

Isolated Rose God

By Faiza Hussain

My life has revolved around war for so long. Long enough that it's hard to think about life without war to go back to that naïve child I was. It's not to say that I wouldn't want to go back to that time. No matter what anyone can say you never get over the fear. That desire to stay alive through it all to see an end. When I often feel that fear I would repeat mentally "I am Arya. Arya is who I am now." I couldn't be that person anymore, and I don't know if it's laughable or sad that sometimes I forget my own birth name. So please give me this reminder of that name before it is lost in time. The name that was so loving given to me by my parents, the name Young-Soo.

Even as I struggled to remember my own name, I can't forget those memories of that childhood to the moment where it fell apart. The loving home of the lord of flame and Aero Harmini with my three younger siblings. A large mansion with many people who lived and served in our home. It was always noisy and chaotic as our caretaker dealt with our behavior. I can't help but wonder that maybe it would be better to have a home out in the cloud, but mom was adamant about being near her home. She had to be close to the volcanos and enjoy the heat of it. I could still remember how she would tell my papa that she would hate to let her skin suffer otherwise. "Ha that would be a crime to nature to take a flame harmini from the beauty of a volcanic area." She would proudly claim out with her hand on her hip and head held high whenever my papa joked about moving. Though for him, he never cared much so long as there was open space to float about.

One of my favorite moments with mom was when she would take us to see the lava up close. My youngest brother would go and pick up minerals and flowers to collect as mom taught us about our flame harmini nature. Soon it became second nature to play in that lava and to relax in it. Someday I hope to go back there, place my hand against the rock and swim around. For my papa I remember how he took us to the cloud. Rest our body against the roofs of the cloud building. Float above all as if letting the wind take us anyway. He taught us to float around as he did. He never really stood much on the ground. It was wonderful watching him play with the clouds as he purified them. It took a bit longer for me to get my father lessons but soon enough it became second nature. It was truly such a happy time and yet all those memories would become overshadowed by that one memory.

We laughed and played unaware. It was a cold day, so we were naturally indoors. Our nanny watched over us even as she cradled the youngest child, my sister. I held the fake sword pretending to be a hero while my younger brother was some monster, my youngest brother was a sidekick. It all stopped when mom rushed into the room. I remembered how she looked, her charcoal hair with a streak of red out and wild, unlike her usual neatly tightly tied bun. Her clothing messed up and the light blue and gold dress had been stained with red. Immediately she rushed to us and grabbed my brothers' hand and motioned to me to follow as she rushed us to this more hidden door. It was a simple room with a glass table and leather sofas around it. One of the sofas leaned against the wall and my mom let go of their hands and moved the sofa as much as possible. There was a hidden vent of sorts and she shoved us into it. In my arms she placed my baby sister.

"Mom... what" I tried to ask before she hushed me.

“Shh honey, Stay here with your siblings and only leave if it is us or your nanny. This is.. a game? Yeah a game of hide and seek but if we don’t come I want you to run far far away. Young-soo you are the oldest so you are in charge of them.” Mom spoke out as she moved the sofa back to its place. I could hear her softly say I love you all.

It wasn’t long before ear piercing Loud screeches that sound inhuman and loud bang noise assaulted my ears forcing me to cover my ear all the while my nose was being attacked by putrid metallic smell. I wanted to curl up but all I could do was whisper “make it stop”. It was all too apparent that this wasn’t a game. No, it was an excuse to make us quiet. I felt ice cold chilled and my heart stopped when I heard loud stomping. It was by pure mercy that they didn’t come into the room. my legs were rooted as my siblings struggled not to cry. However my attention was broken the moment my younger brother lost his patience. And when he realized that I wouldn’t go and check he pushed me slightly and crawled out. I will always regret not being the brave one.

Eventually I forced my body to move but it felt like I had stones wrapped around my feet. I remembered that I bribed my youngest brother with candy to stay. I remember that feeling of bile coming into my throat. I could see hands on the floor and what was once lively people now just corpses unmoving, some of them wide eyes that spoke of unimaginable fear. I held a hand over my mouth and nose as I stepped over. I could hear my younger brother's voice and then I heard sobbing coming from one of the rooms. It was my parents office, my hand hovered over the knob to push the door open. It was always a room we weren’t allowed into. I will never get that sight out of my mind. My brother bent down, shaking a body. My face scrunched up as I cried out. There two bodies laid still, my parents. My dad's head laid on my mom's stomach. She probably held him through those final moments. There was a gaping hole in my dad's chest. Meanwhile mom’s eyes rolled back with no pupil in sight while her mouth hung wide open.

But before I could fully handle it, many footsteps quickly approached at an alarming speed. I tried to get my brother's attention but it was like he wasn’t there mentally. In my state of fear, I did the most cowardly thing I could, I hid without dragging my brother. Oh Inera, I remember that horrible smell, the skin crawling sensation of having to feel blood pool over me and the cold bodies crushing me. Under a small pile of bodies I hide and watch. I saw their feet and I could see the anguish and terrified expression my brother wore. He was probably shaking in his small shoes. And before he could even get a single word out I heard that loud scream of pain accompanying that strange boom. I saw him fall and I felt the blood rush to my ear as I struggled to even breathe. I remember their horrible gleeful laughter at the gruesome scene. And soon enough it was quiet as they left. I finally got out of my hiding spot. I took one peak and I wish I didn’t see that body of what used to be my brother. I wanted to cry but a hand stopped me, my nanny. She picked me up and covered my face. I could feel her shaking every step as she ran. She shoved me back into that vent and spoke one final thing.

“Leave and don’t look back. Take them and live.” I hated that I had to leave her in that place alone.

We ran and ran all night as my brother screamed out at me as I held my youngest sister.