

‘Ya’ Aburnee’

Barakat slowly places the second last item on his list into his backpack and makes his way to the bedroom. The smell of Aqila's perfume lingers in the air, almost like she hasn't left. The sweet lavender smell of Aqila's perfume is Barakat's favourite, he liked to watch her spray it mindlessly into the air and twirl her gentle body with her hands above her head, making sure her entire body smelled like lavender. Barakat rubs some scent on his body and looks down at Aqila, lying gracefully on their bed. Her black transparent body seems emptier now, her cylindrical body shrunk in radius, making her look smaller and leaner. "The last item on my list", Barakat says as he carries Aqila's body up with both hands and settles her nicely in his arms. "You're lighter than usual. Always making me worry. Did I not ask you to eat more?" Barakat says as he holds the door open with his elbow, manoeuvring his way out so as to not hurt Aqila.

Barakat floats out slowly from his hut, determined to travel faster today but knows all too well of the limitations by the nature of his body. His short legs are only meant for stabilizing purposes, in which without it his cylindrical jelly like body will topple. Barakat is surprised by the liveliness of the market today, which is normally quiet and listless. He ignores the crowd and pushes past them impatiently, giving in occasionally only to protect Aqila's body. "Look, him. The one with the body. He's the one who refused to bury his wife on the

day of death." Barakat turns around to see two ladies pointing at him. They look almost alike, as with the rest of the females in town. Everyone takes on the same physique, but also carries a distinctive trait. Aqila's one was her blue sapphire eyes while Barakat has a red nose. Barakat marvels at the fact that a quiet town like his has finally found a common topic to bond over -- him. He walks past the judging stares from the crowd who knows so little and talks too much, taking comfort in the fact that he isn't alone, because Aqila is with him.

The journey up to the top of the hill takes about 2 and a half days. The journey is known for its tedious steps and unpredictable weather. Barakat is however prepared for the journey and although frail and slow, is fitter than most of his age group counterparts. He takes delight in the tamed weather, pulls out the mountain stick he painfully put together with many tiny wigs and starts his climb with Aqila in his left arm. Aqila's body has gotten lighter and flimsy, almost like a deflating balloon. Barakat props Aqila's head gently on his left shoulder and relishes the warmth of her body. The smell of lavender is still evident from Aqila's body, as the morning she died, Aqila specifically told Barakat to rub the scent all over her body. She knew that Barakat loved the smell of her scent, and it would help relieve his pain whenever he misses her.

The morning when Aqila passed away, Barakat was holding her hand tightly and praying softly next to her. He thanked Him for bringing an angel like her into his life, and letting them love each other, because their love is the most beautiful thing that has happened to him. "Blessing", Aqila whispered softly,

"your name". "You are the *barakat* in my life." She smiled. "Thank you for loving me". Barakat recalls as he kicks a stone out of his way. He feels a burning sensation in his legs and starts to pick at the sweltering weather. The sun is at its peak as Barakat forces his left foot in front, pushing his entire body one step further as they wobble. "Yes!" Barakat rejoices over his little victory and beams to himself. He can feel Aqila's body turning sticky under the heat. Barakat knows he has to quicken his pace if he wants to reach the top of the mountain on the third day of his journey.

Barakat tightens his hold on Aqila and travels at twice his actual speed, forcing his short legs to do the extraordinary. He squints his eyes as he charges forward, sweating as he goes. At one point, Barakat is going so fast that he looks down at his feet and thought he could hear them swear at him. "It's for Aqila my dear *asdiko* . You can do it." He blinks his eyes hard to knock himself back to consciousness and is surprised to find himself looking at an abandoned swing. Rusty as it is, the swing maintained its hue of pastel blue and pink well. Barakat feels a hinge of excitement for Aqila, as these were her favourite colours. He carefully removes Aqila from his left shoulder and sits on the swing, placing her softly in his lap. He ignores the jelly remains attached to his shoulder and whispers softly into her ear, "If equal affection cannot be, let the more loving one be me. Your favourite line from Auden." Barakat feels a pinch of sadness and envy. "If you are the more loving one, you would have let me leave first." Barakat hugs Aqila tightly against him and watches in agony as his hands sink slowly into her transparent body. "My

