



Delightful Days in Marjella

Meet The Hashems of Marjella Town

Picnic Plans

The summer holidays were almost over, and the Hashems were planning a large family picnic on the last Thursday before school.

How excited the eleven year old twins, Fadi and Sana, were as everyone got ready for the big event!

Their teenaged brother and sister, Akram and Noor, were helping the twins do their share of what they had planned weeks ahead! All four of them had prepared a surprise for Grandpa and Grandma, in celebration of Grandpa's return to health after a long illness.

Ginger, their naughty cat, thought that she was helping the twins too! She loved sneaking in after them, to twist and tangle the coloured ribbons. She loved rolling the ribbons into a ball and chasing it around the room!

"I wonder what the others are making.." Sana thought. "I'm sure our surprise is going to be very special!"



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Grandpa and Grandma had a surprise for the family too. They decided to choose the place for the picnic, warning everyone that they would not declare where they wanted to go until the very last moment!

Everyone was eager to know where they'd be spending the day, especially the twins.

"I hope they choose the lake," Fadi confided to his sister. He'd be able to wade where it was shallow, catch a fish or two, or swim with his cousins.

"I hope they choose the country house," answered Sana. There, she'd be able to run around the olive groves and pick some fruit off the trees.

It was August.

"The apples and pears should be ripe," she added.

"That would be nice too," agreed Fadi.

They could chase the chickens, feed the rabbits, and play hide-and-seek with the other children.

Whereto, Grandpa?

Finally, it was Thursday! Noor and Akram woke the twins up and everyone got ready. They packed the food, picnic bags, surprises and games, and went out to the driveway.

What fun! All the other cars were driving up, honking their horns, the children shouting greetings to each other as the grownups gathered to make final preparations while they waited for Grandpa and Grandma.

They didn't have long to wait.



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"Here they come!" exclaimed Fadi as Grandpa's car drove in. The whole family, including Ginger, rushed to greet them. It was wonderful seeing Grandpa behind the wheel again, and Grandma sitting proudly beside him!

"Whereto, Grandpa, whereto?" asked all the children at once, as their Grandfather got ready to drive off.

"Where you have never been before!" answered Grandpa, as he backed up out of the driveway. Then he turned to them and added, "I'll give you the next clue when we meet at the narrowest corner of the narrowest street in town!"

"Where's that?" the children wondered as they quickly bundled up into the cars.

Ginger jumped into the land-rover after the twins.

"No, Ginger. You know you can't come with us!" Fadi put her back out, shaking his head sadly. Poor Ginger was pawing the side of the car and begging to go along. The twins felt sad as they looked down at her.



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"She has never done this before!" said Sana, surprised.

"Children, where's your mother?" asked their father, Yusuf, as he got into his seat.

"She went back inside, right after Grandpa arrived," answered Akram.

"There were tears in her eyes," Noor added, as her mother reappeared and got quickly into the land-rover next to her husband. Yusuf said nothing, but drove off quickly after the others. He guessed why his wife had gone back inside. In gratitude for her father's recovery, Bassima had offered a prayer of thanks.

The twins turned to wave goodbye to Ginger, but she wasn't in the driveway.

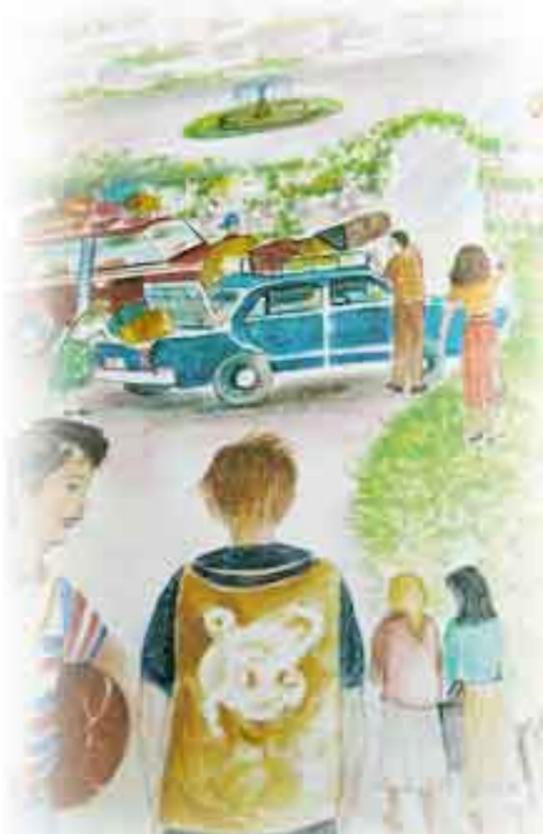
"I guess she went back into the house," said Fadi.

The Chase

Like a procession all the cars followed Grandpa through the streets of Marjella. It was a beautiful town, named after the green meadows that formed its southern border. 'Meadow of Hope', or Marj-el-amal, was its real name, but most young people called it Marjella for short. Never Grandpa and Grandma, of course.

Through the narrow winding streets of the old part of town Grandpa took them, pausing every once in a while to wave them onwards with a big smile.

"Come on, come on!" he'd shout as they paused behind him, not daring to overtake. Then with a burst of gas his car would suddenly jerk forward, and they'd hurry to keep in line.





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The children loved every minute of this unusual chase! It was so much fun that they forgot to wonder where they'd be spending the day!

"Grandpa seems to be driving in circles!" Fadi exclaimed. "Why is he doing that?"

"I believe he's having trouble getting to his destination because of all these one-way streets," answered his Dad.

"Or maybe he's just enjoying the chase!" chuckled Noor. Finally, they reached an old archway that led to what seemed to be a very narrow alley. Grandpa drove on.

"Follow him! Follow him!" yelled the children as their father slowed down. So Yusuf followed him.

The alley was narrow indeed, and the cars had to move very slowly. If the children were allowed to put their arms out, they would touch the walls! They stared at the large battered doors, the tiny old shops, and the mosque ahead, with its charming reddish-brown dome.

"This street hasn't changed since your Grandpa was a child," said Bassima. "I think he wants to visit the old mosque where he used to pray."

Sure enough, Grandpa stopped just after the mosque, in front of a quaint little



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run-down flowershop. He had to park next to one wall so he could open his car-door to get out! The children were surprised to see water flowing down the flowershop window in a stream! The flowers looked beautiful seen through the watery glass, and the children begged their parents to let them get out to join their grandparents.

"We shouldn't spoil this moment for them," answered their mother. "They must have chosen this place because it is special."

She was right, and the children realized that when Grandpa walked over to them.

"So we meet again!" he said. "Have you ever seen a street like this? Narrow, eh? Well then, drive on! We'll see you later!"

"But where shall we drive to?" the children asked excitedly, eager to know their destination. "Give us the next clue! Where shall we see you later, Grandpa?"

"Do you really want to know?" he asked mischievously.

"Of course, Grandpa! Please?"

"All right then. Off you go to:

The End of the End of the Track!"

Grandpa smiled, then turned abruptly and walked away.

Out of The Maze

"Is Grandpa serious?" asked Noor. "I've never even heard of such a place!"



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Bassima burst out laughing. "He's serious all right," she said. "He's enjoying this as much as we are!"

The children laughed. Grandpa seemed so young!

"I am so glad Grandpa feels better!" Noor whispered to Akram.

"So am I!" he whispered back. They knew how worried their mother had been during her father's illness.

"Daddy," Fadi asked, as Yusuf was trying to manoeuvre the land-rover out of the narrow winding alley. "Why did people long ago make their streets so narrow?"

"They didn't need wider streets, son," answered Yusuf. "Remember, people travelled on foot, on horseback, or in horse-drawn carriages."

"I just saw a few of those around," smiled Sana, "and quite a few donkeys, too!"

"The mules belong to small-farm owners who bring their vegetables and fruit into town," Bassima explained.

"The narrow alleys were also designed for safety. To a stranger they would seem like a maze, and he'd never find his way around," Yusuf continued.

"So intruders were easily spotted and stopped," Akram said, scratching his head thoughtfully.

"But that's after they got confused!" laughed Noor.

"Having the houses so close together also means that the alleys are shady and cool throughout most of the day," added Bassima. "The garden-courtyards are inside for the same reasons, privacy and shade."

"Oh.." said Fadi. "I didn't realize that!"



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To The End of The End Of The Track

They were so involved in this conversation that it came as a surprise to find Dad driving out onto the new mountain road!

"So," exclaimed Fadi and Sana, "that's where we're going!"

"The end of the end of the track!" Akram said.

"What track?" asked Fadi. "Do you see any tracks? I don't see any tracks. Do you?" he asked, squinting and making an utterly ridiculous expression.

"I see monkey-tracks!" shrieked Sana, pointing her finger towards her brother's feet. He bent down to look, then realized the joke as everyone burst out laughing.

"More like gorilla-tracks!" laughed Akram, teasing Fadi, whose feet were large for his age.

Fadi started behaving like a gorilla. To make him stop, Sana started a silly song. Fadi immediately picked up the tune, answering her questions. The whole family was soon repeating after the twins who were very good at doing things together.

Sana: "Where are you going?"

Fadi: "To the End of the End."

"To the End of, what?"

"The track, the track!"

"How far is that?"



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“Around the next bend,
All the way to ‘somewhere’, and back!”

“How are you going?
On foot, or horse, or mule, or snail, or camelback?”

“I’m going by car for the journey is far,
All the way to the End of the End of the track!”

The road became narrow and steep, then they reached a clearing. They were finally there!

Surprise !

They had driven to the top of the highest hill overlooking Marjella, leaving behind all the houses, cars and buses, even the vendors with their wagons of fruit-on-ice, and had reached the end of the scenic route.

“What a view!” Noor and Akram exclaimed together, as everyone got out of the cars, stretching their legs.

Noor smiled when she saw her cousin Rasha, and went to talk to her.

“How high we are!” she said, looking below at the clusters of buildings with minarets rising above them, the wide streets that looked like narrow lines, and the river that was a ribbon in the distance.



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“It feels like we’re in a plane!” said Sana breathlessly.

Fadi did not preoccupy himself with the view. He was busy exploring the area. Looks good, he thought. Some rocks, not many trees, there is a nice breeze.. and of course we need space for our surprise! He took both parts of the surprise off the luggage rack, and laid them on the ground gently, careful not to tangle the ribbons and strings.

“Akram, Akram, let’s get it ready!” he shouted excitedly. Actually, even the adults were excited. They had been looking forward to the day when the new mountain road would be open to traffic. That day had finally arrived, and here they all were!

They set about arranging things.

“Fadi!” Akram called out. “Where is the message you wrote for Grandpa and Grandma?”

“I left it there, next to the other part of the surprise,” Fadi answered as he walked towards his brother.

“It’s not here!” exclaimed Akram.

“But I just put it there!” cried Fadi, looking around.

All four children searched for the beautiful message, but they couldn’t find it anywhere! They were very disappointed. Their surprise was not going to be special after all!

“Even without the message,” said Akram, trying to cheer the others up. “We do have a fantastic kite.”

Noor nodded half-heartedly.

“It isn’t the same!” exclaimed the twins, together.



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They were right. They had worked hard preparing their surprise. Akram and Noor had spent the first week building the special red and yellow kite. It had a secret flap which opened when the string was jerked in a certain way, and confetti would then pop out in all directions! Fadi and Sana had spent another week painting the kite, writing the message, and sticking the tail and ribbons on. They had put the colourful confetti inside, together with the message, which would also spring out. Flying behind the kite, attached by a rainbow of ribbons and bows, it would read:

GRANDPA AND GRANDMA,
WE LOVE YOU!

"This is a mystery," Akram said to Noor as they searched the area again.

"Where could the message be? Nobody else was here."

"It could have flown away," Noor suggested. "It is quite windy today."

The twins stood by the railing and looked down over the steep edge of the hill.

"Well, it's gone," they said sadly.

The Mystery is Solved



Just then Grandpa and Grandma arrived.

Grandma looked so pretty as she got out of the car! She was holding a bouquet of Marjella's summer blooms, the famous Fleurs-de-lys, or 'Zambaq'.

