

Sorry I'm not good enough

NUSRAT JAHIN ANGELA

She is the girl who came third in class

She is the girl who got 2nd division during graduation

She is the girl who became runner-up at the sports competition

She is the girl who was never the best

She is the girl who was forgotten...

Everyone remembers who was first. But nobody remembers who came second. They slide into oblivion, like a dewdrop on a petal. Why is it so hard for these people to find a place in this world? It's not that they are not good enough. Mariam wondered hard.

Every time guests visited their house, Mariam thought it was a coincidence that her parents forgot to say much about her. After finishing a long essay on the achievements of her award-winning brother, there seemed to be little to describe her. Dining tables did not need her necessarily during family reunions. Still she sat, only to be forgotten and get detached from the others. She told herself that she was only imagining it, and it was wrong for her to do so. But it was hard to forget the lingering claws tugging at her stomach every time they looked through her to something better. Still, she curved her lips upwards and denied the truth.

At school, she was never scolded. She was close to perfection. Mariam thought cautiously before doing anything, hoping to hear few good words. She studied hard too. But every time she got her test marks, it was 2 or 3 less than the highest. That didn't

make her special. That made them forget her. When the principal looked for representatives, her teachers always recommended someone else, *the better student, the first girl...*

"She has been a student of our institution for 6 years."

I've been a student for 14 years.

Whenever the board examinations ended and Mariam came out, a swarm of parents huddled towards her, only to ask, "Where is the first girl? I want to know how was the paper."

I could tell you too.

Would it hurt to ask her as well? Just "How was your exam?" would be accepted by Mariam with a grateful heart.

Sometimes Mariam gazed up at the night sky, wondering about her life. To be that perfect daughter, the perfect student -- it seemed too much to wish for. But did that mean she was too bad right now, that all that she had worked for and achieved

were meaningless, because they were good, not great and definitely not the best? It hurt, she admitted, and sometimes the pain made her want to give up. She wanted to shout out and tell the world: life's race was not confined to your class test marks, it meant more, a lot more to fight your way into the real world. Job, career, success, they couldn't be measured with grades. The second girl had just as much chance to get there as the first. But most of the time, Mariam found herself talking to herself. Who would listen to her? Surely, those who shone brighter lived better. However, how far was she from that perfection? She was close, but that was not enough.

It never is.

SECOND PLACE IS FIRST LOSER.

WORDPLAY

Letting her hair embrace the fickle touches of my fingers
 She laid down her thighs, bare to my comforts;
 Her eyes unassured and conflicted to the rush of the moment
 Fleeting, she open her lips, caving in.

ADNAN FAKIR

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Messages



NICOLE MOONSTONE

Messages scurry in the dead of the night
 Through our forests of endless texts
 Yet minds that link never quite see
 Eye to eye, as we only reveal
 That which allows us to blend in with the rest.
 So hence we repeat these meaningless words
 And never quite know our own souls.
 As beneath it all lurk our hidden hearts
 Unanswered, unquestioned and bereft of goals
 So we sigh and suppress the hollow within
 And dance to the tunes that the tin-man sings
 And whisper of a light called joy -
 A tale oft' told but now destroyed.