

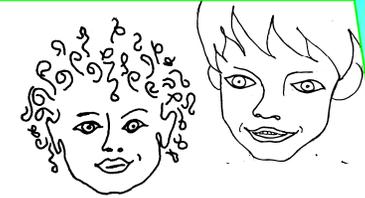


The Story Begins ...



Far, Far Away...

Far, Far Away . . .



Yojlla and Raefon

Once upon a time in a distant land there lived a very happy, hard-working, but poor family. Raefon (*Ray-fawn*) was the first-born. He was a handsome dark-eyed boy who looked just like his father. Yojlla (*Yo-la*) was a pretty little dark-eyed girl who looked just like her mother. Everyone from their tiny village often remarked what a beautiful family they were and how much they loved each other.

The same families had lived in their village for centuries. They kept to themselves because wars frequently plagued their homeland. When Raefon and Yojlla were still very young, their father had to go to war. Shortly afterwards, he was reported killed in action.

Their mother cried and cried when she received word of his death. And since Raefon was just a toddler and Yojlla was only a few months old, they didn't understand why their mother was so very sad and cried often. Eventually Raefon and Yojlla grew older, and they could no longer remember their father.

Their mother had to work very hard to provide for them. It was a difficult life, but they had each other.

Then one day, random blasts of fire from terrorists' machine guns rang throughout their village. Their mother fell to the ground. Instantly Raefon grabbed Yojlla and pulled her to the ground beside their fallen mother. They stayed absolutely motionless as the terrorists passed them.

As soon as it appeared safe, Raefon reached for his mother's hand. With her last breath she faintly whispered, "Raefon, go to the caves at dark . . . Be careful . . . Take care of Yojlla. Promise . . ."



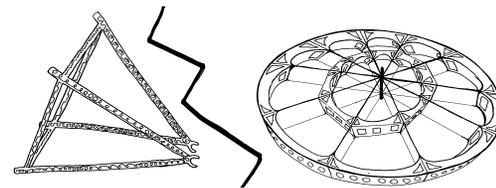
Raefon promised his mother but wanted to cry out when he realized that no more life was left in her. Instead, he remained silent, and he kept Yojlla still until it was dark and the terrorists could no longer be seen, nor see them.

Raefon knew the way to the caves because his family had often hidden there. He knew exactly where their food and water were stored and knew they would be safe. Raefon held Yojlla's hand and secretly made their way to the caves. It was a long cold journey, but they made it. At dawn Raefon hunted for their hidden food and water. To his shock all their provisions were gone—stolen, probably by the terrorists.

Raefon knew that he had to leave the security of the cave to find food and water for them. Yojlla wanted to help, but he knew she would be safer in the cave. “Be very quiet while I’m away,” Raefon instructed his little sister as he forced a smile to his lips. But tears sprang into his little sister’s eyes. “I’ll be back soon,” Raefon promised.

“But you don’t understand,” Yojlla said. She then reached deep into her apron pocket and pulled out their toy Ferris wheel. “I broke it!” she cried.

He tenderly picked up the little toy. It was a very special gift from their mother. She often told them how she and their father had ridden on a real Ferris wheel on their wedding day and that before he died he had vowed to take them on a Ferris wheel ride some day. Right then, Raefon made a double promise to Yojlla, “I will fix our broken Ferris wheel as soon as I get back with food and water, and we will ride on a real one, too, just like our father wanted. I promise, I promise you.”



Raefon in the Land of WOW!

The boy then pressed the two parts together so the Ferris wheel appeared perfect. He put one piece of the Ferris wheel into Yojlla's hand and said, "You keep this with you, and I will keep this part with me. We will put them together soon."

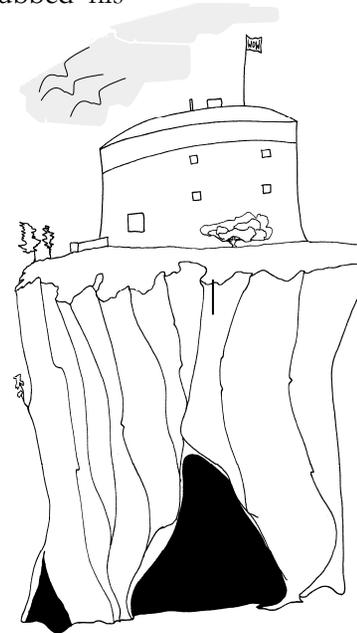
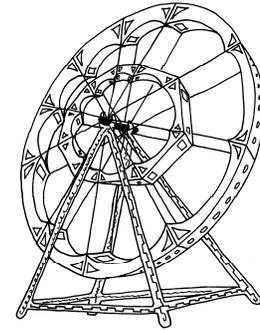
Their Ferris wheel was delicately carved and painted in rich colors – gold, silver, cherry, and emerald green. It was very old, as it had been handed down from generation to generation, but its colors were still bright and its designs remained exquisite. Yojlla had imagined giving it to her own children in years to come.

