

Jusuf's Locket, Father and Amir

by

Raghe K

FADE FROM THE BLACK WE HEAR--

TITLES:

KRUPAC, BOSNIA - 1992

A thin, shabby looking goat digs its lips through the barren grass in the hills above a village, an odd number of houses lay scattered across largely brown fields separated by a dark brown river flows through the small village indecisively like an old scrunched up thread which divides the village into two.

AMIR (V.O)

(reading)... "He needed it, he wanted it, that's what got him into trouble. In the end his problem was that he was naive, but very brave."

JUSUF (V.O)

That's a sad story! What does naive mean?

INT. LIVING ROOM - LATE AFTERNOON

AMIR

You...child, that's what it means.
It means you.

JUSUF

What do I mean?

AMIR SALIMOVIC is a 74 year old man who struggles with the most simple of physical task, he shuffles his way to the miniature wooden bookcase barely lifting his feet of the ground. Each step is matched with pain etched in his face.

AMIR

(laughs)

It means you are young, Jusuf. You have the rest of your life ahead of you. You're not old and worn like me.

JUSUF HOZANOVIC is an 8/9 year old boy who's curiosity and innocence lights his eyes as like a feline he watches AMIR walk across the room to place the book full of stories away. He sits on the broken wooded flooring with his legs crossed.

AMIR

Have you finished that last bit of sandwich and milk?

JUSUF collapses backwards in frustration, JUSUF'S silver locket falls out of his pocket. AMIR sorts the book ordering out on his bookcase.

AMIR

Finish your milk before you go back to your fathers, he's probably wondering where you are.

JUSUF picks his locket up and eclipses the light with it. He opens up the locket and looks at a picture of a woman, AMIR stops ordering his bookcase.

JUSUF

Mr Amir, where is your parents?

AMIR

...They are here arent here anymore...

JUSUF

Like my Mama?

Amir replies by pointing at the milk.

JUSUF

I hate that milk! Its goats milk!

AMIR

(laughs)

It tastes just like Cows milk,
(coughs) drink your milk child! I wont have you going back to your fathers hungry and him thinking that I dont feed my guests.

JUSUF

My father knows you feed your guests, you've fed him before and he was a guest.

AMIR drags himself over to the sofa he turns on the radio to its lowest volume, AMIR arches backwards to stretch his back and folds up his blanket.

RADIO HOST

(Voice on radio)

...Army has taken control of the northern region of the country, opposition forces are fighting back but its looks to be futile....

AMIR

Finish your meal Jusuf or I wont read anymore of those stories in that book you like so much

JUSUF rockets of the ground and races to the table to finish the last bit of meal. He unknowingly places the locket of his mother on the table to finish his meal quicker. AMIR reaches out to read the paragraph on a newspaper, he is already exhausted and breathing heavily, his chest is moving faster than any other body part.

AMIR

I may have to let you borrow that book soon, that one you like so

(MORE)

AMIR (cont'd)

much. I may not be able to read it to you anymore. At least not for a while.

JUSUF wolfs down the last bit of bread and sharply pivots his head to face AMIR.

JUSUF

(muffled)

Why?

AMIR walks over to inspect JUSUF'S meal, he offers a pleased smile to JUSUF and puts his hand on JUSUF'S head. He unknowingly places the newspaper on JUSUF'S locket with the picture of his mother on it.

AMIR

Well, because old men are being children and Young soldiers are being forced to be men and fight.

JUSUF

Are you being a child?

AMIR

Yes! All this reading has made me tired and I need to sleep. Jusuf ride fast, be quick, be Hinault quick, its nearly dark outside.

AMIR gently ushers JUSUF away from the table and away from his locket which is under the newspaper.

JUSUF

I'll cycle faster than Bernard Hinault Mr Amir! I'll be so fast you wont see my legs move. Ill be Armstrong fast!

JUSUF opens the door and goes to his bike by the house. JUSUF notices a window on the base of the wall which has been left open.

AMIR

(laughs)

Armstrong! No one will beat the terrific Bernard Hinault! You young ones dont know greatness when you see it.

JUSUF climbs on his bike which seems like a motorbike due to his size compared to the large bike, looks back at AMIR.

JUSUF

I will beat Hinault! Watch me now Amir! Watch me fly home!

JUSUF cycles home, his legs frantically moving up and down.

The same shabby looking goat peacefully chews on a bare twig, the grip on the twig loosens and falls to the ground. The shabby looking goat briefly shakes vigorously and slowly makes its way to the ground to sleep.

INT. FATHERS BEDROOM - EVENING

FATHER is in his late 40's, bearded and collapsed in his bed in his humble home. His sweaty body is slumped on the bed, he is clearly unwell. His legs are off the bed as though he had no time position himself. JUSUF walks through the house doors, his shadow breaks the silence. He walks past his fathers bedroom door. A short while later he back tracks and looks over at his fathers body and straightens him out, he places a blanket over him and joins him in bed.

