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### Love in the Crucible

SWANEE: *How can you do all you do?*

AMNA: *Well, I get up at six.*

SWANEE: *I know that, but where does your spirit come from?*

AMNA: *[with a wide smile] From friends. Friends. That's a lesson I learned from the war.*

NADA: *In a way, it seems less tragic when relationships break during a war. You have other crises. You see people dead. You're trying to find a place to live. You don't have the luxury to worry. Then later, time does its work. New events push the old ones into the background. But still it's difficult, even now, to talk about the relationships I lost.*

Every element of human life has its wartime version.<sup>1</sup> Everyday habits and happenings are transformed. Just showing up at work becomes a bold assertion that life will go on—as if dodging sniper fire en route to the university or rehearsal hall or clinic is simply a new occupational hazard. Using a cup of water to bathe is a decision to have one less cup to drink. Putting on makeup becomes an act of defiance against the ugliness. A lifetime of acquiring is undone in one shelling, but the owner may not care, for possessions seem irrelevant compared to safety. Health, religion, education—any element of life looks different viewed through the lens of war.

But the dominant element of life the women repeatedly wove into their stories was the effect of the war on their closest relationships. The women constantly referred to themselves as mothers, wives, daughters, and friends. Over



Sarajevo soccer field. December 1995.

hours of conversation, I realized how this theme was fundamental to the work they're now doing to rebuild their country. Their effort and sacrifices are motivated by their commitment to make life better for those they love.

Viewed through the lens of relationship, the cost of war is compounded. Tattered relationships added to the trauma of displacement, fear, and physical hardship. Mothers fled their homes with terrified children in tow. Worse yet, they didn't know where their children were. Or worst of all, they left them behind in graves. Often wives had no news of their husbands, who were off fighting. The men not only weren't around to protect or comfort them; the women were worried about their well-being. War took an equally huge toll on friendships. The neighbor who once had gossiped over a cup of coffee might now be shelling the kitchen of his erstwhile friend.<sup>2</sup>

On the other hand, the war environment clarified and intensified relationships. The elements spread across the same spectrum as that of "normal times." But adoration, protection, nurturing, sacrifice, resentment, jealousy, betrayal all were intensified. Every Bosnian had relationships destroyed or burned pure by the heat of the conflict. The dozen stories I collected represent millions—each with a value never computed in the cost of the Bosnian war. Mother to son, father to daughter, daughter to mother, wife to husband, friend to friend, neighbor to neighbor, colleague to colleague—they are all here, inviting the reader to imagine what it would be like to have our most precious relationships jeopardized. What was the toll on Irma's neighbor, whose husband was killed when he went out to buy cigarettes—for his wife? "Better it was him than the children," the wife said plainly, as if that platitude could somehow halt the moral hemorrhage.

Relationships are intrinsic to identity. We know ourselves as individuals only as we experience our connection to others in relationships,<sup>3</sup> the loss of a loved one is a loss of self. Furthermore, living in a war is dehumanizing, I realized, as the women described feeling "caged" or "trapped" or "hunted"—like animals. Relationships, on the other hand, are a mechanism for feeling fully human, for belonging, for fulfilling the psychological need of human beings to be part of a group. Repeatedly, the women rejected the notion that ethnic or religious affiliations are the boxes within which they live. But family and friends—that's a different matter, and those ties reach across conflict lines imposed by others. That's not to say these close relationships didn't shift or change; in discrete moments or broad sweeps of time, war impacted every relationship these women held dear. Death was the ultimate alteration, leaving the women with only memories when even photo albums were claimed by the war. But months or years of separation

took a toll as well, and marriages had to be reassessed and realigned—if they held together at all.

