GARDEN *of* AYDEN

BY SUKAIYNA GOKAL



CAPTURED

The Heritage of Noor and Scintilla

A GARDEN OF AYDEN STORY

Foreword

We cannot always understand why things happen as they do. Some things just don't make sense. We may feel that life is unfair. It is the way it is and we are the way we are. We can feel so scared if someone we love is put in an unexpected situation and taken away from us. If someone we love is accused of doing something wrong and put in prison, how do we reason it? The people we love are kind and caring. We are being told they have done something wrong and must be punished.

It's not about what happens to us, but how we manage it. If we trust ourselves to do what's best for those we love, we pull up our socks and just face the music and give them blind support. Can we fight things that happen that we don't agree with? Yes, we could while turning blue in the face, but all it does is make us frustrated. We must accept that there are some things we cannot change, at least not for now. If we resist it, all that can happen is that we will feel worse. We need to be strong. In times like this, it's best to learn to expect the unexpected, keep our resilience intact and remain positive. There is no other choice.

Better we keep a clear mind and do what we can to help those we love. Better we remain strong and supportive for those we love. We know that one day we will understand things that make no sense today. In the meantime, let's do our best in the situation we have no choice but to deal with, keep our heads up high, our feet well grounded in the earth and think out of the box.

Four walls a prison does not make.

Captured

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It's cold. I feel a shiver down my spine. My hands tremble as I walk into the Police Station. I ask for him. The Policeman nods, gives me a feeble smile and guides me to sit down in the waiting room. I breathe in deeply; I am not sure how I am feeling. I think I feel like crying but I hold my tears even though the frost outside made my eyes water. I wipe my eyes. I rub my hands together and breathe onto them to warm them. I do my best to relax my shoulders, which are so scrunched up; they feel like punching bags that have been beaten for days on end.

I see him from afar. He waves to me with a smile that comforts me. Tears fill my eyes. I cannot help it; the tears continuously stream down my face. It's as if the worst constructs of my imagination have now been put to sleep and all my worries are dispersed. He looks better than I thought. It feels like I am meeting him in a coffee shop, not coming up from a holding cell where he is being contained. He comes and hugs me. He hasn't shaved. His eyes look tired. I had created nightmares in my head. My mind had made this situation far worse than the reality actually is. He holds my hand and asks me to wait a few minutes, as he has to go take some pictures first before we can sit and chat. I nod my head. I find it hard to say any words; my voice doesn't come out when I try to speak.

I witness him taking mug shots. I feel like I am suddenly in the movies and yet I am in shock. This is all so surreal. Can we go home now please and wake up at home in our beds and see that this was just a bad dream and never really happened? I cannot believe this. We have a brief chat of sweet nothings filled with empty reassurance. We cuddle and hug tight, and then I am forced to leave before it gets too late to get home. I have no choice but to say goodbye and leave him there. As I exit onto the street I look up at the pitch-black sky with tears in my eyes. My cheeks are crisp with the cold and my eyes moist. I close my eyes and say a prayer begging the Universe for him to be ok. My heart aches.

In my deep sleep I dream of light. I feel like someone is trying to tell me something and I am not understanding. I am struggling and being pushed down by this weight of light that wants to make me fly. I resist and I fight and I feel so tight in my heart as if I am being choked and I want to cry out loud but I cannot. Suddenly I feel numb. I am floating. I am

fine. I am peaceful. I can see all that I see. I can hear all that I hear. I can feel all that I feel. Yet I am perfectly fine. I wake up in a cold sweat not understanding what just happened.

I am in the Courtroom. This is the day they make the decision if he can come home until the case is heard or if he has to remain in prison. How can they decide? Who are they to decide? Why do they doubt him so much? He is a soft-spoken, gentle man who has done so much good for so many people. They decide that he cannot come home and suddenly he is whisked out of the room and I jump to my feet and run to catch a glimpse of him and say something to him but it's too late. He is gone. I run around looking for someone to ask if I can see him.

