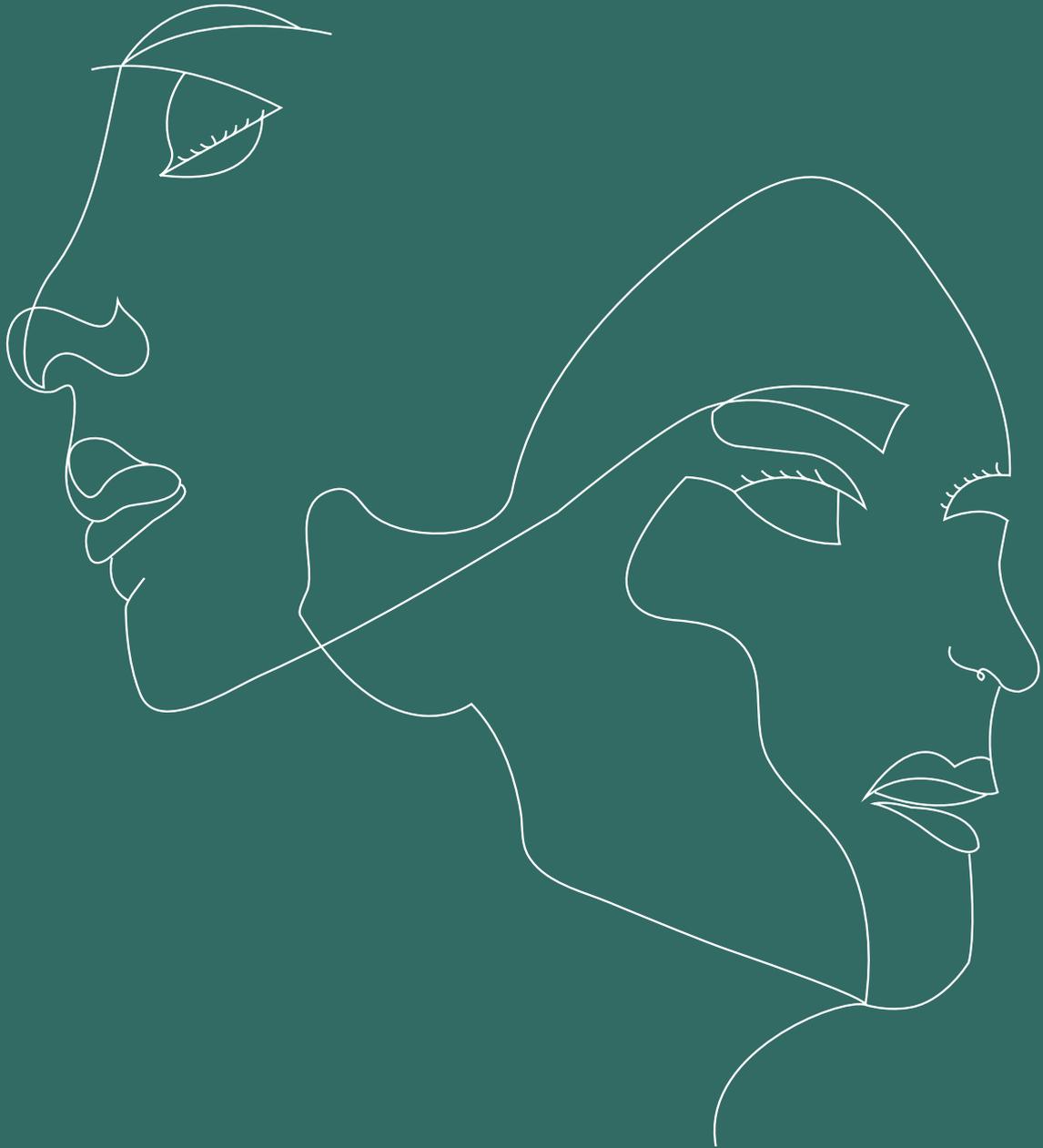


AL SIRAAT JOURNAL



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“You think your pain and your heartbreak are unprecedented in the history of the world, but then you read. It was books that taught me that the things that tormented me most were the very things that connected me with all the people who were alive, who had ever been alive.”

-JAMES BALDWIN

**COVER ART BY FAILA MOHAMED
CO-EDITED BY ASMAA DAHIR**

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THE VICTIM

Running, struggling to find safety in the midst of a vastly dark, humid forest at one in the morning. My skin crawling as I cautiously make my way up the grassy slope. The patter of unrelenting footsteps behind me. I don't know how close he is; I don't want to turn around and face the likely reality of my own fate. His athletic legs will probably catch up to me in forty-five seconds, and I know he'll use my unfit demeanour to his advantage. It feels as if he's already next to me as I am confronted by the screams I know all too well.

"Annaaaa! Come back here now! Come back or you'll never see the light of day again!"

Would he do it? He did it to her. I'd like to believe that seeing the terrified expression on his daughter's face would slow down his course of action, but an insensitive man like him will do anything to get rid of me – fast. Her life was unnecessarily taken over a stupid argument he had with me. His authority over his fists is as weak as my control over my thoughts. Nothing can stop their flow. I struggle to erase the image from my mind as I wipe my blood-stained hands on my drenched floral shirt. My mother was almost lifeless as I cradled her body in my arms, blood gushing from the wound on her neck. She whispered one last thing to me before she inhaled her final breath: "Run," but so did he, after me.

Branches crack as I trip and plummet down onto the damp, infested ground. As he draws nearer and nearer to me with his scouring eyes, he stops for a moment before loudly cackling:

"I can see youuuu!" His psychotic laughter only makes my heart thump faster and faster, my body failing in a frantic attempt to stand. "Just you wait! You'll get what you deserve, you little rat!" He bolts towards me, but stumbles and falls heavily, giving me time to escape.

Since I've almost certainly fractured my left leg and can't stand, I try to crawl to safety, travelling towards the largest dark oak tree in sight. It tries to give me a place to hide behind its massive trunk, but I know it won't last long; he knows I can't have gone far. He regains stability, but has lost sight of me, unknowingly standing only three metres away. Breathless and exhausted from running, he wipes sweat from his forehead. As I cautiously peer at him from behind this tree, I watch him squint in the darkness. Breaking the silence, he desperately pleads in a voice I would've easily fallen victim to seven years ago: "Annabelle. Sweet darling Annabelle...I-I just want to talk. Please come out. W-we'll go out for ice-cream, just like when you were younger. Daddy won't hurt you; Daddy would never hurt you."

He can't possibly think that I'm seven years old anymore. My bruised and battered body tells the story of a young, innocent girl dominated by a vicious soul. He took my mother's life when she tried to shield me from a wretched man. I can no longer bare the pain of waking up every morning, only to be beaten by the horrid tormentor who was meant to be my father. I cannot keep allowing fear to dictate the way I think, the way I live, so I must face him.

