



**Abdullah Abu Snaineh**

# **SCARF**

Translated from Arabic by  
**Wajdee Abu Madi**



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A b d u l l a h A b u S n a i n e h

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*For those who left.  
And for those who stayed...*



On the horizon, beyond the tents, clouds promising rain were steadily marching toward us.

Right before me, Mr. Wajdee was cleaning a zinc roofing sheet that would be installed as the roof of a room which he will use to teach the refugee camp kids.

We came here yesterday to help build the room before winter comes. Mr. Wajdee realizes that teaching in a tent under the rain is arduous for him and the kids. He insists on teaching them in the best possible conditions. He asked me to come over and give him a hand to finish building the room.

I looked at the clouds and hoped to get it done before it rained.

There were young men helping Mr. Wajdee with heavy tasks like carrying bricks and zinc roofing sheets. Another four kids (none older than ten) were helping with the easy tasks, like carrying the construction tools to the room.

He told me that well-to-do donors who value education will cover the expenses of building the room and pay the workers' wages.

I watched as he diligently worked, knowing he did it for free. He regarded education and hard work as a means to unburden ourselves from the anguish of injustice. He asked

for my help and offered money. I agreed to help for free. He taught me reading and writing in Arabic, reading a few words in English, and arithmetic, too. I know how much education would benefit others, especially the kids. Helping him would be the least I could do to return the favor.

I used to ask him about his earlier life before moving to this side of the River, but he never gave a straight answer. He showed me some pages of his journal only when he was sure I had started to read Arabic well. "You will find answers here. This story isn't only about me. It's similar to other stories, but writing history is important. Writing my story, yours, and that of each of us draws the essence of our people's story," he told me.

I started reading the first page of his journal, dated roughly eight years ago.

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Sunday

March 28, 1948

Before school...

Although the weather was getting warmer by the day, my wife started her morning by sewing a scarf for me. Its olive color

caught my interest. However, I was surprised she chose the start of spring to sew a woolen scarf. It had a strange look to it, too.

“Don’t you think the weather is too warm to sew that woolen scarf, Mariam?” I asked my wife while checking my handbag that I carry to school.

“March is a month of unpredictable weather. Sometimes it gets cold after dark.”

“You’re right, but I’ll wear my *kufiyya* if I feel cold in the evening. Not a big deal.”

“I saw an appealing style of scarves when I was in Jerusalem, and I wanted to sew something similar.”

I looked at the woolen ball resting in her hands and said, “The color is, at least. Appealing, I mean.”

“You’ll see it when it’s done. You’ll like it. Munkez should be sleeping for a few more hours which gives me enough time to finish it today.”

I turned, intending to kiss the sleeping Munkez.

“You’re not getting the scarf if he wakes up!” my wife warned me.

I shrugged and said, “It’s fine. It’s warm anyway.”

“Wajdee, please!”

I nodded in obedience and gently kissed her forehead. I looked at my child's serene face and blew him a kiss.

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The camp's air was mixed with the damp smell of wet cement. I hoped it would dry out before it rained. The clouds advanced more, but we had enough time to take a break before finishing the room.

The young men gathered for tea. Mr. Wajdee was the last one to sit. He looked at the room and then toward the kids who brought a ball to play with.

"Aren't you going to drink tea with us?" Mr. Wajdee asked them.

"No!" one of them said. "We won't be able to play if it rains and that's our last chance for a short game. Don't worry about us, Mr. Wajdee. I have a basket filled with food if we get hungry."

Mr. Wajdee nodded and checked the progress of the room. Setting up the zinc roofing sheets was the only work left, in addition to some final touches. There were only three zinc roofing sheets, and most of the final touches were to be done inside. We could finish up even if it rained.



The clouds were still somewhat distant, but there was no need to blow on my tea to cool it down.

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Sunday

March 28, 1948

After school...

I try to be hopeful around my students, even though the status quo suggests otherwise. It works, I think, but the grown-ups know better.

I pass by Abu Musa's at least twice a day: once in the morning when I go to school and the other in the afternoon when I come back. I usually find him resting in the shade of one of the trees that are planted in his small front yard.

Today, he was resting in the shade of a fruitful almond tree.

I said hellos and kept walking, but he stopped me. "Where to? What's all the hurry?"

I looked at him in uncertainty. He got off his chair and asked me to wait a moment.

"Get up and pick up some almonds for the teacher!" Abu Musa ordered one of his kids.