INT. FATHER'S KITCHEN - MORNING

FATHER is sitting by the table pouring JUSUF soup, his body now moves easier, JUSUF walks out topless as he rubs his eye whilst straightening his fringe. They sits down by the table and have their soup with bread.

FATHER

You said only 10 minutes Jusuf...

JUSUF

I'm sorry Father, I thought I was going to get back sooner. MR. Amir made me drink goat's wee..

FATHER

(chuckles)

Im sure you did something to deserve it, like being out late. Jusuf, you are too young to be out for that long.

JUSUF

Am I too young to be out late or am i too young to fight?

FATHER stops eating.

FATHER

What?

JUSUF

Mr. Amir said that young soldiers are being told to fight...and old men are really childish?

FATHER

(pause)

Well, Mr. Amir is right, but you are too young for that.

FATHER pours the remainder of his soup into JUSUF'S bowl and gives him his bread piece.

FATHER

Jusuf, soon we will have to leave to go somewhere else, somewhere safer and happier.

JUSUF stops eating.

JUSUF

Where?

FATHER

Copenhagen in Denmark, do you remember where we used to go with your mother?

JUSUF

Yes...but why?

FATHER

Dont worry, life will get better for us. I'll explain more later but I need to pray right now.

FATHER gets up and goes to his bedroom.

FATHER

Jusuf, Its safer if im out with you, promise me you wont go to Mr Amirs house unless im with you?

JUSUF

...Then who will tell me stories then?...

FATHER

...I can tell you stories...

JUSUF

But I like the stories Mr Amir tells me...

FATHER

...I can buy you a new story book in Denmark Jusuf, the stories in denmark are better. They involve snow and trolls and brave Vikings fighting bad and evil! Ok?

JUSUF

...Ok...

FATHER goes into his room to pray, JUSUF finishes his soup and prepares himself for prayer soon after his father.

EXT. VILLAGE TOP - AFTERNOON

Faint smoke coming from a small crater on the ground, the village resemblance a dirty oil painting that's aged. The shabby looking goat experiences a moment of peace as he lays

on the ground but he stands up alert and aware at the sound of bullets and firing.

INT. LIVING ROOM - AFTERNOON

JUSUF is sitting on the sofa watching an old black and white cartoon, his body is slumped on the sofa, his boredom tattooed to his face.

EXT. BOSNIAN STREETS SARAJEVO - AFTERNOON
(Voice from cartoon)

Young Bosnian Serb soldiers whistle to get the attention of the people living in the huge, grey and worn out metallic buildings. Soldiers strip males wearing islamic caps out from their homes and away from their families, boys are lifted off the ground and away from the clutches of their female family members. Bosnian Serb solders violently order men to line up as other soldiers tie white bands to the females on the street. Big trucks appear on the scene with intention, males are herded into the trucks like cattle. A female runs after her husband and son but she is met with the base of a gun to her head and dragged back to the pavement.

EXT. VILLAGE TOP - AFTERNOON

The shabby looking goat roams the uneven field looking for lush grass, his nonchalant movements are interrupted by the sound of bullets as he bolts up and scatters away.

INT. LIVING ROOM - AFTERNOON

JUSUF sits on the floor having finished praying, he looks up at the ceiling, his concentration is taken away by the violent coughing coming from his father. He looks over at his fathers bedroom. JUSUF touches his chest where his locket used to rest, the absences of the locket is leads him to his pockets, the empty pockets takes him to the kitchen table which guides him to the sofa. JUSUF allows his mind to breathe and clear.

JUSUF concedes and falls to the floor. HE immediately jumps up and reacts as though an electric charge has passed through him. He runs to his fathers room and stops by the door to get his attention but the stops, He looks over to the front door. He rushes to his bedroom and puts on his shirt and jacket, straightens his muslim hat and heads out for his bike.

EXT. CYCLE/ROAD PATHWAY - MID AFTERNOON

JUSUF cycles down the path, his jacket creates a cape like outline as he zips down the only path on the countryside that leads to the other cluster of houses as well as Mr AMIRS house.

JUSUF

Faster than Hinault, better than
Armstrong! Faster than Hinault!
Better than Armstrong!

JUSUF'S is going so fast that his feet slip off the pedals, he struggles to keep a straight line in the oddly bumpy pathway. JUSUF stops cycling, he stands up tall to see further, he hears bullets being fired from behind. He looks back with fright, he gets back on his saddle and cycles to AMIR'S house. He gets to the house and runs around the back to a small window. He squeezes his small frame through the window and tries to stay quiet by walking by the edges of the wooded flooring to make little noise.