The children ran to them, and the girls bent eagerly to smell the aromatic white blossoms that seemed to be strung onto the long stems.



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"Like precious pearls!" sighed Rasha admiringly.

"Look," said Noor, touching the buds at the tip of a stem.

"They're beautiful!" She bent to smell them. "But they don't have a scent."

"They will have the most beautiful scent when they bloom in a few days," said Grandma, smiling lovingly at Grandpa who had joined them, as she put the bouquet in the bucket of water he had fetched.

The girls hugged their grandmother.

Grandma smiled. "But you, my little buds," she said, kissing Noor and Rasha, "and you, my darling grand-children, are the loveliest jewels of all."

The children smiled happily.

This was a day the whole family would never forget. The whole family, including Ginger, as we shall soon discover!

Bassima had helped Aunt Sara prepare what she hoped would be the funniest surprise of all. Bassima had made figure-shaped cookies, and Aunt Sara, who was an artist, had used icing-sugar to dress them up like each one of them! The cookies looked so droll, and everyone laughed heartily when Akram insisted on choosing the 'Fadi-like' cookie to crunch up!

When it was the children's turn to show everyone their surprise, Fadi and Sana explained to Grandpa and Grandma what had happened.

"And it must have blown away.." Sana ended sadly.

"Don't let this upset you, children," said Grandma. "We can see your message written all over your sweet faces!"



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Grandpa was the first to fly the kite. The children raced after him as the kite flew into the air. It was beautiful!

Suddenly, something in the distance caught Grandpa's eye. He stopped, handing the string to Akram, who was waiting for his turn to fly the kite.

"The mystery of the Missing Message is solved!" Grandpa exclaimed, walking briskly towards the car-park.

"Wha ..what did Grandpa see?" the twins asked each other, hurrying after him.

"The daring detectives capture the robber red-handed!" Grandpa announced, peering underneath his car.

"Ginger!" Fadi and Sana exclaimed in surprise.

There was Ginger -under Grandpa's car- tumbling about with a large ball of coloured ribbons and torn paper! The missing message!

"How did she get here?" cried Sana.

"She must have jumped onto the luggage-rack before we left home!" Fadi answered. "We thought we had left her in the driveway, but you know how stubborn Ginger is!"

"We do, indeed!" Noor and Akram answered as they joined the others. They, too, were surprised!

"You little scamp!" Akram said, stretching out under the car to catch Ginger.

"You could have killed yourself!" shouted Noor crossly, as Ginger tried to escape with her ball.

Grandma walked up. She laughed when she realized what had happened.



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"Naughty Ginger! So, it was you who tried to spoil the children's surprise!"

"She loves those ribbons!" Fadi and Sana explained.

"That's why she insisted on coming! You took her toys and wouldn't take her with you!" Grandma chuckled.

Grandpa, of course, was the first to see the comic side of Ginger's escapade.

"I... ha-ha-ha nev-never before... ha-ha-ha!" Grandpa couldn't stop laughing long enough to finish his sentence. "I've never seen anything like it!" he said finally. "Imagine, how funny she must have looked! Ginger, high above your heads, surprising everybody she met!"

"Wiggling through the winding alleys!" added Fadi, wriggling like a snake.

"Flying by the flowershop!" laughed Sana, flapping her arms.

"Mewing to the mules!" shrieked Akram, doubling up in laughter.

"This..ha-ha-ha.. this is the funniest surprise of all!" said Grandpa.

"It certainly.... it certainly is!" Grandma replied. "But don't tell Sara and Bassima we said that!"

Noor finally caught the furry thief.

"Ginger! You're lucky you didn't fall off the luggage-rack before getting to the end of the track!" she scolded, stroking her gently. "What you did was very dangerous, Ginger. Very dangerous indeed."

"Come on, Grandma and Grandpa!" Sana and Fadi pulled their grandparents back to the clearing. They stopped to look directly above them at the kite which Akram was flying.

Akram gave the string a special tug. Suddenly, a large, multicoloured flower



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bloomed in the sky as the confetti popped out, flying in all directions! Grandma and Grandpa stood laughing under the shower of petals, as everyone cheered! It was a marvellous sight to watch!

The children's surprise was the best after all!

Later, when it was almost time to go home, Fadi and Sana asked their grandfather why he had called this place :

"The End of the End of the Track."

"Do you see that square below, where the new mountain road begins?" asked Grandpa, pointing downwards far below them.

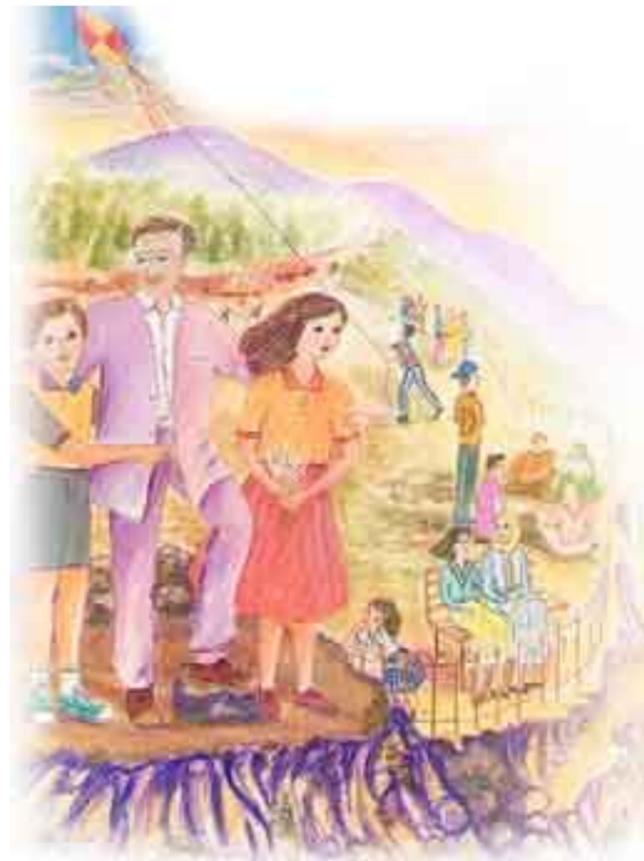
"Do you mean the park with all the people and vendors?" Fadi asked.

Grandpa nodded. "That park was once 'the End of the Track'. Long before both of you were born, when your mother was a young girl, that point used to be the final stop for the Marj-el-amal tram.

The railway tracks ended there, and the tram turned around and went back to the Central Station."

"So this place really is the end of 'the End of the Track'!" laughed Sana.

"Now I get it!" the twins exclaimed together.



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Things I Love To Do

I love chasing swift shadows

Across the wall

I love tipping pots over

And watching them fall

I love tangling the dangling

Ribbons and strings

I love flinging bright things

So they ring`ting-a-ling`!

But when someone yells, "Oh,no!

What have you done?!"

I decide that it's bedtime;

I have had enough fun!





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The Centre of my Thoughts

Who is he,
 That knocked on my heart
 And I let him enter?
 Who is he, know you not
 That he has been the centre
 Of my thoughts, full days and nights
 And seasons cold and warm?
 Who is he? The worthy one,
 Of whom I am born..
 Who is he,
 That made the night
 For me equal the day?
 Who is he,
 That made the light
 Of happiness shine my way?
 Who is he,
 That made my eyes
 Open to glorious life,
 To see the full half of a cask...
 The blunt side of a knife?
 Who is he, love of my heart
 The winner of my soul?
 He of whom I am a part
 And my head high I hold
 To say to him,
 "Father, I love you,
 And shall always do..
 May God keep you with us for ever
 And us in turn with you!"



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'I Missed You!'

Sana was very excited. School was to start tomorrow, and she knew that she would meet all her old friends!

She wanted to wear a new dress (one her friends hadn't seen), so she took the red one with white dots out of her closet and laid it on the chair.

Tomorrow! Her big day!

When her father woke her up for prayer, early the next morning, she gave him a big hug.

"Happy, Sansoon?" Yusuf asked as he kissed her.

"Yes, Daddy!" Sana said.

She loved it when Dad called her 'Sansoon'.

Her older brother and sister were already up. Akram and Noor always woke up first. Sana knew that they had a lot to do, but still, she believed they woke up too early. She thought they were great. Her twin brother, Fadi, thought they were teenage monsters! Or maybe he only said that to tease them! Fadi teased people whenever he could. Dad called it a 'sense of humour'. Mama said he took after her father.

Meaning Grandpa, of course.

Fadi finished his prayers and ran to get dressed. Sana's door was open. No one was there. He saw her red dress lying on the chair.

"Oh, how I'd love to hear her scream!" he said to himself impishly. So he crept quietly into her room, held the dress to his side as he crept back out, and hid it in his closet.

When Sana had finished whatever she was doing in the bathroom, which



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took ages, she ran to her room, skipping and jumping (the silly way girls do). Then, suddenly, everyone in the house, no, everyone in town heard her scream!! Fadi was delighted!

*"Her scream is music to my ears,
(That is what sisters are for!)
One scream would make me happy,
But I always try for more!
I always try for more!"*

He laughed and laughed until he felt his pyjama-pants split open at the seams!

Sana felt very unhappy. She was getting late for school and her dress was nowhere to be found!

Fadi came out of his room, already dressed, but his face looked funny. It looked like Ginger's face when she had stolen something from the kitchen.

Their mother came in. Mama always knew when something was wrong.

"What's wrong, darling?" she asked. "Was that you screaming or did Fadi accidentally step on Ginger's tail?"

"My new red dress!" cried Sana. "I've searched everywhere for it! It was lying right here on the chair!"

Bassima looked at her daughter quietly.

"Were you planning to wear it to school today?"

"Yes, Mama.."



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"Do you think that's a good idea, dear?"

Sana thought for a moment. Then she looked at her mother.

"Maybe not, " she said. "Maybe it isn't such a good idea after all."

Bassima smiled at Sana lovingly. She then brought out her new school uniform, ironed and sparkling clean. It looked beautiful!

Sana put it on, and combed her hair. She then wore her shining new shoes.

Bassima told her not to worry about the dress.

"I think I know where to find it," she said. "Whoever took it actually did you a favour, but even so, the guilty persons will get what they deserve! You did the right thing by not wearing your pretty new dress today."

So Sana didn't waste her time worrying any more. She never worried when Mama took care of things!

"School, here I come!" she whispered.





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Sana loved meeting her schoolmates again! They looked so good in their new uniforms. A few of the girls were wearing pretty dresses, but they just didn't look right.

"I am glad I didn't wear my new dress," thought Sana. "It would have been too fancy."

She waved at Fadi as he lined up to go to his class. He waved back.

Yusuf and Bassima had decided that it would be better for Sana and Fadi to attend separate classes at school.

"Each of you is an individual," Bassima had said.

The twins didn't mind. This gave them two sets of friends!

How the lessons flew by for Sana that first day! She was looking forward to the fifth period, which was Islamic Education. Miss Ruba was teaching them again this year! What fun they always had!

"Assalamu-alaykum! Peace be upon you!"

The children stood up happily. Some girls wished they could come forward and kiss her.

"So, how are you my dear children?"

They told her about their vacation, their families, travels and friends. She told them that they had grown since last year, and they got into a conversation about how they were beginning to look different, especially in height! Some children were even asked questions by well-meaning family friends, like, "Your daughter must be in high school now," or, "Don't tell me this teenager is your son," and they weren't even teenagers yet!

"Don't worry about how you look now!" Miss Ruba told them. "Just eat



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healthy food, sleep well, do some exercises, and bathe daily. Time will take care of all your problems!"

They always started the lesson by reciting what they had memorized of the Qur'an. Miss Ruba had a little booklet for each student in which she marked the child's progress, and put a star or cute sticker for encouragement. Then they studied something from their books, and were given homework. At the end, Miss Ruba always had a riddle for them. The riddles were fun, and the children loved searching for the answers.

"Who can tell me the answer to the riddle I gave you before the holidays started? What was the riddle, Mazen?"

Mazen stood up. He had repeated it so many times he knew it by heart!

