



Saving
Rose Green

RICHARD SHEKARI

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By Richard Shekari

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DEDICATION

To *Fat-hi Said Omar*, a brother and a rare chum.

NAME TAG

“Hi, do you speak English?” said the white slim lady to the nurse at the reception.

“No, I did not go to Harvard because I am an Arab woman whose parents are low income earners!” answered the nurse.

“I’m sorry, I didn’t mean it that way!” responded the white lady.

“Maybe an identification and a ‘please’ added to your question would make your approach benign, don’t you think?” said the female nurse with a straight face staring straight into her eyes.

“I am Rose Green, please I am here to see Doctor Abbas Hassan?” she replied smiling, a bit embarrassed by her first approach.

“Now that, my sister is called courtesy. Our parents spend most of their precious time teaching us these things here!” remarked the nurse. She dragged a desk phone on the counter and picked the headset, dialled a number and spoke in Arabic mentioning Rose Green to the person she called then hung up, “Fifth floor, second office on your left!”

“Thank you!” said Rose, she looked up the clock hanging on the wall behind the nurse as she walked away.

“You’re welcome, Rose Green!” responded the nurse.

“Excuse me?” said Rose as she turned.

“*ána úhibbu fustaanuk!*” replied the nurse complimenting Rose’s dress.

“Whatever!” *she murmured.*

Rose got into the lift and hit the button to the fifth floor, before the doors went shut, a janitor rushed in and blocked the doors, then walked in with a yellow 24L cleaning mop Bucket whistling the song he was listening to. She watched him press the button to the fourth floor.

“Hi!” he said with his headphones banging.

“Hi” replied Rose with a smile as she leaned her ears close to the headphone.

“*Aisha!* Beautiful song. I enjoyed it as a little girl back in the 90’s.” she said.

“What!?” asked the Janitor as he pulled off his headphones?

“I said, the song, *Aisha*, I love it!” she answered.

“Oh wow, you speak French too?” he asked.

“*Naa!*” she exclaimed

“*Naa?*” *he wondered.*

The lift stopped on the second floor and the doors opened but no one entered, then closed again as it moved up.

“I mean no! Sorry about that, *naa* is a slang for no!” she said.

“I know that!” he replied.

“I used to watch the song on the telly back in the 90’s! Great guy!” said Rose to the Janitor.

“Honestly, it’s my all-time favourite song,” he said smiling in his Arab accent as he put back his headphones. They both smiled.

“Cheb somebody? I can’t really remember his last name and even though I did not understand the language somehow my heart had a strong connection to it back then, so deeply!” she added smiling.

“Yeah, it’s a beautiful song. My wife loved it so much. The Artist, his full name is Cheb Kha...” said the janitor aloud but got interrupted by the sound of an explosion that ripped the floor above them, the lift instantly went to a halt as power blackout hit the hospital. Rose screamed as another

explosion rocked the building from a different direction shaking the lift violently. They both heard the cables break and as the car descended they both looked around for something to hold on to. The car came crashing down hitting the ground floor, sending Rose up in the air.

By the time Rose gained consciousness, water from the bucket was all over her.

“My leg, I can’t feel my leg!” she moaned as she looked around for the janitor but could not see anyone, she then heard the sound of gun shots being fired in the hospital with people screaming.

The lift was half-way open, she quickly began to search for her bag, after a while she spotted it and as she stretched her hand out to fetch it, someone came through holding an AK47. Rose panted heavily out of fear, the man raised his gun and aimed it at her, squeezed the trigger but realised he ran out of bullets.

“*Ya khara!*” he cursed as he pulled out another magazine, set it and cocked his gun then raised it again to shoot her but got hit behind the head with an object. As the man fell on Rose, his head landed on her forehead making her dizzy. She

pushed the man's body off of her and saw the janitor standing holding a fire extinguisher, instead of relief Rose got more terrified as she finally had a good look at his name tag.

