

Title(up to 20 words): Bombarded Hopes

Strap line(up to 40 words): Xiomara is writing a letter to her friend Mireia, in the times of the Spanish Civil War. Will the war spare her and her sister, or will all hope be lost?

Copy (between 900 and 1000 words):

Bombarded Hopes

Paun

25th April 1937

Dear Mireia,

I write to you with hope in my heart, but doubt in my mind. I do believe that the war will be better one day. But will we be better? Or will they take all remnants of our souls that they themselves shattered?

I want to be strong for Celestia, she is my little sister after all. I have saved up money from dressmaking in order to make her dream as a painter a reality. As you already know, I am the only one who can help her towards that.

26th April 1937

Dear Mireia,

As you already might know, Guernica is a bewitching village in the north of Spain. In the distance you can see the wise mountains, ageing like old wine. There is also the waters that are the only peaceful constant of these times.

What I like most is the people, or for the lack of a better word, my newfound family. There is Rosa, the towns baker, who treats us like her daughters. She likes to tell us stories from when she was young. Perhaps I got my courage from her. There is Francesca, who helped me create my shop and therefore do the mastery of dressmaking, which pays for our living and keeps my heart beating when my mind is clouded by worry. What is to know is that none of these hardworking, kind and giving people stand with either Side. They are neither nationalists nor republicans. "What are they?" one might ask. They are peace lovers. They wish for a better time. They stand by Spain. I shall forever stand by her too.

Today I have a favour to ask of you. I do not know if we will make it, but be sure that I will do anything to protect Celestia. In case I don't make it, I beg you to take her in as a little sister and take care of her. It would mean more to me than you could ever imagine, for I live my life and I am happy through her only.

26th April 1957

Dear Mireia,

It has been 20 years since that sinister day. If it were not for you, I would not have been able to achieve my dreams. I hope I can repay you one day.

I found this letter from my warrior sister, Xiomara, when I was looking through her belongings and reminded myself of her constant bravery, and particularly her courage on this fateful day, 20 years ago.

She saved my life. When the bombings started, she made me go into the basement first. I came out of it unscathed, but unfortunately, as you know, I cannot say the same for her. I shall always remember the last fearless look of love that she gave me. The sound of the bomb in such close proximity was the most painful sound I have experienced. She took it without screaming. It showed me how a true warrior and hero is not killing someone else. They want to save people and they care not for politics. She was and still to this day is, my hero...

She always fought for me in every way possible in order for me to achieve my dreams, and ultimately she put my life before hers, to save me. Today I invite you on my first gallery show that is dedicated to her, for she shall be remembered for her aforementioned devotion, love and sacrifice towards me.

I remember her with pride in my mind, but sorrow in my heart. She has inspired me to be the woman I am today. Xiomara has been the base to my power and my strength. I had her in my mind always, whenever a door was shut in my face. At times I feel like she guided me with her spirit, her memory was the thing that moved me forward.

It is saddening to write about, but not foreign, when it comes to our roles. Many critics have told me that my artwork is impeccable and yet not one was willing to showcase my art in a gallery, because I am a woman...

I fought. It is the prime thing that I have learnt from her. I fought for what was right, I met the right people and I made my dream a reality. It took sacrifice.

I hope she is proud of the person I have become, for I can hold my own. I am even in the process of preparing for my second gallery show.

However, before I get too full of myself, I wish to talk about my aforementioned sorrow. As I have previously said, my sister was, is and will forever be my source of strength, despite me being her weakness. She took care of me before she took care of herself.

Painting her in so many of my art pieces for this gallery made a tumultuous and crashing realisation appear in my mind. She was beautiful; but it was not her perfectly round face, her elegant nose, her heart shaped lips, nor her hair that looked like waves crashing at shore that moved me in a poetically violent way. It was her eyes. Her eyes held the hero that I am

so proud of. They held her maturity, strength, will to fight and her love for me. She was 19 years old and she was my warrior.

It was people like her, that were the true heroes of the Spanish Civil War.

I will forever cherish her.

Last but not least, for this tale that lasted 20 years, and will shape me for the rest of my life, I would like to thank you for picking up the broken parts of my soul and making me whole again.

Stay warm,
Celestia

PS: My sister was not my only source of inspiration.