Courageously, I crawl out from behind the tree. He looks at me with wide eyes, shocked as he readies his weapons. I stop him in his tracks as he attempts to draw nearer: "NOO! Don't you dare touch me! Not again! Who do you think you are?! Do you not have a heart? Do you not feel sympathy towards your only child?!" He looks at me with an unaltered expression as he quickens his pace, eyes dead set on his target. I didn't think this through, and now I'm going to pay for my careless mistake. Struggling to shuffle back towards the tree, I watch him open his mouth, the moonlight illuminating my view: "You did this to me," he cracks his neck, "and now you're going to suffer, just like your dull-witted mother!"

Just as I begin to open my mouth in retaliation, the sound of his boot swinging back in the wind warns me; I halt and try to roll over. As if my movement only made it worse, the tip of his hard boot still makes contact with my abdomen. A blood-curdling scream escapes my lips as I try to scramble away, but to no avail. Moving onto my face, he grabs me by my shirt and punches me in the nose, instantaneously shattering it. This is exactly what he did to my poor mother whom I could not save, only it ended with a knife in her neck. Realising my inevitable death, I plead with him: "Please!" He ignores me, focusing on his mission. Lifting my right leg up, I try to kick him away. My attempts don't affect him, as he merely steps on my weak leg to keep it down. I fall back in defeat.

Just when I think it's over and he's left me for dead, I hear the familiar sound of scraping,

right before he heaves the knives into the air. I muster up all of the energy I have left and lift my hands up to hold his arms back. As he stares into my aghast eyes, his menacing expression falters for an instant, as if questioning his actions. He shakes his head and screams, plunging the knives into my neck. Warm blood spurts everywhere. I try to gasp for air, but fail to make a sound. In my last waning seconds of life, I hear him whisper: "Sweet dreams, Annabelle," and he drags my body, gripping my feet tightly. As I am being pulled into the unknown, tears streaming down my cheeks, I find solace in the good memories my mother and I had when the demon wasn't hanging over our heads. Just before I succumb to the pain and my eyes shut once and for all, I see a flashlight shine our way, and feel the tight wrap of his hands around my ankles loosen.

It's too late now.

SAKEENAH BROOKMAN

ZINAB KHALIFA



ZINAB KHALIFA



AUTUMN

It was Autumn, that beautiful time when the flowers curled up to a crisp and the sun hid behind the clouds. That time of the year when all the animals became so restful and calm, that you would rarely hear an animal sound at the farm; any infrequent cries were overpowered by the wind's howling. But today there was no wind, it was an utterly quiet morning. Sarah's puppy usually ran circles around her, but today he was across the field playing. She smiled wearily and jogged over to play with him. Suddenly, the silence became ominous, the dog was gone, and all she saw were leaves.

She walked warily, calling out her puppy's name when she stepped into a thick pile of dried leaves and yelled in shock as they gave way and she slid underground. Her scream echoed as she travelled further down, and her body curled around itself, preparing for impact. She was moving so fast, but every time she looked down, the tunnel looked endless. At last, she slowed down as the makeshift slide levelled out and she fell onto the hard earth with a thud. Sarah stood and staggered forward, her breath coming out in wheezing gasps, spitting in an effort to clear her mouth of the horrible taste of dirt that had flown in during the fall.

She looked at her new surroundings, her brain finally coming to terms with what her eyes were seeing. She had expected to see flesh-eating bugs and ghastly reptiles. Sarah blinked hard and looked again, rubbing the dirt out of her eyes with her equally dirty shirt. Instead, all she saw was a massive waterfall, aquarium-blue, the flowers resting beside it letting out

a honey-sweet scent. Trees with bright red fruit that looked ready to burst dotted the area and bushes with gem-coloured berries were everywhere. The lake at the base of the waterfall was filled with colourful fish that arced out of the water, their scales glittering in the sunlight. She looked around, astounded by the beauty. The idea of this being real was absurd, but what made it less believable was that there was nobody else there.

She somehow knew, that if she explored this utopia, she would find everything she could ever dream of, but the thought of being trapped made her feel claustrophobic. She couldn't survive on her own, she would just... die. She vaguely remembered how to pitch a fire, but had no other survival skills. She did know that the first thing she had to do was stock up on food, so she walked carefully towards the bushes, hoping the fruits were edible. The sound of nature calmed her down until her thoughts drifted to whether there were any bears nearby, she didn't fancy being mauled by one. She found a bush, rich with red cherries so glossy that sunlight reflected off them and right into her eyes. Finally, she managed to pitch a fire and build a bed out of broken branches and soft leaves as best as she could. At night, she laid there, captive to her thoughts as they consumed her mind; she gazed up at the night sky as fireflies chased away the dark.

A couple of days passed by and Sarah didn't see a single soul. She was stuck in the same daily routine: catching fish, cooking fish, eating fish, then searching for a way out. At

this point, questions were overflowing and she desperately needed someone to talk to. Exhaustion tugged at her and when she least expected it, an air of melancholy encompassed her causing her to burst into tears. She sat down, back against a large oak tree, and realised she had lost all hope of ever getting out. She felt weak, terrified, and deranged.

Suddenly, there was an explosion, followed by a rolling wave of energy that knocked her away from the tree. Sarah turned around when she noticed that the oak tree had grown... a door? She grabbed the doorknob and pulled it frantically, praying that it was a door to the outside leading her back to her old life.