“Thank you so much, but please don’t bother yourselves,” I said.

“It’s nothing, Abu Munkez. Just some almonds for you and your wife.”

I nodded my thanks. Two minutes later, his son brought a bucket full of almonds.

“Thanks, hajji. Thanks, kid!”

“That’s the least I can do for a decent man like yourself. Say hi to Mariam.”

I carried my bag in one hand and the bucket in the other. I put the latter down to knock on my door.

Mariam does not typically open the door for me all the way. She likes to stand in the doorway and keep me outside. This habit, she explained, is so I can appreciate her while she’s still beautiful and young. Although she’s been saying that for three years, she’s been getting more gorgeous every day. She’s stood in the doorway to welcome me countless times before. I still feel what I felt the first time I saw her. I take my time before I talk, lest my words come out stammering and bumbling, like my heartbeats when I grasp the shine of her gaze. I know there is no getting used to that.

It's as if she opens her heart to me every time she opens the door.

She let me in, and I saw Munkez stumbling around, proudly laughing whenever he fell.

A child falls hundreds of times before being able to walk. Sometimes I wonder whether we lose the will to get up after falling when we get older, or is it that some falls leave us too weak to rise again?

I got inside, closed the door, and went toward Munkez and kissed him. "Your mother didn't let me kiss you in the morning!" I turned around to see her reaction.

She gave me a challenging look and threatened, "I won't let you do other things if you keep on with this kind of humor!"

"Other things?"

"You know what I mean." She stopped talking for a few seconds then attentively asked, "How's it going?"

I looked at the almond bucket and said, "It's going fine."

"I'm serious! Answer me."

I shook my head trying to dispel the thoughts about the current situation, but my wife is too smart to tell her a

comforting lie. I sought to find suitable words to tell her. My silence was enough for her to know how bad it was, however.

She nodded in understanding. “I finished sewing the scarf. Let me show it to you!” she said, in an attempt to lighten our mood.

I played with Munkez and tried to teach him to say my name, but had no success. I taught a lot of kids and adults how to read and write. However, I still can’t teach my son how to say my name. He’s still too young to do that, I guess. Two minutes later, Mariam came back with an olive-colored scarf.

“This is it,” she said, showing me a scarf with a “W” sewn on it, not handing it to me yet. “I made use of your schooling. I sewed the first letter of your name on it.”

“I have to admit, it looks unique. That 'W' is also the first letter of our son’s name if you flip it upside down.”

“Right! That’s one cool thing about their language. That’s about the only good thing that has to do with the Englishmen.”

I smiled at her remark. But my smile vanished when reality crashed in. I would rather have never heard of them or their language. They came to our land and caused us misery. I looked at Munkez, now playing on the floor, too tired to get

up. "Not everything around us brings about misery," I thought to myself.

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Mr. Wajdee excused himself to go to the restroom. He went to the bathroom we built separately a few meters away from the teaching room. I motioned to the others to get up and install the zinc roofing sheets to cover the roof. We wanted to get that done since it was the most laborious task left. Mr. Wajdee doing that was out of the question.

Right before doing that, a pissed-off old man and a young fellow carrying a stick stormed in. The old man hurried toward us and said to his companion, "Come on, son!"

We froze in place when we realized that they were angry at us.

"Leave these zinc sheets now!" the old man started yelling.

We stared at each other but said nothing. I looked at the approaching clouds. We had about an hour left to finish the work. Nonetheless, the old man's tantrum might stretch it for longer.

“What’s wrong, old man?” one of the young men asked, the first zinc roofing sheet panel to be installed leaning on his body, with the help of another boy standing on the roof.

The old man gazed at the young man on the roof. “Come down!” he ordered him. He then looked at the one holding the sheet. “You’re not installing that sheet!” he said in a commanding tone, pointing his index at him.

His eyes darted toward us and the other two zinc roofing sheets. His eyes shifted toward his son who shook his head no. The son looked at the zinc roofing sheet that was about to be installed and nodded yes to his father. The old man looked at the boy who was about to raise the zinc roofing sheet and bellowed, "Stop that!"

“Why?” the boy asked.

The old man was running out of patience. ““Why?” I’ll tell you why!” he yelled at him.

The old man’s words were heavy with sorrow. The matter didn’t require such an exaggeration. Nevertheless, it was like a key that opened a door to a much darker place in his past.

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Friday

April 2, 1948

After Dawn Prayer...

