

Unseen



The hospital lights seem brighter today
as I stride in
The AC a bit cooler than usual
always running no matter the weather.

Every anesthetized patient drifts off to sleep
a little more easily
Every surgery complicated
but without complications.

Room 14's call bell is louder than before
"more water, please"
Room 23 is much more antsy than yesterday
but at least today he's going home.

Over my morning coffee I open a live stream with a single tap
volume off
Over 6,000 miles away a cancer center, or was it a children's hospital?
now just rubble and ash.

It's loud in this hospital, but I'm struck by the silence
the distinct lack of explosions outside
It's hectic, but I'm struck by the calm
the relative absence of sniper fire.

Here, there are no patients without a bed
no babies without a parent
Here, the electricity is always enough
to keep the surgery theater's lights on.

To die here is a spectacle, a play bathed in spotlight
and our time to mourn is a luxury
To die there is to die unseen, in the shadow of a thousand fires
neither in mystery nor in certainty.

A screenshot replaces the live stream in my feed
brightness all the way down
A screenshot of a WhatsApp message from a resident physician
meant for a friend but sent to the world:

"We're alive
but we're not okay."

—Mohamad K. Hamze, MD