*"Kind words, and bad words,
Both leave lips as sounds,
Growing thereafter as trees in the ground.
The good : fruitful forever, reaches the skies,
While the bad tree: decaying, uprooted it dies!"*

"Thank you, Mazen. You knew the riddle by heart! Now, who can tell me where to find the answer?"

Many children raised their hands, each wishing to be the one to read from the Qur'an.

"Sana?" asked the teacher.

Sana stood up.

"The answer is in Ibrahim; Chapter 14, verse 24."

"Read it please, dear," smiled Miss Ruba.



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"In the name of God, Most Compassionate, Most Merciful," Sana began:

*"Don't you see how God sets forth an example,
A good word, like a good tree:
Its root firmly established,
And its branches in the sky.
It brings forth its fruit at all times
By permission of its Lord,
And God sets examples for people
That they may often remember.
And the example of an evil word
Is that of an evil tree:
Uprooted from the surface of the earth,
It has no secure foundation."*

Sana read the verse beautifully!

"What do you understand from this verse?" asked the teacher.

Hassan raised his hand excitedly.

"I think it means that a good word always brings forth more goodness, like a tree bearing fruit in all seasons, while an evil or bad word destroys the person from whom it comes, and ruins everything it touches, like an evil tree."

"True," said Miss Ruba. "Thank you, Hassan. That was an excellent explanation. Are words the only source of badness and evil?"

"No," said Najla. "Actions could be evil too."

"Yes," said Miss Ruba. "Deeds could be evil too. We should learn a lesson from this, because most people do not realize how destructive their words and



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deeds could be. Think of an evil deed as pollution: although it sometimes isn't noticed immediately, the damage remains, and may strike anywhere, anytime."

The children had more ideas about this to discuss, and Miss Ruba helped them.

"We're out of time!" she announced, smiling, as the bell rang for recess. "To end our lesson.."

"The riddle, Miss, the riddle!" the whole class shouted at once.

"Would I forget?" the teacher laughed. "The riddle for next week is.. let me see.. .Okay:

*An enemy won by kindness and cheer
Becomes a good friend, close and dear!"*

Miss Ruba wrote the riddle on the blackboard, and the students excitedly copied it, already exchanging ideas as to where the answer might be found.

A short while later Sana went to the staff-room to see Miss Ruba. She had bought her favourite teacher a card which said: "I missed you!" She had also written something sweet inside, and had decorated it with hearts and flowers.

Miss Ruba gave her a big hug and a kiss.

"I missed you too, sweetheart!" her teacher said.

Sana was so happy she felt as if she were flying in the air! Yes, this was going to be a wonderful year!



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The School Year

*Schooldays are alive
With the joy of learning!
Every day we can meet*

*Our very best friends!
This is where we gain
Knowledge and experience,
This is where our time
Is excitingly spent:
Watching days flying by,
And the seasons turning,*

*Till one more year
Draws to an end!*



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Taller at last!!!

Fadi felt wonderful seeing everyone again after the long summer vacation!!

He was very happy at school.

He had grown taller, and that felt good.

There was a time last year when he thought he would never grow. All his friends wore pants that were getting shorter by the day, while he felt his pants grow longer.

"Maybe the detergent Mama uses to wash the pants is the kind you use after something has shrunk, so you can make it big again," he thought.

"Or maybe the soap I use in my bath is the kind that makes humans shrink."

Anyway, to be safe, Fadi changed his soap (choosing the brand the tallest boy in his class was using), and when that didn't work, he decided to soak himself in a tub full of 'Magic Soap' soapsuds.

"One hour should do it," he thought. That was the longest hour of his entire life! He had to make up a song to pass the time:

*"I'd rather be a mini-mouse in a wee wall,
A little leaf on a tiny tree,
A microscopic micro-organism in the atmosphere,
Or even a puny pea !*

*Whatever, wherever, no matter how small,
Rather that, than short little me, Rather that, than short little me!*



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*Magic Soap, if you don't make me tall:
Down the drain you will be!"*

When he finally came out of the tub and measured his height (for the tenthousandth time) he found that he hadn't grown taller at all!

Only his hands and feet were swollen and wrinkled like an old man's!

So he fulfilled his threat and threw away the Magic Soap.

That was when he started eating long things.

For example, he wouldn't eat a short cucumber, or a short carrot, no matter what.

"If you're not long, I won't take you along!" he'd sing as he threw the unlucky, undersized vegetable back into the fridge.

Even his beloved beef-burger was given poor treatment; he wiped it off his menu of delicacies, and switched to the luscious, long hot dog!

He started taking the longest route when he went around on his bike, and always did things the lo-o-o-ngeest way he could.



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His prayers were quite brief though, and Dad suggested that Fadi might make those longer too, just like everything else.

So he did.

He spent more time on his prayers, and spoke to God for a long time afterwards.

He asked God to make all good things easy for him.

One of the things he really wanted was to grow taller- much, much taller.

Although everyone laughed at him when he'd choose long things, they all praised him for his prayers.

Fadi didn't do it for the praise though. He really got to enjoy it. He found that he had more time to tell God about everything, and he knew that God understood him better than anyone else.

Why ?

"Well, because He made me!" Fadi thought.

When the school year drew to an end, Fadi stopped worrying about getting taller, stopped measuring himself, and started enjoying his summer vacation: swimming, cycling, and all the other wonderful summer sports!

Finally, at the end of summer, when he had to wear the school trousers again (he was wearing shorts all summer long) he found that they didn't fit!

They were tight, and, oh... so, so , so short!



Delightful Days in Marjella

Sugar and Spice

Cats are strange animals.

They don't show love the way dogs do, but they still do love you. They are quite selfish, and think of their own comfort and peace of mind before anyone else's.

Ginger was no exception.

Where would you find her when it was too warm to go out?

She'd be asleep on the cool, marble floor beneath the shady grape vine, her arms spread out (unlike true cats, more like stuffed cats, you know, the tiger-skin spread out on the floor with a real tiger's head?).

That's what she looked like, and she'd never move, even if someone stepped on her or tripped over her!

She was one cool cat.

One day, Sana and Fadi looked for Ginger but she was nowhere to be found.

It was winter, and she usually lay in true cat fashion, all curled up from the cold, on the rough mat in the entrance.

Mother had placed that mat there to keep everyone's shoes clean as they entered the house. You see, they were supposed to wipe them as they walked in.

But Ginger wasn't there, in her usual place.

Once, on a cold wintry day last year, Ginger was mistaken for the doormat,



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and Aunt Sara was scared out of her wits!

That was only a few days after little Ginger had arrived at the Hashem home, and she and Aunt Sara hadn't been introduced yet. Poor Aunt Sara! She thought the doormat had come to life! Even Ginger got scared, and both were screaming their heads off. The children came running. They thought the house was on fire!

When Aunt Sara's eyes had adjusted to the dark and she could see properly, she screamed even louder. One thing she is afraid of more than ghostly shadows in the dark, or living doormats, is cats. cats! CATS!!

Later, though, they both felt silly for screaming at each other and became good friends. (But the children never forgot the funny incident, especially since Aunt Sara, who had her father's sense of humour, helped them write a poem about it.)

But that was a long time ago.



Delightful Days in Marjella

*Tall Spooky Shadow
Screamed in the night!
Scared by springing doormat,
It shouted in fright!*

*Small Shadow replied,
With squeals loud and shrill:
Both shadows together,
Shrieking at each other,
Shuddering and
shivering...until
Someone remembered to turn
on the light!*

Now, the children were worried. Ginger couldn't be found anywhere. They kept calling and calling her name.

No answer.

Bassima said they shouldn't worry. Maybe Ginger had gone off somewhere and would return later. She said that cats rarely got lost.

"They always find their way back home, wherever they might be," she added, comfortingly.

The phone rang. It was Sana's friend.

"Come over," said Reema. "I want to show you the doll's house. Dad finished it today."

Reema's father had been building a wonderful doll's house for her. It was his gift to her for memorizing the thirtieth section of the Qur'an. He had begun working on the little house the day she started learning the section, and this morning she had finally completed all twenty pages!

Sana had often seen him working on the doll's house when she visited her friend.

Reema must be so proud !

Sana hurried with her homework, made sure there were no mistakes and showed it to her mother.

Bassima, her eyes twinkling, gave her permission to go.



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"You'll love this!" she said to herself.

Reema's house was just two streets away, and Sana walked there. She was happy because she knew they'd have fun with the new doll's house, but she was also sad because Ginger wasn't with her. You see, Ginger enjoyed visiting Reema's house where she was always given a bowl of milk.

"Come in, Sana," invited Reema's mother. "We have a wonderful creation to show you."

Sana ran into the playroom. There, occupying the corner of the room, was the most beautiful doll's house she had ever seen! It was made of wood, with real windows and frilly white curtains.

"I stitched the curtains," said Reema's mother.

It had real tiles on the roof and miniature furniture in the rooms. There was a mini-kitchen, with a stove and a fridge, a table and chairs.

"I built the furniture," said Reema's brother, Hani.

The house looked so real. There even were some bushes around the entrance. The door had a brass ring on it, and a tiny keyhole!

Reema's father walked in. "Do you like it?" he asked.

"Oh, yes. I love it!" Sana said, happy for Reema. "What a wonderful creation, Uncle!"



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"But that was not the creation I meant," said Reema's mother, smiling.

At that moment Reema walked in. She was holding a little doll's bed in her arms. The blue satin cover was thick and fluffy. Sana could tell that Reema was proud of it by the loving way she held it.

"I know that you made the bedspread, Aunty," said Sana, "and you made the bed, Hani. They're wonderful!"

Reema was smiling as she showed Sana the bed. She placed it carefully on the floor, slowly pulling the satin bedspread aside, and there, all snuggled and curled inside the doll's bed, were the two tiniest and cutest kittens anyone had ever seen!

Their little bodies were quivering. Their paws were so small, and their squeaks were so soft you could barely hear them!

"Oh my.." said Sana, kneeling beside them.

"Oh .. my God! This is the most wonderful creation of all!"

At that moment she felt something furry brushing against her ankles.

"Ginger! Are they yours?"

And Ginger said yes, in a catty way, by mewing for her babies, then licking them lovingly.

