

## ***BELONGING BEGINS WITH A BREEZE***

The first weeks in our new home felt calm and peaceful. Each morning started with breakfast by the window. We listened to the quiet city sounds and the birds singing in the garden. 'The cool breeze was still laced with the faint scent of oud' , just like in my grandmother's home.



My mother always woke up early. She sat near the window with her Arabic coffee and watched the sunlight move through the palm trees. Maybe she was remembering old times. I think she was enjoying the peaceful mornings she missed in Canada.



Aisha and I were also getting used to the new house. It was much bigger than our flat in Canada. We each had our own room now. I filled mine with football posters and mystery books. I started reading more—books about clever heroes and adventures. Aisha decorated her room with drawings, toys, and dolls. She loved the garden the most.



Aysha often played tea party with her dolls and asked me to serve as the waiter.

“Come on, just one cup of tea!” she laughed.

I always said yes, even when I pretended to be annoyed.

In Canada, we couldn't play outside much because the garden was shared with neighbors. But here, everything was open and new.



One Friday evening, we heard laughter outside. People were walking to the park with food and mats. My mother smiled. "It's the neighborhood gathering," she said. "Fatima told me."

"Do you want to go?" my father asked. Aisha jumped. "Yes!"

I wasn't so sure.

"What if no one talks to me? What if I just stand there alone?" I thought.

But then I saw the warm lights, kids running, and smelled food in the air. I took a deep breath and said, "Okay, we can go."

We brought vine leaves, pastries, and dates. I held the tray tightly as we walked to the park. My heart was beating fast.



Aisha quickly joined a group of girls. I stood still, holding the tray, not knowing what to do. The park was full of people saying “Assalamu alaikum.” Kids were playing, parents were talking.

Then a boy walked up. “Hey, wanna play?”

“Sure,” I said, without thinking.

The boys were playing a fast game—like tag mixed with dodgeball. We ran, shouted, and laughed. One boy fell trying a backflip. “Nice try!” I yelled. I was having fun. I couldn’t believe it.



Then, a strong wind blew. Mats flew, food spilled, and sand got in our eyes. A little boy near me fell. I picked him up. "It's okay," I said. "The wind will stop soon."



After the storm passed, everyone laughed and helped clean up. I saw my mom sitting next to a woman named Aisha.

“It took time,” she said kindly, “but soon this place will hold your stories too.”

That night, walking home under the streetlights, I felt different. The house, the people—it all felt a little more like home.

And it all began with a breeze.

