



*2 PARTS
OF DESIRE*

Rita

I was 12 going onto 13 when the war broke out. It was a Sunday afternoon, at 3 o'clock, we were at nannu's having lunch. I can still see them all huddled around the radio when war was declared. That was it, & my father immediately realised that our home in Valletta was not safe. A family friend offered to move his family for us to move into his house. This was the spirit then, everyone helping each other. But such hardships!

Kwart u nofs hobż biss, that's all we each had to eat. "You have a piece of bread for me?", my cousin asked when he came to visit us, "*baqalek slice?*" My father did everything to bring us food. We rationed, shared & didn't waste a thing. Nowadays you throw away everything without thinking!

I remember one time, when we were in Sliema, my sister & I were in a window & we were spotted by a German bomber as he swept down. Tak tak tak tak, directly at us! In Rabat we'd walk to the shelter for safety, dragging nanna with us because she was far too old & sick to walk alone. "Leave me here, let me die here", she used to say. It broke our hearts to leave her at home, but we just couldn't do otherwise.

Another place we stayed in was just 1 room, with a *toqba* for a kitchen! Mummy, daddy, nanna, a couple of cousins, my sister & I. Because beneath us there was a bar often frequented by soldiers, my father took the decision that was my most painful moment: to send us off to St. Dorothy's College as boarders. My weekend visits home always ended in such a heartbreaking way... I felt torn from my family, lonely.

Mother suffered in silence, in one room, doing nothing. Every morning she'd see her husband off to work, & as she looked onto Valletta from Rabat wonder whether he would return home that evening. I remember her making newspaper cut-outs to decorate the only tiny shelf we had in the kitchen...how sad & lonely she must have been.

I would have wanted to study to become something, to do something. Probably a social worker...yes that's it, a social worker. Poverty & suffering hurt me, I'm tired of hearing talk about it but nothing gets done!

No schooling, no future, no dreams, nothing. We just lived for the day. Your generations know nothing of this, you never learn these things in school. War is very ugly, we suffered terribly & I wish it didn't exist. But we've learnt a lot. I am stronger, tougher.