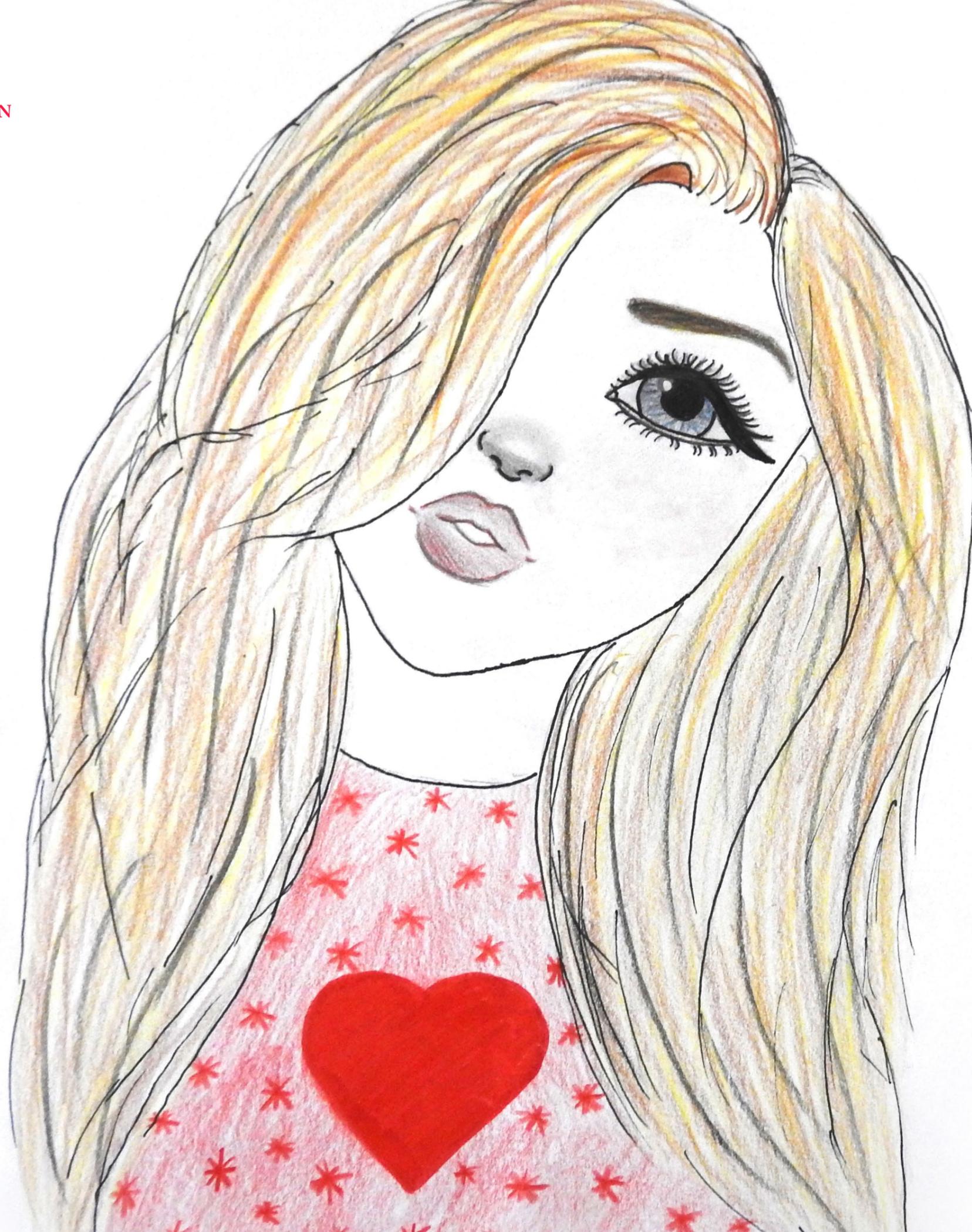
The door began to open and she was filled with a raw triumph that culminated in a wild-sounding howl as the door swung open. Her screams cut off as a lanky old man crawled out of the door. At first glance, Sarah thought he was an actual wizard and she was even crazier than she believed, but the way he dressed reassured her. Without a single word, Sarah enveloped him in a hug and immediately felt...human. The old man led her into his little cottage in the tree, which was surprisingly spacious, and rambled on about random topics. Sarah, barely listening, was starting to question his sanity when she heard him say: "Let's get you home." Excitedly the old man says, "I've been coming in and out of here for over 4 months, trying to find out what this is. I believe this is a parallel universe and I'm working on a way to tell the rest of the world about this. I mean, if I just said there was a perfect world right underneath ours with

no inhabitants and a load of resources, I'd get more medical attention than media attention." Sarah wanted to ask hundreds of questions, but before she could even reply, she was led to a tattered draped blanket that covered part of a wall. Behind it was a large hole presumably where she could leave from, as a long ladder was built into it going up higher than she could see. Had this old man done all of this?

"No questions now," he said sternly. "Just keep this all top secret until I say otherwise."

MARDEEN JAWHAR

RAIHANNAH BROOKMAN



Poetry

POETS HEAR
LEFT ON THE
FOR A POE
HEART LEFT
POETS HEAR
LEFT ON THE
FOR A POE
LEFT

She

a i n

I don't need to see her to know that she's there

To feel her savage, sadistic, satanic stares

She screams, she screams out all of my sins

And I try not to care

But she's everywhere I've been

I don't need to see her to know that she's there

She is the demon following me like a creep

Even my shadow can't keep up

And when she torments me in my sleep

The monsters under my bed choke up

The truth is, I don't need to see her to know that she's there

She tears me to skin and bone

Then just watches me cripple

I am sorry if I spoke to you in that tone

I tend to lash out at the wrong people

Only because I can never seem to find her

Believe me I didn't mean the things that I said

So why don't you tell me, where do I find her?

If she is inside of my head

NAZIIHAH NUR HAFIDI

A Poet's Heart Left On The Floor

Do you hear the beating
Of a poet's heart left on the floor?

Where his words were pulled out of his mouth
As though his soul was being pulled from his core

Hearts parted as he spoke
Like the parting of the Red Sea

Do you smell the smoke
Of the fire that he breathes?

Tears of joy or pain
Poetry has no sympathy

Versification of tribulation is art
A poet paints a picture only the heart can see

Listen as the piece of flesh continues to beat
A memento for his audience as he takes theirs to keep