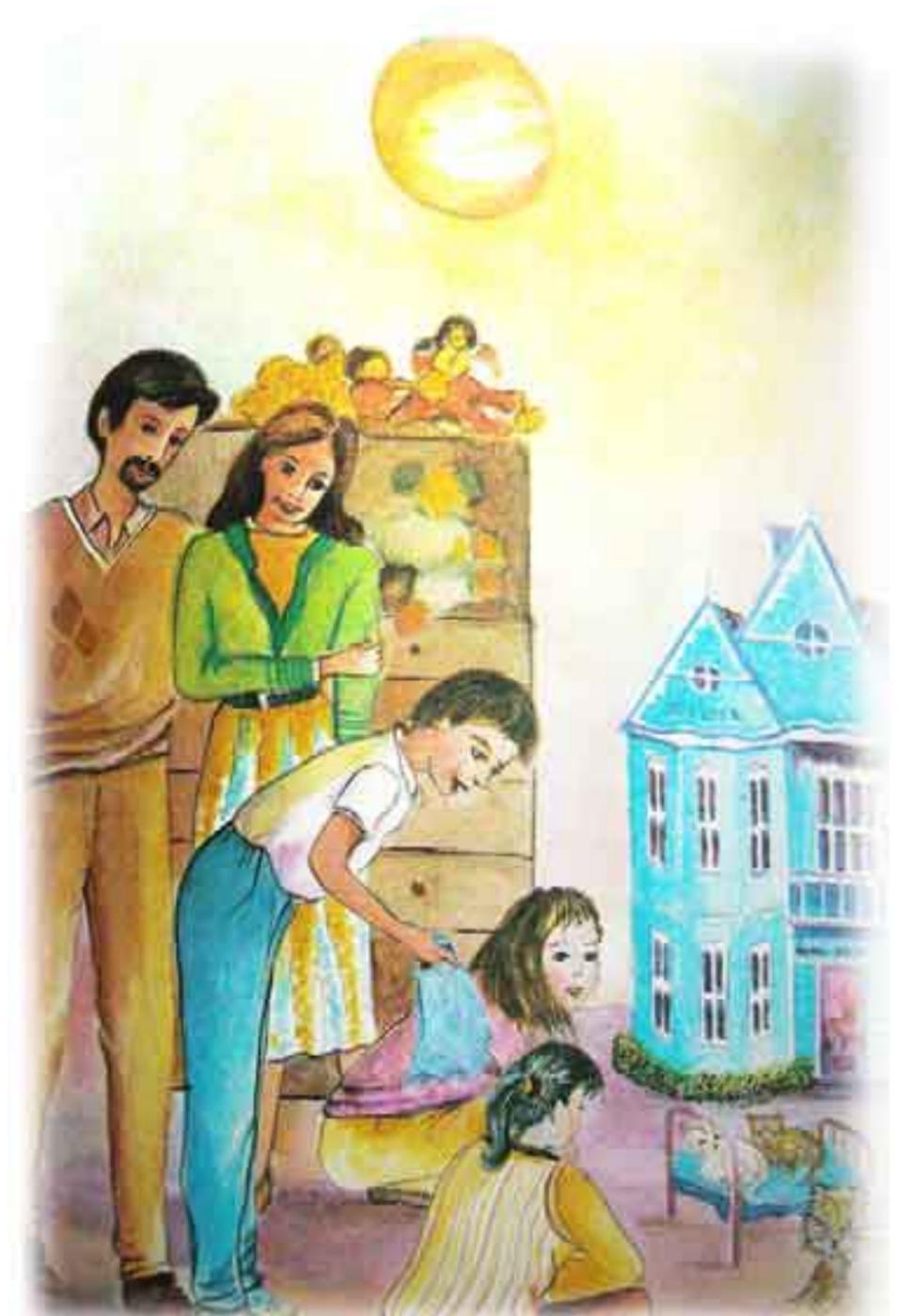
"Oh, Ginger!" exclaimed Sana. "They're adorable!"

"What names will you give them?" Reema asked.

"I haven't had time to decide, yet. But I'll name one, and Fadi can name the



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other," Sana replied. "He won't believe this!" she added.

Ginger, a caring mother now, held each of her little kittens by the skin on the back of the neck and carried them, one by one, into the doll's house.

There, she found a cozy spot in the corner, where Reema's father had left the extra wood-shavings, and where Reema's mother had left bits and pieces of cloth.

She put them down gently, sat beside them, looked up at her friends' faces peering in through the window, and said to them in a catty way:

"This is our house for now, and we love it!"

Those two wonderful creations, named 'Sugar' and 'Spice', brought happiness to many children in Marjella!



Delightful Days in Marjella

He Knows Everything

How many hours passed, how many to come ?

How many rays in the light of the sun ?

How many flashes in a flashing star ?

God alone knows how many there are !

How many flickers in a candle-flame ?

How many raindrops will be enough rain ?

How many creatures will swim the blue sea ?

God alone knows how many there'll be !

How many children are tearful and sad ?

How many laugh, how many are glad ?

How many inches will each one grow tall ?

God alone knows about them all!

How many heartbeats before a heart stops ?

How many leaves yellow, how many will drop ?

How many new lives will each new day bring ?

God made all, so:

He alone knows everything !



Delightful Days in Marjella



Delightful Days in Marjella

The Thief

Bad Habits

Luna was a thief. Everyone knew that.

Whenever something was lost, Luna had it. Whenever something was broken, Luna did it. The children did not imagine it. It was true.

Fadi disliked Luna. So did all the children in her class.

Luna was an ugly little girl. Her clothes were dirty, and her hair was a mess. She was a careless little girl, whom nobody in school wanted to come close to.

During recess, Fadi would see Luna eat part of her sandwich, throw the rest into the garbage, and walk off towards the classrooms. Then, after recess, everyone would expect a report of something misplaced or missing.

Luna was sly. She often wouldn't just take things. She would simply move a pencil from the pencil-case in the first row to the pencil-case in the last row.

When everyone screamed, "It must be Luna!" or "Luna took it!" she'd calmly say, "No, I didn't. Search me!" Of course, nothing would be found. Then someone would say, "Look! Anwar has it!" and poor Anwar would be blamed. And so on.

The new school rules said that nobody was allowed into the classrooms during recess, no matter what the excuse. And the classrooms were locked. But Luna still had her way.

There were Gym classes, Art classes, Islamic Education classes (which were held in the Mosque sometimes), and she could always find an excuse to be in the class by herself.

All it took was half a minute. Thirty seconds and the mischief was done!

The teachers did their best to help Luna change her bad habits. The Principal met her parents several times. They, too, were unable to help solve her problem.





Delightful Days in Marjella

Once, a teacher phoned the parents asking them about a large sum of money which Luna had tried to buy chocolates for the whole class with. Her father seemed sad and ashamed. He said Luna had taken it without permission from his pocket that morning. "Stolen" was a word he couldn't use. The next day Luna was absent from school.

On 'Teachers' Day' Luna brought three bottles of perfume to school. She presented them to the three teachers who shouted at her the most. The teachers took the gifts to the Administration. They were open, half-empty bottles of perfume which Luna had taken from her mother's dresser!

Stolen, of course!

The next day, Luna was absent from school again.

The only teacher that Luna seemed to like was Miss Ruba.

Miss Ruba never shouted at her, and always had a kind word when she seemed to be improving.

Everyone knew that Luna was lying when she said that she never missed any prayers, but Miss Ruba still gave her stars.

One day, when Luna's stealing and lying got too far, the Principal had a long talk with her teachers. After the talk he spoke to Miss Ruba in private.

"I have chosen you for a difficult task, but I believe that only you are suited for the responsibility, Miss Ruba. You have a way with children, and possess the patience and kindness necessary to help Luna." He asked Miss Ruba to take care of the little girl and try to solve her problem.

"Do whatever you feel is best," he added.



Delightful Days in Marjella

The Plan

A few days later, when Luna was absent (after another problem at school) Miss Ruba spoke to the whole class.

"Listen," she said. "You know that it is our duty to help Luna. She may seem to be a bad little girl, but nobody is born bad. People become what they are because of many things which affect their lives.

First, we have to find out what it is that makes Luna behave the way she does. Then, we must help her. Finally, we must stop and look at ourselves, judging truthfully if we really are as good as we seem to be. In that way, we can help Luna and help ourselves as well.

I have a plan, but we must work together as a team."

Miss Ruba explained her plan, and everyone listened carefully.

Fadi raised his hand.

"Once we begin, we mustn't tell anyone anything at all?" he asked.

"No one," said Miss Ruba. "No one at all, because we have no right to tell anyone of another person's secrets. I will personally inform the Administration and your parents when there is something they should know. But you must learn the value of silence. And Luna must not suspect that we have a plan. She must believe that things are happening naturally."

Step One of the plan began immediately.

That day, three children got permission from their parents to visit Luna, who was sick at home. Fadi was one of them. Miss Ruba met them at school and they went to Luna's home together.

Luna's mother let them in. The house was not very tidy; the vacuum cleaner stood in the hall, and it seemed that Luna's mother had been cleaning the house when they arrived.



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"I am sorry," she said, "but I just came in from work. Luna! Luna!" she shouted to her daughter. "Your friends and teacher are here!" She led them in, then turned back and shouted again, "Where are you, you naughty child? I told you an hour ago to get ready for your guests!"

Luna came in, flushed and trembling.

"Hello," she said shyly.

"Why are you red in the face?" asked her mother. "Were you at my make-up again?" Luna shook her head. But her face truly was flushed. Even her eyes were pink. Her mother frowned, putting her hand to Luna's brow.

"Do you still have a fever? It is quite high. You were much better this morning. I thought you'd be well by now. Did you take two aspirins as I told you to?"

"Yes," said Luna, "and I even took a bath."

"A bath? But there wasn't any warm water. I hadn't turned the heater on. Did you bathe in cold water, Luna?"

"It- it wasn't very cold.." said Luna, hesitantly.

"Oh dear.. excuse me.." said the mother, turning to Miss Ruba. "Something must be done with this child!"

She looked at Luna angrily. "Off to your room! You are not allowed out for two hours! Take two aspirins and lie down. You don't want your father to hear of this, do you?"

The phone rang. The mother answered it, argued with someone on the line, and came back.

The children felt extremely embarrassed .



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Miss Ruba talked a little with Luna's mother, and then asked to be excused. They all left, feeling very uncomfortable.

Luna was absent the next day, too.

After the class discussion, the children and Miss Ruba were able to put Step Two into action.

During Art class each child made Luna a card.

The girls wrote cards saying sweet things, like 'I Love You', and 'I miss you'.

The boys wrote cards saying 'Luna, get well sooner (not later)', and 'There's no fun when you are gone', and 'Luna: Come back to Earth', and other crazy things.



Delightful Days in Marjella

The children had a pleasant surprise when Miss Ruba joined them in the Art room! They put the cards in a large envelope and sent them to Luna's home with the bus driver.

Fadi thought about their discussion all day.

Miss Ruba had told them that Luna wanted people to be pleased with her. She needed friendship and encouragement. She needed to be shown love and care. Luna hated baths, but she had taken one that morning to please her mother. Of course, her mother wasn't pleased because Luna was ill and shouldn't have used cold water. But Luna didn't realize that.

To her: whatever she did was always wrong!

Poor Luna !

So Step Two was to show her that her friends cared.

Fadi felt certain that she would love her cards, but he wanted to give Luna something really special. He discussed that with Miss Ruba.

"I don't know if they could keep a kitten in the apartment," Miss Ruba answered. "I'll talk to her parents," she promised.

Luna came to school soon after that.

Step Three was in action. A group of children played with Luna all day. The group would change the next day, but Luna always had someone playing with her. Children wouldn't move away as they used to do, leaving her lonely and sad. Then, wonderful things started happening.

The teacher would come into the classroom and find a flower on her desk.



Delightful Days in Marjella

When she asked, "Who put this here?" everyone would say, "It must be Luna!"

Luna would look puzzled, and say, "But I didn't..." and the children would say, "But only someone as nice as you would have thought of that!"

And when something got lost, or 'taken' by Luna, the child who actually saw her take it, instead of pointing a finger at her and accusing her, would say, "I took it by mistake, and I'm really sorry. It won't happen again."

Luna would look puzzled, and ask, "Why did you say you took it, when you didn't?" The child would say, "Because I care for you and I don't want you to get into trouble."

Anyway, Luna soon got the message.

It seemed that her classmates cared!





Delightful Days in Marjella

Love and Friendship

Fadi saw the change in her. He told her once, " You look nice today, Luna."

It was true. Her hair was tidy, and her clothes were clean. She smiled.

"I asked Mom to wash my clothes and iron them for me over the weekend." She started to say something else, then stopped. Fadi gave her a friendly look.

"Poor Mom.." Luna continued. "She never has any time for me, now that she is working and my little brother is such a nuisance. I told her I'd take care of him while she took care of my clothes, and she agreed."

"That's good," said Fadi. "You are lucky to have a little brother."

"Am I?" she asked. "I've always felt very unlucky to have him. Dad loves him so much, and doesn't love me at all. He wanted me to be a boy. When I was born, and turned out to be only a girl, he was angry with Mom. Mom said that she had to go back to live with her family for some time, because of me. She said that Dad never held me, even as a baby."

Fadi was disturbed, and felt sorry for Luna. But here she was, talking to him as a true friend for the first time! She was telling him how she felt, and he had to listen, although he felt uncomfortable.

Luna went on. "Dad always shouts at me, whatever I do. He and Mom hit me sometimes, but mostly, they shout at me. They never shout at my brother, or hit him. Never."

"Why do they hit you?" Fadi shivered.

He knew that children only get hit when they do something very, very bad, and his parents had never actually hit him.



Delightful Days in Marjella

"Whenever they are angry with each other, they hit me."

"But it isn't your fault!" exclaimed Fadi.

