Ayssar Habeeb is a student in Advanced ESL. Day 26 is a fragment from the memoir she is working on.

**A Memoir, Day 26 – by Ayssar Habeeb**

The bombardment echoed in the neighbourhood, long night with ambiguous possibilities. The rumbles shuddered my bedroom window, cracked open in search of a summer breeze. Restful sleep was a luxury out of reach. Typical summer nights in Baghdad used to have a mingle of sounds: a blend of crickets’ chirp, the neighbours' loud TV, a married couple arguing, and distant chatter from the young men gathering down the road. The highlights of their lurking centered mainly around exchanging cigarettes, car gibberish, and their favourite job: hitting on girls walking by the street. I could still hear them now, talking through the distant low blasts, but this time obviously, they were political analysts and artillery experts, competing to link each aircraft sizzle to its made and source.

At long last, the sun rose on a wreckage of a city. I had barely slept. The mornings brought a relatively quiet, short recess, clear of the air strikes that punctured the nights. I stood on the balcony to the view of a ghost town, multiple clouds of smoke rising in the sky on the horizon. It had never been that quiet before; no school bells rang, no cars rushed for work, no peddlers hollered to sell their food. Even the birds had left their nests. A few stray dogs were scavenging for food in the garbage, which was piling for days now. I waved to our neighbour across the street, whose family hadn’t left yet to stay with relatives in rural areas, away from the danger of the capital. Her two little kids had been crying all night.

I went to the kitchen to grab a bite and some tea, or whatever mother managed to store before the war. My mother was not there. My sister-in-law had gone into labour, and they rushed her to the hospital. All phone lines were cut off and we couldn't reach them; swamped with worry, we waited, counting every second.

When they returned that evening, my mother was in shock, crying.

"We have to leave the city and go to the countryside, it's safer there," she told my father.

"I don't think it is safe to move now with five kids and a baby," father said.

"The hospital is full of hundreds of wounded civilians lying on the floor in the emergency room. There are not enough ambulances, so taxis are rushing them in. They told us to leave and look for a private hospital, even though they knew most of them were closed; we were lucky to find an open one*.*”

"I'll try to find a gas station tomorrow. There is no use talking about this if we can't move the car," father said bewildered.

As I was lying in bed, staring at the chandelier wiggling due to another round of pounding, I tried to rationalize living in a city that was once vibrant and then turned into a war zone. I thought of how, in any difficult situation, we adapt and learn to beat the fear of demise by committing fully to the moments and the people we might not live to see another day. I was grateful for surviving another day, for having food that would last us a few days, and for the ray of hope in the cry of the newborn baby, which shadowed the sounds of bombing throughout the night.