The fearful accounts of mothers with their sons were stark against the backdrop of the panicky, out-of-control nature of war. *MEDIHA* has had multiple careers: a university professor in Sarajevo, a promoter of affordable orthodontics, and member of parliament in the party that, after the war, insisted on a multicultural platform. But she insists: *There's no greater thing than being a mother.* Divorced early in her marriage, she is from a family of professionals, connected to the former Muslim aristocracy—a past of distinction that pervades her present and is obvious in the breadth and depth with which she understands herself and her society. *As a doctor and a professor, throughout the war I decided to stay in the capital with my patients and my students . . . and my son—a young man, really—who wanted to stay with me. The fear of dying was exhausting. Death hung over our heads. Everyone lived the same life, not just I. When I think about those four years of prison in Sarajevo. . . . The city was a huge concentration camp, with no electricity, no water, and constant shelling. I still have nightmares today, and I can't stand the sound of fireworks.*

*In my dreams, I still see some small sequences so gripping they remain in my life. My son and I used to leave home every day at the same time. When we reached my university, we said goodbye. We didn't know whether it was the last time. He went to work in one direction; I went the other way. He'd always look back, and I'd watch him and pray to God I'd see him again. Those were long, long days, since there was no telephone communication. I used to arrive home earlier than he did. My apartment building was in total darkness and silence. There was nothing to do, so people went to bed early. I'd sit in the dark. From time to time, I could hear the entrance door slamming, and I'd hope it would be he. I waited there, wondering who would knock on the door and bring what kind of news. If I heard the knock on my neighbor's door, I felt pain and relief at the same time. Then the next set of footsteps . . . the next knock. Finally, at my door. Frozen with fear, I'd ask who it was. I'd hear his name: "Bojan." I'd open the door with tears in my eyes, but he couldn't see them. I felt first relief. . . . then a knot in my stomach, knowing we'd go through the same tomorrow. Then I'd make him something to eat in the darkness, and when he'd had enough—he wouldn't have eaten the whole day—he'd ask if I'd had something. "Of course I have," I'd lie. "Have some more." Then if he left something, I'd eat it . . . in the same darkness.*

Anyone who has listened for the footsteps of a beloved can identify with the twisted gut, the spontaneous tears, the white lie. Like *Mediha's*, *MAJA's* suffering was quiet, in keeping with her professional role as a hospital administrator. One of her sons was twenty-three when the war broke out—draft age, even though

he had already put in his required time of service. *At the beginning, he was with me in Mostar. But he was very affected emotionally by the situation. He wouldn't accept that he was divided from his friends by a street down the middle of town. For his sanity, I had to send him away, but it was an extremely hard decision.* Maja's relatives, first in Italy, then Cyprus, took in her two sons. She deliberated whether to keep the younger, the sixteen-year old, with her in Mostar, hiding him; but she decided the risk wasn't worth it. *When we were seeing him off, it was pouring rain. The skies and I were crying together. I told him, "Please take care." And do you know what he said? "Mother, when we land, I'm going to travel on a train! I've never traveled by train!" He was too young to travel the world. On that huge ferry, his head looked like the tip of a match.*

As Mediha waited for the return of her son each night, and Maja worried about the well-being of her boys abroad, KAROLINA's anguish for her son had a strong moral element as well: *I taught my son—and I'm not saying this because he's mine—I really taught him to be good. But he had to take a gun and defend himself. Why should they take such a nice young man and make him a killer? I kept telling him, "Don't shoot anyone unless you have to." The very idea is horrible. Who are we to take another's life? But he had to defend himself. I didn't bring him up to kill. It was forced on him.*

*At the beginning of the war, he was eighteen. When he went to the most dangerous part of the front line, my husband couldn't bear it. He died from a heart attack. We had so many problems. First, finding food. Then basic hygiene; it was terrible, since toilets didn't work. And water; at 4 A.M., I'd go out and fetch all I could. We were constantly afraid of infection, because we had to use the same water for drinking, cooking, washing our clothes and ourselves. I took in two other refugees from Dobrinja. They didn't have anything. One girl, my daughter's twenty-year-old school friend, was orphaned. There was also a seriously wounded boy, a friend of my son's. I had to feed everybody. As years went by, the war became fiercer. Once my son was gone for two months. I didn't know what was going on with him, whether he was alive or dead.*

