

The Forbidden Friendship

“Come downstairs!” Ammi called from downstairs. “Coming!” Ameena, a 12 year old Pakistani girl, replied to her mom. She straightened her dupata and swiftly rushed down the stairs. By her surprise, her dad was sitting there at the table, crystal clear across her eyes. “Assalamualaikum Ameena. Did you have good sleep?” Abbu cheerfully greeted. “Assalamualaikum Abbu. The police sirens kept me up. Are you not supposed to be guarding the border?” 2 years after the Pakistan and India war which took place in 1948, Ameena and her family moved closer to the border that separates the 2 countries so her father could guard it and protect their country from danger. “Well, the head supervisor gave me a day off so I could spend more time with you.” Ameena couldn’t be more joyful. “This is marvelous!” She tightly hugged her father and couldn’t let go. “I have to go now for school. Khuda hafiz.” Ameena told her father. “Khuda hafiz.” She opened the creaky door and was gone in a flash. Ameena walked upon the emerald green grass until a paper flew directly at her face.

“I’ll be down in a second, baba,” Karan, a 12 year old Indian boy, yelled out to his father. Before breakfast, he made sure he had his assignment in his backpack about peace because it was due that day. He swept across the carpet and arrived right in the kitchen. “Namaste baba.” Karan greeted his father. “Namaste Karan. Here is your parathas and dhai. Do you have your essay?” “Of course I have it.” Karan took out his essay and handed it to his father. “Peace: The Key to Life. I’ll have to remember this.” Baba read the title aloud. “I have to go now so I can have a good education. Alavida baba.” “Alavida Karan.” He tightly grabbed his paper and headed out the door. He walked through the wild wind which, unexpectantly, flew out of his hand and head through the border. Since the guards were on a break, he snuck through and followed his assignment. He chased it until he saw it bluntly land on someone’s face.

“Ummm..” Ameena and Karan both babbled. “Who are you?” Ameena questioned. “I am Karan, from India. I know you’re standing here for a reason.” Karan explained. “I am Ameena and you’re right. I am Pakistani.” Ameena replied. She then checked the time. “Oh no! I’m late for school.” “Well, since we’re both late, do you wanna go to this park I know so we can talk in private?” The reason he asked is because when he first saw her, he knew he likes a Pakistani girl. “Well, I don’t think so. You’re only a stranger.” Ameena explained. Karan had doubts. “It’s because I’m Indian, isn’t it?” “Yeah. My parents always told me not to go near Indians.” This wasn’t the true reason she didn’t go. She also realized she likes an Indian boy, but she’s too nervous he wouldn’t like her. But after seeing what a kind offer he gave, she agreed to go with him. They secretly snuck to the park and talked for multiple hours. They didn’t want to leave, but they needed to make it seem as if they went to school, so they said goodbye and went back home.

“Assalamualaikum abbu” Ameena greeted her father. “Assalamualaikum Ameena. How was your day?” She tried not to make anything suspicious. “It was good.” “That’s great. Go wash up so we can enjoy supper.” “Okay.” Ameena then went upstairs and took a big breath of relief.

“Namaste Karan.” Baba greeted him. “Namaste baba. What’s for dinner?” Karan rushed his sentences so he wouldn’t reveal anything. “Well slow down!” baba jokingly said. “We have lentils and rice. Go freshen up then we can eat.” “Okay.” Karan replied. He rushed upstairs and couldn’t have been more nervous that moment.

The next day, both the children decided to tell their parents the truth. “Ammi? Can we talk?” Ameena asked. “Okay.” “Yesterday I didn’t go to school.” “What?” Ameena was thinking of the words. “I was already late so I went to a park with an Indian boy.” “Don’t joke about those things.” “I don’t randomly joke around.” “Why? Do you know it feels when your own child disobeys you?” “But he was so nice and his offer was kind and…” “No! Go to your room and we’ll discuss the consequences later.” Ameena ran off, crying, knowing she is a disappointment.

“Yesterday you were acting strange. You kept daydreaming. Is there something you want to tell me?” baba asked. “Yeah. Yesterday I skipped school and went to my favorite park with a Pakistani girl.” “You’re joking, right?” Karan knew there was nothing else to say. “I am serious baba.” “Were you out of your mind? You should’ve been thinking how it would affect what others think of you! This is a disgrace!” “But…” “No buts!” Karan immediately went to the park him and Ameena met at, swiftly.

Baba went looking for Karan and calling his name. He then heard someone else calling for their daughter. They tell each other everything that happened and go to the park because baba knew he would be there. “Why can’t we be together?” Karan asked once he saw baba. “You even said that peace is the key to life. Love doesn’t judge what’s on the outside. It wants to get to know you,” Karan continued. “But life isn’t always perfect and there’s nothing we can do about it.” At that exact moment, Ammi had a brilliant idea. “Maybe we can do something. We can put up signs, host campaigns, or have meetings to try and bring even a little bit of friendship and love.” Ameena, Karan, and baba agreed with this small movement because they knew something would change. Years later, India and Pakistan started to give each other more acceptance, day by day. Remember, “Love doesn’t judge what’s on the outside. It wants to get to know you.”