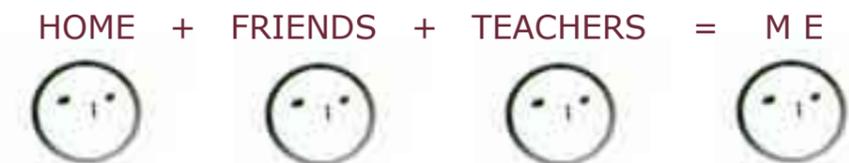
"It is too!" Luna replied. "Anything terrible which happens to our family is my fault. I am the bad person in the family. Don't you see?"

Fadi didn't see at all. He had two sisters, not one, and his parents treated them all equally. Sometimes, as a matter of fact, Fadi was a little jealous of Sana because he saw in his father's eyes a tenderness reserved only for her.

He must speak to Miss Ruba about this as soon as possible, he thought. Miss Ruba must know about Luna's problem. He won't tell anyone else. The whole class had promised not to discuss Luna's problems with anyone.

After his talk with Miss Ruba, all the children, including Luna, were asked to use a chart which she had prepared.

The chart looked like this:



Miss Ruba collected the charts.

She showed them to the class one day when Luna was absent. Some children had a sad face in one of the columns, but ended in the last column with a happy one.



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Most children didn't have sad faces at all. But Luna's chart was different. All the faces in her columns were angry ones, except for the last face which was very sad. She had even drawn tears running down the cheeks!

HOME + FRIENDS + TEACHERS = ME



How could a child have a smiling face when he or she gets several angry faces!

Miss Ruba showed them that day, that at least two out of these three faces should be "smiling" if the child is to smile and be happy!

The children felt very bad. They were the 'friends', and theirs was the angry face Luna had drawn on her chart!

They realized how unkind they had been! No wonder each of them had a smiling 'me' face on the chart! They had parents who loved them, a happy family life, friends who were nice to them at school, and teachers who showed encouragement!

How lucky they were, and oh.. how mean they had been to Luna! They felt ashamed of themselves, and promised to keep showing Luna that they truly cared.

And now, more than ever, Fadi felt certain that it would help Luna to have a pet.



Delightful Days in Marjella

Miss Ruba spoke to Fadi a few days later.

"Luna's parents have agreed to let her have a kitten!" she said, smiling at the expression on Fadi's face.

"Great!" said Fadi. "Sana and I thought that we could give her Spice. He is very funny..." he added with mixed feelings. "We'll miss him."

"It's very generous of you, and Sana, to give a friend something that you enjoy. I am very proud of you, Fadi."

"Spice might give Luna a 'smiling face' on her chart!" said Fadi, hopefully.

"I expect Spice to give everyone smiling faces!" laughed Miss Ruba. "Having a pet to love -and feel loved by- is an excellent recommendation in this case! Bravo, Dr. Fadi!"

Luna was overjoyed.

"Oh, thank you, Fadi! Thank you, thank you, thank you!" she repeated again and again, as she stroked the kitten tenderly. "I cannot believe this! Is Spice really mine.. all mine?"

"He is all yours, now!" Fadi answered, trying not to show how much he was going to miss the frisky little creature.

But Fadi was right. Having Spice did help Luna tremendously.

In the meantime, everyone at school was treating Luna kindly. She, in turn, had really started improving.

Her clothes were washed every weekend, she was taking regular baths, her schoolwork and handwriting had improved, and she wasn't hiding things



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anymore.

Fadi saw Luna's parents at school one morning.

They entered the Principal's office and stayed there for a long time. That afternoon Luna's father picked her up from school. Her mother was also in the car. Her eyes were red. She seemed to have been crying. Fadi saw Luna's father lift his daughter's heavy school-bag off her back and carry it himself. Then he actually bent down and kissed her!

It seemed that everyone was in on 'The Plan' by now!

All the teachers were encouraging Luna. When it was time to choose the Class Monitor, guess who was chosen? Luna, of course!

On Sports Day that year, the Blue Team won. Luna was in that team, and everyone said it was because she was such a good basketball player.

"See," Fadi said to her. "Having you on our team was lucky for us!"

Luna beamed with happiness.

She even seemed a little pretty when she smiled like that.

"Having you as a friend is lucky for me, Fadi," she replied.

After that, the only things Luna stole were smiles, marks, and honours.

She became one of the top five students in her class, and everyone forgot the little 'Thief' of long ago!



Delightful Days in Marjella

When I Think of Treasure...

The most wonderful emotion

On earth, is Devotion:

Loyalty, affection, respect;

An arm to rely on,

A shoulder to cry on,

A warm welcome to expect!

The most devoted creatures

On earth, are the Teachers:

Beacons, burning with love

Of knowledge -to brighten

The world, to enlighten

The minds- with their treasure troves!





Delightful Days in Marjella

The Real Test

Sana was very upset when she found out that she had failed the Mathematics test. Although she hadn't expected a good mark, the 'F' hurt her deeply. She knew she hadn't paid attention in class while the teacher was explaining the new lesson, and had not done the exercises at the end either.

She knew that she deserved failing this test.

But she wished there was a way to escape telling her Mom and Dad! She wished there was a way she could simply forget about it all.

"This is the first time in my whole life that I get such a bad mark! How would my parents feel if they found out?!" she asked herself.

After school that day, she was quiet during dinner and went to bed early, saying nothing about the test.

In bed, she planned her next step.

"I am sure there must be a way out of this. No one has to find out about it!"

Sana lay quietly in her bed thinking.

Much later, when everyone had gone to sleep, she got out of bed. She walked quietly out of her room, making sure not to trip in the dark. She tiptoed down to her Dad's study and shut the door slowly behind her.

Yusuf had a signature-stamp he used when he had many papers to sign. Sana knew exactly where her father kept it. She had seen him use it so many times, and had always admired the little crystal-glass case that held it.

She pulled Dad's swivel-chair to the corner of the room, next to the bookcase.



Delightful Days in Marjella

"I would be able to get to the stamp if I stood on Dad's chair," she thought. She climbed up, reaching for the crystal case. It was on the top shelf, and seemed a little too far to reach. Sana climbed down, got a pencil, and climbed up again.



She pushed the crystal case with the pencil, and it was at the edge -but she had pushed it too far!

Suddenly, before she could catch it - crash- it went over the edge and onto the floor below!

-crash- !!

Glass was everywhere! Oh, no! She had broken Dad's gold-rimmed crystal-glass case!



Delightful Days in Marjella

She was sure everyone could hear the noise!
What should she do now? She'd better hurry!



Her hands were shaking as she held her test paper. She found the place which said: "Parent's Signature". Very carefully, she stamped Dad's signature there!

Suddenly, all the writing on the paper faded!

Dad's signature was the only brightness on that paper!

The top of the page did not say Mathematics Test any more. It said "Honesty Test", in red, and her mark was a big red "F" for failure!

Oh.. no..!!

"What have I done now?" she thought.

Failing an Honesty Test is the worst thing in the world, because nobody would ever believe you after that! And you might never be allowed to take another test to make up!!

The paper shook in her hand. She did not know what to do!



Delightful Days in Marjella

"I wish I hadn't done this.." she said, looking tearfully at the Test paper, and at Dad's broken crystal case on the floor.

She started weeping quietly, then louder and louder.

She didn't care if everyone woke up!

There was nothing left to hide.

"Let them see what a dishonest girl I am!!"

She felt the hot tears rolling down her face as she wept.

Her whole body was shaking.

The whole room was shaking.

The bed was shaking.

Then she heard Mama's voice, "Sana, darling, what's wrong? Wake up!!"

Mama was shaking her to wake up.

"It's only a nightmare. Wake up darling... there.. there.." Bassima wiped her daughter's tears and held her close.

Sana, calming down, clung to her mother.

And what do you think Sana did when she realized that it was only a nightmare?

What do you think she did with that test paper?

Were her parents angry with her or not?

I am sure you know the answers, dear reader.

What would your parents have done?

Which is worse, failing a school test, or failing an Honesty Test?



Delightful Days in Marjella

The Ocean of Your Love

Why do you see my tears, before they are there?

Why do you watch over me,

And always care?

Why do you carry my burden

Of sorrow and of pain,

And turn to sunshine

All my days of rain?

Why do you hide your sadness,

And Happiness you make?

Why do you give forever,

And never, never, take?

Your love is like

a fountain,

Your heart is like

the sky,

Your eyes are like

the sunshine

That shines on me

from high!

My love for you is great;

Greater than any sea,

But the ocean of

your love

Drowns my sea,

and me...

When time comes for me

To leave and love another,

The treasure I shall take with me, will be YOUR LOVE, Mother...

Will be your Love, Mother...



Delightful Days in Marjella

The Wise Princess and the Shoemaker's Son

"Girls are so gullible!" whispered Fadi to Akram as they sat eating cake in Grandma's living-room one day.

"I can trick Sana into believing almost any story I make up."

"Not just any story, Fadi. I am sure that there are a few things you tell us that none of us believes!" replied his older brother.

"Really?.." Fadi looked disappointed.

"We all know how you like to joke and tell us wild tales at times. We pretend to believe them, just for the fun of it. Like a game. But I am sure that you wouldn't actually lie, would you?"

"No, I wouldn't lie. Just joke .. you know, for fun."

"Be careful, Fadi. Fun is supposed to be shared. Sometimes people don't realize that their fun causes other people unhappiness."

Fadi nodded, and finished his snack in silence. He was thinking about what Akram had said. Yes, he did sometimes say things which were untrue, but only as jokes. Now he felt guilty because he remembered that he had sometimes made Sana upset when he played his little tricks on her. He always said to himself (when she got upset) that girls aren't good sports anyway, and cannot handle a good joke.

Later, he followed Grandma out to the garden, where he found her picking some flowers.

"I'll ask Grandma," he thought. "She knows everything, and is a good sport even though she's a girl."

"Joking is okay," Grandma answered, "as long as people realize that you are joking, and you are certain not to hurt their feelings. Sometimes jokes can be



Delightful Days in Marjella

very harmful, even to the joker himself."

"Like the boy who cried 'Wolf!'" exclaimed Fadi.

"Yes," Grandma agreed. "But the real trouble starts when a joke is taken seriously. It becomes a lie, and spreads around from one person to another, until everyone believes it. False rumours always cause much misery."

"But, surely, people can still tell it's a lie?" asked Fadi hopefully.

"No, Fadi. Most people cannot tell the difference," said Grandma. "Anyway," she

added, "by then the harm is done, like the story of the Poor Shoemaker."

"Tell me, tell me!" insisted Fadi excitedly.

"Tell you what?" asked Sana as she walked up to them, carefully taking the basket of flowers from Grandma.

"Put them in the vase and hurry back, dear. I am going to tell you a story."

Sana ran inside. "Grandma is telling us a story!" she shouted to whoever was listening.

"Once upon a time there was a wise princess," began Grandma.

"I am sure that Grandma once was a wise princess," thought Sana to herself



Delightful Days in Marjella

as she looked at Grandma's hair shining like a crown in the sunlight.

Fadi was certain that Grandma's story had a boy in it too, not just a princess.

"She was approached one day by a little boy," their grandmother continued.

"Yippee!" thought Fadi.

"The boy seemed very worried. He said that his father was a shoemaker, and was getting poorer and poorer because fewer people were buying his shoes. A new shoe factory had just opened in town and was selling its machine-made shoes much cheaper.





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"But nobody makes such beautiful shoes!" cried the boy.

"Before this new factory opened, Papa had customers of all kinds. He made special shoes for every person. He used the softest leather, dyed into the most beautiful colours you could imagine! Even after the factory opened, people told him that his shoes were much more comfortable, and that they would never buy machine-made shoes. But now, many old customers have stopped coming!" he said sadly.

"Young man," smiled the Princess, "What's your name?"

"Wadi, your Highness," he answered.

"Don't call me 'Highness'. Just call me Princess," she replied. "I'll see what I can do for you, Wadi, and I'll let you know."

Wadi left, relieved that he was finally able to tell someone about his problem.

The Princess gathered a few of her friends, and asked them about what they had heard in town.

"People expect the Shoemaker to go out of business soon," said a friend.