I wrote about this day a week after it had passed because writing about what had happened hurts me. And this journal was supposed to be personal anyway. Besides, what's the point of writing about something that I want to keep out of my mind? But what happened in Deir Yassin last Friday changed my mind. Writing our story is a collective responsibility. What I write makes up a part of the picture that tells our story.

The sun was still not fully visible, but daylight dawned. Ahmad, my cousin, knocked on my door. Sometimes I went hunting with him and used the occasion to revise the letters I had taught him.

Mariam, still in bed, heard the knocking. "Would you like some tea before going?"

"No, honey. Go back to sleep."

"Okay. Don't be late. I'll wait so we can have the tea together."

“Deal. I promise I won’t be late.”

But not all promises are kept...

Ahmad is about sixteen years old. He dropped out of school so he could help his father herd his flock of sheep since he’s his only son. He likes hunting birds and sells most of what he can get his hands on.

“Do you know how, Mr. Wajdee?” Ahmad started talking on our way to the mountain where he usually hunts, a forty-minute walk from the village.

“How what?”

“How can I tell a girl that I love her?”

“Is this about a specific girl or in general?” I stopped in place for a few seconds and asked.

“I don’t know. I mean... maybe... actually... It’s just feelings. I know I’m young, but I feel like I can protect her. I’m good with the rifle now.”

“I know you’re a good shooter. But are you sure you love her? And does she love you back?”

“I think so... She tells me ‘good morning’ on most days.”

I laughed at his stuttering answer. I covered my mouth and kept walking.



“Two days ago, she said ‘Good morning, Ahmad’,” he added.

“Saying your name with a morning greeting is a strong sign of her love.”

“Are you making fun of me?”

“Not at all. Your father wants to marry -may your mother rest in peace- so it’s not proper to marry before he does. And you should focus on work.”

He nodded in agreement and said, “All right, but I will give her the finest bird I hunt today as a present.”

Ahmad was better off hunting a lot of birds so he could make a profit off of them. That day, however, he opted to catch a beautiful bird to give to his beloved. “This is for you, Zahra!” he yelled in triumph when he managed to do just that.

Silently, he secured the bird in a cage and went on to pack the hunting equipment. He was done and over for the day, apparently. We didn’t go through the letters I had taught him earlier. No matter, such nuisances were quickly forgotten when I saw how eager he was to present the fancy bird to Zahra.

I helped him with the packing and headed back to the village, exhilarated by the bird’s tweets.

The tweets turned into shrieks when we reached the outskirts of the village. I thought for a moment that the bird finally figured out it was locked up in a cage. Moments later, screams from the village joined those of the bird. I looked at Ahmad to check if he heard what I heard. When you live in a village populated by two hundred and fifty people, any trouble is your trouble. Said people are either family, relatives, or friends.

We ran to the village. The first thing we saw was Uncle Abu Ahmad's flock of sheep, scattered on the land where they were usually herded. The long, green grass was soaked with blood. I knew what had happened at once: the armed Zionist militias were here.

We found my uncle's body in the grass, his index finger resting at the trigger of his rifle. Ahmad hurried to his father's body and urged him to wake up. He kept shaking his body in desperate attempts to wake him up. He went on until his hands were drenched with blood leaking from the corpse. "Why'd you leave me alone?" he asked the soulless body. "Why? Why?" he put his face next to his father's when he didn't hear an answer. "I didn't hear you. I'm closer now. Tell me! Why did you leave me alone?"

My knees were shaking. I barely stood my ground. I wanted to stay more with Ahmad to calm him down, but the stream of screams was still flowing from the village. My uncle wasn't the only victim.

Mariam has never left the door open. When I saw It like that, it was like a gateway to my most horrible nightmares. I hurried toward it and found empty bullet shells in the doorway.

Darkness met me instead of Mariam. My vision focused after some seconds, and I found her lying on the ground. She was facing the floor, two bullets in her back like a pair of bleeding eyes.

I got used to writing about what I felt and went through almost daily. Some things, however, can't be expressed with words. That's probably why screaming exists. Except I was not screaming like the others outside, I was crying silently.

My knees collapsed and I sagged down to her body. I turned her body over and found Munkez in her arms. He cheered up when he saw me, not aware of what had happened. "Wadi! Da!" he cheered. That was the most intelligible attempt he ever managed to say my name. Thanks to his mother, Munkez was unharmed.