Mothers sometimes describe the urge to protect their children as more primal than learned. The terror seems to flow from her son through her as Karolina describes his time at the front. *I went crazy. All those horrible times, when they were leaving Sarajevo, breaking through enemy lines. . . . There was open fighting outside the capital, in the mountain area. A shell landed on the cave where they were having breakfast. I was a wreck before I got word he'd survived. Really, beyond myself. There was another time when he was on reconnaissance. Four of them were hiding in the cellar of an old house, surrounded by Chetniks. The Chetniks unleashed search dogs. It was January and snowing. Four days and four nights they stayed in that cellar with no water and*

no food. My son wanted to commit suicide with his rifle. He tried to escape through a trench. Enemy trenches crossed each other in several places before Sarajevo. One night he crawled out, then jumped back in, but landed on top of somebody. Neither spoke, and neither boy could see. They waited for the moon to come out so they could tell who they were, not knowing if they were from different sides. When the moon came out, he realized it was a schoolmate who actually had started out to look for him. Neither knew where they were, but they managed somehow to get back.

He had a nervous breakdown after that and spent three months in the hospital. He can't speak properly now, and he has emotional problems. He can't stand injustice, or stories about the war. He's very easily hurt. He lost a lot and doesn't like talking about it. He seems at least ten years older than friends his age. Of his classmates—fifty or sixty probably—only five survived. [Karolina's eyes filled.] All the others are dead.

For mothers with sons in the fighting, the strain was obvious, but there was also a tremendous tension for anyone raising children in a war setting. RADA describes her family's narrow escape from the front lines, where her apartment was being shot up, into the center of Sarajevo, with only the sweat suits they were wearing. *I was never afraid for my life. I knew I had to live. But I feared for my children and husband. God alone saved us. We didn't have a cent with us. Nothing.* Living with her sister-in-law for two years, she and her husband continued going to their jobs at the radio station. They thought constantly about the safety of not only their young son but also their teenage daughter, whom they called the wonder of their lives and who after high school found no options, despite her excellent English. When the young graduate begged her mother to allow her to start a career as a journalist, Rada at first said no, afraid she would be killed. But with no idea of how long the war would go on, she decided she couldn't keep her daughter locked up.

ALENKA, meanwhile, was trying to keep her two children safe, against a backdrop of carnage that terrified parents in Tuzla, the multicultural city about two hours north of Sarajevo. She carried the weight squarely on her shoulders; her husband had been killed in a car accident just before the war. But in addition to the basics of physical safety, she bore the burden of knowing the war was being perpetrated by members of her own ethnic group. *For four years, from May '92 till the Dayton Agreement, we sat as if we were in a prison. There wasn't that much shelling, but we knew that any single moment a shell could drop anywhere, so the oppression was more mental. The sense of dread was horrible. My children had to live like . . . like dogs, tethered close to home. Can you imagine, keeping an eleven-year-old boy cooped up all the time? It was just terrible.*

Apart from the social impact, Alenka sees the war through an engineer's eyes. *The beginning was hardest. Everything was new. I didn't know anything—like how much could be destroyed by a single shell. I thought when a shell hit a building, it was like a bomb; everything was destroyed.* But her steepest learning curve had to do with psychological survival. *At the start of the war, I was mad. It took some time—the first month—to accept that this was a war that would last for God knows how many years. The worst was, not knowing anything about how to survive shells. And then we always think bad things happen to everybody else, not to us. The idea that people were shooting at us took some getting used to, to say the least! It was much easier after a year, even though there wasn't any food. We got used to it and somehow adapted. You know, you can adapt to almost any situation if it develops step by step.*

Alenka insists that, no matter how bad the shelling was, others in Tuzla didn't pressure her family, although they were Bosnian Serbs. *It's hard for outsiders to believe. They get such a different story from the media. And speaking of the media: I have a cousin, who's lived in New Jersey twelve years. He called during the war and asked what the children were doing. I said, "Well, they play; and they work on the computer." "How can they work on a computer? They have computers?" I said, "Of course." "What kind?" "You know. Pentium." He was completely confused. I said, "My dear cousin, this is a modern war: you have shells and you have computers, you have cameras and you have slaughter."*

*In the evenings, we'd sit around the TV watching the shelling and burning of our country. Then some hit song or latest new movie would come on. . . . There was always this disconnect between the nightmare and real life. Sometimes, in the middle of the night, the electricity would suddenly start up. Everyone would plug in their electric cookers, radios, TVs. [Alenka laughs at the memory.] You'd step out on your balcony and, in the quiet of night, hear vacuum cleaners humming throughout the neighborhood.*

