

BEHNA

Written by

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OVER BLACK

The voice of AMAL (8) echoes through the darkness.

AMAL (O.S.)
Why do we dream?

INT. SHELTER - NIGHT

A small room with two bunkbeds against the wall. There are no windows, only a steel door and single light fixture. Faint SHOUTING in English is heard from the other side of the door.

Amal pokes the arm of INAYA (19) that is wrapped around her as the two lay on one of the bottom bunks.

INAYA
Go to sleep behna.

She moves the fraying blanket stretched to cover the two of them onto the slender, frail body of her younger sister.

AMAL
Why do we dream?

Inaya sighs, turning to face Amal's curious eyes. SNORING can be heard from one of the bunks across the room.

INAYA
Once upon a time there was a young girl with big brown eyes and long dark hair. She was a princess, and she ran her kingdom with such wisdom people from villages far and wide would come to see her.

A muffled YELL from outside the metal door startles Amal but Inaya keeps her voice steady.

INAYA (CONT'D)
She had many talents - she could speak with animals, grow flowers in the palm of her hand, and fill someones heart with love with just a touch of her finger.

She strokes Amal's cheek tenderly, watching her sleepily close her eyes. She lowers her voice to a whisper.

INAYA (CONT'D)

But the real reason people loved their beautiful princess, was because she made sure everyone was happy. She would play with all the young girls every morning in her garden, and braid their hair and let them try on her gowns. She would help all the young boys to learn to read and write so that they could send messages to their friends in far away places. She created a world of freedom.

Amal yawns and Inaya smiles softly as she hugs her sister.

INAYA (CONT'D)

And outside these walls is our-

The two jerk upright as the room is suddenly filled with harsh florescent light. Bedsprings CREAK as nine girls hurry to stand in a line in front of the beds, covering their features with hijabs. Inaya gently pushes Amal behind her.

Three soldiers shove their way into the room, jostling their guns to make the girls shift nervously.

One soldier steps up to stare down a girl not much older than INaya as he presses his gun against her shoulder.

SOLDIER

Who's been here the longest?

The girl unlucky enough to be shivering at the touch of the gun lets tears fall as she remains silent. Inaya, keeping her head down, whispers under her breath:

INAYA

He's asking-

The soldier spins faster than Inaya can move before the sound of metal hitting skin echoes through the room.

SOLDIER

Speak English dammit.

Amal flinches as tears stream down her face. She doesn't move.

INAYA

(in broken English)
I translate.

SOLDIER

She needs to know how to speak
English if she's gonna live here
now don't make me ask again.

He strikes the end of his gun against the metal bunk bed sending a dissonant chord that startles the girls. Inaya gives a tear-filled smile to her younger sister.

INAYA

Remember the princess. They're
taking me to my world of freedom.

The soldiers begin to YELL for Inaya to speak English, pointing their guns at her, but only Inaya's voice is heard clearly.

INAYA (CONT'D)

I'm going to be happy.

The soldiers jerk her to her feet, tearing the fabric from her face. Amal is horrified.

INAYA (CONT'D)

Don't worry about me-

They shove her to the door as her voice begins to shake with panic.

INAYA (CONT'D)

Take care of yourself.

The soldier's guns dig into her ribs as they pull her from the room. She screams over the commotion:

INAYA (CONT'D)

I love you Amal.

The door slams.

The women huddle together, but Amal doesn't move. Tears soak her skin and clothes as she replays the last image she will ever have of her older sister.

CUT TO BLACK.

THE END