NAZIIHAH NUR HAFIDI

HEAR
THE
POET
LEFT

HEART
LEFT

Where Hearts Are Lost

'Home is where the heart is,' they say

But home grabbed my heart and darkened its rims

Home extinguished my mother's pain, only to salt her wounds again

Home manipulated my father and drenched his sins in gasoline

Home was the lip of a knife

The knife that surged around my sister's neck

Home watched my brother weep like the drizzling sky

Home imprisoned my mother under the words of her oppressor

Home intoxicated the air inhaled, and so did my brother

Home silenced our freedom

Home isn't where the heart is

But where broken hearts are kept

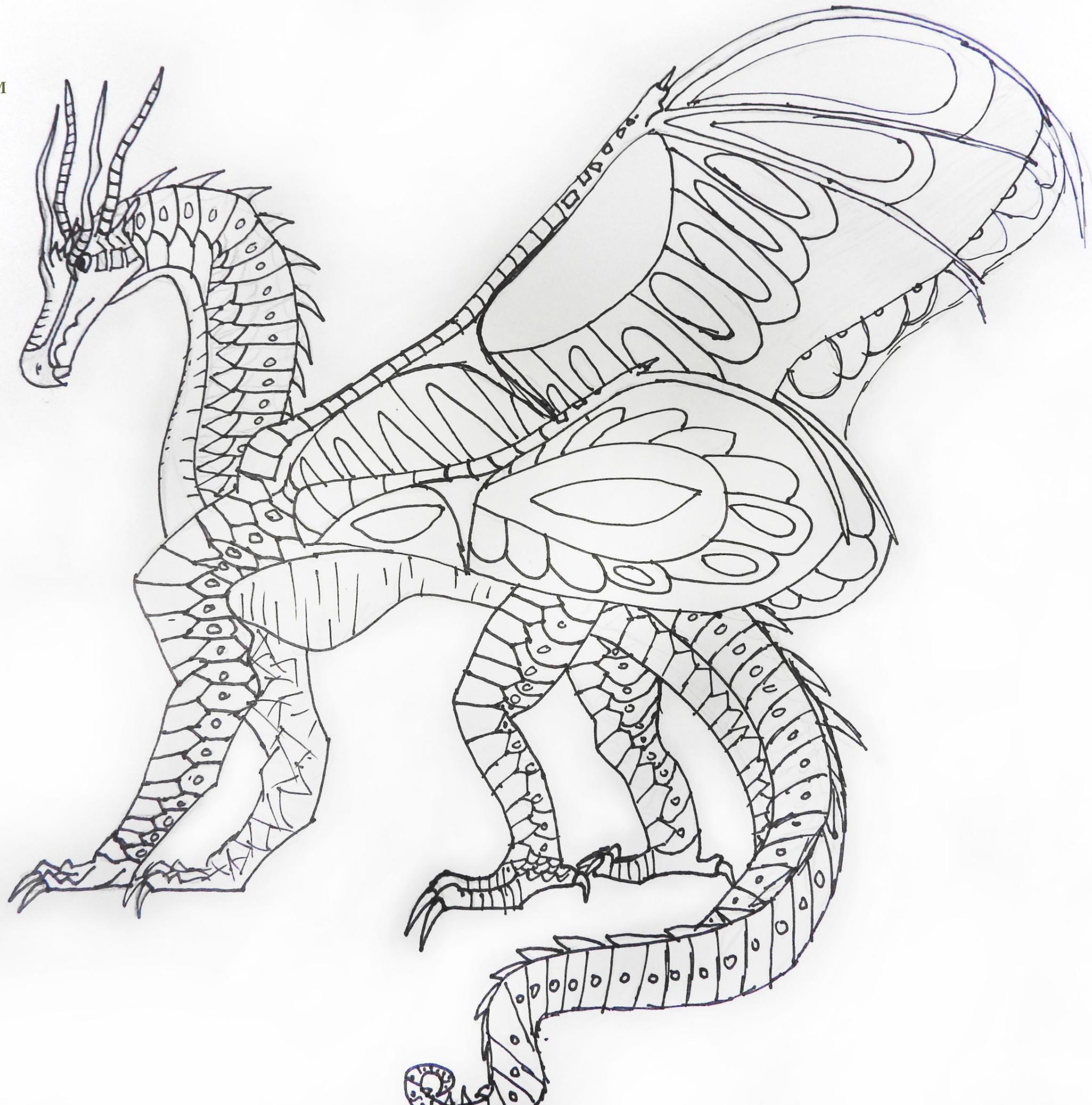
TAMANA AZIZI

The Black Hole

I plead to be left alone. I urge to abstain the voice that tempts me to gain fullness to my emptiness. Hopelessness and despair seep into the tips of my body. They weave their way around the veins that lay underneath my calloused, trembling skin that glows a helpless blue in the silver of the moon. Bones grow brittle and fragile, like the sky's stardust, that remains specks throughout the deep twilight's blackness. Eerie jitters find their way around my dainty, frail back. I don't seek help. I've found myself curious about the hole that awakens my misery. The hole that has placed itself into the vacant and deserted space in my chest. The hole which has found a way to expel the illuminating and radiant hope that glows. I've lost the warmth the sun provides and now I shoulder a darkness once foreign to me.

HANAN HERSI

ARTIN IBRAHIM



ARTIN IBRAHIM



NONFICTION

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TEENAGERS SHOULD BE WARY OF DANGEROUS DIETS

Studies show that half of teenage girls and 1 in 4 teenage boys have tried dieting to change their shape due to body image issues. Society has long since set standards as to what the perfect body is and impressionable teenagers have made it their goal to achieve these unrealistic bodies, causing self-confidence to plummet. The line between a healthy diet and a precarious and unhealthy diet is not a fine one, but it is one most adolescents choose to ignore. Adopting outrageously injurious diets can cause eating disorders, binge eating and low self-esteem. Teenagers should be wary of following dangerous diets.

If weight is not lost in a sustainable and healthy manner, it leads to a repetitive cycle of gaining, losing and regaining weight. This cycle has been shown to have multiple negative effects, including increased risk of heart disease and long-lasting impacts on metabolism, etc. Have you ever gone to school on an empty stomach? If the answer is yes, you are unfortunately not alone, approximately 20 to 30 percent of adolescents have completely given up eating breakfast and go to school on an empty stomach. Many teenagers purposefully skip meals to lose weight, resulting in a common eating disorder known as anorexia and bulimia; therefore, impacting their energy levels, self-esteem, mood and concentration. Seeking the 'ideal' body based on society's expectation leads to a never-ending cycle of self-hate

and body image issues. Focus on creating a balanced life that encourages life-long healthy habits that lead to a positive mental and physical health, not emotional distress.

In addition, unhealthy dieting will never really end. When the diet is 'over' it can result in binge eating causing you to gain back the weight loss or to gain more weight. When the body feels deprived, you are more likely to overeat when you stop restricting. When you binge eat, your pancreas releases unusual amounts of insulin to break down the excessive food consumed, which can permanently damage the metabolism. Binge eating can cause obesity, heart disease, high blood pressure, type 2 diabetes and arthritis. Skipping meals can contribute to cravings and increase your risk of overeating. Binge eating can be avoided by ensuring that you're eating regular meals and snacks during the day, rather than cutting out whole food groups. The common phrase, 'health is wealth' is a true testimony to the reality of life. Do not risk your health for quick diet fads that are not solicited on scientific research.

One study reports that 90 percent of teenagers are unhappy with their body shape. In today's hyper technological era, teenagers are bombarded by unrealistic and often photoshopped images that skew their perceptions of beauty. Motivated by what they see on Instagram, Twitter and Facebook – teenagers' resort to restrictive

diets that result to unhealthy attitudes on food and weight. In the famous words of Theodore Roosevelt, 'comparison is the thief of joy,' so rather than comparing yourself to the unique physique of another individual, focus on being your best self. Learn how to build your confidence and self-worth outside of society's ever-changing beauty standards. Remind yourself that you're not a number on a scale, but an individual filled with aspirations, talents and positive qualities.

