

a story by Yasmina Fakhoury

The Circle of Life





It was a bright and sunny day. White, fluffy clouds drifted across the clear, blue sky.

Summer was not Kamel's favorite season; he preferred stormy, rainy days. This sunny day was a typical school day; at precisely two in the afternoon,

Kamel, a ten years old boy, was waiting for his dad to pick him up from school. Kamel was talking with his classmates, who were also waiting for their parents to pick them up.

Their chat wasn't about car toys, the amount of homework they have for tomorrow, or what they eat for lunch.

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Their conversation was about Kamel's mother and her medical progress since she had been in the hospital for about two weeks from today.

For nearly two weeks, Leila, Kamel's mother was feeling sick; she would continuously faint, throw up and feel dizzy for half of her days.

An ambulance two weeks ago took Leila to the hospital, and since that day, she has been there.



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Today in this bright sunny day, Kamel, while waiting for his father to pick him up, was telling his friends that he's a courageous boy, always by his mothers' side.



He knows that his mother is very sick and that doctors will do whatever it takes for his mother to be cured as his father told him.

He isn't afraid because his mother always looks happy, smiling, always eats well, and has visitors around like his Teta Nayla and Jedo Wassim.

Adam, Kamel's best friend, asked him if he could visit auntie Leila and bring her chocolate like she used to bring him when he broke his leg.

Kamel's brown eyes went bright. His smile brightened his face, and his hands were clapping with excitement.

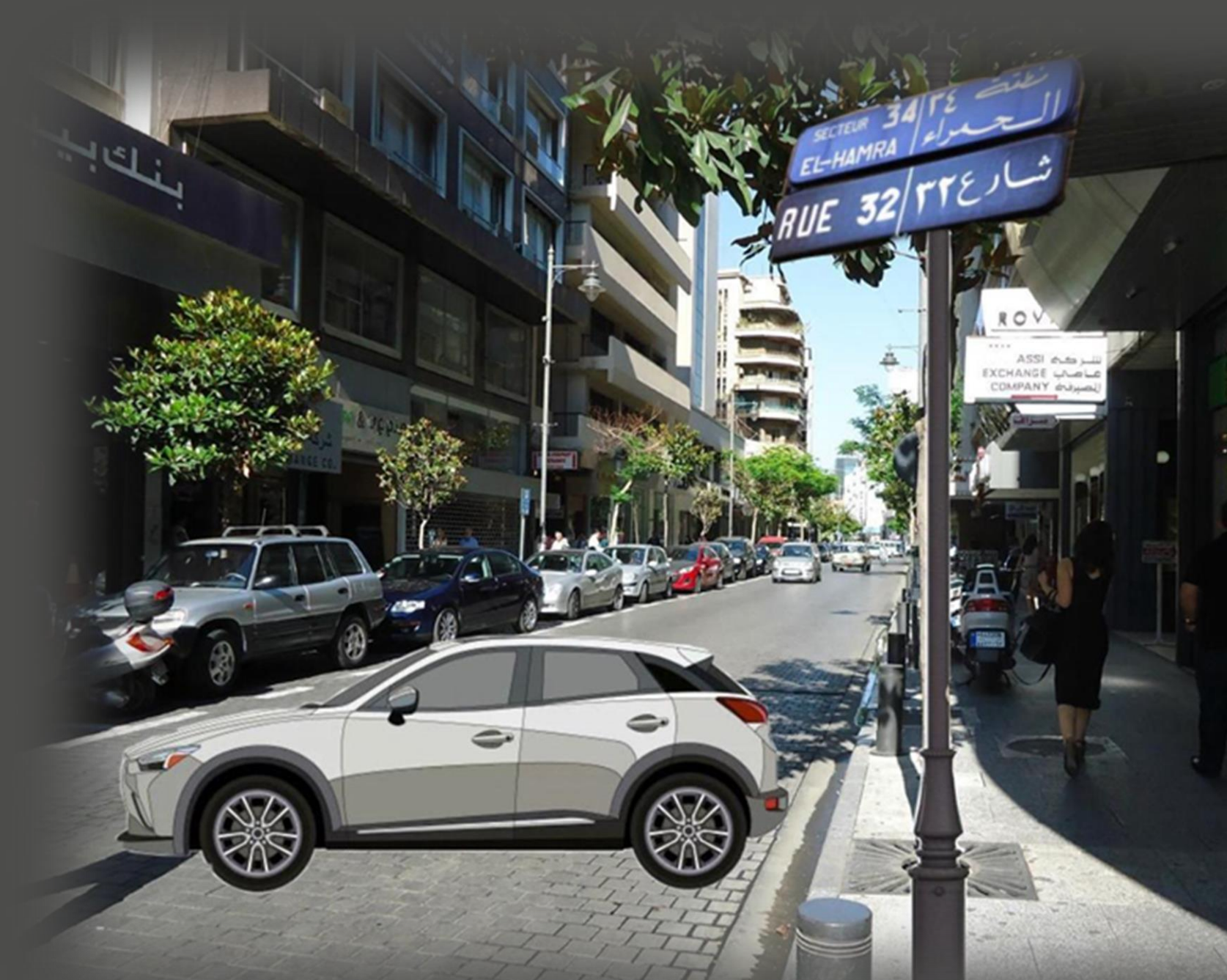
Kamel told Adam he would ask his father for visiting hours and that they will be happy to have him at "Leila's royalty hospital room."



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At exactly 2:30 pm, Firas, Kamel's father, came to pick him up. He blasted on a klaxon horn, and Kamel went running to his father happy to tell him Adam's suggestion.

Firas was sad; it looked like he had been crying, but, once he saw Kamel, he put his favorite music on the radio at a high volume and asked him about his day.