"Why so?" asked the Princess.

"Nobody actually knows what is happening. You know, only whispers here and there. But they say that his shoes are jinxed."

"Jinxed?" asked the Princess, smiling.

Her friend nodded. "I, too, have been noticing things, and the people seem to be right! The Shoemaker's shoes really seem to bring bad luck!"



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The Princess had heard all sorts of things before, and showed no surprise at all.

"Continue.." she said.

"All sorts of bad things have been happening.." answered her friend.

Another friend interrupted. "Listen, my sister heard from the Mayor's daughter that it all started when the Mayor bought his shoes the day before he was to deliver his annual speech. The next day, he choked over breakfast, and coughed so much as he spoke that nobody understood a word he said! He had always spoken so well!"

A third friend interrupted. "My brother told me that it all started at school one day, when the schoolteacher first wore her new shoes. Her chair collapsed as soon as she sat on it, and she couldn't complete the exercises on the blackboard!"

Then a fourth friend interrupted. "No, no! It all started at the Ladies' Club. A few club members went shopping for shoes together one afternoon. No sooner had they worn their new shoes, than each had a stroke of misfortune. One tripped on the stairs at a restaurant and landed in someone's hot bowl of soup, another broke her nose when a large grapefruit dropped off a tree in her garden, and yet another absent-mindedly put the cat food in the cage and fed her pet canary to the cat!"

"Well," laughed the Princess, "there always is a way to learn the truth, isn't there?"

She summoned Wadi, and told him what she had heard.

"Bad luck?" asked Wadi desperately. "I was ready to do my best to bring back Papa's business, but what can one do against bad luck?"



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"Don't worry, dear. A lot can be done. From now on, I would like you to tell me all that you hear or see," she said. "We'll be working together."

Now, as it happened, Wadi usually stood quietly at the entrance to his father's shop, opening and closing the door for the customers as they came in and went out.

That week something very strange happened. People started returning the shoes they had bought earlier! He heard a lady, who had just returned her shoes, speak to her friend under her breath.

"Thank God I returned these shoes in time! Imagine what an unlucky marriage my daughter would have had if I had worn them to her wedding tomorrow!"

"And what bad luck if you hadn't worn them!" her friend answered.



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"Yes," said the first. "Imagine what could have happened if I had kept them at home... a fire would burn the house down, or worse. Even if I had thrown them away.. the street would become unsafe! Where would all those dear little children play?" she ended mournfully.

It is strange how children are sometimes unnoticed by adults. A child could be in the same room, in plain view, and still be invisible! Adults are sometimes so preoccupied with themselves that they do not see children.

This is how Wadi always felt.

He had heard what both ladies thought was a private conversation among friends. They hadn't noticed him, even though he had held the door and smiled at them as they swished in and swept out! Neither of them had said thanks, of course, but Wadi was used to that.

Other customers came and went, all bringing back the shoes they had bought earlier. They talked to each other

about the same thing: that these shoes brought bad luck!

They never said a word about that to the old Shoemaker, of course. They made other excuses. But Wadi heard everything, because they didn't notice his presence, as usual.

And Wadi saw his father become paler with each customer's visit.

"Wadi," the Princess asked when he saw her again. "Do you believe in bad luck?"

"I didn't, before. Now I don't know what to believe!" Wadi answered.

"Tell me your latest news," urged the Princess. So Wadi told her how



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terrible this past week had been for his father.

"Papa started opening the shop later and later each day, saying that he didn't feel very well. In the end, he asked me whether I could open it myself. He says he can't leave home. He is very, very sick." Wadi ended on a tearful note.

"Listen, Wadi," said the Princess. "Your father is feeling sick, but he isn't really sick. He is so upset that he doesn't want to open his shop. That's all. Bad luck is a lot like that."

"What do you mean?" asked Wadi. "Are you telling me that bad luck isn't true; that we only think it is?"

"Exactly!" said the Princess. "Tell me. Haven't you ever felt something to be true, even when you knew perfectly well that it was impossible?"

"Not really..." answered Wadi, then hesitated. "Except.."

"Yes?"

"Except for the strange feeling I have of being invisible at times," and he told the Princess what he meant.

"Exactly!" she said. "Now, I want you to be patient. Everything should be back to normal very soon."

They chatted for a while, and then Wadi went home, comforted by the Princess' assurances.

The Princess set about her task of finding the truth. She had a plan, and she put it into action immediately.

At the end of a busy week the Princess invited all the ladies in town to tea.



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They loved her tea-parties! She always invented new games and gave out nice prizes.

The Princess posted Wadi at the palace gate to watch the guests as they entered through.

"Tell me if you notice anything unusual," she said.

The guests seemed very happy, chatting and laughing as they walked in, wearing their best gowns. Even the poor ladies were all dressed well, for, together with their invitation cards, the Princess' messengers always brought them pretty new gowns. But this time something was different: Not one of them was wearing his father's shoes!

This saddened Wadi, and he looked away tearfully, almost forgetting to keep his eyes on the guests!

"Watch out, Wadi!" he scolded himself.

Suddenly something caught his attention.

A young girl in a dark purple dress was walking in with her mother. He recognized her. Yes. She was the new girl at school. Her name was Tama, or Tamia, something like that. Her mother was wearing a white cotton turban. The girl was wearing pink shoes with purple bows.

"How strange!" he said to himself, as he thought about those shoes.

And he was right.

*Pretty pink shoes tied with purple bows
Where did she get them? Everyone knows
That there is only one shoemaker in town
Who has the leather to match every gown!*



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He hurried to tell the Princess immediately what he had seen.

The Princess and her ladies-in-waiting welcomed all the guests warmly, and after tea was served and they were all chatting gaily, the entertainment began.

"Today there shall be three prizes," said the announcer, as the prizes were brought in and shown around. "The first prize is a beautiful hand-made carpet!"

The guests gasped in wonder at the beauty of its design and colour. Some pushed forward to touch it, marvelling at its softness.



"The second prize is an original oil-painting!"

Excited shrieks and giggles were heard as the light hit the painting from several angles, showing the combination of colour and the power of its lines.

It was a breathtaking piece of art!

"The third prize is a hand-embroidered shawl!"

The guests shouted in excitement as the handwoven gold and silver thread sparkled.

The three prizes were laid out on three tables, each a little farther away from the



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guests than the other.

"Now, all you have to do to win a prize is this:

Walk towards any of those prizes, stepping only on something of yours



that is natural and hand-made!"

The guests started chattering nervously together. They looked towards the Mayor's Wife, who was always the first to begin a game. She smiled. She was ready.

She stood up, taking off her long string of pearls. "Natural pearls," she said as she unravelled the many loops. "Threaded by hand."

The Princess nodded in agreement.

Then the Mayor's Wife undid the long sash around her waist. It was a large bow of hand-woven silk, and the two ends reached all the way to her ankles.

The Princess nodded again.





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A lady-in-waiting took these items and stretched them across the floor in the direction of the first prize.

"Oh .." sighed the guests. Not long enough.

Everyone knew that if the Mayor's Wife won, the prizes would be donated to charity. She wanted to win the first prize, but she had nothing else that would do. She stood in silence for a moment, then decided to try for second prize. Not enough. The third prize was the closest, but still her necklace and sash weren't long enough.

Now, the Mayor's Wife was a very smart woman. She was known to be very shrewd, and nobody could beat her at games of intelligence or wits.

The ladies were very excited now! Shouts, screams and nervous laughter could be heard, as well as whispered plans.

"Undo your satin ribbons!"

"How about tearing off the lace on your petticoat?"

"Why don't you borrow something?"

The Princess shook her head to these suggestions. "I am sorry, but that is against the rules. The items you step on have to be yours, and you cannot destroy something in order to use it!" she said to the guests.

They sat back sadly, uttering a long "Aah!"

But the Mayor's Wife was not one to accept defeat. She stood for another moment in silence, measuring the distance with her sharp eyes, planning her next move.

Other ladies had started laying their things on the floor, helped by the ladies-in-waiting who made sure those things were natural and hand-made.



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The lady with the hand-spun, white cotton turban on her head, unwound it, and started stretching it out on the floor.

"Look at that!" the ladies exclaimed. The white material covered more than half the distance towards the third prize. But then they sighed sadly. It was too short. Disappointed, the lady went back to her table.

Then someone said, "These rules are impossible! How can one person reach any of these prizes?"

"No, they're not," said the Mayor's Wife, who never gave up easily. "I'd like to buy your turban!" she turned to the disappointed lady. "Name your price."



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"One hundred silver coins!" piped her daughter, jokingly.

The mother started to disagree, looking sternly at her child, when she was interrupted.

"Done!" said the Mayor's Wife, signing a paper for that amount immediately.

The lady opened her mouth in disbelief, handing the Mayor's Wife the unwound material. The little girl (whose name was Tamia) jumped up and down impishly, clapping her hands in excitement.

Holding her string of pearls and sash, the Mayor's Wife started walking slowly on the stretched-out turban that reached more than halfway towards the third prize. Then she stretched her sash, walked upon it, stretched her pearls, and almost stepped upon them. Stopping suddenly, she took off her shoes and stepped upon the pearls barefooted, careful not to crush any of them.

She arrived finally at the third prize!

The Princess handed her the shawl, smiled and congratulated her. Then, "Ooh!" said the crowd in amazement, for they found her putting the prize shawl on the floor, and stepping upon it towards the second prize! Then, "Oh.." they sighed sadly, for it was just a few steps too short.

But they all clapped anyway as she went back to her table, wearing the new shawl around her shoulders.

She smiled at Tamia and her mother as she passed their table, and they smiled back.

"Mama.." said Tamia enviously, "isn't the shawl pretty?"

I am glad that she couldn't get to the first and second prizes! Surely, she has many paintings and carpets in her home and doesn't need any more!"



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"The prizes wouldn't have gone to the Mayor's home," said the mother, "but to homes of poor people, or to museums that would pay a lot of money which the Mayor's Wife puts to good use."

"What good use?" asked Tamia, surprised.

"Taking care of all the poor orphans in this town is the job of the Mayor's Wife! You should learn to mind your own business, dear!"

Tamia was silent for a few minutes.

"I'd like to try for these prizes," she whispered. "I'd like to win!" she added.

"Quiet!" said her mother impatiently, as she looked around, feeling the excitement. The women were all talking together now. Suddenly, to her mother's amazement, Tamia stood up, asking everyone to listen!

"I have something natural and hand-made, and I shall step upon it towards both prizes!" she announced, as the whole crowd became silent.

The mother pulled her daughter's skirt.

"Sit down, Tamia!" she whispered. "Do not make a fool of yourself!"

The ladies smiled kindly at Tamia. What could she possibly have to step upon towards both prizes? This little girl apparently did not understand the game!

Tamia walked up to the Princess. She put her foot out, showing everyone her pretty pink shoes with the purple bows.

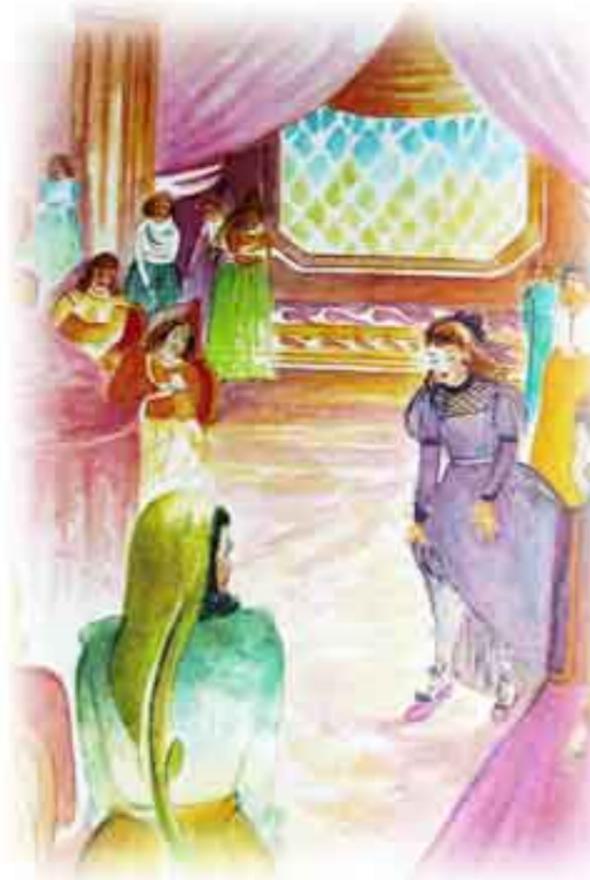
"These shoes are of natural leather and are handmade."