Adolescents are proven to be negatively impacted by restrictive diets. Teens that decide to go on unsafe diets are prone to eating disorders, binge eating and low self-esteem. Therefore, dieting among teens should not be seen as a social norm or an expectation within our society. If you do turn to diets as a solution without any knowledge or preparation, you are setting yourself up for an unhealthy, dangerous and miserable life.

SABRINA ALI

THE FORGOTTEN CHILDREN OF LIBYA

Despite the trauma the children of Libya have encountered through witnessing endless deaths and suffering; their pleas for peace are forgotten.

During my summer trip to Libya, I visited the school my aunt worked at. Due to the ongoing conflict, the school did not have any resemblance to ordinary schools in Australia. There was no vast soccer fields for children to play in, no proper school desks and chairs for students to sit in; even the classroom doors were in poor condition. Due to the lack of funding for teachers and infrastructure, the school's environment was not conducive to student learning. The shortage of electricity in parts of Libya make educating children even more challenging. Although private schools are abundant across Libya, everyday citizens struggle to afford it. This leaves many eager to learn students without the education they deserve.

In today's Libya, there are 1800 children in need of evacuation from places experiencing ongoing conflict. 7300 have already been displaced from their homes due to violence, 500,000 children estimated to be affected by war-torn zones in Western Libya, nearly 1000 refugee and migrant kids displaced in detention centers that are in dire need for humanitarian assistance. This is a predominant issue in Libya as these children are the upcoming generation of leaders and critical thinkers. Instead of experiencing the bliss, sweet

innocence and freedom of childhood - many Libyan children cannot go to school due to the crippling fear of losing their lives. Some children cannot receive an education because their entire school has been destroyed by war, or cannot complete their studies because of poverty. Not only have these innocent children lost the right to an education but their lives are forever changed by harrowing and unforgiving violence.

As a Libyan-Australian, I recognise the hardships my fellow brothers and sisters face back home. However, I also recognise the youth's great optimism and endearing strength. Despite all they've encountered, they fight through grief and unwavering chaos with the optimum faith and hope in Libya's greater future. It's time those in positions of power and responsibility do the same by enforcing policies and legislations that unite rather than divide. It's time to protect the children of Libya by giving them a childhood free from trauma, anxiety and tormenting memories of brutality. Let's allow the children of Libya to be just that, children.

ALAA EL FERJANI

ONE WOMAN'S STRENGTH AGAINST THE PHARAOH OF EGYPT

The Pharaoh of Egypt, who thought himself to be a god, is notoriously known for his wicked and unjust crimes towards those who go against his beliefs. In fear of being overthrown and his kingdom destroyed the Pharaoh killed many of the newborn boys of Bani Israil and when Asiya, the wife of the Pharaoh refused to accept her husband as God, he tormented her with a torturous death. However, before Asiya disclosed her Islamic faith to her barbaric husband, she was inspired to live in her truth by the courage of Mashitat.

Mashitat bint Firawn was a hairdresser who used to brush the hair of the Pharaoh's daughter; she had also embraced Islam secretly. The hairdresser was a mother of five and was still breastfeeding her last-born child. One day Mashitat dropped the comb she was brushing the Pharaoh's daughter's hair with and said: "Bismillah" (in the name of Allah). The Pharaoh's daughter asked her, "Do you have a god other than my father?" Mashitat replied by saying: "Yes. My Lord and the Lord of your father is Allah." The Pharaoh's daughter then rushed to her father to inform him of the conversation she had with the hairdresser.

The Pharaoh was enraged by the hairdresser's proclamation of faith and ordered the soldiers to prepare a giant pot of burning oil like the size of a swimming pool. Everything he ordered was prepared and his soldiers brought Mashitat and her children to the Pharaoh.

The Pharaoh sternly told Mashitat to take back what she said early and accept him her Lord, but she remained steadfast on Islam and didn't waver her faith in fear of the violence she was about to encounter. When Mashitat refused to denounce her Islam, he threw her oldest son into the boiling oil. She had witnessed the flesh of her son's body perish. The Pharaoh once again asked Mashitat to accept him as God, but adamant in holding on to her faith she refused. The Pharaoh then threw her second, third, and fourth child into the burning oil. Mashitat was holding onto her fifth child when she was about to pull back; however, all of a sudden Allah made her infant speak and he said: "O Mother, be patient. The torture of the Hereafter is far more severe than the torture of this life, and do not be reluctant, because you are right."

Unwavering to her devotion to Allah, the Pharaoh threw her last born into the flaring oil. Mashitat began to cry knowing she too was about to face the same fate. She asked the Pharaoh for a favour unaware if he would comply, she said: "Once you throw me into the oil, then I want you to gather whatever is remaining of our bodies, and I want you to bury us together in the same grave." The Pharaoh agreed and she died soon after as a martyr.

The lessons in this story are rich with meaning and moments which may happen to any of us at one stage, the following are some of the lessons:

- A person must always remain steadfast on the truth even if he knows that his punishment may be severe, but a person must always remember that the punishment of the hereafter is the worst of all punishments.
- A person must always give dawah (invitation to Islam) to anyone whenever he/she has a chance to do so and not to be taken back by some frightening thoughts or actions that may be taken by other individuals.
- A Muslim who is true in faith must always speak the truth.

OSAMA AKKAD

ALI.A



RECOMME



NDATIONS

'AMERICANAH'

is a literary masterpiece written by the extraordinary Nigerian author Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie. The novel depicts the story of a young woman named Ifemelu who spends her younger years in Nigeria and later migrates to the United States, due to the harsh military dictatorship in Nigeria. She leaves behind her family and her boyfriend Obinze, whom she hopes will join her in the near future. When he tries to, he is denied entry due to the tighter immigration laws of post 9/11 America, leading him to become an undocumented immigrant in Britain. While in America, Ifemelu learns what it is like to be a black person in a country with a white majority; she finds success in writing a blog about the struggles she faces. Many years later, as an adult, Ifemelu makes plans to go back to Nigeria where Obinze is now a successful businessman. Find out what happens next in this outstanding book, which many immigrants and people of colour will be able to resonate with. 'Americanah' is a great addition to your collection due to its deep meaning and the writer's ability to make readers sympathise with the challenges the characters are facing.