"Come with me!" said the janitor, "They will show no mercy to the likes of you!" stretching his right hand towards her.

"I can't move my leg!" Rose uttered in agony.

The janitor hurriedly rushed for a nearby bed under the rubble. He pushed the debris off the bed and dragged it to the lift, he got into the lift and with caution tried to help her up in order to place her on the bed. While Rose was struggling to stand on her feet, they heard some men fast approaching, the janitor then placed her back on the floor, gave her a gesture to stay mute and play dead as he picked the AK47 then walked away.

While Rose played dead, she overheard him converse with two other men in Arabic, her head got so light she passed out.

JANICE CARPENTERS

Rose could hear her heartbeat, she gently opened her eyes and sighted a vintage ceiling fan slowly spinning above her. She looked around and spotted her bag on a table not far from the bed she lay, the room looked a bit dusty and quite small for a hospital or any kind of clinic. Rose knew she was not in any hospital and had no idea how she got there in the first place, as she tried to move her left leg she felt a striking pain. She groaned and placed her head back on the pillow gently. Rose lifted her head a bit and realised her left leg was tied up with sticks and bounded with some pieces of rag, sort of a hurriedly made casts to hold her leg in one position. She also noticed something like a newspaper kept not far from her feet.

“You need to stay put, uncle Junaid will be home soon. He went to get some medicine from the naturopath!” said a young girl smiling as she stood by the door.

Rose watched her walk into the room happily with some food and water on a tray, she could tell the girl was around 11-12years of age.

“I hope you will like it, it really tastes nice. Learned how to make almost all American food on the food channel, and on

the menu today; American lite fried rice!” said the girl as she placed the food next to Rose’s bag then pulled the table towards the bed, “Time to eat!”

“What’s your name?” asked Rose.

“Hadiza! Hadiza Miqdad Abdul-Basit!” answered the girl, “What’s yours?”

“I am Rose, Rose Green!” she replied.

“What brought you here? Do you work with UNICEF too?” Hadiza inquired.

“No, I am just a tourist! Why did you say that?” answered Rose.

“Because most of the foreigners I know of work with UNICEF!” said the girl.

“No, I don’t work with UNICEF, I am on vacation!” Rose responded.

“Okay! I would like to go to America too but not as a tourist. I wanna go study there someday, maybe Oxford University?” said Hadiza.

“That’s in England Habiza, not America!” said Rose.

“It’s Hadiza; H-A-D-I-Z-A! Get it?” she uttered.

“Got it!” replied Rose laughing, “Could you please help me pass my bag?”

“Sure! Here!” she replied as she handed the bag.

Rose collected the bag, unzipped it and stared into it, then smiled at Hadiza.

“Everything is there. Well, everything that was in the bag when uncle Junaid brought you home...even your small gun!” said Hadiza as she stood up and opened the window to let the fresh air in.

“How long have I been here?” Rose asked.

“Ever since you got here!” answered Hadiza as the two burst out laughing.

“Ouch!” Rose cried out as she felt pain from her leg.

“Oh my God, take it easy! Sorry!” said Hadiza.

“Thank you!” Rose responded smiling as she sighed, “Did your uncle tell you how we met?”

“Hmm! Uncle Junaid doesn’t talk much. Well, he did say you are his friend though and that you need a place to stay until your leg gets healed.” Hadiza answered.

“For how long has your uncle been working at the hospital?” Rose asked.

“You are his friend, how come you don’t know that?” Hadiza asked, “Besides, you resemble Fatimah so I guess uncle will not hide anything from you!” Hadiza joked.

“Well, you know him...he’s not much of a talker, and who is Fatimah?” said Rose.

“Two years before his wife and daughter were killed,” answered Hadiza, “I believe he did tell you about them, right?”

“Right! Yes...he did,” said Rose, she stammered smiling as she picked the plate of rice from the table, fetched some with a fork and into her mouth, “Oh God, pepper!”

“Oh, I am so sorry...I didn’t know the spices are harsh!”