hands used to fit really nicely on you. Now I can't even hold you properly my dear." The sun has now set and in its place is the solemn moon in its waning gibbous, growing weaker by the hour. Barakat walks in silence with Aqila on his shoulder, focused on covering as much steps as he can before the sun rises. The night is long and tedious, with Barakat having to stop several times to catch his breath. Immensely focused on his climb, it is not long before Barakat feels the first ray of the new sun penetrating his skin, serving as a timely reminder to hasten his pace.

The second day of Barakat's journey starts out with a positive surge of air. Barakat stops occasionally to marvel at the beautiful landscapes meticulously painted, describing even the minute details to Aqila to make sure they are witnessing the same thing. However, it is not long before the sky turns grim. The clear skies fold themselves into a gloomy crowd and let down a huge downpour that sends Barakat sliding downslope. He holds on to Aqila with one hand and plunges his fingers into the soil of the hill. The strong wind howls with such cold melancholy that pierces through the hardened heart of Barakat, freezing him momentarily. Barakat feels numbness spreading across his body before he collapses onto the muddy ground. He turns to check on Aqila and watches with terrified eyes as black droplets drip onto his face. Aqila is melting in the rain, the heavy droplets too strong for her dissolving body. Barakat cups his hands together and tries to catch the remains of Aqila's body. "Three days. You promised me three days. Let me bury her myself *manfaddol* (please)," Barakat pleads to the crying heavens who are

taking his wife from him. His heart breaks with every droplet that falls from Aqila's face, desperately collecting what he could of her. "No, no, no. Please. Let me bury her myself. "Barakat pleads again. " At least a minute to say goodbye to her."

Like a wave of magic washing across the land, the rain pauses temporarily in its cruel pursuit. Barakat murmurs a small prayer before carefully peeling Aqila off his back and holds her in his arms. He stares at the beautiful features of Aqila, constructed as if handpicked by God to be sculpted by him. Her sapphire eyes which now hide behind her distorted eyelids were what he missed the most. "You have very beautiful eyes my dear." He whispers as he strokes her face for the last time. "I have always dreamed of a place where we can be alone together. A place we'll never have to say goodbye. "He kisses Aqila's hand gently. "But I have to say goodbye to you now. I am sorry I am not able to bury you myself." Barakat whispers as he cries softly next to Aqila's ears.

The skies, even as it spares the couple a moment of mercy, could not help but tear itself away from its job to mourn for Aqila. It transforms into a gradient grey, painting a silhouette of two consoling hands enveloping the couple. Barakat rocks his body back and forth as he weeps into Aqila. "You are so lucky to leave first. How am I going to make it without you?" Barakat cries as he tightens his grip on Aqila, unwilling to let her go. "I do not know how to get used to you not being by my side. Aqila, how am I going to get through even a day without you?" The pain of losing Aqila fills Barakat to his brim, like a test

tube about to overflow under prolonged boiling, his emotions finally rising free. He weeps and weeps into Aqila's disfigured body, his tears falling fiercely into her melting skin, the black wobbly sea gobbling up each tear fast, like Aqila kissing away each tear on his face.

At this moment, a rain drop falls gracefully from the sky and lands harshly on Barakat, like the ringing of the second alarm clock in the morning. Barakat looks up at the dark clouds gathering themselves together again before turning to Aqila. Lying delicately across Barakat's lap, Barakat kisses her forehead. "It's time for you to go." He looks at the unrecognisable face and smiles. "How could you have aged so beautifully?"

He holds tightly onto Aqila's hand, embracing the raindrops that falls onto his face. He smiles softly as Aqila's hand glides slowly away from him and trickles down the slope, the remains of her body gently slipping away from his shoulder and joining the rest of the pack. Barakat closes his eyes as he rests his heavy heart and backpack down.