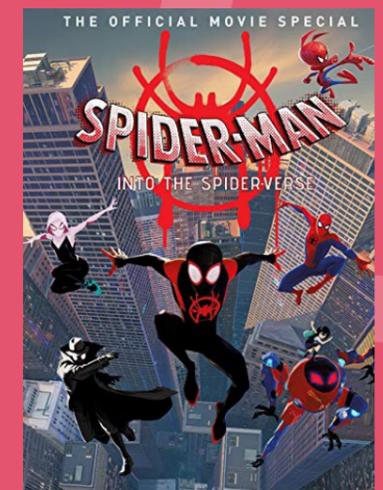
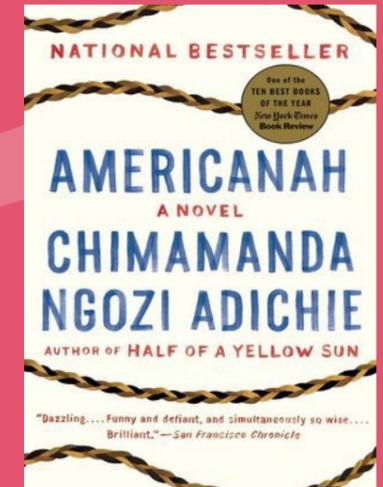
'SPIDER-MAN: INTO THE SPIDER VERSE'

is a feel good American animated film which was released in 2018. The Oscar nominated film chronicles the superhero adventures of a young boy named Miles Morales who was bit on a New York subway. The bite gives Morales superhuman abilities and helps him fight crime, which he does whilst juggling life as a young teenage boy. He soon discovers that he is not the only one with these powers, that there are others like him from alternate dimensions. Finding friendship, they work together to defeat the evil Kingpin and restore all versions of Spider-man to their original dimensions. 'Spider-man into the Spider Verse' is an incredible film that is not limited to a specific age range and can be enjoyed by all.

If you are anything like me, a total crime show addict, then '**Crime Junkie**' is the podcast for you. Released by Audiochuck and voiced by radio host Ashley Flowers and her producer Brit, known as the OG crime junkies. The first episode was released in 2017 to great acclaim and now the podcast has a 5/5 rating. Each episode is about a different crime, ranging from murders, kidnappings to information on infamous criminals. All shared stories on the podcast are based on real life events. Sitting on a train, or on your way to work or maybe in your classroom -- Crime Junkie is an easy way to feel like you're in a real life thriller, on the front lines of an investigation as the main detective.

'WHEN THEY SEE US'

a tear-jerking documentary on Netflix directed by the talented Ava DuVernay, tells the story of the controversial 1989 Central Park jogger case. The series portrays the life of the five innocent young men who were jailed for 7-13 years for a sexual assault that they did not commit. 'When They See Us' explores the overt racial bias in the legal system, police brutality, New York's deep racial divides, the under-privileged but tight-knit POC communities and just how the media contorts issues to influence public opinion. The young boys Korey Wise, Kevin Richardson, Antron McCray, Raymond Santana and Yusuf Salaam were manipulated and coerced by white police officers into giving false confessions, then publicly tried. They were found guilty on the charges against them despite a lack of evidence, and sentenced to the maximum sentence for juveniles, except Korey Wise, who was tried as an adult. The true perpetrator of the crime was discovered in 2002 after all the boys but Wise had completed their sentence. 'When They See Us' tells the important story of how unjust the people in power can be; especially towards black men. It's production was overseen by the Central Park Five themselves, which ensures no detail is changed. This series is an emotional watch that all people should take the time to see no matter their race as it perfectly illustrates just how different and harsh life can be due to the colour of your skin.



Advice Column

DEAR ANONYMOUS:

My best friend and I have been friends for many years, however after our most recent fight we mutually decided to stop being friends for our own emotional wellbeing. Recently we made up and apologized to one another, but there is still so much tension whenever we speak to one another. How do we navigate our new friendship when it's still so awkward between us? **#awkwardterritory**

DEAR AWKWARD TERRITORY:

If you and your best friend have known each other for that long, you must have gotten an understanding of each other's behaviours. Chances are your friend feels the exact same way as you and also wants to get rid of the tension. If you've already tried ignoring it and it hasn't worked for either you, I advise you to acknowledge it instead. Try talking to them about how awkward you feel around them and what's changed since you began the friendship again. Try starting all over again and treating it like a new friendship, as it's not healthy to go back to the way you were before. Reintroduce yourselves and start from scratch. Then truly begin a new friendship.

DEAR ANONYMOUS:

My uncle wants to adopt a child but my whole family doesn't approve of the idea. How can I help change my family's idea to support my uncle? **#confusedneice**

DEAR CONFUSED NIECE:

I must start by telling you that even though it is great you want to support your uncle; it is not your responsibility to change your family's mind. If your uncle really wants to adopt a child, it is his job to either convince your family it's a good idea or to ignore their complaints. He should

be dealing with this and you, as a teenager, can help him if you want to but should not feel guilty for your family's thoughts or as if it is on your shoulders to help him with such a big issue. But if you really want to help your uncle, ask your family why they disagree with his decision. To challenge their reasons why he shouldn't, give them reasons why he should, i.e: giving a child a loving and safe home.

Tackle each family member one by one, so they don't overpower you, and offer continuous support to your uncle.

DEAR ANONYMOUS:

I've been struggling to talk to my parents about a serious mental health condition I have. I'm scared my parents won't take it seriously and ignore the problem. I've been struggling with my mental health for almost two years. How do I open up to my parents? **#silentstruggle**

DEAR SILENT STRUGGLE:

If you are afraid your parents won't take you seriously, then when you talk to them about it, make it as serious as possible. Arrange a time to talk to them, ask for their full attention, do your research and make it as factual as possible. Make them understand that a mental health condition is just as serious as a physical illness. Don't downplay its effects on you and outline what they can do to help you. Don't let them tell you that you're just sad or that you are overreacting. Show them the scientific causes of the condition if possible. Most importantly, don't go into the discussion with a negative mindset, trust in the good intentions of your parents and their love for you as their child.

Always keep in mind that they really do want the best for you and although outdated beliefs might hold them back sometimes, they genuinely don't want to see you suffer.

DEAR ANONYMOUS:

I get frustrated when my friends ask me for food. I'm too nice and I always give them my food, but I'm always left so hungry at school. I just want to eat my food. What should I do? **#savemyfood**

DEAR SAVE MY FOOD:

Gain the courage to say no. No one can force you to give them your food as long as you say no. There is a big difference between being nice and being a pushover and right now, you are being taken advantage of. Your friends most likely don't know that this irritates you, and you keeping your thoughts to yourself isn't going to help you. It's not rude to stand up for yourself and it probably won't make a huge difference to your friends. You don't have to yell at them or be harsh, just let them know you don't like sharing your food and you'd like them to not ask you again. An extra piece of advice: you need to learn to say no to people or else you're going to have a very unpleasant high school experience. Saying no isn't rude, and no one is going to know you're upset if you don't speak out.

