

A NIGHT DREAMS AND WISHES

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The sky was bare and Ari was disappointed. She had expected stars, but there was nothing but an endless void of black. She sighed, remembering the constellations she had seen. The sky had been so beautiful back then, but now it seemed like it was stripped bare and robbed of its jewels. Her sister had taught her not to be afraid of the dark. She had showed her the stars and taught her their legends.

But now the stars had disappeared, masked away by the city lights. Looking at the sky made Ari remember all her fears of the dark.

"Do not fear the darkness, Ari, because without it the stars wouldn't shine. And who would listen to all your wishes then?" Her sister would tell her and would laugh, and so would Ari. She would point at a star and wish something absurd, knowing that it would not be fulfilled. But simply doing that would calm Ari down. They would then trace patterns in the stars until they both fell asleep.

But she was gone now and so were the stars. She couldn't even wish her back as the stars had chosen to disappear. No, not chosen, forced to. She fell to her knees as the darkness choked her. Her sister had left, not wanting to fight the darkness with her anymore. She was happy and Ari knew it but it still hurt her. No one was there with her to fight the darkness. Ari thought she should just let it win.

But then... something twinkled at the corner of her eye. A star. Only one, shining even though its brothers and sisters had disappeared. It was shining for the very people who forced it to disappear, thought Ari. The sight was beautiful and devastating all at once. So Ari did the only thing she could think of. She wished, wished for the stars to appear again. For them to shine. She wished but the star didn't listen.

Anger filled Ari. After all the stars never listened to any of her wishes before. Why would they now? But some part of her told her to try, to make them listen. So she turned off every light in her vicinity. Even the street lights that she wasn't allowed to turn off. It was silly and Ari knew it. This would make no difference as there was an entire city filled with lights. But Ari did it anyway. She stood in complete darkness until she couldn't bear it anymore. She was about to turn them on again but she couldn't move as fear paralyzed her. But then... slowly the stars started to appear. And then the sky was filled with them. Ari stood and watched, watched the slow dance of the stars as they lured her to sleep.

Only later did Ari realize that the star had listened after all. It was only waiting to see if Ari had been worthy enough for her wish to be fulfilled.

The writer is a grade 7 student at Sir John Wilson School.

YOU KNOW, YOU KNOW

KHALED AHMED

I was born on a calm afternoon in August. My mom says I didn't cry at first and she thought I might've been dead, until the doctor smacked my bottom. I wasn't an easy child, I cried and threw my arms around, and hated new people, and I sort of kept doing that for 2 years until my brother showed up. He didn't cry and throw arms around like me, Rashid was naturally suave, something he inherited from the crib. I've been told how he'd climb into the arms of new people and play with them and I was a 2-year-old who wasn't talking yet. A matter of grave concern for the house of the greatest men in the village that the eldest son wasn't turning out as what he had to be.

Things got better when I was around 6. I met Shirin and once I had made my first friend, my aversion to people started going away. Shirin was like an undertone to my unruly existence, I'd go running around the houses stealing treats from window sills and there she'd be beside me, bearing the sweet smile that filled everyone's heart, and they'd give us more. When Rashid was old enough to tag along 2 years later, we became a gang of three and because of my younger's brother superior growth people often couldn't tell who was older. That would have irked me if I wasn't worried about him getting bigger than me, which didn't happen for another 5 years. Once that happened though, he started assuming the responsibilities the eldest son of the house with the greatest people in the village must undertake. That left me with a lot of free time and well, I would have spent them with Shirin had she not chosen to zoom in and out of my life like a mosquito zooms in and out of your vision when you're trying to kill it in the shadowed evening. Just to be clear, I didn't want to kill her. I wasn't sure what I wanted at that time, but it was a sense of wanting to get a hold of her, and I'd know what to feel and what to do and what to say if I could just be with her.

For all my shortcomings in other departments, I was doing really well in school. By the time I topped my second board exam, Rashid was sitting for his first and sadly, he failed. He was never one to be attentive at class but no one really noticed or wanted to do anything about it until the worst had happened. But for the sons of the house of the greatest men in the history of the village, school was a mere formality. The mantle of leadership had fallen into his hands as soon as he surpassed 6 feet in height and 44 inches in chest. I remember his first day in the business that the greatest men in our village historically busied themselves with, that was also the day I decided I'd write a book. Like after all important decisions, I found Shirin and told her I'd be travelling for inspiration—to learn about the ways of the rest of the world, although my book would have the tales of our village, without understanding the rest of the world I wouldn't have the perspective that great books provide. Shirin understood, and held my hand and told me she wanted to come with me, because she wanted to learn about people and write about them in a way only people of our great village could, so outsiders understood us. She told me she'd be the undertone to my unruly existence that might get me killed in the rough world out there, and I finally knew what I wanted to feel and do and say all those years ago, to which I obliged.

Rashid took us to the station as we were about to leave and suited to the big brother he'd become, he blessed us. His progress in the business of great people was going well, and I gave him some advice, as suited of the big brother as which I was born. Shirin held my hand as we jumped on to the train that would help us know what we didn't know and had to be known. As the village vanished from our sights in the horizon, I looked back and could still see Rashid stand there 6 feet tall, and smiled and thanked the Gods for truly making our house the greatest in the history of all houses.



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