

The Watermelon and the Rose

Naseem, dear, wake up. The first lights of the morning will be here soon. Please go to the garden and bring a cutting from the finest rose.”

Naseem dressed quickly and went to the garden, while her husband Amir went and picked the finest watermelon. They met again in the small courtyard just outside of the kitchen. They could hear the sound of Amir’s cousin with the camel outside the gate. In a few hours, their families, Shiraz, and the rising sun, would all be behind them. Amir looked upwards toward the fading stars, asking that this journey be blessed and his family kept safe. Then, with the aid of a small, sharpened stick he punctured the thick skin of the watermelon and stuck the cutting from the rose into the small opening. That’s when the conversation between the watermelon and the rose began.

“Ouch”

“I’m sorry about the thorns.”

“It’s okay, we both know it’s for a good cause.”

“That’s true, but still I’m sorry for the pain.”

“You also felt the sting of the knife this morning.”

“Yes, but I will grow and bear beautiful flowers

again soon.”

They rode for days together, the one giving necessary life to the other. They listened at night as Amir and his cousin spoke of their families and their hopes for joy and happiness and long life. Each night, before sleeping, they listened to the poems of Hafiz and Rumi.

Both the watermelon and the rose were cool at night, but very hot during the day. It was just a matter of patience. In a month, they would be separated and life would change yet again.

“I will be forever grateful to you for your sacrifice,” said the rose.

Quoting Rumi, the watermelon replied:

...may your soul be happy, journey joyfully. You have escaped from the city full of fear and trembling; happily become a resident of the Abode of Security...

With that, the rose shed tears of love for this humble watermelon. Darkness passed, and they only spoke again on the morning of the next day.

“Oh, humble watermelon, in honor of you, I will explode in spring with the most fragrant roses ever smelled by man. When little girls play nearby, I will draw them close and entrance them. And when the nightingales perch nearby, I will tell them of the sacrifice you made—that I could live on forever. Every rose will be named in your honor; and every perfume will carry your grace. And when the pious come to ponder near my blooms, my sweet scent will tell them

only stories of you.”

After this wonderful tribute, there was silence as they rode in the heat of the sun and treasured the taste of the sweet words. After a time, the watermelon replied, “Your tribute, warm and sweet, penetrated to the very core of my being. But we are one, and sacrifice is only an exchange. A few weeks ago, you were part of a branch that was making wonderful roses for Naseem and her children. Now, you journey to the East to adorn a new place with your beauty. Though you were cut away from the place you had grown to love, you understand you will live again, and will never really die. The admiration you feel for me is because you drink my sweet juices and think that by this sacrifice, I die. By giving life to you, I will now live many lives. Part of me will forever be a rose and my seeds will still give joy to many children. Each will sing the song of change, and tell the stories of long ago.”

Three months later, long after the rose cutting had been separated from the watermelon and was standing in warm soil, and long after the watermelon seeds had been dried and stored safely away to await the coming of another spring—Amir and his cousin returned home and were sitting in the small courtyard outside the house of Amir.

Naseem went to the kitchen to prepare them sweet tea, while her eldest son collected a ripe watermelon from the garden. A short time later, all the children had gathered around the two travelers. As the children begged for stories and sweets, Amir and his



cousin enjoyed the luscious, red watermelon, and while laughing and smiling and feeling happy to be back home, the two men disposed of the watermelon seeds as children have done—through all of time.