DEAR ANONYMOUS:

My non-black friends often use the N-word around me and despite me telling them that the phrase is racist and hurtful, they continue using the word. As a black person, am I being overly sensitive? How do I stop my friends from using this word? **#racistfriends**

DEAR RACIST FRIENDS:

You are not being sensitive; you have every right to be offended. If they are not listening to you and continue to use the word, they are not worth being friends with. If they cannot respect your basic human rights when you ask them not to use such a derogatory word that directly affects you as a black person, then you cannot call them your friends. However, I know how difficult it is to

distance yourself from people so the first thing I suggest is: when you tell them the word is wrong to use, do not say it as an offhand, easy to ignore comment after they use it and do not try to soften it for them. Sit them down and tell them that their behaviour is negatively affecting you and it hurts that they are making your very existence a joke. Let them know the n-word is not a trendy bit of pop culture, it represents centuries of abuse and discrimination towards people who look just like you. If they are really your friends, they will apologise to you and never say it again. If they persist, there's nothing you can do but report them. If you can't do it alone seek the support of girls with similar backgrounds to you, even those older than you, because most of the time they will be able to relate to your situation and will support you no matter what. Most importantly, do not feel guilty for feeling the way you do and don't let anyone tell you it's 'not a big deal' or 'a joke' because it is very serious and your friends are in the wrong.

DEAR ANONYMOUS:

I've realized that I get thoughts of showing off. Every time I do something, I want others to think well of me. How do I stop this thinking process? **#showoff**

DEAR SHOW OFF:

The first thing you need is to realise that no one really cares about other people because they are too focused on themselves. All those people you're trying to impress? They're too busy thinking about how to impress others to notice your efforts.

Doing things to impress others is going to make you really unsatisfied in the long run. Instead of trying to satisfy others think about whether you really want to do it. Just focus on yourself more in general. Try boosting your self-esteem by

doing things you've always wanted to do: learn a skill, begin a skincare routine, start reading. The more you focus on yourself, the less you think about others. There's nothing wrong with wanting people to think well of you, but make sure it doesn't take priority over how you think of yourself.

DEAR ANONYMOUS:

I'm really insecure about myself, particularly my looks and face. I look in the mirror and I feel ugly because of my acne, pimples and scars. I struggle with anxiety and I don't know how to fix that. My brother always puts me down for my looks, making me feel even less confident. How do I learn to love myself and be confident despite the judgement of myself and family?
#young&insecure

DEAR YOUNG & INSECURE:

The most important thing you need to know: you are not alone. Although some people may not look like it, everyone has insecurities, especially teenage girls. You need to stop looking at your flaws in the mirror and start looking at you. What about yourself makes you proud? Do you have good drawing skills, are you particularly funny, are you good at helping people? If you start seeing yourself as these things instead of seeing only the negative things about yourself, your self-confidence will rise. Regarding your acne and scars, they do not make you ugly and I can assure you that people do not think any less of you because of them. You may not believe it, but you judge yourself a lot more harshly than anyone else does. Acne is a normal thing for teenagers and although you might feel like it changes your appearance drastically, you can still look and feel beautiful with it.

Your family putting you down is a bigger problem because they are supposed to be there

to support you, not discourage you. Your siblings are honestly the last people you should be listening to when it comes to looks, as they are ridiculously insensitive most of the time, but try telling your brother how much it hurts when he tells you that. He is probably doing it specifically to make you insecure, so don't take his words to heart. Keep in mind the most important opinion is still your own and if you don't think you're good enough, you are more likely to believe others when they insult you. However, it is a lot easier to be confident about acne when you do something about it, so I highly suggest researching skincare that can help you with acne and scarring. For example, for your scarring, find a vitamin C serum and for pimples, find a cleanser that works well with your skin. It's a lot easier to deal with something if you actually take action on it, and taking care of yourself is bound to raise your self-esteem. On the topic of anxiety, I advise seeking professional help, perhaps even the school counsellor. But if your anxiety is tied to your insecurity regarding your looks, perhaps dealing with your insecurity will get rid of your anxiety. I'm really rooting for you as you begin your journey of self-acceptance, and always remember: other people's opinions don't make you any less of a human being.

DEAR ANONYMOUS:

I have a close relative diagnosed with serious illness. They mean so much to me and the thought of losing them makes me extremely sad. How should I accept the fact that you're going to lose the ones you love very soon?
#comingto terms

DEAR COMING TO TERMS:

First of all, I am so sorry you have to go through this. This is not something that someone so young should have to deal with. You probably mean a lot to your relative as well, which is why

they would not want you to be in pain over what is happening to them. But you will be in pain, and it will take you a while to accept it.

Everyone close to you will eventually pass away, and it might seem impossible for you to come to terms with that now that they're still alive, but you are stronger than you think you are and you will get through it. Remember that Allah does not burden a soul more than they can bear, so if this is happening to you then Allah knows that both you and your relative can bear it even if you think you can't. What I can guarantee is that you will not feel as sad if you know they are in a better place so try to make as much dua as you can for them to be granted paradise.

DEAR ANONYMOUS:

I know that as Muslims we should pray 5 times a day and be mindful of Allah, but recently I've been so spiritually and emotionally drained that I've stopped praying. I always feel guilty and I find it so hard to balance my religion and the temptations of everyday life?
#deenoverdunya

DEAR DEENOVERDUNYA:

I know it sometimes feels that we've got too much going on to pray and it's just easier to do homework, be with friends and just live if we don't, but the only one who can make it easier for you is Allah and he can only do it if you put Him first. At this point it's a really good sign that you've realised that you're not as close to Allah as you should be. Admitting it is always a good place to start and that's a sign that Allah wants you to turn back to him. If you've stopped praying completely, it's good to start with one prayer; preferably the one that you find easiest.

Purify your intentions, be sincere and know that Allah is noticing your efforts. Learn about the importance of salah and how it's a positive impact in our lives. Once you've perfected that one, move on to the others and I promise you

that once you've learned to fit all the five prayers in your day, you'll learn how important it is to have religion. Once Allah sees you trying for him, he will make it easier to balance your religion and everyday life.

DEAR ANONYMOUS:

I feel like a failure. I'm failing in all my school work. Whenever I try and do work at home, I lose all motivation and I often give up. How can I keep up with my studies and not give up?
#failingstudent

DEAR FAILING STUDENT:

Just start. That's the only advice I can give you. As someone with a serious lack of motivation, I find any task a lot easier once I have started. Usually, you don't want to start because you think something is too much work and end up falling behind, or you have a big problem with procrastination. In both situations, the work becomes a lot easier to handle once you have started it. So, if you have a big chunk of work, try prioritising. Choose the hardest or most important one, and then just begin. Don't think about doing it, actually do it. If it's a struggle to start it, I find it helps when I use a countdown. So, start at 5, countdown, and when you get to 1 just jump up, collect everything you need, and start. Once you get into the flow of it, it doesn't seem as tedious and you'll get it done a lot faster. P.S: keep your phone in a separate room and whatever you do, don't go near it until you're done.