"You'll see. It will be as good as new. The music will play, and the wheel will go round and round again, for it is filled with love," Raefon said encouragingly.

Yojlla smiled happily. Her dark eyes danced with delight. "That's good, Yojlla," her brother said tenderly. "I will fix the Ferris wheel as soon as I get back, even before I eat," he said as he rubbed his tummy and rolled his dark eyes in jest.

This made Yojlla giggle and giggle until her nose crinkled up and tears of happiness sprang into her eyes. "I will be right back with food and water. I promise," Raefon said in parting.

Yojlla hid in the caves as her brother had told her to do. She would be safe until his return. She clutched the broken Ferris wheel to her chest, thought of Raefon's wonderful promise and blocked the loss of her mother from her mind.



Far, Far Away ...

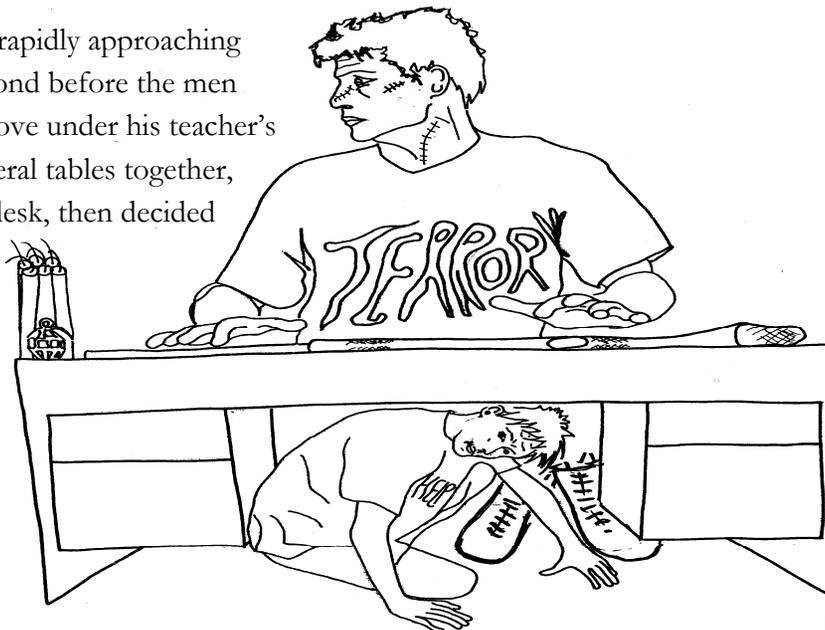


Raefon did not look back. In search of food and water, he ran as fast as he could toward his village. He had no idea where to get food or water, but he had been taught to be resourceful and never make a promise he could not keep.

The closer he got to his village, the more he realized that everyone he had known and trusted was either dead or hiding. Raefon started to feel real panic and extreme fear, but an unstoppable desire to take care of his sister drove him on.

The sound of hundreds of feet pounding the ground alerted Raefon that danger was near. Fortunately his school was around the corner so he ran inside to hide. "Maybe my teacher is here?" Raefon muttered out loud. But the classroom, he had loved so much was in shambles. All the books and papers were overturned, as well as many of the desks and chairs.

Outside, footsteps were rapidly approaching from all directions. A split second before the men burst into the room, Raefon dove under his teacher's desk. The intruders pulled several tables together, started to move the teacher's desk, then decided it was too heavy. Their leader, instead, sat down at the desk and stretched his feet out under it. Raefon quickly moved away from them and held his breath.



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Through a small crack in the desk top Raefon saw the terrorist's face. To his horror it was the same man who had fired the machine gun, that killed his mother.

Raefon had to call upon all of his innermost strength not to attack his mother's murderer. The young boy stifled his tears, his sobs, and his desire for revenge because he had to save his little sister. Thus, he remained frozen in time and space. He had to endure.

To Raefon's astonishment, what he overheard were the terrorists' detailed plans. He learned their names and every part of their awful plot to do away with Raefon's government and another government half way around the world.

Raefon was not sure how long he remained motionless in the cramped space under the desk. Every part of his body ached. His mind was tormented by fear, anger, hate, and revenge. He had to do something! He had to tell someone about the terrorists' plans. He had to get food and water to his sister. He had to survive and get out of there.