She looked questioningly at the Princess.

The crowd held its breath.



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The Princess smiled, nodding in agreement.

The crowd was silent for a moment. Then everyone clapped. How clever! This is so unexpected!

They started counting Tamia's steps, giving a clap for every step as she danced towards, around and behind the prizes. She did not bother to walk in a straight line, because wherever she stepped, it was in her natural hand-made shoes!

"Fifty-one! Fifty-two! Fifty-three!" they shouted.



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Tamia was really enjoying herself.

The Mayor's Wife looked at Tamia suspiciously, her eyes darting back and forth from the girl to the mother, sitting alone at the table. Then she whispered something to her friends and they nodded in agreement. She was overcome with emotion as she got up and went to the mother. They spoke a few words, and both looked extremely upset.

Meanwhile, Tamia had reached the first prize and was starting towards the second.

"Eighty-eight! Eighty-nine! Ninety!" the crowd cheered as she took the last few steps and held the painting in her hands. Her mother and the Mayor's Wife did not notice her success, for they were engaged in a deep conversation. Her mother had tears in her eyes.

The crowd clapped as the girl turned back towards her mother and held the painting out to her.

"I can't.." said her mother, sobbing, "I won't accept it!"





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She took the painting from Tamia's hands and gave it to the Mayor's Wife.

"Please.." she added, "it is for the orphans."

The Mayor's Wife nodded but did not take the gift.

Tamia asked, "What's wrong, mother?" but her mother ignored her completely.

The Mayor's Wife stood up and talked to everyone:

"Everything has a price, even success," she said. "But the price for this girl's success was paid by a poor innocent Shoemaker who lost all he had. This girl (she pointed at Tamia) might have won valuable prizes, but she has failed in something much more valuable: she has failed in Kindness."

"True.." agreed Tamia's mother shamefacedly. "My daughter has committed a grave mistake. One day her father said to us that his business would be excellent if only people would buy factory-made shoes. He said he needed advertisers. Tamia assured him that she could help by spreading the word around. We didn't imagine.."

The Mayor's Wife interrupted. "This girl tried to improve her father's business quickly, and she succeeded, seeing that all of us fools attending tonight are wearing shoes bought at his factory. She behaved in a thoughtless and unkind manner." She looked at Tamia. "I believe it was you who first mentioned that the Shoemaker's shoes brought bad luck?" she asked.

Tamia stared at the floor. She couldn't deny that. It was true.

The Mayor's Wife went on, "You probably whispered that at school to your friends. The schoolteacher had just had an accident which the carpenter should answer to, not the shoemaker!"



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"But I was only joking.." Tamia started to weep.

"It might have started as a joke, but you wished it to continue!"

"I didn't wish to hurt anyone!" cried Tamia.

"Then why didn't you put a stop to it?" screamed a woman at the back. "My son told me that you told him that things would be even worse if we didn't return the shoes. You told him that your teacher had said that to you."

"I did not say anything of the kind!" retorted the teacher angrily. "And I didn't even return my shoes. I certainly do not believe in bad luck."

"Then why aren't you wearing them tonight?" asked a guest, cleverly.

"Because if I did, you'd all expect something bad to happen to me, and that would make me very, very uncomfortable!" the teacher answered.

"Same here, forgive me!" admitted the Mayor's Wife.

"Same here! Me too !" the wiser ladies said. "We really do not believe in bad luck."

"But we were foolish enough to join the crowd!" answered another.

Suddenly everyone was shouting and comparing stories, and all the lies and tales were found to lead to Tamia in the end. The Princess and her ladies-in-waiting watched all this silently.

"Then what about all the other accidents?" someone asked.

"All those 'accidents' were natural everyday happenings which people imagined to be 'bad luck'!" answered the teacher. "Don't you see? Everyone in town has been wearing the Shoemaker's shoes for many years. We have had some accidents and a lot of good fortune during that time. Why didn't we ever



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say that it was because of the shoes?"

The ladies agreed.

She continued, "But someone recently started a rumour, and others helped by actually spreading it, or (such as myself) simply allowing it to spread. I should have said something, or done something to stop it. We have destroyed an old friend, the poor Shoemaker, and his family. We are all to blame, not just this little girl!"

The ladies hung their heads guiltily.

"But how did you know that I started it?" asked Tamia, in tears.

It was the Princess' turn to speak now. "You were the only one who knew it was a lie, because you were the only one in town still wearing the Shoemaker's shoes, other than myself, my ladies-in-waiting, and the Shoemaker's family!" she said.

The Princess then summoned Wadi and his father.

Tamia apologized to everyone, especially to the Shoemaker. She presented him with the beautiful carpet.

"I don't know how to mend the wrong I've done.." she said, tears streaming down her cheeks. "All I can do is ask for everyone's forgiveness.."

They all looked at her in angry silence.

Then her teacher came forward and hugged her. Others did the same.

Then all the ladies flocked around the Shoemaker, eager to order his colourful, comfortable, hand-made shoes. Although the Shoemaker was very pleased, he apologized.



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"I am too weak to cut so much leather, dye it, and sew it all at once. Maybe we can do soem business in the future, when i feel stronger," he said sadly.

He then donated the carpet to the needy.

Tamia couldn't bear to look at the poor Shoemaker. He seemed so sad and tired.

"What have i done to this old man?" she thought to herself, ashamed. She knew that something had to be done at once, and she ran out of the palace in tears.

She returned a short while later, pulling her father's hand. She led him to where the Shoemaker sat wearily. The two men talked, smiled, and shook hands.

Tamia smiled at Wadi, who had heard the men's conversation. Wadi knew that father would have four helpers from the shoe-factory to work with him during the next four months.

"A Deal has just been made!" announced the Princess. " i think you can place your orders now, with Wadi, the Shoemaker's son."

Wadi smiled proudly, then couldn't help laughing when one of the oldest customers said:

"What a delightful little boy! Why haven't we ever met you at your father's shop?"



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Dreams of the Future

Grandpa was sick.

Fadi and Sana came to his bedside and kissed his forehead gently. Grandpa smiled weakly and opened his eyes.

"The Troublesome Twins!" he joked.

"Grandpa!" the twins protested together, glad that their grandfather felt better.

"When will you take us to the End of the End of the Track again, Grandpa?" asked Fadi.

"We had such a stupendous time!" said Sana.

"We had a few superb laughs, too," said Grandpa softly. "Especially since you and your super-cat gave us a few startling surprises!" he added with a twinkle in his eye.

Fadi and Sana laughed.

"Well," continued Grandpa. "Ginger has lived up to her name, hasn't she? She adds spice to everything!"

"Sometimes too much spice!" exclaimed Sana.

"Spice is nice!" Fadi argued. "That's why I named one of her kittens 'Spice!'"

"It was kind of you to give Spice to a friend," said Grandpa.

"It felt good to be kind," answered Sana. Grandpa smiled.

"And what else have you two been up to lately?" he asked. "Anything interesting I should know about?"

"Just the usual," said Sana.

"Yeah," agreed her brother. "School, school, and more school!"



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"When I was your age," Grandpa began, to the delight of his grandchildren who loved hearing his stories, "There was no electronic entertainment. We used to play games, daydream, and read stories."

"I play games and read stories," said Fadi.

"I do too. And I daydream!" added Sana.

Fadi frowned.

"Don't you daydream, Fadi?" asked Grandpa.

"Daydreaming's for girls!" said Fadi. "Men nowadays have no time for things like that. We live in the real world."

"The world of computer-games!" said Sana, laughing. "That's the world you live in, Fadi!"

Grandpa smiled. "But you enjoy those games because you feel that you are actually there, on the screen in the game, don't you?" he asked.

"Yes," nodded Fadi.

"Then you are using your imagination, Fadi. A person without imagination has a dull life indeed. It is our imagination which takes us out of the restriction of our surroundings - to freedom."

"That's not the same as daydreaming, is it?" asked Fadi.

"It is very similar," answered Grandpa. "How do you think each computer-game was invented? Someone had to imagine a story, a puzzle, a hero, a solution. Someone had to dream of what it would be like, how it would feel, before actually working on it step by step."

"And then the dream would come true?" asked Sana.

"It would, but the result would not be identical to what was imagined. It



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would be similar though, sometimes even better.”

“I dream that I’ll be a scientist and that I’ll bring Peace to this world!” said Fadi, raising his chin proudly.

His grandfather looked at him thoughtfully.

“Yet you are complaining of school-work! To be a scientist you need a lot of schooling! Even later, after you finish school, you will still be studying, doing research and experimenting.”

“I really would love to be a scientist, Grandpa,” said Fadi decisively.

“Okay. Then you should start now, by using your computer for research as well as games. What do you say?”

“But what can I research?” asked Fadi.

“Anything which interests you,” answered his grandfather.

“The history of Marjella!” exclaimed Sana. “What we found out on our way to the End of the End of the Track really interested us!”

Grandfather smiled weakly. He was getting tired of talking.

“And what do you want to be when you grow up?” he asked his granddaughter.

“I would love to be a writer. A wise writer, who helps everyone realize what is important in life and what is not.” said Sana. “Just like Grandma!” she added.

“What, do you think, is most important?” asked her grandfather, marvelling at both his grandchildren.

“Love, Respect, and Kindness. To be just as God asks us,” answered Sana, looking so innocent as she was wrapped in her thoughts.



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Like a dear little angel, thought her grandfather to himself.

“And Peace,” added Fadi philosophically, with wrinkled brow. He looked so serious, like a little scientist, carrying the weight of the whole world on his shoulders!

Grandpa laughed. His bed shook with his laughter and the children were afraid they might have excited him too much.

The twins had no idea why Grandpa was laughing. What had they said?

Grandpa apologized.

“I’m sorry, children. I wasn’t laughing at you. It is just that you have made me very happy!”

Sana and Fadi looked puzzled.

Grandpa explained. “You were both talking about the same thing! You only used different words for it.”

“We were?” asked Sana.

“We did?” echoed Fadi.

“Tell us more, Grandpa!” begged the children, just as Grandma came in.

“Let’s give Grandpa his rest, and he’ll be able to tell us more tomorrow,” she smiled.

That night, both Fadi and Sana did some research. Fadi sat at the computer feeding in information about Marjella and its streets:



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Old Marj-el-Amal:

The town was enclosed within walls.

The town was divided into enclosed quarters or districts.

Peculiar street system; two types of streets:

1. winding streets: turn in one direction then another.

2. blind streets: simply provide access to the interior of a quarter and suddenly come to an end.

Thus a district is usually skirted (on the outside) with winding streets, from which the blind streets radiate into the interior.

"Winding wiggle-worms!" exclaimed Fadi, falling out of his seat to grab Sugar, Ginger's kitten. "Isn't this a fantastic discovery?!"

"It is wonderful to know more about Marjella," Sana agreed, "although what I really like about the whole thing is finding out how life was for Grandpa and Grandma when they were children!"

"Could you really imagine them as children?" asked Fadi.

"Of course!" answered Sana. "They'd be just like us, only old-fashioned!"

Fadi giggled. "And they'd be playing hide-and-seek in those wiggly streets!"

"I'd hate to get lost in those winding streets, wouldn't you?" Sana asked.



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"I don't think I'd get lost in the wiggly streets," answered Fadi. "They have to stop wiggling sooner or later, like this little sugar-lump right here!" He held the kitten as it tried to wriggle out of his grasp. "What I would be worried about are all the blind streets, those dead-ends, that stop me with a wall and take me nowhere at all!"