JUSUF walks over to his sitting spot and replays his movements from the day before. He collapses on the floor and pretends to eclipse the light with his finger tips. He sits up and looks over at the miniature wooden bookcase and walks over to the book AMIR was reading to him. He opens up the book and reads a page.

JUSUF

(softly and slowly reads)

"He pushes the castle door open to
find her there, she is safe and
unharmed, finally. Unlike him, he,
is in their sights. He is wanted
and he is soon captured."

JUSUF stops reading once he hears AMIR talking, he stays quiet and listens out. Silence. He remains unmoved for a short time. He glides over to peek into AMIR'S bedroom to find AMIR is asleep, talking. JUSUF rushes back into the living room sees the glass he used to drink goats milk from. He picks up the glass and curiosity makes him sniff the glass. He's repulsed by the stench and places it on the newspaper on the table.

The uneven surface forces the glass to tilt. He looks under the newspaper to find the locket of his mother. JUSUF puts the locket in his pocket, he makes his short journey to the window when he stops in his tracks. He sneaks back into the living room and to the bookcase, he takes the book and puts it in his trouser squeezed by his stomach.

EXT. CYCLE/ROAD PATHWAY - AFTERNOON

JUSUF decides to put his locket around his neck and makes sure AMIR'S book is safe and secure, he cycles back home as quick as he can.

JUSUF

She is safe and unharmed, finally.
Finally Mama.

An army vehicle is approaching in the distance, soldiers are bursting out from the back end. JUSUF gives the vehicle enough space, the vehicle slows down and stops. JUSUF also

stops in front of the vehicle. A man jumps off and sees JUSUF'S religious hat.

SOLDIER

You live around here boy?

JUSUF

...yeah?...

The soldier looks back at his fellow soldiers in the vehicle.

SOLDIER

You live with your family?

JUSUF grips the handles of his bike.

JUSUF

...just my father...but hes to old and sick to be fighting...

SOLDIER

We can help him...can you take us there? He sounds like he needs our help.

JUSUF nods, the soldier walks over to JUSUF and forces him away from his bike and takes him to their vehicle. The Soldiers make a u-turn and head back where they came from. Their vehicle drives off into the distance as the wheels dig fresh new tracks on the pathway. The sight of the vehicle becomes smaller and smaller.

INT. FATHERS BEDROOM - LATE AFTERNOON

FATHER empties out his chest of draws, he judges his clothing and throws dirty clothes to one pile in the room. A photograph falls out from the dirty folded jeans. FATHER picks the photograph up and straightens it out to reveal JUSUF with FATHER and his wife. FATHER leaves the bedroom and enter the kitchen, FATHER takes out the picture in the kitchen and place it in his pocket.

His body freezes. His eyes fixed on the window, he nervously takes a step back and walks into the table. A rusty, metal, broken tin falls on the ground. FATHER is unmoved. The bang on the door jolts him, FATHER hesitantly walks to the door an opens. FATHER sees JUSUF.

FATHER

JUSUF!

FATHER attempts to rush to his son, SOLDIER intervenes and hits him using the blunt side of his gun.

JUSUF

PAPA! PAPA!

JUSUF hits out at the soldier holding him, JUSUF becomes more upset at the sight of his father on the ground.

FATHER

JUSUF! JUSUF! Its ok (breathes heavily) its ok son. Its going to be ok.

SOLDIER leans in on FATHER stares at the side of his face for an uncomfortable amount of time and whispers.

SOLDIER

(whispers)

...Are you a muslim?

FATHER reluctantly concedes, FATHER nods his head. SOLDIER stands up straight prepares a cigarrett and briefly pokes his head inside the house. SOLDIER steps away from the house to light his cigarrett, SOLDIER nods to his accomplices. Two soldiers jump off the truck and walk over to FATHER and aggressively take him into the truck with JUSUF. JUSUF sits on FATHERS lap and clings on to him.

JUSUF

I left her papa, you said not to leave but I had to get Mama back..im sorry papa!

JUSUF shows FATHER his locket. FATHER reassures JUSUF and holds him closer to his chest. As they are driven away from their house FATHER see men gushing into his home. FATHER digs into his pocket and pulls out his photograph. FATHER discreetly holds it up to JUSUF.

FATHER

Son Its not your fault...you are only a child son.

The truck drives aggressively fast and with intent, FATHER kisses his sons head and places his mouth by JUSUF'S ear.

FATHER

(whispers)

.....Dont be afraid, be brave son, be brave for me and Mama.

The truck continues driving at high speed, in the distance dark smoke is bellowing, creating a mushroom cloud. A flurry of flies buzz around a dead legless goat.

FADE TO BLACK