ZINAB KHALIFA



ZINAB KHALIFA



Moana

Interviews

This is an exclusive interview with Hani Farzan by Zainab Rida

Who is your favourite sibling and why?

I have an older brother and a younger brother. We do different things. With my younger brother I love playing games and doing what he likes. With my older brother, I love watching TV with him. They're both cool brothers! So I can't choose between the two.

What are your hobbies? What do you enjoy doing with your parents?

Some hobbies that I like doing by myself is crafting, photography and baking even though I don't do often. Of course I have to add watching TV to the list! Some things I enjoy doing with my parents is just talking to them or watching movies together.

What country would you go to in the world?

I'd live in Saudi Arabia, but for tourism I'd love to visit Switzerland!

If you had one million dollars, what would you do with it?

I would share it with my family, give some to charity, and use the rest on me for travelling!

If you had 3 wishes, what would they be?

/ I want to live my life in a peaceful way. Not in a world of crisis, because everyone deserves peace!

/ I would love to travel the world to the point where I would be like, "I don't want to go on a flight anymore".

/ I want to be close with my extended family just because they bring a smile to my face! I leave my future in Allah's hands, I can't decide but I just hope my future is good In Sha Allah.

What made you smile today?

Coming to school just because I see my friends and hey! Sometimes learning can be fun!

What is the most important thing you've learnt in life? – Islamic perspective

Being patient. There's going to be many tests in life and I think you just have to be patient and always keep your trust in Allah. The thing is, when you go through a test, you would usually get so angry and say things like: "Why is this happening to me", but trust me, there are tonnes of people in the world and I'm pretty sure on the other side of the world, there's someone else going through the same pain as you. You should just trust that there will be a time where you will get your answer as to why you were suffering through that. If you're suffering in this world, maybe the reward will be better in the Akhira.

What is more important to you- status, money or power? Why?

I wouldn't choose power just because I could go crazy with it. I want to not pay too much attention to what people think of me; so maybe not status, but I still do care about how people view me. Money could be used in both good and bad ways. So I guess, I would go with money and use it wisely, In Sha Allah!

Inside Out

This is an exclusive
interview with **Asmaa
Hussein** by **Zainab
Rida**

Who is your favourite sibling and why?

That's hard. I have 5 siblings. I would choose my 22 year old sister. Honestly, I love them all and they all love me so it's hard to choose.

What are your hobbies? What do you enjoy doing with your parents?

Generally with my family, we normally play sports such as basketball and soccer. My mum is a basketball player and my dad is a soccer player.

Which country would you go to in the world?

I would choose America. I want to experience new cultures and new scenery and of course new food because America is known for delicious food.

If you had one million dollars, what would you do with it?

I would give most of it to my parents so that they can pay bills and go on holidays and I would save a little bit from it.

If you had 3 wishes, what would they be?

/ World peace

/ No racism

/ No poverty in the world.

I wouldn't wish anything for myself because I already have everything Alhamdulillah.

What made you smile today?

My friends made me smile today because they're always there for me and they always make me laugh. They make school more enjoyable. I wouldn't even be able to stay mad at them.

What are you grateful for?

Parents, food, my house and the basic necessities. I'm grateful for everything that I have.

What doubts do you have about yourself and what do you do to overcome them?

School work. Whenever there is an assessment, I always doubt myself, thinking I'm going to fail and what not. How I overcome this doubt by thinking positively.

What is the most important thing you've learnt in life?

To always be nice to people. Whenever you go to a new school or a new environment, it really shows your character and who you really are. If you're a shy person or you just stare at people, no one is going to really want to hang out around you. If you always smile and if you always complement them, then the more people know you, the better you get experience in socialising.

What is more important to you- status, money or power? Why?

I would choose status. If your personality is on point, you will get everything you want- money, life and power. I wouldn't want to come across as a negative person.

Inside Out

Teacher Interview with
Amir Tariq Interviewed
by Sabrina Ali

Our parents love to remind us how obedient, hardworking and respectful they were growing up. While often complaining about our messy bedrooms, our obsessions with technology and staying up past our bedtimes. Growing up what did your parents tell you off the most for?

Marks, coming from a Pakistani background, marks were always compared from child to child and you to your friend and then you to the rest of the class, at times it was ranking, "why didn't you come first" or "how have you come 2nd and the son of so and so came 1st", this later changed once I was in senior years and they became more appreciative of my achievements.

My parents did not like to compromise in the matters of religion, so they would tell me off for not being diligent about my duties as a Muslim.

If you had a super power what would it be?

The ability to fly (*come on, anything else will be boring!*)

Who was your biggest role model growing up?

My father because of his achievements, his hard work and passion for life.

What is a quote you live by?

Don't have one quote, by I do like to live by the commands of the Prophets given to us in the Hadeeth.

We all have books we return to again and again, to reread for pleasure, knowledge and solace? What types of books are you most 'drawn to'?

The Harry Potter and Tomorrow When the War Began series. I like a variety of genres and they change from year to year as I am feeling, if I get bored from one genre, I move onto another.

Besides the school holidays and the VIP treatment at the school canteen, what is your

favourite part of being a teacher?

The students. I love working with students. It's a new day every day. There is something new to learn in every class, seeing the students learn, when the students say "oh yes I understand now, it makes sense, thanks for helping me understand this."

Being a teacher is a very demanding, and stressful job. If you could go on your dream vacation right now, what would it consist of?

I would love to go back to the Ka'bah and see it one more time; last time I went was 5 years ago. I do miss the environment there and the emotional connection.

Teaching can be an overwhelming profession both mentally and emotionally, how do you practice self-care?

Speaking to other staff, speaking to my family, interactions with other people, visiting places, driving, reading and doing something other than teaching.

As we know we all have a lot of things to be grateful for. If you had to choose, what in your life do you feel most grateful for?

I would be most grateful to Allah and my parents and the opportunity to be in an environment of teaching and learning.

Being a teenager comes with a lot of self-doubt and anxiety, the future seems so uncertain and extremely terrifying. What piece of advice would you give to students in tackling the challenges of life?

Don't try and work out everything yourself, listen to the older people who have lived your age, take advice from them and apply it in your life, make a connection with Allah, find time for your parents, follow them in their footsteps and make them proud. Make goals for yourselves, fight for your aspirations and don't let anyone tell you that you are not capable of achieving your dreams! Be yourself, be who you are.

FAILA MOHAMED



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