Kamel felt something wrong was going on because, usually, his father hates loud music and prefers to sing himself and not listen to songs on the radio. Kamel didn't speak about it; he was excited to see his mother.

Their ride to the hospital didn't take long. Kamel's school is in Hamra, as well as the hospital location. There was a bit of usual traffic on Hamra's street but managed to arrive at the hospital in twenty minutes

Once they arrived, Kamel went straight to the elevator, pushed button number four, which was the same number as his mother's room.

After arriving on the 4th floor, Kamel was about to open his mother's room when he heard a familiar voice screaming, "STOOOOP."





Kamel was surprised and choked. He recognized this voice; it was familiar to his ears. He soon remembered, its doctor Anthony's voice.

Doctor. Anthony was Leila's doctor, . He always wore a face mask and a white coat. Doctor Anthony looked at Kamel with a mid-smile on his face and said:

"Kamel, my boy, sorry if I scared you. It wasn't my intention... I just don't want you to get inside this room because your mother isn't in it".



Kamel, a little worried replied: "but, but my mother is always inside waiting to have lunch with me; I wanted to tell her that Adam's wishes to come to visit her."
Doctor. Anthony stood in silence for about a minute and then proceeded telling Kamel that "Your mother is on another floor, she will come back to her room a little later." Kamel went to sit in the lobby, waiting for his mother, and also his father to come back from the receptionist's desk.



Kamel waited for about half an hour, but neither his father nor his mother was seen on the floor. Kamel started to get worried.

He went for a walk on floor 4 and saw his dad and Doctor. Anthony talking behind a door. He didn't want them to see him, so he stood behind this door and listened to their conversation.

Doctor. Anthony was saying: "I'm sorry Firas. I don't know what happened, suddenly she had a very high fever and wasn't able to speak, she's in intensive care room."

Firas, -with a shaking voice, replied-: "Is Leila better now? Where is she? Can I see her?"

Doctor. Anthony said with concern: "I'm sorry Firas, you may not, her situation is unstable."

Firas was trying to hold himself from crying and said: "Doctor, do you mean... she might die?"

Doctor. Anthony replied : "It's a very low chance, but still present, I'm sorry again. As a medical crew, we are working hard for her recovery. We are trying to find out what exactly happened".

At that moment, Kamel's father left the room.



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Kamel was heartbroken, death? What is death? He started crying, and his eyes turned red. He ran to his mother's room, stood in front of the door, tears were still scrolling down his face. His father saw him "Why are you crying, Kamel?" He asked.

"I overheard your conversation with the doctor, my mom... my mom... is not okay... my mom will leave us." Firas held Kamel's hand and took him to the cafeteria and said, "My son, you're a brave boy, you're my light and strength... My son, let us go have lunch and I'll tell you how we deal with our worries."



When done, he was ready for his father's talk.

Firas started :“ Kamel, imagine you have a plant in a garden, this plant is growing day by day just like the rest of the plants, do you treat them all equally?”

“Yes dad.” Kamel replied.

Firas continued: “Now imagine that this specific plant started losing leaves, do you keep on watering it?” Kamel quickly answered “Of course, dad.”



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Firas went for the next question : "Now imagine that this plant will demand more attention than the others, will you pay more attention to it?"

Kamel was getting fidgety: " Yes dad." He said.

Firas:" Will you love this plant less because it isn't like the rest?"

Kamel took a minute before replying: "No dad I won't, I will take care of it till it go back the way it was and love it even more."



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Firas continued: "Kamel, do you know that this plant might not go back the way it was even if we kept on watering it and taking care of it?"

Kamel did not understand, so he asked: "But how? Why?"

Firas explained: "Sometimes, we keep on watering a plant and giving it the attention it needs expecting it to rise again and be fuller of leaves than it was before. But, even if we put all our effort into the plant to make it live, if it will lose all of its leaves, it won't be a plant anymore. The plant will decide to leave, but its memories will stay."



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And, that's when Kamel's father said, "This is the circle of life."

Kamel's father proceeded by saying " There are that two options that can be faced; to keep on nurturing the plant, giving it attention, and hoping for the best. Or, abandoning this plant. When considering the two options, death is present, but at least in the first option, we did our best to keep it alive."

Kamel said emphatically "we should always take care of who we love because they bring joy to our lives. Even if this plant might die, I took care of it, loved it, and hoped for the best."

circle of life

Kamel's father said once again,
"This is the circle of life; death
happens even if we tried our
best to avoid it."



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Kamel's father said, "Kamel, can you relate the plant story to your mother's condition?"

Kamel said:" Mom is this specific plant that isn't feeling well like the rest of us, doctor Anthony and his medical crew are taking care of her. I should love mom as equally as I love you. She's my mom, and I love her and wants what is best for her. Mom might not be here with me again, but it doesn't mean that I shouldn't hope for the best and wish for her recovery. Isn't it true, dad?"

" Absolutely, son." Firas replied

Days passed by, and Kamel was praying for his mother's recovery, wishing that her story would not end up like the plant in his father's story.

Kamel never left his mother's side. After school, he would always come and sit at her hospital door; it wasn't on the 4th floor like he was used to but at the intensive care room door.

Even if she couldn't interact with him, he knew that she is listening to him.





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On a bright sunny day, Doctor Anthony came to Kamel and his father. With a big grin on his face, he told them that Kamel's wish came true. His mother is now doing a lot better and is safe. Kamel was the happiest. Summer was not, Kamel's favorite season, but at moments like these. Nothing could be better.

Kamel is now aware of the meaning of death and how to deal with it. He is happy for this lesson but, most importantly, that his family will be back as before.

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