The shrieks were still bellowing outside. I tried to get up and close the door so Munkez couldn't hear them, but my body betrayed me. How could it not while my soulmate lay dead before me? Her body was still warm, unlike her eyes which lost their shine. That shine was the sun in my sky. When it went off, darkness prevailed in my world. My fingers floated over her face and closed her eyelids. I wished that it had all been a terrible nightmare and that I would wake up to Ahmad knocking on my door. Sure enough, it was a nightmare, except one I was living in.

Knowing it was the last time we would be together, I lingered next to my wife and son for a while.

Mariam didn't hesitate to sacrifice her life to save our son. I had to make sure that it wouldn't go in vain. I found the will to hold Munkez's arm and get up. I looked toward the door and saw a silhouette that belonged to a boy holding a rifle taller than himself.

Ahmad threw a pistol toward me. "May Allah help you," he said in a muffled voice.

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The old man's son, holding the stick, stood next to his father. "Leave that zinc sheet! It's mine and I won't let you steal it!"

It's mine and I don't let anyone take what's mine!" the old man yelled at the boy holding the zinc roofing sheet.

The word "mine" didn't come out as heated as the rest of the words he said; it came out almost stifled. The old man turned his sight in the direction of the tents and the brick rooms. His face facing the ground, he silently nodded. He realized he didn't mean what he had said. How could he, while he had lost all he had and did nothing about it? If he were asked about what he had lost, the zinc roofing sheets would bear no value. It was nothing compared to what he had lost before coming here. Perhaps he hated these zinc roofing sheets. The old man, like all farmers, would rather have grape vines or green almond trees over his head than zinc roofing sheets. His tantrum probably was an impulsive act demonstrating his will not to lose everything and that he was up and ready to fight for what was his (what's left to be fought for, anyway). The way he looked around though, said that nothing left was worth fighting for. What's the point of fretting over crumbs while you've lost the entire loaf?

Mr. Wajdee came back. It was obvious that he heard the entire thing. With the old man's back turned to him, he calmly

said, “Don’t worry, hajji Abu Musa, we don’t take what’s not ours.”

Puzzled, the old man turned around to face the owner of the voice. “This voice is familiar! Dear Abu Munkez!”

Abu Musa stepped toward Mr. Wajdee and hugged him. They idled in their embrace. They must have done it because it brought them back what can be returned from the past. The past in which all of us wish to live. They were few moments, sure, yet they reminded them of many memories. Memories were one of the rare things that the militias couldn’t take away. They were the most valuable possessions most of us had.

“Sorry about that,” Abu Musa said after breaking their embrace.

Mr. Wajdee cast a curious glance at the boys, inquiring where they had gotten the zinc roofing sheets from. They remained silent for a moment. “We thought they were abandoned. They were very dirty!” one of the boys broke the silence a moment later.

Hajj Abu Musa smiled and signaled his son to hop in and help the boys. He looked at the approaching clouds and said, “All right. Get back to work, I’ll bring you some tea.”

“We just had tea!” one of the young men said.

“You’ll have it again then!” the hajji said, already on his way to grab tea.

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Friday

April 2, 1948

After the burial of the martyrs...

After sunset, and after burying nine martyrs, we regrouped and discussed what to do in the next hours. The majority decided to stay albeit the risk involved. There was no telling the armed militants would not come back. Some villagers wanted to go to supposedly safer villages. We, who lost family members, decided to pack up and march beyond the River.

We packed our memories before we did our belongings. We wished we buried the memory of that day with the bodies of the martyrs. We went on our journey, each of us carrying the burden of our grief, under the light of a crescent moon that guided our path. Our hearts, though, were darkened. Injustice

and helplessness killed off something inside us. We strolled dimly, like shadows in the dark.

I put on the scarf Mariam never got to see on me. I wasn't sure if I did it because it was cold, or because I wanted to remember how happy Mariam was when she was sewing it, or because I craved to touch something that held her scent.

We loaded our baggage and helped the women and children onto the horses. The men had to walk for the most part, riding a horse in intervals to take some rest. Ahmad refused to ride and let me walk at first, and it took some effort to convince him otherwise. “We won't make it tonight anyhow. You will stay up to watch, so you must get some rest,” I told him at last.

He nodded in agreement.

Ahmad sneaked a glance at Zahra (who lost a brother that day) whenever he could. After a while, he came to me and asked, “I know you loved Mariam -maybe more than I love Zahra- and you're aching over your separation. Do you regret knowing her now? Do you wish you had never met her?”

