

The background of the cover is a sepia-toned photograph of a coastal scene. In the foreground, there is a body of water. In the middle ground, a small boat is visible on the water, and a larger boat with a tall mast is docked on the right. In the background, there are some buildings and trees along the shore. The overall tone is nostalgic and serene.

Farewell Forever

A Short Story

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The Story:

(1)

One night, people gathered in the village of Maireed, which was lively and full of joy. The residents of the villages hear drums and gunfire, so they know there is a wedding celebration and come for entertainment and food. Both the bride's and the groom's houses were crowded with people who stood in line outside.

Women were singing, while Bedouins danced various traditional dances. The people of the neighborhood played many kinds of games. Amid all this joy, someone was crying and suffering. She heard the beating of drums and felt as if each beat were a knife stabbing her heart.

She was a girl who had felt nothing but sorrow and sadness during all this time. They had adorned her with precious jewelry, but she paid no attention to it. She held against her chest, over her heart, a note secretly brought to her by a young servant girl. On it was written: "Farewell forever".

When the time of the wedding came late at night, the women came and dragged her unwillingly while she cried, and her mother cried as well. The woman thought she was crying because she was leaving her mother, but no one in Maireed knew the true reason for her tears except her mother.

(2)

When the women brought her to him, she saw him: a young man of medium height, with thick lips, a short nose, and wide eyes. He stood up to approach her, but she screamed in his face and pushed him strongly. However, he paid no attention to her, as he was in a frenzy.

Days and years passed, and the poor girl never tasted happiness. Her life became increasingly unbearable, and her mother grieved deeply for her until she fell ill and passed away.

The girl tried several times to adapt to her new life, but she failed each time. Whenever she saw her husband, she felt as if he were a savage beast, even though he made great efforts to be patient with her hatred. Arguments often arose between them over trivial matters, although he never raised his hand against her. Eventually, he grew tired of her and lost hope in changing her, so he married a second wife.

Strangely, fate sometimes gives people rare things, easily, things they would never find even if they searched the whole world. It can bring good out of evil and turn poison into a remedy.

Thus, fate brought this miserable wife a kind co-wife, Saeeda, who felt her pain, sympathized with her, and tried to bring her happiness and comfort. Saeeda had known Fatima since childhood, as they lived in the same neighborhood. They used to meet when their mothers visited each other, and they would play together for hours. They made dolls from palm sticks, dressed them in colorful clothes, and made them "walk" and "embrace" while telling stories and acting through them. After Saeeda moved away with her mother following her father's death, their meetings became rare, limited only to holidays. Saeeda later heard of Fatima's sadness after her father forced her to marry Jasim. She also learned that Jasim was patient and did not mistreat her. When her uncle agreed to Jasim's proposal to marry Saeeda, she accepted, saying, "I will be a sister to Fatima, not a rival." Fatima was happy when Saeeda came, and Saeeda would tell her stories and keep her company, easing her pain.

(3)

One day, Fatima sat breastfeeding her one-month-old daughter, Amina. Memories of the past filled her mind, and tears welled in her eyes. Despite her hatred for her husband, she loved her daughter deeply and found comfort in caring for her. Yet she worried about her daughter's future; would society oppress her as it had oppressed her mother? Saeeda entered and saw her crying. She said, "What is making you cry, Fatima?" "Nothing... just memories of childhood... and fear for this innocent child," said Fatima. "Tell me your pain. Share it with me," said Saeeda. Fatima replied: "You are right... But I don't know where to begin... I will start with a summer night that always returns to my memory..."

(4)

It was a beautiful night near the palm groves. The moonlight made the scenery look like a painting. Ahmed used to sneak out at night and wait for her in the valley. That night, he waited a long time, growing anxious. He tried to justify her delay, telling himself her parents may have sent her somewhere. He sat remembering their childhood—how they played together, laughed, and shared innocent moments. Suddenly, he heard rustling. He thought it was Fatima coming, but it turned out to be a cow walking. He angrily threw stones at it.

(5)

The next morning, Ahmed woke up early. He prayed and sat thinking about Fatima's absence. He watched a farmer drawing water from a well using a bull. The sound of the pulley created a musical rhythm. He noticed a small water turtle in the well and asked about it. The farmer said it helped clean the well.

Ahmed returned home but could not eat. He kept thinking about her. Soon, he learned she was sick, which filled him with deep sorrow.

(6)

Days passed while she was ill. Ahmed still went to their meeting place, crying in loneliness. He suffered from insomnia and nightmares about death. His family thought he was possessed and tried to treat him, but nothing helped. Eventually, he became physically ill. But when he heard that Fatima had recovered, his condition improved.

(7)

After recovering, Ahmed returned to the valley. This time, she was already there waiting. They embraced silently, sharing deep emotions. She said, "I fear separation." He replied: "It will not happen. I will speak to my father, and we will get married." She dreamed of a future with him, holding a child. But they had to part before her father noticed.

(8)

After the summer, everyone returned home to Maireed. Fatima waited for Ahmed to propose. A month passed with no news. She grew anxious. One day, her father entered smiling and said, "You are now of age to be married." She felt joy, thinking that he would tell her about the engagement to Ahmed. But then he said: "You are engaged to the son of the richest man in Maireed—Jasim." She was shocked and screamed, "I will not marry him! I don't love him!" Her father became furious, slapped her, saying, "When did girls love boys before marriage?" Her mother later told her there is no escape from her father's order. If I object, he will hit me or divorce me.

(9)

Ahmed told his father about their love, and his father agreed to propose. But Fatima's father proudly rejected them, saying that his daughter is engaged to a rich man. Ahmed was devastated when he heard the bad news. Days later, he suddenly disappeared and could not be found in the village. His parents found a letter from him: "Do not be sad. I am going to Kuwait to continue my education." He attached a note to his parents, requesting them to send it to Fatima. The note says: "Farewell forever."

End of Story

Commentary Made On the Year 2021:

I wrote this short fictional story in 1961 when I was eighteen years old, while I was a student in Kuwait in the first year of secondary school (equivalent to the third intermediate grade in Qatar).

The environment described in the story is the one in which I grew up in the coastal village of Maireed during winter, and in huts near the palm groves, far from the sea during summer.

I wrote it in the school hospital, where I was suffering from mumps. I had been admitted to the secondary school hospital against my will, and the doctor ordered that I be isolated from my friends and classmates, alone in a room for two weeks. Although I did not experience any pain or fever, the school doctor at the time informed me that the World Health Organization-recommended procedures required that children with mumps be isolated for two weeks to prevent the spread of infection.

So, during that period, I entertained myself by writing this story during the day.

As for the night, my room—although I was supposed to be "medically isolated" from people—turned into a crowded gathering place full of visits from my classmates and friends. The hospital did not interfere with that!

When I returned to reading the story in 2021, sixty years after writing it, I realized that some of the Gulf words that were familiar to us in our childhood would no longer be familiar to the new generation of our children in the Gulf.

So, I added explanations for those Arabic Gulf terms. Over the past sixty years, the environment and social customs have changed, and many of the things and traditions that I mentioned in the story have disappeared. The palm groves mentioned in the story have died, and the sea has encroached upon the village of Maireed and the city of Ras Al Khaimah, causing its inhabitants to migrate away from the coastline.

As for my childhood friend, Shaikh Saud bin Kaid Al Qasimi—who was the first to read the story in my hospital room and volunteered to write its introduction—He passed away in 2018, may God have mercy on his soul.