

RAIN DANCE

SAMIN SABAH ISLAM

The sky was wildly blue with shrill rays of blinding yellow piercing through patches of wandering white clouds. Ayman searched the vast unknown above with creased eyebrows, barely able to keep his eyes open, for any symptom of a downpour.

On the other hand, Raiyan, the more practical, and less optimistic of the two twelve years olds stood under the green tin shed with his purple sunglasses on. Yet he was the one full of complaints.

"I told you this was a sham," he fussed, "If bizarre body postures could make it rain, my dancer khala would be the queen of Somalia."

Ayman rarely knew what Raiyan was talking about. Ignoring his best friend's cynical remarks, he focused on the task at hand – playing rainmaker.

"Maybe I'm not doing the stances correctly," he concluded, "Read the instructions again."

Raiyan silently cursed himself for proposing the absurd notion that perhaps if they could persuade the rain Gods above to shed some blessings, maybe Ayman's father

would have to postpone his flight and stay back one more day for his birthday. Unfortunately the tone of sarcasm in Raiyan's voice went undetected by his best friend.

Exhaling another audible sigh he reread the meticulous 14 steps of instructions for the eight peculiar body poses that Ayman had found on some random website.

"And finally, put both hands on your waist, face towards the sun and spin four times", Raiyan finished.

Obedying his commands Ayman spun, dropped to the ground and waited. Two minutes went by, then five and at nearly the seventh minute Ayman concluded that it wasn't a delay in the progression, but the ministry above simply wouldn't cooperate. He punched the concrete below in frustration as angry tears began to stream down his cheeks. Raiyan decided to keep his groan inaudible and swallowed the "I told you so" from the tip of his tongue.

"He'll be here for the next one," he sighed and dropped to the ground too, "That's the good thing about birthdays. There's always more to look forward to, unless you die before the next of course."

Before Ayman could protest about it

being his big 13th, his older sister called out from the staircase.

"Babu, abbu is leaving for the airport. Come see him off," she was panting from afar and it clearly wasn't in her design to reach the setting of her subject.

However, Ayman wouldn't budge. Frustration and disappointment had banded together into juvenile stubbornness. If Abbu was cruel enough to leave him like this, he was scarcely deserving of a proper adieu.

Abbu, being in a hurry to catch his flight, didn't have the luxury of climbing up to the roof to put out the flame. The parting between father and son hence remained wordless.

Daylight eventually bid farewell and darkness settled in comfortably. After a few attempts of affectionate coaxing followed by two angry slaps by Ammu, Ayman was forced to retreat for dinner. At night, the pitter-patter of rain against his sunshade kept him wide awake. Each thump mocked him, taunting the unloved child whose father wouldn't stay and the forsaken, trivial being God scarcely cared for.

Sleep did come eventually, but not to completion. While still in a trance, he

heard Apu rush to his room, scarlet faced and teary-eyed. Words had failed her. It was only a jumble of sounds she could relay to her little brother.

Due to the ferocious incessant rain-storm, the magnificent plane that Abbu had favoured over his son's happiness had crashed, swallowing the lives of its passengers.

The rain gods had answered, long overdue and charging a hefty price.

At the break of the first ray of morning light the following day, the fatherless child rushed to the next flat to awaken his best friend in a futile attempt to lessen his burden – the burden of a killer.

"It wasn't my fault," Ayman frantically reasoned with tears in his eyes, "If I knew it would make his plane crash, I never would have done the rain dance. It's their mistake for being delayed. I only wanted him to stay."

The other 12-year-old's usual impassive countenance altered into an unwonted expression of conflict. After a long drawn-out period of hesitation, and still stubborn of meeting his best friend's gaze, he whispered, "Who are you trying to convince?"

