

## **1B Mehmood Abeel Pardinias**

### **Blind Yet Friendship is Visible**

It was raining. The slums were dark and cramped, and the objects that barely resemble houses were packed like sardines. There was barely any sunlight, as the factories surrounding the city clouded the skies and painted them a grim yellow. The rain didn't exude a smell of petrichor but instead filled the air with strong fumes. Anyone would think that those who're unlucky enough to live in this sort of environment would have moved out by now. However, some people just aren't fortunate enough. There remain people left behind, like cattle looking through a small birdcage. Cursed to never taste freedom.

Within this insufferable place lives Iris and her pet, Sclera. Iris donned ragged clothes, and lived without her parents. Her only companion in life was Sclera. A blind dog who was cheerful and always barked. Sclera was found in an alleyway while Iris was wandering around the city for food. Iris paid the dog no mind, but the dog chased her around with its sense of smell, as the dog was blind. Eventually, Iris gave in to the dog's charm. They've been together ever since.

Iris and Sclera had both already grown accustomed to the rotten lifestyle the slums had to offer. They wouldn't mind having to live in such miserable conditions, so long as they had one another to rely on. Another day passed in the boring, uneventful lives of Iris and Sclera. The next day, a giant yellow truck sprayed water and disinfectant everywhere. People in yellow hazmat suits went around the small "city", littering it with rat poison. Iris was relieved to see that there were finally hygienic measures in her living environment. She dashed down to the streets and begged them for water. She received what seemed to be 1 litre in return. Her eyes flickered in glee.

When she returned home, she noticed that the cheerful dog was lying down on its side, silent and unresponsive, and appeared to be breathing erratically. She got worried and dashed down to the streets with Sclera curled up in her arms in a panic. Iris, desperate to save her dog, snuck into the large factory - the catalyst of the slum habitants' misery from all its pollution.

Conveniently, that same factory manufactured bread. And thus, Iris infiltrated the factory with a dog on the verge of starvation in her arms. The

dog quietly growled once before falling asleep. Luckily, Iris had successfully stolen a bag of bread to feed the dog. She then rushed along back to her tiny home with haste. In desperation to save the dog, she fed it small pieces of bread as it slept. When the dog woke up, it refused to eat. Iris, dumbfounded, wondered why the dog wasn't eating. Before she could guess, the dog had started vomiting and making unpleasant noises. It wasn't long before Iris realized that the dog was sick. The fumes of the disinfectant and rat poison must have gotten to the dog. Iris cried in despair as there weren't any veterinarians in the area. The next city is miles away. Her only sufficient food was the bag of bread she stole from the factory earlier. Her only sufficient source of water was the single litre she was given as a charity act.

And so, she decided to run away from the slums in order to save her dog's life. And for the first time she wondered why she hadn't left any sooner.

She ran barefoot. She ran for what felt like an eternity to her. Even if the crooked pavement injured her, even if she tripped and fell, she ran like her life depended on it. Her determination to save her friend burnt brighter than the sun. After running for hours, she finally saw a city in the distance. She collapsed and passed out. Sclera woke up to an unconscious Iris. Sclera tried waking Iris up with her paws to no avail. Sclera struggled to stand properly, her limbs trembling as she tried to stand straight. She barked with the little energy she had left, which woke Iris. In the meadow where Sclera laid unconscious shone city lights in the distance. Iris stood up, picking Sclera up to rest in her arms. Iris ran, and the distance between the city was closed. The closer she got, the more hope she mustered. She'd finally be able to save Sclera. The city was now only a kilometer away. Iris, with hope glimmering in her eyes, assured Sclera that she'd be saved. But there was no response. Sclera's body temperature wasn't as warm as it used to be. It was cold. The dog's pulse disappeared.

Iris' smile instantly broke into a frown. Her eyes welled up with tears as she frantically tried to resuscitate the dog. She was in disbelief. She didn't want to believe that Sclera had passed. She didn't want to be alone. She couldn't accept that Sclera had died. She screamed and cried out Sclera's name. For more than half of Iris's life, Sclera was there for her. And now, she's gone. Iris won't have anyone to rely on anymore. She doesn't have parents. She doesn't have friends. Her best companion is now gone. Iris

couldn't bear the thought, and laid still on the ground next to Sclera, as her tears sunk and absorbed into the ground.