



Departure

DEPARTURE

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Once a bustling city filled with laughter, Marawi stood tall with its harmonious blend of cultures where Christians and Muslims lived side by side. However, one foreboding chapter would etch its mark on Marawi's history, forever haunting the memories of its people and altering the cityscape.

The clash of beliefs, intensified by external influences, plunged Marawi into the depths of chaos and uncertainty. Eduardo a 35-year soldier and a father were frantically searching for his son who was taken by the terrorists.

Mark was being dragged by a group of men in black who considered themselves part of ISIS and threatened to kill him if he were to resist once more. He huddled in the corner of his cell; the walls ready to collapse with each explosion of bombs. Fear crept to him like a second skin and despair haunted him like a ghost.

His father assured him with a promise: that he would protect him at all costs. But now, as gunshots echoed outside, Mark held on to his father's unwavering love and bravery.

The room reeked of smoke and desperation. Mark's trembling hand clasped a worn-out rosary whispering prayers for survival, beads slipping from his fingers replaced with a gun that he does not know how to use and did not ask for, given to him by the terrorists.

The world beyond his window was a nightmare- a symphony of screams, broken glasses, and the ear-splitting roar of warplanes combined with the deafening blast of gunshots.

As he was being forced to fire at nowhere, he sensed a single gunshot, so close that he felt its echo in his chest. His father, a shadow in camouflage, burst into the room, successful at infiltrating the den of the terrorists. Blood stained his uniform, and his eyes held a fierce determination. "Go Mark," he rasped, pushing his son toward the window. "Find safety. Live."

Mark hesitated, torn between obedience and love. His father's sacrifice was etched into every line of his face. "But you –" Mark began, voice breaking. "I'll hold them off," his father said, voice steady. "You're my legacy, Mark. Our hope."

Mark climbed out of the window, the night swallowing him whole. Explosions rocked the ground, and he stumbled, tears blurring his vision. His father's final words echoed: "Live."

Gunshots, dead bodies, rubbles, and shattered buildings. Nothing, all that's left is nothing but a speck of dust, an eerie silence, and the smell of death sending shivers down the spine. As the days turned into weeks and the weeks into months, the battle for Marawi raged on.

Finally, after five months of bloodshed and sacrifice, the guns fell silent, leaving their traces in every corner of Marawi forever etched into the citizens' memory. Amidst the ruins, hope began to sprout, as the people of Marawi started their arduous journey of rebuilding their lives and their beloved city.

Five years later, Marawi breathed anew. The scars remained-etched into walls, etched into hearts-but life flowed like a river reclaiming its course. Children played in courtyards where bombs once fell. Markets bustled, and laughter danced through alleyways.

Mark stood at the edge of Lake Lanao, where the water mirrored both sorrow and resilience. He remembered his father- the soldier who gave everything. Mark had become a teacher, passing on stories of courage and compassion.

The city had rebuilt itself, not just in bricks and mortar, but in the spirit of its people. Soldiers had fought for peace, and civilians had paid the price. But hope had risen from the ashes, a fragile bloom that refused to wither.

Marawi-a testament to humanity's capacity for both destruction and renewal-stood as a beacon. Mark closed his eyes, feeling the breeze off the lake. His father's sacrifice was woven into the very fabric of the city.

And as the sun dipped below the horizon, Mark whispered, "We live, Father. We live for peace."