Alenka and her children live on the edge of Tuzla, separated from town by a soccer field and river. *No buildings. Nothing to hide us. When you looked from the town in our direction, you'd see the hill with a TV tower. We knew there was a tank next to the tower. You'd think, "If a shell comes, would I see it or not?"* Given the uncertainties, a mother anguished over when to let children risk their lives. *There were lots of interesting activities going on in Tuzla. Some humanitarian organizations started children's playrooms, some youth centers, training for this or for that. But I didn't dare let my children try to get there. For four years, they missed out on sports, guitar lessons, English courses—all those youth groups.* The signing of an agreement by politicians doesn't undo the damage of war on youngsters. Like mothers across Bosnia, Alenka was left to sort through the difficulties of parenting, wondering which behaviors were

attributable to the war, and which were the normal stresses of adolescence. *My daughter's a teenager now, and there's pressure—she's trying to catch up. She wants to be out with her friends all the time, because all those years she didn't have the chance.*

Was Alenka overly protective? The times in which she was raising her children were filled with uncertainty. Perhaps that was the greatest challenge for parents, figuring out when healthy independence crossed over to dangerous carelessness. Every parent in Tuzla remembers May 25, 1995. *It was 9 P.M. I was watching TV. They interrupted the movie and said, "Special bulletin, blah, blah, blah." I'd heard the shell, of course, but that was happening every night. Nothing so special. Then Tuzla TV said a horrible tragedy had happened. The shell had hit the center of town and killed—I think they started with thirty people, you know, a few minutes after it happened. Then we saw everything: the kids' hangout, dead bodies, people who came to help move the corpses. . . .*

*All night we watched death on TV. It was unbelievable: seventy-one teenagers. I remember one girl without a head. Four helpers, each picked up one arm and one leg, as they put her in the van. We saw a lot like that. It was a live program, interrupted by calls from panicking parents. "This is my daughter's name. She was there. Have you heard anything about her?" Then bedlam at the hospital in Tuzla, with all these corridors full of corpses, and about two hundred injured young people—almost all of them teenagers—lying there like logs. The nurses and doctors . . . it was a mess all around. Our cleaning lady at work, her daughter's boyfriend was killed there. My father's friend learned about his son when his second son called from Canada, saying he'd seen his brother on TV, lying dead at the hospital.*

Alenka's concerns about raising children in wartime were picked up by KRISTINA, whose narrative began with two moments from the harrowing, chaotic flight from Sipovo. The first was in the car, caught in the jam of vehicles, trying to escape as the shells were exploding all around: *My daughter was begging, "Go, Mom! Please go!" I had to protect her. I looked at my beautiful girl: dark eyes, olive skin, curly hair. "She's the reason I'm doing this," I thought. She was panicking, so I had to be calm. I don't know where I got the strength, but throughout the madness I kept thinking, "I have to stay sane." In the middle of that hell it's almost like you're hallucinating when you tell yourself those things. It sounds completely surreal and seems impossible to find the strength. But while you're thinking that it's impossible, you're still doing it mechanically. It just kicks in . . . sort of a mother's instinct.*

*My husband was somewhere fighting. I had no idea if he was dead or alive. My older daughter was gone. I didn't know where she was or if she was OK. I was just trying to save my baby, but I didn't know where I was going, what I was doing, how to help her, how*

to calm her. Everything was on me. I thought, if I don't know where the two other most important people in my life are, I've got to take care of this one. She's here and depending on me right now. I just kept repeating, mechanically: "Don't be afraid. . . . We're going to be okay. . . . I'm going to take care of it. . . . This is just a little stop, and we're going to get through. . . . Look! The crowd is moving. . . . We're going to make it. . . . Everything's going to be fine."