“Marrying her was the best thing I've ever done in my life.”



Ahmad smiled and headed toward one of the luggage-carrying horses. He grabbed the cage that contained the fancy bird he caught that Friday and approached the horse that Zahra rode on. I couldn't tell what they were whispering nor make up their faces. I switched my attention to the horse carrying my son and two other women. He was awake, so I asked one of them to bring him down to me.

Holding his tiny hand, we walked together for a few paces. He was happy with his progress and was no longer constantly falling like he used to a few days ago. It was getting colder. I took off the scarf and wrapped it around his neck. Her scent still lingering on it, I imagined Munkez wrapped in Mariam's arms.

Some minutes later, I gave him back to the women.

It was almost midnight. We reached a hill with dense trees at its bottom. There was a junction that branched off into three paths. One of the men thought we better stop for a while and said he needed to relieve himself. We agreed and others went around to do the same.

While I was walking away from the others (looking for a rock or tree for privacy), Ahmad came jogging to me and said, "She smiled when I gave her the bird."

I patted him on the shoulder in congratulation. I looked over my shoulder to make sure I was not seen. The whinnying of the horses was barely audible.

“I need to relieve myself, too,” Ahmad said and went for a tree distant enough from mine.

He was roughly thirty meters away, but the night was calm and I could hear him cry. He was trying to stifle it but couldn't. He chose to weep alone instead of sharing his grief with me. That made me pity him; he was feeling lonelier than I thought.

I was done and ready to go back to the others, but I decided to wait for Ahmad. He took way too long than usual (it never took him half this long when we went out hunting). I grew worried.

I didn't make a move until I heard rattling coming from the tree Ahmad used to conceal himself. I waited for a few more seconds. Still nothing. I closed the distance to his spot and heard the rattling again. I realized it wasn't coming from there exactly.

"A hyena!" I thought to myself. I drew the pistol Ahmad gave me.

I was about to call out and tell him not to worry about the gunshot. But the sound of it would scare the living hell out of the others. I stepped closer to the sound.

What happened next took me by surprise. I heard a gunshot from the back, where the others were waiting.

"Hyenas!" I figured. This will scare the horses off!

I wanted to go back, but the weird sound was getting closer. I aimed my gun and stood my ground.

Something wrong was going on. The gunshots didn't cease and they sounded like... a shootout!

Two armed men appeared and shouted in the enemies' language. I shot one before they had the chance to raise their guns. The other fell to the ground. Ahmad was holding his rifle, smoke rising from the barrel.

"The others!" Ahmad yelled. "My ankle!" he fell to the ground screaming, just as we started running under the wheeze of the bullets.

I quickly dragged him and hid behind a rock. We knew we would be found easily. Luckily, the bullet scratched his ankle and went its way. Ahmad quit screaming and readied his rifle to shoot again. They were coming for us.

The shootout at the junction stopped. A terrible thought came to my mind: they were all dead. I tried to focus on the incomers and how to survive, but the image of Munkez dead took over my mind.

“How many bullets you got?” Ahmad asked me.

“Five.”

“Then aim for the head!”

He acted steadfastly under immense pressure, logically thinking about how to eliminate the thugs.

Since you’re reading my journal, you’ve deduced by now that I survived. Ahmad did, too. The Ahmad who survived was not the same, though. It’s as if he died and was reborn with a new character. He coldly looked at me and said, “Hold!” in an unrelenting tone that I have never heard before.

He placed the rifle on my shoulder and aimed at the trees that shadows were lurking behind. I covered my ears and braced. He fired once and almost blew my ears off. I was able to hear whimpering coming from where Ahmad fired albeit the buzzing in my ears. Another shot fired... another whimpering. They fired back at us. Ahmad stopped shooting and we took cover behind the rock.

“I’m reloading!” he whispered to me. I realized he wanted me to cover him and halt their advance. I fired four times and they held their ground. I was about to fire more, but I remembered I had only one bullet left. I kept it for later.

Ahmad finished reloading. We could not see any of our enemies. They stopped shooting and hid. But they were still there. There was no way we could move.

The premonition of finding my son dead was taking over my senses, and it showed. Ahmad asked me to calm down. I looked at his face for quite some time. He was no longer the same person who told me about his love a few hours ago. He was no longer mumbling like he did when he told me about Zahra. His breaths were calculated, his words efficient and on point.

“I heard gunshots in the back. There are more of them,” he said, pointing toward the trees we were watching.

