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Grade 10

*Who knows, and knows that he knows,
Makes the horse of intelligence jump over the vault of heaven.
Who does not know, yet knows he does not know,
Can nevertheless bring his lame little donkey to its destination.
Who does not know, and does not know that he does not know,
Remains mired forever in double ignorance.*

Naser al-Din Tusi

How did you find out about him?

*Just like everybody else
and it broke my heart.*

How did you feel?

*<Chuckles>
Who cares? After all nobody gives a shit
Even you
You pretend to care
You wanna know how I feel?
It felt like my heart was shattered into pieces
I felt like a crumpled piece of paper.
Wasted.
Useless.
The more I yelled, the less people cared.
It felt like everybody clicked the mute button on me.
Sorry ...*

Tell me more about him.

*When I was a child, you signed me up for piano classes.
You told me, don't be one dimensional.
You danced around the house while I played "Autumn, Autumn, Autumn" for you.
Happy, like today is your last day.*

*You taught me math.
Telling me math teaches you to think systematically,
Math is more than just a bunch of equations.*

*On Sundays, we played chess with no timers
While drinking tea with Persian nabat
Took hours to finish
You always won.*

You read Hafez and Shahnameh to me.

*I'm twelve years old now,
preparing for a science test.
You see me memorize formulas*

*You get angry,
Take away the book
You tell me, never ever memorize a thing in your life.
Instead, understand it.
Digest it.
Then it will be stuck in your mind forever.*

*Every year,
You take me to the tomb of Cyrus The Great
Preserve the culture.
We are not Iranians, We are Persians.
We have written the Charter of Cyrus
The foundation of today's Western human rights.*

*Persia,
The place where tradition is respected,
Where there is no slavery,
Where the oppressor is punished
Where there is freedom of religion.
Sadly, it's not like that anymore.*

*You taught me physics with patience.
What is acceleration?
You answer with love.
What is acceleration?
You never tired.*

*You have a heart as big as the universe.
Thick arteries, filled with streams of rich blood.
Filled with passion and love.*

*You work day and night
To provide a better life for me
I ask why?
You tell me,
One for all and all for one
It took me five years to find out it's not your quote
Of course,
I'll never send you to a retirement house.*

*You kneel down,
Use your bare hands and tore your chest open
I see your heart*

*Pounding like a timpanist playing the timpani for a Prokofiev symphony
Allowing me to feed on you.
You allow me to live.*

*Without you,
The world would crash
Collapse to emptiness
There would be no difference between day and night.
There would be no hope.
Without you I would be nothing.
This is what I call true love, the rest is just affection.*

*“Only two more days.” I said, “Mom could we talk with dad?”
She sighed, “Let me see, right now it’s eight am. Eight plus eight is sixteen, minus twelve is four.
It’s four pm, he is working, but you can try!”
<Ringin>
“Hey Farnoosh, could I talk with dad?”
“Oh hey, Aria. Yeah, you can. He is not seeing anybody right now.”
“Hi dad, how is it going?”
“Hey, ooh trivia question: how many hearts does an octopus have?”
“Umm, one?”
“Boo, it’s three. Are you going to school?”
“Yeah, when is your flight time?”
“It’s 1 am, and I believe I have a stop in Ukraine. Anyway, I have to go. I’ll see you guys soon!”
“Bye.”*

The smell of baked goods has filled the school. Christmas spirit. Everybody smiling, singing “Jingle Bells.” Inviting me to sing. I refuse. I will not smile back. Maybe I’m crazy, but I’ll never become affiliated with such a thing. I shall be an outsider in this so-called home. I’ll never give in. Not like those Iranians who come to this country, put aside their past, and call themselves Canadians. Their parents make sure to send their kids here at least by age ten, making sure their children will lose their thick Iranian accent.

They’ll say, “Oh, when did you send your kid away?” Fifteen. They’ll say with pity, “Uh, don’t worry. Hopefully he loses his accent. See, I sent my kid at age nine. She speaks just like Canadians.” Oh look at you, you are proud of yourself. You think others will not see that she is Iranian. The funniest one is the Persian kid with her fake British accent. Pretending. Don’t worry

your secret is safe, but just a hint: make sure to change your last name as well. Try "Evans," sounds British enough.

Huh. They think they will fool me. I don't need to see your thick black hair, or your Persian eyebrows to see you are Iranian. I can smell you from a mile away and tell. I hate those people. They are traitors. They are the ones who kill my culture. I will not be them. They will pity me, but I will never ever give in.

Others, one day tell me I'm a terrorist. Another day, they ask me to say allahu akbar. I'm Persian. I speak Persian, not Arabic you fool. It means God is great anyway, so just chill. They force me to learn about Halloween. The traitors tell me, "What's wrong with you, why don't you just embrace the culture? Do you know how many Iranians want to be in your place? You are living in a developed country. Don't be spoiled!" Why would I embrace yours when I have my own? You have Christmas, huh? I have Nowruz. You have Halloween, huh? I have the Festival of Fire, Charshanbe Souri.

You practice yours, and I will practice my own.

What happened after?

Then the plane crashed.

Let's take a break. What class do you have next?

Math.

See you next week, at the same time?

Yeah.

***We had enough money to at least survive. We were one of the lucky ones.
Here are some true stories:***

"What the fuck should I do? My husband who was supposed to be a doctor in two months just passed away. The government. No word exists for me to show my hatred for them. I now have

to pay a 300k student debt, I am a housewife and I have one young child. How am I going to live?"

"Curse all of you! My child with her husband just came here for a wedding ceremony. They were leaving to get on with their lives. Damn the government. They were good, smart people. Damn you!"

"How is 50k gonna save my life? I have no job, and got children to feed."

"I lost my whole family, they were coming to see me. No one will even be at my funeral. HOW CAN I LIVE?"

Hey dad, where are you? I need you man. Mom doesn't say a word. I got no one dad. What should I do? WHAT SHOULD I DO? <Sobs>

Mom at least said a few sentences this week. "The best way to survive is to go back to the normal life. You should go to school." It is not the time to argue. She said, "the school emailed me today, they want you to go to Guidance once a week. I agree." I sighed, "What are they gonna do?"

And now we are here.

I feel your grief

<Chuckles>

Sure.

What are you going to do?

I honestly don't know.

Do you have any friends in the school?

No.

Why? You seem sociable.

Why not? Canada is such a diverse country, can't you find one person?

Maybe.

How do you feel right now?

*I just want to be normal,
Just like everybody else.*

I walk into the cemetery. The gloomy silence gives me comfort. I pass tombstones, one after another. Dozens have sobbed on each one of these. I understand why others thought that way about me. Why the traitors acted the way they did. I understand now. I kept telling myself

you and I are different. I didn't give them any chance. I am ready now. Don't worry, I won't erase my culture, neither should you. We will co-exist. We will include each other in our lives. I will give you Persian food and you will give me some of yours.

Hello dad, I forgot to tell you:

I can play Chopin's Fantasie-Impromptu, thanks to you.

I can play chess, thanks to you.

I can understand, thanks to you.

I can think, thanks to you.

I have confidence, thanks to you.

I am living, thanks to you.

One for all and all for one.