"Ouch!" he exclaimed, letting Sugar get away after a fierce struggle.

"That's what you get for being so rough!" said Sana, as Sugar jumped into her lap for safety. "I'm sure Spice is happier with Luna than he was with us!"

"Girls!" Fadi got up in a huff. "Always complaining about something!"





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The Straw-Fairy Tale

Fadi and Sana love ice cream. Tell me do you know a child who doesn't?

Well the day of the ice cream mystery started out quite normally.

Fadi was playing a computer game on a quiet afternoon, but found that he didn't enjoy it very much.

As usual, he shouted at the tiny characters on the screen:

i'll punch you out

Awit your end!

Are you redy?

You're history , my friend!

(punch, punch, boing boing)

It won't take long, For the name is Fadi,

Teh Smart, the Strong,

The Ever-ready!

(punch, punch, punch, boing, boing, boing)

i strike the right keys,

You're defeated, with ease!

For Fadi's the name

That always wins the game!

(punch, punch, punch, boing, boing, boing, BINGO!)

But the game bored him



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"Maybe i'm out growing these silly games," he thought. "Why don't i invent a new one?"

He remembered the talk he and Sana had with Grandpa a few weeks ago. So he sat back on his chair thinking of a new game to invent.

"Wouldn't it be wonderful if i could play with real characters, maybe creatures from another world?" he said to himself. " A world full of soemthing good to eat!" he added hungrily.

Just then the phone rang.

It was Grandma. Grandma and Grandpa missed the children and wanted them to come over. So they all went.

It wasn't very far to walk, and anyway, Noor and Akram said they needed the exercise. Fadi and Sana said that they would like soem fresh air.

But everything seemed different that day. The streets looked unfamiliar, and teh children took a wrong turn in a narrow side road, losing their way to Grandpa and Grandma's house.

They walked on and on as the streets got narrower and seemed to wind here and there and everywhere.

Sana was so tired she even stopped talking (which was strange), and Fadi stopped kicking the stones and jumping over imaginary hills and mountains (he loved pretending he was a giant and ants were little people).

They were all tired.

Akram their leader, felt upset that they has lost their way. But Noor was a



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good sport. She didn't say, "I told you so," as other sisters would have done. So they walked on, past strange buildings and gardens, past shops which sold grown-up stuff (but nobody was inside), and then suddenly they found themselves in front of an ice cream shop.

The sign said: "Lick-a Dream Ice Cream".

"Oh...I wish we could find someone in!" said Noor.

"Please," exclaimed the twins together, "Let's have some ice cream!" So Akram opened the door and peeked in.

There was an old, silver-haired woman in a silvery-blue dress, wearing a shining blue shawl.

"Yes...?" she asked in a sweet silvery voice. "May I help you?"

Everyone felt relieved and happy. They stood beside the counters and ordered their favourite flavours of ice cream.

"But I don't have those flavours," the old lady said kindly.

"That's funny," thought Fadi. "She doesn't have Strawberry Ripple. There it is! And Chocolate Fudge for Akram and Butter pecan for Noor."

"No, Fadi" said the lady. "They are not the flavours you think they are."

"How does she know what I am thinking of?" thought Fadi. "And how does she know my name?"

That pink and white ice cream is Straw-fairy Dimple. The brown one is Shock-mate -Dodge, and the other which Noor is looking at, is Shut'er-id-you-



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can. Would you like some?"

She seemed like an old lady who loved joking with children! Anyway, Fadi felt too hungry to waste his breath when he's rather be licking.

They got their double-scoops, and walked out of her shop, laughing. They heard the jolly, old lady laughing too, a silvery laugh like the jingling of little bells.

"Happy dreams with your ice-creams!" she called out as the door shut behind them.

"Thanks!" they called back. But if they looked back they wouldn't have seen her. She had disappeared.





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It was quite warm outside. They wished they could have stayed in the shop while they ate their ice creams. But they hadn't noticed a stool, table or chair in the shop. Anyway, they soon saw across the road a clump of trees; small low ones with branches hanging down almost to the ground. They ran there eagerly, each sitting under a tree, leaning their backs against the trunks. They could hear each other, yet they felt they were in a world of their own.

It was cool and shady.

Finally they could enjoy their ice creams!

Fadi took a big lick. He rolled his tongue across the side because it had started to drip with melted strawberry-ripple. Mmm...delicious!

"I feel as though I am in a strawberry patch somewhere in Strawberry Land, where everything smells of strawberries!"

Another lick. "Mmm...I can almost see it!" He shut his eyes, enjoying the creamy flavour...mmm.. "Delicious!" he said, aloud.

"What is delicious?"

Fadi opened his eyes at the interruption, and what did he see?

He found himself staring at a strange little boy, about his age. He had very pink cheeks, and his face was creamy white, and his eyes were dark green. And whenever he moved the smell of strawberries would fill the air.

"Who are you?" asked Fadi.

"My name is Dimple," smiled the boy. And as he did the cutest dimples Fadi had ever seen appeared on either side of the boy's mouth. "What is your name



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?" asked Dimple.

"I am Fadi," answered Fadi politely, putting out his hand. As they shook hands, Fadi felt a shiver run down his body! Dimple's hand was as icy as an icicle. But Dimple himself seemed healthy enough, so Fadi didn't worry.

But then looking around, he started to worry. Really worry! Where was he?

He certainly wasn't in Marjella. Everything here was different. Actually he didn't seem to be on planet Earth at all! Oh no...this must be a dream!! So Fadi pinched himself, then harder, then even harder, but he did not wake up!!

Dimple laughed. "What on Erde are you doing?" he asked.

"I am also glad to meet you" And he started to pinch Fadi! Fadi jumped up, his skin crawling, because his pinches were very cold. It seemed this 'icy Strawberry-boy' thought that pinching was a way to say hello!

"Freezing frost fingers!" exclaimed Fadi giggling as he squirmed away. The boy giggled too especially when Fadi decided to start to pinch him back!

"Hello, hello, hello to you, too!" laughed Dimple.

This is the strangest warm welcome I've ever had!" thought Fadi to himself.

"You seem surprised to be here, " Dimple continued, " but you won't be when I tell you about this place. This is Erde, and I am an Erdbeere (pronounced 'erd-bear'). You must be a boy from Wonderland."

Fadi laughed. " You don't look like a bear to me! More like an overgrown berry, I must say!"



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Dimple smiled. "We know about you because we study your ways in school. We try to learn what is good and because we see your mistakes, we try to stay away from them. Every year our headmaster chooses a group of outstanding students and lets each of them pick a friend from Wonderland to spend the holidays with. I picked you."

Fadi didn't know what to say. He knew that humans picked strawberries, but he could never imagine strawberries could pick humans!

"How did you pick me?" he asked.

"Well," said Dimple, "I chose you from the menu." Fadi was troubled.

"Menu?" he thought to himself for a minute. "Oh, no!" Aloud he asked, "You mean I was on your restaurant menu?" He shivered. Maybe this creature ate humans!

Then, looking at the (so far) harmless 'Dimple' fellow and feeling braver, he thought, "Hmm...I wonder what their menu would call me, a homo-sandwich, or maybe a cheese-boy-ger..?"

"No, silly," Dimple smiled. "The computer menu!"

"Oh, I see.." Fadi felt slightly relieved.

"Why me? Why not someone else, say my brother Akram for example?" he asked, still a little suspicious.

"I cannot bring you here on my own. You must want to come, and you must choose me, too!" answered the Strawberry-sundae Stranger.

"I didn't want to come and I didn't choose you!" argued Fadi.

"You must have. Think hard. Did you ask anyone about Erde, Erdbeeren, or about me, Dimple?"



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"Nope. I didn't even know about you. This is the first time in my life I even hear those names!" exclaimed Fadi. This is getting stranger and stranger!

"Okay, then tell me this: What is the last thing you did in your world?" asked Dimple helpfully.

"I was sitting under a tree eating ice cream!"

"And before that...?"

"Before that, we all were in the Ice Cream shop buying the ice cream!"

"Is that all?"

"Yes! And we were lost before we found the shop called 'Lick-a-Dream Ice Cream...and we ordered our flavours from the cute old lady who called my Strawberry Ripple 'Strawfairy dim...Dimple'! That's it! That is your name, isn't it?"

"Yes. That's my name alright. Do you realize what happened? You did order me at the shop, just as I ordered you from the computer, so we found each other!"

"Shaking sugar-cones!" exclaimed Fadi gleefully.

The two boys held hands, and started jumping up and down together!

"I've always wished I had a brother my age to play with, not just a sister," said Fadi. "She's not bad, but she is a girl, and you know how they are!"

"Yeah, I have a sister too!" answered Dimple.

"She nags!" said Fadi.

"She cries!" said Dimple.



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"She screams!"

"She acts like she's my Mom!"

"Yeah, or she acts like a baby!"

"exactly!" said Fadi. "I wish she'd make her mind up what she wants to be. a baby or a mom!"

They both laughed joyfully, sharing the experience of having a sister!

"But," said Dimple, "there's something you must know."

"What's that?" asked Fadi, who was wondering where the rest of his strawberry ice cream was. He had only taken a couple of licks before all these strange things happened!

"You must never talk about your coming here to anyone, or you can never come back again! And one more thing..."

"Oh..? asked fadi, opening his eyes wide with interest. He actually trembled a little with excitement.

"The only way you can come back is by licking the same flavour of ice-cream which bought you here in the first place.'

"Strawberry Dimple!" interrupted fadi.

"Yes, " answered Dimple.

'And how do i go back home?" asked Fadi, who did not really care to go back yet, but was still wondering what had happened to his cone. He was afraid that Dimple might get scared if he showed his hunger for the Strawberry Dimple ice cream.

"You'll find that out for yourself!" giggled Dimple, as he started, slowly. to walk away. Then he started hopping, turning to Fadi while he hopped away, then



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running, and Fadi , thinking it was a game, started to doing the same.

"Listen!" Dimple shouted from afar. "i've got to go now, but we will meet again!"

Fadi chased Dimple for a while, then he got tired.

Dimple went over a hill, and fadi could see him no more.

Feeling tired, sleepy na dhungry, Fadi sat down in the cool shade of a large tree. He leaned against the trunk (which smelled like cinnamon) and said to himself, "Everything here has anice smell...like something good to eat!" and he took a good sniff of the reddish brown bark.

"Mmm...just like Grandma's cookies!"

Fadi felt hungrier than he had ever felt in his whole life!

So he did something silly (boys sometimes act silly too)! He stuck out his tongue as far as it would go (which was quite far considering he was a human and not an anteater) and licked the bark.

"Lucious lollipops! This tastes good!" he thought.

"What a nice place! i am so hungry i could eat the whole tree!"

But as he tried to get up to see how he might start eating a whole tree, he felt dizzy, and teh world (sorry..."Erde") seemed to be spinning! He sat down again and shut his eyes and what do you think happened?

When he opened them again, it seemed a little dark. He could still taste cinnamon, and he could even smell cinnamon. But where was the tree?

he suddenly realized that he was in a familiar place. He was in Grandma's kitchen! And there was Grandma, baking cookies!



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She was, as usual, wearing her shawl over her dress, (they were both cinnamon-brown. You see, she had shawls of the same colours as her dresses, and wore them to match) and she called out lovingly (in her sweet silvery voice) as she took the hot tray out of the oven, "Come and get it! Cinnamon cookies for my cinnamon honey-buns!"

Oh, how Fadi loved his Grandma! She had the most wonderful names for the most ordinary things, making everything seem so precious and special!

The Fairy Tale

*I once had a daydream
of Erdeere and Ice cream,
Of a land where everything is cool;
Where a berry named Dimple,
So lively and nimble,
Ordered me from his menu at school!
Then i had such an itching
For cookies and ice cream,
That my tummy was twitching!
So i cancelled my daydream,
smelling sweet cookies cooking
-Certainly cinnamon-
In Granny's cushy kitchen!
(And as for my daydream...
Well, i'm planning
To have it again!!)
We'll bring Delightful Days, to you,
In Marjella, Volume Two!*



Delightful Days in Marjella