I nodded in agreement.

We were worried the rest of the thugs would come at us from the back. We saw shadows approaching the figures hiding behind the trees. No time to worry about that. It seemed they did not account for a lot, but, for one thing, we

were only two. And for another, we did not have much ammo left.

We slowly started toward a bigger rock, further away from the trees. Shooting at them wouldn't be the brightest thing to do. No reason to compromise our new hiding spot.

Moments later we heard something drop by the rock we were taking cover behind earlier. The thing turned out to be a grenade. It exploded and sent the rock moving. Ahmad was growing uneasy. We were surrounded.

The thugs cheered in celebration. Three of them walked out to where the grenade went off. They were in plain sight. Easy targets to take down. If we had fired at them, our spot would have been exposed. And there was no way we could kill the still-behind-the-trees thugs.

But there was no escaping the confrontation. When they walk up and find no bodies, they would spread out and look for us. Three of them were ten meters away from the rock, and one threw another hand grenade. They braced for the explosion. The moment it went off, Ahmad got up and shot two dead. His rifle jammed. I immediately stretched my neck over the rock to locate the third target. I did and fired my last bullet. He dropped dead.

We exchanged looks, knowing we couldn't fight any longer. His rifle was jammed, and there was no chance of fixing it without revealing our spot. I also didn't have any bullets left. We looked at the shadows behind the tree line. No more than three now. They looked hesitant to leave the safety of the trees after watching their companions lying dead on the ground; still not knowing where the shots came from.

Moments later, the shadows backed away.

We waited for twenty minutes before we moved. We went to the bodies and grabbed the weapons.

Ahmad leaned against my shoulder. We walked back to the junction expecting the worst. We saw bodies on the ground from a distance. There were no horses in sight.

Four of our men were on the ground. Only one was still alive.

I put Ahmad down and went to the dying man. "What happened, Abu Khalil?" I asked him. I was looking all over for the others, especially my son. Abu Khalil noticed what I was doing and said, "Don't worry. Your son is fine. They ran away unharmed." It felt strange, the dying man calming the unhurt one.

"Which way did they take?"

He started raising his hand, but it collapsed on his bloodied chest almost immediately. Abu Khalil's life came to an end.

I looked at Ahmad and shook my head. We might have known where they went had we arrived a minute before.

I went back to Ahmad and checked his wound. I knew that even if we'd figured out where they had gone, we would not have been able to follow them. We looked at the bodies and contemplated what to do: bury them, or leave right away to earn time.

“How are we going to find them?” he asked.

“Let's find someone who could fix you,” I said and helped him up. “It won't end well for you if your bleeding doesn't stop.”

We started our journey beyond the River, leaving behind us the bodies in the embrace of the night, knowing some wounds would never be healed.

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There were some pages left to read, but I chose not to continue. I handed him the journal back despite the urge for answers. “I spent months looking for them in the other camps after I had gotten here. And I ask every student which village



they come from. All to no avail,” he said as if he sensed my curiosity.

That was that and I didn't ask any further questions.

Setting up the zinc roofing sheets was not going well. The strong wind made them swing left and right. And we were cold. The clouds haven't yet covered the sky. It was cold and dark, just the same.

We managed to finish the roof before the imminent rain, which looked minutes away from falling.

To take refuge from the wind, Mr. Wajdee sat down in front of a room near the one we just finished. One of the kids who helped us sat to his right.

Satisfied, Mr. Wajdee's attention was focused on the room he would use to teach, which was to his left. Now that it was done with, he was exhilarated. He didn't even pay his dusty clothes any attention—the new room effect, probably. Let alone forgetting about dusting his clothes, completing the room made him forget about his grief, however short-timed it was. A wide smile was on his face. It was as genuine as a smile could be. He didn't notice me watching him. When one smiles to oneself, it's real. It seemed like nothing could avert him from staring at the newly built room.

My focus shifted to the kid sitting to Mr. Wajdee's right. The kid was feeling cold. Squeezing his shoulders to his chest, he put a small basket next to him and rummaged through it. He took a woolen scarf out of the basket and wrapped it around his neck. There was no mistaking that the scarf was olive green, despite the dimness the thick clouds caused and the scarf itself being tattered. I recognized the "W" sewn on it right away. The letter that, if you flip it upside down, would be an "M."

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# **NOISY TOYS – Abdullah Abu Snaineh**

**Translated by Wajdee Abu Madi**

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