

Our future is Europe – Europe is our future

As I set the globe on the table, I stare at it in admiration. Fascinated by the way the lands are formed, the complexity, the beauty of the earth. I turn it, sliding my fingers across the smooth sphere. Suddenly, I hear a voice echoing in my head, telling me to close my eyes.

“Clueless child... you think of this world as if it would give you hope – as if every single one of your dreams would come true, but I don’t think you see truth behind all of it. Child, look to the east of Europe and tell me, what do you see?”

The globe unexpectedly tilts to the left, the cruel sight frightening me as I open my eyes: The ground bloody, the people turning to corpses laying in the dirt. I hear the voices screaming in fear, but before I could ask myself why they were crying out for help, I notice the bullets flying through the air, the bombs exploding in the distance, the fire spreading everywhere, devouring everything in its path that isn’t fast enough.

“Now tell me child, have you seen the fighting, the terror, the war happening every day for years? Taking and taking until nothing is left to take anymore, then moving further and further to try and take more. Until there is nothing left to be taken, continuing as we speak? Clueless child, look to the west of Europe and tell me, what do you see?”

The globe tilts to the right, I see the flood that washes away the people, washes away their homes, leaving them unprotected, hopeless, cold. I hear the people crying as the ground shakes, I see the storms, raging in anger, making everyone shiver and tremble in fear, the vision leaving me speechless.

“Now tell me child, have you seen the destruction, the countless people begging for mercy, pleading, in hopes someone can save them, in the end being left then and there? Have you seen the catastrophes happening not only for years, but decades? The disasters multiplying even though we knew it was going to happen, we didn’t do anything, did we? Clueless child, look at where you are standing right now. Look at the centre of Europe and tell me, what do you see?”

The globe spins again, but I can’t see a thing.

“Oh, my apologies, I wasn’t specific enough, clueless child. Look into the past a bit more, see the history of your home.”

My eyes widen at the sight in front of my eyes. I hear people screaming again, being burned, forced to suffer. I turn my head, there are others watching. I yell at them to say something, to do something, but they turn around and cover their ears, even though they saw what was going on. I see the false hope, that became something unspeakable, the weight of it hanging over the sky.

“Now tell me child, have you seen the death, the pain, the ignorance, the denial? Have you seen what we did, the kids being ripped away from their mothers, the people being stripped of their lives, the hatred lingering in almost every single one of whom was just watching? Have you seen the walls that have been built? Clueless child, please do tell, why do you still hope after all this world has done?”

I see the pain, the suffering, the deaths... but in my heart, there still shines a dash of hope. I raise my head, I raise my voice, I raise my hand to my chest.

“Because, dear teller of grief, I am not simply a clueless child. I know what happened to the people, I know what the world has done. Everybody knows. That is the reason why we still have hope! Because even though we have been taught about the suffering, we have also learned what came about, we also have learned what happened next.

We have learned that after the hurt, there was regret.

After the pain, there is healing.

After despair, there is hope.

After the lies, there is the truth.

After the storm the sun returns.

This is what it means, Europe. We can't erase our past, but we can build our future, together. We learn from the mistakes. Even if one day, those who have lived through the suffering won't be here anymore, we will still teach the younger ones, so we don't end up making the same mistakes.

You know, teller of grief, Europe is so much more. We help each other out. We lift each other up. We care about one another, include one another and love one another. We are rebuilding the things we broke. We fix systems if they don't work.

We are united, through all the challenges we face, which have no borders. We are diverse. Each of our cultures, languages, history are beautiful in their own way, and we have the opportunity to learn, to realise and to become more than what we once were. We invest in education, innovation and development. We search for justice, we fight for peace, for equality, we cherish our democracy.

Europe isn't perfect. We know that. We know we must look to the horizon and face the challenges which are yet to come, the threats we need to face.

Teller of grief, you see, when I say that our future is Europe – Europe is our future, then it is not simply just a statement, but rather a vision for a continent that has the potential to grow, to lead us towards peace, towards joy, towards hope. Only together we will have the strength, the courage and the determination to go on this journey. Only together, we can create our future.”

Because our future is Europe, and Europe is our future.