A kind policewoman puts her arm around me and says that he is being locked up in the truck. She says if I want to, I can run and get him some food and she will make sure he gets it. I run frantically and yet quietly thinking of best strategies. I see a Chinese take away restaurant. I run in, intuitively understanding that Chinese food will be warm and cosy for him and also easiest to eat because of the chopsticks, as cutlery was forbidden in the van. It comes naturally to look at all the precaution that must be taken into account, for his wellbeing and for his security. I am fascinated that this comes naturally to me. I run to the truck. All I can see is bars surrounding the windows of the Prison truck and I hear a loud engine as if the truck is ready to leave.

My heart pangs but I keep a straight face. I beg and I plead to a stern guard who ignores me at first. Suddenly the kind policewoman is standing in front of me, smiling and she takes the bag from my hand. A brief feeling and visual of my dream of light tingles through my mind and body simultaneously. There is an echo in my mind. "There are little miracles everywhere if we only stop to witness them." I stand there watching as she disappears to ensure he gets the bag of warm food I got him with so much love. I try to imagine which window he is behind. Since I cannot imagine it, I close my eyes to feel it. The light fills me as soon as I close my eyes. I send a wish of goodness and feel the energy surge within me. How is he feeling? What is he thinking? I quietly urge him to be positive and to occupy his mind with positive thoughts. I feel peace for an instance. I open my eyes. I feel so lost. I feel so alone. I put my head down and walk as quickly as I can, but I quickly realise that there is nothing to run from. The pain is within me.

In my sleep I see light again. Scintilla is there. She doesn't speak. She just envelopes me in warmth and I feel protected. I awaken with a smile until reality hits me and my heart drops

into my stomach. I pull the covers over my head and curl up wishing to lose myself. I close my eyes and again I am filled with light and I hear Scintilla's reassuring voice. "Tests of life happen to all of us. We need to accept them and accept any emotions we are feeling and yet continue to gain strength. It's ok to be scared. That is how courage is born. Keep moving and hold yourself tall. This too shall pass." I feel like I am dreaming and yet I can hear the children playing in the park outside.

It's raining. It's windy. This will be my first visit to the prison. It's a long walk in between trees to reach the counter before the prison door. I feel like I am going to be carried off in the wind, its so unforgiving. I suddenly feel like I have a Movie Director in my head that is looking at me. The scene is so much like a movie, it is the only way to live and experience it. I take his perspective and lift off from the actual visceral feelings of the cold and wetness and take a macro picture view in my imagination. I look down at myself and imagine myself wearing a bright yellow raincoat and that I am carrying a multi-coloured over-sized umbrella that I am twirling and can only now see the colours of purple, yellow, red and green swirling around me and giving me safety, comfort and reassurance. I smile.

I whisper, "Thank you, Scintilla!"

I announce myself as a visitor for MB2354. I announce him as a number. How sad. He is no longer a human being. He is a number. The guard behind the counter smiled warmly at me. He said, "Don't worry love, its all going to be ok." I was stunned and taken aback. Unexpected. Expect the unexpected. The heavy door buzzes open and I go through it. I put my bag through the security and walk through the metal detector. I am less anxious now. I do not know why. I see a room full of people sitting and waiting. I see a beautiful little girl with long curly honey coloured hair, cuddled next to her mother, playing with her doll. I look at her and I feel for her in my heart. I wonder if she understands. Her mother looks at me and smiles, and ushers me to sit with them.

I learn that she has been visiting this prison for six months. I think she recognises the horrified look on my face. She tells me softly that we must believe in each fragile

moment of life and not contemplate extremities of time. Otherwise time cannot be forgiving if we do not have faith in love and truth. We must be mindful and live in each moment with all the threads of absolute truth, and allow ourselves to feel each little emotion, appreciating each one with all the beauty they contain. There is always someone in a lesser position than us. Why should we only look at people who are in better situations

than us? It would be unfair to those who suffer more. Do those who suffer ever really feel understood? I remember the saying I had once heard... "I cried because I had no shoes and then saw someone who had no feet." I felt light rush through me. I felt understood. Expect the unexpected. She did not belong here.