Kristina leaned forward as she drew me into her story: *My older daughter had come from another village, knowing we'd have to be coming that way. She was searching one car after another, filled with screaming women and children — asking everyone where her mother was. No one had a clue, and she thought she might've lost us. Eventually she came to our car. You can imagine, when I saw her . . . and when she saw us. We started crying, tears of relief.*

As the crisis cooled, concerns changed. Life settled into endless war-weary tedium. *The war interrupted my older girl's studies. My younger finished her senior year of high school in Banja Luka, where we were refugees. We were in this one-room apartment; she piled her books on the washing machine and studied in the bathroom. Before, we were the luckier ones. We lived a very good life. Then the war came, and I was struggling for my family's survival. What else could we do but just manage? It wasn't simply that we were afraid, or that we intellectually understood something bad was happening. It was under our skin. My girls' lives were turned upside down — not just circumstances, but their entire way of life. Everything was shaken up. They were almost grown. They were proud. They'd lived well. They were used to dressing nicely. Suddenly they not only couldn't have something but it was wrong to even think of it. With no warning, they'd lost everything. That wasn't their biggest problem. Just staying alive was. I tried to give them some things, to pretend life wasn't that different. I wanted to convince them this would all pass. I made them some clothes, gave them lipstick, shoes, a book, anything I had, just to help them feel a bit better.*

Amid the confusion, the women were determined to create stability for their families. Many were activists responding to the crisis while juggling their responsibilities as mother, wife, or friend. Sometimes those external and internal roles diminished each other. Other times the women's familial roles enriched their work, creating empathy that impelled them to engage in some of the toughest scenarios of the war. MIRHUNISA describes how her roles of mother and wife affected, and were affected by, her war-related relief work: *Before the war — when refugees started coming in from Croatia — I thought, "What if something like that happens here?" I had a son almost fourteen at the time, and my daughter was ten. I kept trying to think of what I could do that would be useful, but at the same time, I didn't*

want to leave my children alone at home. Eventually, Mirhunisa had to flee her apartment on the outskirts of town. *Like the refugees with whom I work, I know what it's like to lose your home and take your family into complete uncertainty without any explanation. You can't explain it to yourself, so how can you explain it to your children? I remember my daughter asking, "Mommy, who's sleeping in my room now? Why did we leave my roller skates at home?" My husband could not tolerate my wartime activity, and we divorced. Now I live alone with my children. But Mirhunisa cannot speak of her own family's struggle without then telling me about the greater hardships others endured. She describes her interviews with women and girls forced into bordellos in concentration camps; there, her private and public worlds blend. As a woman, as a mother, I couldn't imagine what they had endured; but as the days passed, and more young girls arrived, I began to understand.*

Understanding translated into action. Despite—or perhaps because of—her feelings as a mother, Mirhunisa pushed farther and farther into the flood of refugees being airlifted into Sarajevo from eastern Bosnia. *They arrived without arms, without hands, without eyes. Most had to be hospitalized. Nobody came in one piece. The refugees came by helicopter from Gorazde, an enclave about two hours east of Sarajevo filled with Bosniak refugees and surrounded by Serbs.<sup>4</sup> The town straddled the main road, separating two chunks of Serb-held territory. It was like an island, and you couldn't reach it by land. When I heard they were arriving, I went to meet them. I asked people in Sarajevo for help—for example, a shoe factory owner, because they all came barefoot. They'd cut strips of fabric from their camouflage uniforms and tied them around their feet, like shoes. It was hard to look, because most of them were missing a leg. When we gave them shoes, they were so funny. Humor always kept them going. They joked, "Hey, you don't need the right shoe! Let's give it to somebody else." "No! What's my prosthesis going to wear?"*

Mirhunisa adds one more vignette, all the more poignant given that her marriage was falling apart: *The refugees arriving were mostly men, but among them was a woman with her husband. They and their children had been running through the woods behind the retreating army as the Serb soldiers advanced. Then a blast. The father turned and saw the corpses of his two children. From that moment, he was mute. I'll never forget it. That woman was so dedicated. She worked with him every day. He would draw a picture for me of something he needed. Then his wife would draw a picture of what she would give him. It was a picture of a baby.<sup>5</sup>*

