

# 3<sup>rd</sup> PLACE LEVEL III

Abi,

As salaamu alaykum. Oh Allah! Have I done something wrong? If I have, please forgive me. Abi, as I walked by your office today, I noticed five sheets of paper neatly aligned on top of your cherry red desk. I usually walk on by but the structure of the words, sentences, and the spacing on the white sheets captured my curiosity. I walked closer and I began to read. Why were the words so spread out? Does it represent the chaos going on in your head? Abi, a part of me was taken away too. It has been just as long since I have seen my brother AbdurRahman: two years, eleven months, ten days, five hours, and twenty-four minutes. I know because of the timer on your notebook and I just add two months. Abi, you are not crazy and I know you miss him intensely; just know that I am here for you too.

I know that I am only fourteen but I have seen you change over the years. Once, while we were all together, we ran through the snow, jumped in the pile of leaves, went apple picking, and built sandcastles. Since that horrible day, however, the waves crashed our sandcastles and like a sand crab, you retreated to your shell and remain in your world of alienation. Abi, I know we pray, read, and study together but there is something missing between us. Where do I fit in amongst your “books, pencils, pens, papers, and magazines”?

I do not know why Allah chose for you to be a police officer but I know you were an exceptional one because I have read the innumerable recommendations and awards you received; especially the one where you saved eight lives during the fire but fell out of a window, rupturing a spinal disc. Abi, I think we share the same trait that makes us more

Over, please

apt to become hurt. We see and feel things differently. Our hearts are sensitive and because of our religious belief systems, we seek justice and our norms and values are on a higher plane which is why you absorbed and kept so much inside.

Believe it or not, in a way, I experienced everything you went through as a police officer. Although I know you tried your hardest not to bring your work troubles home, I knew something was wrong. After you got out the shower an hour later and I entered the bathroom, my feet were drenched with water. Also, when we prayed, I noticed that your recitation was off and you forgot whether we prayed three or four units. Though minimal in comparison to what you physically went through, I too was afraid because something, I do not know what it was, was taking you away from me.

You know that I am in a public school now. For years, you and Umi have tried to shelter me from the social and political ills and injustices by keeping me in an Islamic school. I am not yet a man but, I see and feel as you do. I am now exposed to people, ideas, norms and values which are totally contrary to what we believe in; but even in your darkest moments, you have done your job as a father. In your crazy ways of teaching and lecturing me, you have shown me not just by words, but by example of how to be a just and honest man. You have shown me how to take responsibility and especially how to prioritize that which is important in life.

Abi, every morning I feel that sickness in my stomach; literally and physically. You have taught me to accept whatever Allah has given us with patience and perseverance.

AbdurRahman is not with us for now but we have to move on. You do not have to go through this alone. I have a favor to ask you. Can you please come out of your shell and can we please build sandcastles again? As salaamu alaykum.

Your son,

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