Her number gets called and she swiftly picks up her sweet daughter and almost skips off, excited for her visit. I look around me. Each person looks like they belong to a community, to a home, to a family. Nothing makes sense to me.

My number gets called and I go inside a large room with a Canteen to one side. I go and buy chips, drinks and chocolates for us to share during our brief hour together. His face is shining and again, I feel like he awaits me in a coffee shop. He is strong. He is handsome. He is resilient. I feel like something has shifted. We are on the path of a good fight. It cannot be admitting defeat. It's the beginning of a journey of truth. However long, however tough, I know we will overcome it. I feel the tingle surge through me again. There is nothing wrong with shadows of doubt for the human being that believes in life. The mirror we project is one of togetherness and strength to hold us all together.

I leave deep in thought. We have discussed all that he needs that I may bring for him. We are in organisation mode. Its no longer a period of shock. We now have to micro-manage details of comfort and process. Lawyers. I put on a brave face. I silently push myself to become the person he wants me to be so that he may rely on me. "Scintilla, please help me." All I want to do is stomp my feet and scream but this is a luxury I cannot afford. I am given no choice but to be proactive and clear-minded and stop feeling sorry for myself. How silly to want to feel sorry for myself. Who am I to do that? And then with magic... The pain is gone.

All the newspapers the next day carry the story. It is not even true the story they carry. The drama and sensation is again like the movies. What is truth? What is positive perspective? What is honour? What is integrity? Who has a right to play with these noble traits of people? And who is right? Who is wrong? What is good? What is bad? Is justice ever really achieved? I start contemplating different public figures that went through struggles. Nelson Mandela. Martin Luther King. Mahatma Gandhi. There are so many stories of the fight for freedom and what justice really means, so many lovely souls. They were all fighting for truth. Fighting for light. There are so many also that we do not know about and where honour is not and will never be served. Should we raise our arms and say we live in an unfair

world and stay sad and dark? This would make no sense.

What becomes important is how we feel within ourselves. Who cares what anyone else thinks if we know our own truth. We can be warriors of truth, doing our best to prove ourselves to people who are not truthful. What a waste of time. If each one of us were

self-accountable rather than trying to prove something to someone else, the world would be a peaceful place with no malice. Let us work for that. Let us stay kind and gracious and gentle, and be warriors of peace.

The phone rings. There is a lock down in the prison. No visits tomorrow. No phone calls. Someone tried to kill himself. Was he wrongly accused? I go and sit in the corner on the floor of my bedroom feeling defeated and scared. Scintilla comes to me. She fills my room in a soft glow of light that is sparkling. She flows with her thoughts; easy remedies, easy harmony. Impressions of people are so far from the truth of who they really are. What drives someone to do something wrong or to want to hurt themselves? Feeling misunderstood? Feeling unacknowledged? Can it be something that they had to suffer when they were younger that they are reacting to?

Man is good in his essence; everyone is born with equal measures of goodness. Our experiences colour our person. Sometimes there may be questionable behaviour, but it doesn't make the person questionable. The essence of each and every person is good. We know not the intricacies that people go through or get tested with in life, as all we can only see is the surface. Who are we to judge anyway? Why do we believe that our truth is the only truth? There are many versions of everything. Each person's perspective is unique and we are all entitled to our opinions, even if they are not agreed with.

It's time. We go to the courtroom. I see the judge with the wrinkly skin, stern face and the funny wig. I think to myself he was also someone's baby, being cajoled and loved once upon a time. Did he have an easy childhood I wonder? What motivated him to want to be in a position to decide people's fates? I look at the jury. Normal people. Forced to take time from their lives to sit and listen for days or months and then hold the responsibility of deciding the destiny of the accused. Now it's only about who can tell a better story and convince the innocent impressionable Jury. It becomes about winning and losing and its no longer about justice and truth. Which of the two lawyers will do justice to their story? We are now leaving aside justice in its essence. Which one had a healthier breakfast that morning? Who has a headache or who is feeling tired. Who is better prepared and did their

homework properly? Whose child woke him up in the middle of the night with a fever?