The women confiding in me were not only mothers fearful for their children but also daughters, worrying about their parents, even when they themselves were in extreme danger. Unable to get home to Mostar from Sarajevo, ALMA

joined up with the army as a paramedic, but despite the shelling and snipers, she remained focused on her family: *It was on Mount Igman that I was first injured.<sup>6</sup> I was part of an ambulance team and we were going down to Ilidza. My mother had begged me by phone, "Come here, darling."* Alma didn't realize that that suburb of Sarajevo, near the airport, had been devastated by Serb attacks. *I couldn't wait! I'd be able to go to my parents' home!*

*I was exhausted, so I was lying almost prone in my seat, slumped down, daydreaming about seeing my parents—and that's what saved me. The Serbs started shooting. Every vehicle coming down the mountain road was hit. [Her hand becomes the vehicle winding down the road.] We had a lot of dead and injured that day. Luckily, the bullet hit my helmet. We had quite a time getting out of there. Our car was disabled. The driver and other medic bolted out, but the stretchers were across my door. I managed to crawl to the other side of the car then jump out. There was barbed wire in front of us. I wasn't sure if that meant we were in Serb territory. I was frozen with fear. My only thought was, "I mustn't be caught alive!" There was a thunderstorm. I was totally disoriented, even though during the peace I used to jog on that mountain path. Now I didn't know where the hell I was.*

Eventually, Alma made it down the mountain. She managed to get within half a mile, but there was no way to reach her parents. Ilidza had been totally destroyed, and she had no idea if they'd survived. *What we saw on tv, as well as the reports we received, gave me no hope they were still alive.* Hospitalized, she could think of nothing but her parents. She checked herself out. *Then after half a year, came the greatest happiness a person could have. In April of '93 we were reunited for ten days. Then I went back to Mount Igman to help my fellow soldiers. The situation in Sarajevo was very bad then—shelling all the time. In June '93, I was injured again. I tried to hide it from my family. But seven days after surgery, I learned that my brother, my only sibling, had been killed. My family was in Mostar. I decided to travel there—on foot. My nose and knee were broken, my ligaments were torn, but I felt no pain. I just wanted to get to my family.*

Frequently during the war, I listened to grown daughters like Alma, distressed that they couldn't provide the comfort their parents needed. As FAHRIJA was trying to support her politician husband in Sarajevo and figure out how and when to make her escape with their two children, her concern also turned toward her elderly mother. *She was not really sick. She just had high blood pressure, and the political crisis made her condition deteriorate. When war started in Slovenia and then Croatia and threatened to engulf us as well, it brought back memories of the Second World War, when she lost her first husband and escaped on foot from Sandzak through the mountains*

*carrying a bundle hiding her one-year-old baby, my half-sister. That was when she was very young, and for the rest of her life she bore the memories of her father and husband killed by Chetniks. With this new war, she was scared that her four sons would be taken from her. Her blood pressure was out of control. She died in January '92. There are twenty doctors in our family, and none of us could save her.*

The public face of war is often that of terrified soldiers, refugee women, or hungry children. But as each woman layered her story on top of others', I began to understand the devastating effect of conflict on the elderly. DANICA'S mother grew up in a wealthy Slovene family but moved to Bosnia to be with the man she loved. Life in Bosnia was difficult for her as a farmer's wife, raising four children. But Danica speaks reverentially about her mother's attitude during the war that gutted her final years. *I started packing for our escape, thinking of my daughter and my two young, helpless grandchildren. Then I thought, "I have to take my mother."* Setting up life as a refugee in Croatia, Danica struggled with depression. *But my mother didn't make a scene when we fled, and even as a refugee, in her appearance and in her soul there was always peace. She just seemed to adapt to her new situation and fit in again, as happy as before. We didn't have much income, but there was never a problem. That was because of my mother, who kept us all stable.*

Danica's story of her mother is more than a tale of stoicism. Tens of thousands of parents and grandparents found themselves unable to provide for their dependents in wartime. Being on the receiving end of humanitarian assistance created a shift in their identities, robbing them of the satisfaction of being a provider. *I took her back to Slovenia, where she became very ill with intestinal cancer. She had a difficult death, but I don't think it was the cancer that was most painful. It was that she had only her purse with her when we fled, and she felt devastated that she no longer could give us things, or make something pretty for us. [Danica is crying.] During those days of dying, she kept saying, "It's so hard when a person can't give any longer. People are giving us things, taking care of us, when I want to be the one taking care of you."*<sup>77</sup>

