

# Who You Are

Written by Nikita Gill

One day someone will ask you who you are,  
but before you grasp for the legacy  
you always reach for,  
let me show you a different story.

A story in which there are sirens and debris,  
and two of the most devastating wars  
the world has ever seen.

But even through this,  
the tales that endure are of courage  
and standing strong  
for your community.

You see the stories I hold dearest  
come from my grandfathers  
who served in the Indian army.  
They always told me that courage  
looked like the legendary Khudadad Khan,  
first Indian recipient of the Victoria Cross.  
And they instilled in me the knowledge  
that even through tragedy  
some moments live on for eternity,  
like a father tenderly accepting  
his late son's medals in his memory,  
showing us the sacred bond  
that we call family.

And maybe just like the stories  
my grandfathers gave to me,

your lineage holds truths for you too.  
Perhaps you have someone  
like Dorothy who joined  
the Women's Army Auxiliary Corps  
being only fifteen years old,  
because she believed that a better world  
*is* possible and it is worth fighting for.

The truth is the exact measure of a person  
is who they are in times of turmoil,  
in times when they are needed to be  
the best of all of humanity,  
like a twenty-one-year-old barmaid,  
recommended for a Civil Defence Gallantry Award  
for saving a man's life.

And even in moments of immense pain,  
from great courage came great art  
like soldiers writing poems from trenches,  
and during the second world war,  
despite the Nazis trying to ban it,  
people danced the Lambeth Walk,  
showing us that heroism can take  
a thousand different, colourful forms.

So, when they ask you who you are,  
tell them you are the result  
of kindness and rebellion.  
You come from poems written in trenches  
and dances that led revolutions,  
and from soldiers showing compassion  
to those they are meant to call enemies  
on Christmas day.

You come from the stories of everyday  
and not-so-every day Britain.

You are here  
because of  
someone's sacrifice,  
someone who  
believed enough,  
and held on long enough,  
for the hope  
of a new peaceful dawn.

*You* are their dawn.

So come with me  
and let's go and find out  
who they were

and discover  
who *you* are.