Tornados of events make us even more capable of staying afloat. They inspire maturity, sharp intellect and determination. We are guided in the darkness by Scintilla within us. We are the only ones who can choose to stay in the light or foolishly allow the darkness to engulf us. Shortcomings are there to be overcome, and overcome them is what we strive to do as quickly and proactively as possible. We all have within ourselves a hidden treasure, the worth of which comes out to play in the bright sparkling light during times of difficulty. Shine bright and let no one stop you. We only grow against the tide. Who is to measure our path? We are! Wait for no one to pat you on the back, it is not worthy. When you can look at yourself in the mirror, peaceful within and sleep well at night, is all that matters. The rest is just fluff.

The judgement is in. Expect the unexpected. Guilty. He looks up at me and smiles and says, "don't worry" as he shakes his head, to reassure me and I smile back at him to reassure him before he is taken away. Void. Nothing makes sense. Those who have in fact done what he is accused of doing are sitting pretty, living peaceful. Or are they? We never know. Such is life. Everything plays out as it must and truth will prevail.

Sometimes struggles are exactly what we need in our lives. If we had no obstacles, we would be less of who we could be. We could not be as strong. We could never fly. We could not stretch ourselves to be the best that we can be. What is Scintilla for us? She holds our hand when we are scared. Gives us the courage to be assertive. Gives us the strength to face the things happening to us and within us, with grace and confidence. She also breeds gratitude within us on a bright and beautiful day. There are those who are financially the poorest in the world who are the happiest people in the world and those who are financially the wealthiest in the world who do not understand happiness. The measure of how we feel in life is in our understanding of the fragility of life and in the measures of gratitude. Being able to measure life in its essence. To fully appreciate the little things sincerely is an important blueprint to how we live. The grass is not greener on the other side. The garden is within. Cultivating our truest essence is the best gift we can give to ourselves.

It may be quick for each of us to find solutions or the quest of how to measure time and its value. It depends on our resilience. It depends on our wisdom. It depends on our ability to look at the big picture. Fortitude is within. It's got nothing to do with people or places. Whether the journey of confinement is long or short, hold strong and never give up hope to

see the light. The light is within and ever present. Scintilla has shown it, lived it and will not leave you to doubt it. Do what you must to make life for those you love as easy as possible. Be generous with your empathy, time, and gestures of kindness. Be unselfish and you will find joy, beauty and bliss within.

When I lie down in my bed at night, Scintilla appears. I glow with her in her light. I grin and she glows brighter.

“Scintilla?”

“Yes, Noor.”

“Thank you for everything. Thank you for teaching me to stand strong, not to judge people, and thank you for teaching me that we are never really alone. Without you, I would have never known any of this. You have taught me a lot about life and how to be resilient, kind and courageous even in the most difficult circumstances. Thank you for showing me how to feel like light.”

“But Noor, I never taught you any of this. I just tickled you here and there, and it all shone out of you. Thank you for being able to stand so tall. You were a ball of light already. There was always transparency within you. You can always seek the light whenever you need it because the light is within you, as it is within us all.”

Scintilla stays with me as a halo of light and then I see a wonderful flash that flows within me entirely. I sigh and feel blessed.

Epilogue

You or someone you love might be accused of doing something wrong. You may be the accused or the accuser. Everyone has a ball of light of good within. We are all good. There's no such thing as bad. Do not be afraid. Question your own perspective. Do not judge. Ensure you keep a positive mind-set. We are all courageous adventurers who have a journey that lies ahead of us. Ask for forgiveness, and be forgiving. We can achieve anything we want. We are all human, we are all light. We are all anything we want to be. The minute our thoughts change, the world around us changes colour.

"Find the light within."

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