

The Secret In My Mind

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Bright and adventurous, 12-year-old Imad loved nothing more than exploring his neighborhood with his friends Amal and Zein. He lived in a little flat in Akkar, Lebanon with his mom and dad. Despite living in harsh conditions due to the current economic crisis, Imad and his family were happy.



Imad's parents both worked long hours to make ends meet. His mother Lamia was an elementary teacher in a public school. She was often underpaid and overworked by the government.



Meanwhile, his father Dawood owned a small bookshop. Both incomes combined could barely allow them to pay rent and buy simple groceries.



In his free time, Imad loved to spend his days playing outside with friends, discovering different parts of the neighborhood. One day, he started to notice that something was wrong.



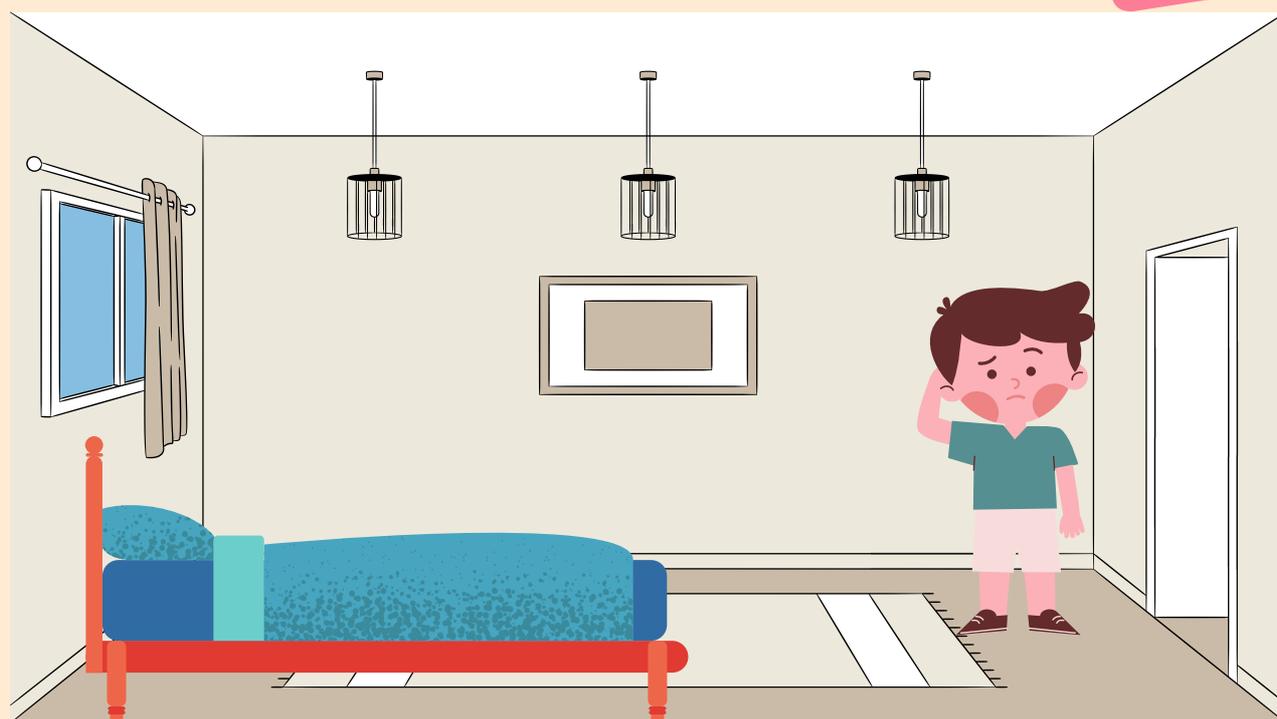
Imad began to notice strange things happening around him. He heard voices that nobody else could hear and saw things that nobody else could see. Sometimes, he thought he saw people lurking in the shadows. Other times, he heard voices whispering in his ear.



At first, Imad was scared and confused. He didn't know what to make of it, but he knew it was different from anything he had ever experienced before. Imad tried to tell his mom and dad, but they didn't understand. They thought that he was just being silly or playing make-believe.



**However, Imad knew
that what he was
experiencing was real.
He felt like he was
slowly losing touch with
reality. Imad didn't know
who to turn to for help.**



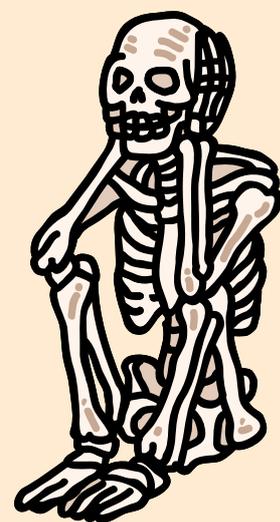
Then, one day, Imad's family received some bad news. They were going to have to move out of their apartment because they couldn't afford the rent anymore. Imad was devastated. He didn't want to leave his friends and the place he had always called home.



**On the day they moved,
something strange happened.
Imad's imaginary world came to
life. As he was packing his
things, Imad stumbled upon a
secret door hidden in the back of
his tiny closet.**



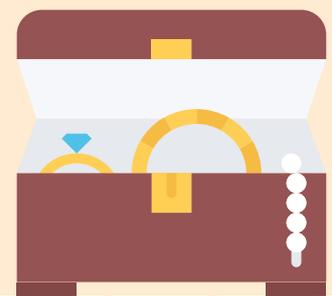
When he opened the door,
Imad found himself in a
world filled with people he
knew no longer belonged
to the land of the living.
Imad was afraid. He didn't
know if he was
hallucinating or if the
world around him was real.



Later that day, Imad's imaginary episodes worsened. He became more withdrawn and anxious, and his friends began to notice that something was wrong. Amal and Zein decided to let his parents know what was happening.



Imad's parents finally gave in and took him to the doctor for a checkup. However, they didn't have enough money after renting their new house so they had to sell some of their most prized possessions.



After some medical tests and psychological evaluations, Imad was diagnosed with schizophrenia, a mental disorder that affects a person's ability to think, feel, and behave clearly. His parents soon learned that his hallucinations manifested as a defense mechanism against his poor living conditions.



Soon after, Imad began to see a therapist who helped him understand the illness and gave him tools to cope with it. He learned that his imagination was a powerful tool that could help him navigate through difficult times.



As Imad explored the new world that he was constantly imagining, he realized that it was both. It was a place where his imagination could come to life, but it was also a place where he could escape from the harsh reality of life.



Imad learned the importance of seeking help when needed and the value of understanding mental illness.



In school, Imad made brochures to raise awareness about schizophrenia with the help of his friends and teacher. They created a campaign to support children who suffer from similar mental illnesses. This campaign featured colorful illustrations and informational texts written by the students.



With the help and support of the community, it became easier for Imad to cope with his mental illness. The power of imagination and the support of his loved ones helped him overcome even the toughest of challenges.



