

AMAL

“Throw your dreams into space like a kite, and you do not know what it will bring back, a new life, a new friend, a new love, a new country.”-Anais Nin.

“When.” Not asked as a question but spoken inquisitively. Amal has always wondered if her dreams were too far from reach; she was simply what you would call, a dreamer. Dreams of the future, the past, the present, she has seen it all. Amal got ready, then proceeded to hop her way onto her balcony. She sat down and started recalling today’s dream. It was of her own self, Lebanon. The beauty of Lebanon, a Mediterranean piece of land drawn with the archeological remains of the Roman empire, stressed with the French influence, and completed with the unique and exotic features of the Arabs. She knows of no other land that holds finer beauty than hers.

Her dream revealed the past, it showed her everything that has stained Lebanon in a positive and negative way. She saw wars on one hand, then celebrations on the other. She saw invasions on one hand, and a resistance on the other. She then saw children, small little children, waddling on their feet running to their mothers and fathers while uttering their first words. Recalling even more, she saw families having the time of their lives together throughout the land. It was as if these thrilled gestures, the happiness accompanying it, was her source of power, her fuel that kept her going no matter what befalls her. It gave her the hope she was named after.

Returning back from the past, she stood in the present. Amal looked out of her balcony, the sun shining on the citizens in front of her, who were planting cedar seeds with their children and grandchildren watching them. As the old farmer planted his cedar tree, digging deep into the soil,

it is as if the roots of this seed represent the older generations of parents planting their hopes, dreams, and most importantly their love and compassion of their country into the future generations; and as that seed grows into a big tree these children grow alongside it absorbing the nutrients planted in the soil. As Amal looked at them, she was instantly reminded of the Lebanese flag. Surrounding a cedar tree were two parallels of red and a color of white, she saw the red as blood, and in between that blood, there stood that cedar tree, the symbol of our country, surrounded in the white symbolizing purity. No matter who these children grow up to be and how far they end up reaching, the symbol of their country remains engraved deep into their blood reminding them of their identity for it is the oxygen that they breathe.

“*Amal...*” Amal snapped out of her thoughts and looked behind her. “*Hello??*” She asked confused hearing someone call her name; however, there was no reply.

“*I think I finally lost my sanity this time,*” Amal laughed while turning back. A few seconds later, she heard it again but louder, “*Amal....*” She now jumped frantically looking back and forth searching for the source of the voice that called her. “*Follow my voice child..*” There it was again, loud and clear. Amal really thought she was going insane, yet her natural curiosity forced her to follow that voice. As Amal followed the fading voice calling her name, she ended up near a well on the border of the cedar tree forest. Approaching the well she kneeled down spotting something etched onto its cold harsh stone, she read,

“We celebrate the past to awaken the future for the past is in your head and your future is in your hands...”

“*What does this mean?*” she asked into thin air hoping the voice would reply to her. And so it did, “*What is it that you truly dream of, child.*” “*What do you mean, I don’t understand?*” “*Dear, you should never forget that you are the past, you are the present, but you should always remember that you are also the future. What is the future that you truly*

wish for in your heart, you are Lebanon, and your beating heart is Beirut, but are you your dream Lebanon?"

Amal stood there, ten seconds passed, then a minute, then ten, she was still thinking. *"The Lebanon of my dreams...What a lovely dream..."* She thought. Amal finally stood up facing the cedar trees with her voice echoing into the forest. She loved Lebanon, her own self, but beyond every love there is also darkness lurking around secretly seeping through the cracks of its soil.

"I dream of a Lebanon where I can be able to walk its streets without an ounce of worry or stress for its future. It would be a place drowning in equality and acceptance where everyone is loved regardless of their sect, religion, or status may it be financially or socially. Discrimination wouldn't exist, violence wouldn't be neither a solution nor even an option. I see this land as a sponge that can absorb whatever you give it and turn it into something beautiful only rejecting the ignorance that soils its every corner."

"Is that all my dear?" the voice called out.

"I have yet to even start, Lebanon can be so much more than that."

Amal sat down leaning against the well ready to pour her heart out to the mysterious yet affectionate voice. *"It is not only that that I wish for, I also dream of a Lebanon that can use its resources to the fullest meaning that it would be agriculturally, scientifically, and technologically sophisticated. Seeing scientific and evolutionary ideas victorious over bigotry and blind faith is an ideal Lebanon, where it prospers like a small bud that evolves into a pretty flower; and I dream that everyone can see this pretty flower's pretty petals and its pretty posture, and its therapeutic and aromatic scent that puts anyone in an instant state of relief. In the Lebanon of my dreams, education is mandatory for all. It would be void of illiteracy and rich in knowledge thanks to an educational system that creates promising futures. These futures would include job opportunities*

for those who aim for it. The capable Lebanese who travel abroad would be able to correctly represent Lebanon for its true value. Even so, I dream of a Lebanon where medical support would be free and available to everyone with no exception; medical services are one's human right where they shouldn't need to pay for their desire to live. It would be such a lovely place where people are able to live a healthy and happy life away from the worry of having to earn enough money in order to treat their own disease or sickness, but they would only pay that money for their own happiness."

"Is that all my dear?" The voice asks yet again.

"No, I have one more." Amal Stood up saying, "I dream of a Lebanon free of all corruption and evil, depression and sadness, hopelessness and fear. It would be as if it was our own private utopia on earth. In my dream, Lebanon is protected from all injustice and persecution, as if it were under a tree's canopy, shielded away from the sun's harsh light beams. Now that is all, what do you think?"

Silence...

Amal could only hear the sound of the wind brushing through her hair and the sound of water droplets slowly dropping onto the floor. It is as if the mysterious voice has vanished. Weirdly enough, it has also started to rain despite the hot weather. Amal waited ten seconds, a minute, ten minutes dripping in water, yet still no answer. "Weird, did I say something wrong?" she questioned herself internally. Amal was fed up waiting for the voice to reply thinking that it must have left, and she headed back home since the sun had already begun to set. As she got back to her house, she searched the kitchen fridge for something to eat as she hadn't eaten the whole day due to the sudden appearance of a now missing voice. After it was time for bed, Amal brushed her teeth and headed up to her room. She first headed to the balcony hoping that the voice would reach out to her again. She waited, yet nothing was to be heard. All that could be heard was the sound of crickets chirping deep in the forest, while she stood

staring at the moon that was surrounded by an ethereal glow, having millions of stars sprinkled around it, hoping that one day she could stand in its place.

Amal withdrew from the balcony and headed to bed. She then rested her head on her pillow and covered herself with a blanket. She wondered if she could actually achieve her dream Lebanon. All this thinking started to hurt her head so she decided to finally sleep. Just before she could fall into the abyss of the unknown, she heard it again.

*“My dear child, faith is a knowledge within the heart, beyond the reach of proof. You are a **dreamer**, a person who visions their ambitions to plant the seeds of the future for dreams are just **realities** in waiting. Now goodnight dreamer...until we meet again...”*

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