Hadiza reacted.

“I am only messing with you, I love it!” said Rose.

“Really? You do?” asked Hadiza.

“I super love it, you should teach me how to make this!” said Rose.

“Hmm, that’s like a lion asking a dog to teach it how to hunt for Zebras!” said Hadiza.

“Good one there!” Rose murmured with food in her mouth.

“Do you know why I spent my precious time to prepare this delicious meal for you?” asked Hadiza.

“No, why?” Rose inquired.

“Well, I have an assignment to submit on Monday and I’d really need your help!” she said smiling cunningly.

“If it is mathematics just count me out, I am bad with maths!” replied Rose.

“You’re bad with maths in a positive way or a negative way? Anyway it’s history class! I am to present a short spoken word about peace and I am afraid what I wrote might make the entire class laugh at me!” said Hadiza.

“Well, I think I might like your spoken word, I bet it’ll taste as good as your rice. Why don’t you just bring what you have written down and let’s see what we can do about it, huh?” said Rose, she groaned trying to adjust her position on the bed.

“Okay!” said Hadiza, “You’re gonna have to stay put!”

“So, what do you wanna be when you grow up?” Rose asked.

“Well, just one thing and one thing only; a doctor! I would’ve gone for something as complex as an astronaut but no!” Hadiza answered.

“A doctor, huh? Why? If I may ask!” Rose responded.

“So that I’d move to Palestine and save lives, especially the innocent children. I don’t like what I see on TV. Too much suffering.” said Hadiza.

“You sound like a good leader!” said Rose.

“No matter how many good leaders men have, they cannot solve the problems they created through greed and wickedness!” Hadiza replied.

“So, you think men cannot solve the problems the world is facing today?” Rose asked.

“I’m no fool, it’s obvious the world needs God now more than ever!” Hadiza responded.

“Do you believe in God?” Rose asked.

“Don’t you?” Hadiza responded looking into her eyes.

“Well, I used to, when I was much younger!” Rose replied.

“What happened? You lost your appetite for a better and peaceful world just like our leaders who turned their arsenals

against their own people?” Hadiza smirked, “I do believe in God and I do pray every day! Actually I see prayer as a form of acceptance, you know; stretching one’s hands to receive what’s rightfully yours from the Father!”

“Have any of your prayers ever been answered and what kind of prayer do you pray?” Rose asked.

“Well, no one has ever prayed for what they never had. Often men pray for things they think they lack even though they already own them! And for your second question; the answer is world peace! I always pray for world peace!” she said.

A knock echoed through the house, Hadiza excused herself and left to check who it was. Rose quickly pulled out the pistol from her bag and checked it; the cartridge was missing, she checked the bag thoroughly but could not find it so she put the pistol back into the bag and held firm the fork.

Hadiza walked in smiling, behind her was the Janitor holding two shopping bags.

“Which one’s mine uncle Junaid?” asked Hadiza.

“Hadidi, which one among the two looks frosty?” he asked lifting the two bags up.

Hadiza seized the smallest of the bags on his right hand and left the room, “Oh my God finally, vanilla flavour? Now you are 100% my favourite uncle!” echoed Hadiza’s voice.

He kept the other bag on the table next to Rose’s bag, “How are you faring?” he asked.

“I am much better! Thanks!” she replied looking at him.

“I had to take the cartridge! As bad as the world seems, a man has got to keep the house safe for his niece! Sorry I had to do that!” he said looking at Rose, “I am Junaid Abdul-Basit, I believe Hadiza has let the water in the dam flood your ears by now!”

“What?” she responded.

“I mean; she talks too much so I guess she must’ve told you where you are and who brought you here?” he said smiling.

“Just a little, she is a smart girl! Too intelligent for her age! I am Rose by the way, Rose Green. I am here on vacation.” she said.

They both stared at each other for a while.

“Thank you for, um, for saving my life back there!” said Rose, “I really don’t know how to uh...”

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