Beyond family, the war took a tremendous toll on social relationships, many of which cracked under the political strain. GRETA reflects on life maneuvered within the cross hairs of snipers. She is, after all, an authority on survival, having endured internment in Auschwitz but then returned to Yugoslavia, where she was a government minister and professor. Her description of Sarajevo under siege has the stark edge of someone who knows war intimately. *I can't understand how snipers could take aim and then shoot women and children. In Sarajevo more than ten thousand people died. More civilians than soldiers were killed by snipers and shelling. With no fuel or electricity, we had no buses or trams, and of course no cars; then when*

electricity started up in 1994 or so, we had a few streetcars again. At the intersection in front of the Holiday Inn, a bus would have to stop because of the tram, and that's when the snipers would shoot. On one street near a small Catholic church, it was impossible to leave your house without snipers seeing you. People had to go out through their backyards. Greta has pondered war for sixty years. It's even worse than with the Germans. They were foreigners to us, but these were people with whom we'd lived. We had mixed marriages; we were neighbors. I had over a thousand students over the years. Those may have been my former students shooting at me. Who knows?

A story from KAROLINA, in Sarajevo, conveys the same unsettling theme of insiders turned enemy: *I have lots of Serb friends. For the ones who stayed here and who love this country, it was really hard. Just the fact that they were here, and they had cousins and relatives on the other side. . . . That was very tough.* At Karolina's firm, almost all senior managers were Serbs who joined the aggression. *They were on the other side, in the hills. To get to my office every day, we had to cross a park full of big, old trees. Chetniks would shoot from the surrounding hills, and we'd be caught in the crossfire between the two sides. My new Muslim director and his deputy were fighting on the front lines, but once a week they'd come to the office to keep business going. Three of us were walking together across the park one day. A sniper started shooting at us. My director asked, "Shall we run, or should we walk slowly?" I was recovering from a heart attack. My feet suddenly felt like lead. There was no way I could run. I said, "You go. I have to walk slowly." They said, "No, we'll all walk. Nobody run. If they're going to kill us, they can kill all three of us together with one shot." The bullets were flying all around, not directly at us, but beside us. When we were halfway, one of the directors said, "Who's shooting at us? Milan, Goran, or Slavko?" We were sure it was one of our former colleagues, and he knew exactly who we were. He wasn't shooting to kill us—just frighten us.*

These weren't stories of colleagues working in a climate of distrust, mothers anxious about children getting in with a bad crowd, wives seeing husbands waste away with cancer, or friends drifting apart. One cataclysmic day the war broke out, and everything changed. The suddenness of the assault added to the social chaos and traumatic loss. MIRHUNISA has two vignettes: *There was a well-known woman who, before the war, was in the government. She wore thin, metal, spiked heels, and she'd hit the captured men in the stomach with those heels; they showed me the marks. That was a woman.* Repeatedly, I heard reports of longtime friendships becoming casualties of the war as unexpectedly as the first shell in a barrage that blew away half the living room. Mirhunisa, again, described a schoolroom with some seventy men sleeping on small cots. She asked one, who had a cross cut

into his back with a knife, “How could seventy of you be captured? I don’t understand physically how somebody captured seventy grown men.” The answer was: “They were our neighbors. We trusted them.”

Ultimately, the women were left to try to close the wounds of betrayal. There is no greater healer than EMSUDA, determined to realign her life, despite her concentration camp experiences at the hands of members of her own community. *Everybody was in shock. They simply couldn’t understand what was happening. They couldn’t grasp it. It just didn’t penetrate. It’s especially hard now, since the war, as people are returning to places where the crimes took place. They have flashbacks, or they simply remember what it was like. Then they finally have to face it again, after these years, and realize it really happened, that it’s true.*

*It was difficult for us to understand then, and it’s still difficult today. I sometimes think it’s a dream. One day I’ll wake up, and it will have been a nightmare. But unfortunately I’m wide awake, and it’s all absolutely true. Our friends we loved — loved like a brother or a sister — turned out to be cruel.*