Time passed slowly. Then, someone dropped a gun, which accidentally fired and hit a fellow terrorist in his foot. Heads peered under the table. Raefon recoiled as blood squirted on him. Helpless like a fawn under a bush in the face of a predator, Raefon instinctively remained deathly still. Eyes turned in his direction, but somehow they did not see him. They examined and bandaged the wound and decided that their planning was finished for the day. One by one, the room full of terrorists made makeshift beds for themselves. They sprawled out over the floor and fell asleep.

In the dark Raefon eased his way out from under the desk. Just as he stood, he heard footsteps approaching, so he jumped into a

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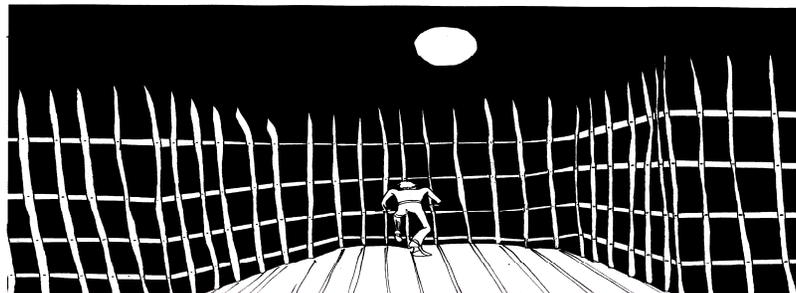
closet. Within seconds, the closet door flung open, and Raefon expected to be shot – dead.

Instead, the door slammed shut. Raefon’s heart pounded hard and fast. Some of the men were awakened. There were cross words among them. Then, all went silent again. Raefon remained still for a long time trying to regain his nerve to escape. He had to tell someone about the terrorists and get food and water for his sister.

At last, he opened the closet door. Its hinges squeaked and someone turned over. He stopped dead still. The room was completely black. Someone else moved. His heart jumped to his throat and his breath came in tiny gulps like a panting dog. He regained his nerve and carefully tiptoed around the sleeping terrorists. It seemed to take hours, before he finally reached the door, and he crept out into the night.

Silently he made his way through his village and down the long road towards the nearest city. In the distance giant flares of fire lit the night sky. He instinctively headed straight towards them.

Just before dawn, Raefon came upon the iron gates that protected the government building, which the terrorists had described the night before. The moon came out like a spotlight on him just as he eased through the iron bars. The question, “How will I know which person to trust?” haunted him. It seemed to him that terrorists could have taken over this building like they had his school.



Raefon in the Land of WOW!

As Raefon turned a corner around the huge building, a gun was thrust into his face. Raefon closed his eyes and held his breath. Then like a miracle, he heard his name spoken by a familiar voice.

“Raefon, what are you doing here? You could get killed. It is very dangerous.” A voice in the dark whispered cautiously.

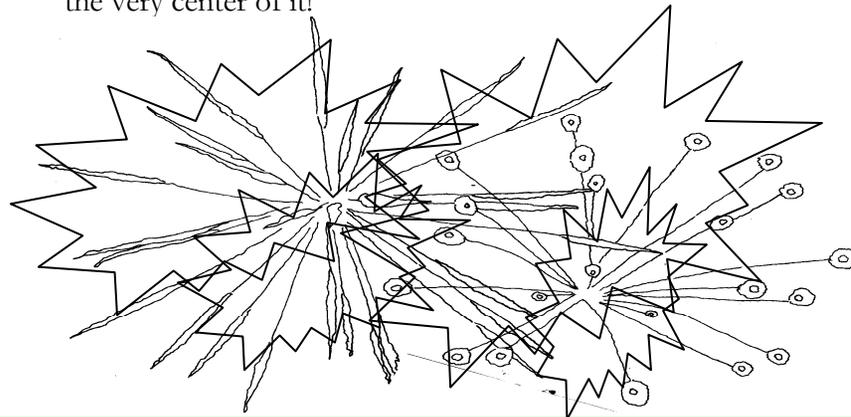
Raefon opened his eyes and fell into the arms of his teacher. “I thought you were dead. The school is full of terrorists,” Raefon warned.

“How do you know?” his teacher asked.

“I was there. I know their plans. I need to get food and water for my sister. She is in the caves by herself.”

Raefon’s teacher took him to the authorities. There, the terrorists’ plans spilled out of the boy, word for word, as he had heard them. He was shown pictures of suspected terrorists, and he identified them, including the one who had killed his mother.

His teacher tried repeatedly to get him to eat, but he vowed not to eat until he had rescued his sister. For Raefon’s protection, but against his protests, they locked him in a room under guard. Raefon tried every way to get out and go to his sister but failed . . . until a blast of fire exploded the walls. The war was on, and Raefon was in the very center of it!



Chapter: 2

Rae fon's Rescue ...

