

Losing My Brother

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I had just graduated with a doctorate degree and returned home at the end of the summer. My uncle picked me up at the airport and everybody was so happy to see me. I was so happy and excited to be back with my family. An hour after I had arrived at my uncle's, my sister Rawda called to welcome me home. I was in my uncle's bedroom talking to her while standing and facing my uncle who was sitting on his bed. I was asking Rawda about each member of my family starting with my mother, Mohammed, Fatma and finally my youngest brother Yahya. When I asked how Yahya was doing, she said that he was not O.K. I asked whether he was sick. "Worse than that," she replied. "Is he at the hospital?" I asked. "Worse than that," she said. "What is worse than being sick?" I wondered, "Is he dead," I added anxiously. "Yes, he is", she answered. What a shock! I felt as if heaven had fallen on earth. My feet could not hold me, I choked with words and tears stood still in my eyes. My uncle picked up the phone from my hand and he yelled at Rawda for telling me such shocking news at the wrong time. I seemed like yesterday when I last talked to Yahya over the phone to wish him a happy Eid. We talked and laughed and I never thought I would lose my 20-year old brother whom I had not seen for over 2 years just like that. He had passed away one month before I arrived and my family did not tell me about Yahya's death as I was finishing my studies in the States.

Yahya got killed in a car accident on the Mecca-Jedda highway. My brother Mohammed, his wife and little "Ahad" were in Italy on holiday. Ahad was Mohammad's first baby. She was three months old and Yahya adored her. Yahya always held her, played with her and brought her toys and presents. He learnt that baby Ahad was coming home from Italy around midnight. So he took Mohammad's Mercedes car and drove to the airport in Jedda to meet Ahad. He waited and waited but could not see Mohammad. So, he drove back to Mecca as fast as he could,

hoping to get home and return the car before Mohammad's arrival. On the highway, Yahya had the accident and the car rolled over several times and Yahya died instantly. The police came, picked Yahya's body and could not find out who he was. So they sent him to the hospital and kept his body in the mortuary.

My mother and sister were waiting for Mohammed and Yahya to come home. But Mohammed and his family got home and Yahya did not. Mother asked Mohammed where Yahya was and Mohammed replied that he did not see him. Mohammed went out to look for Yahya 3 o'clock in the morning, and Fatma called Yahya's friends in the neighborhood and asked them to look for him. They looked, but in vain.

The following morning, Mohammed and his friend Marwan went to the police station and checked with the hospitals in Mecca but there was no trace of Yahya. Marwan suggested that they go check the hospital's morgue. They did. Mohammed was searching quickly and did not notice anything. Marwan was more patient. He saw a young man with fair skin, so he asked Mohammed if that was Yahya (he never saw Yahya before). As soon as Mohammed saw his face, he fainted. Doctors and nurses tried to resuscitate him. When he was conscious again, he screamed and screamed and screamed. Marwan helped take Yahya home. When my mother learnt about Yahya's death, she took heart and asked to take a look at him. She kissed him good-bye and asked God to rest his soul.

For Yahya's funeral, people came from all over, even people whom my mother never saw or knew. They all cried and mourned Yahya. Yahya was so popular and had a good sense of humor. He was good-hearted and always liked to help people and joke with them.

For a very long time, it was hard for me to enter Yahya's room, look at his pictures or his beautiful black car. He had a talking car. Its seats were covered with white soft fur. He liked to wash his car at night while playing very loud music. He was a very loving brother. Every time he

came home from Jedda for the weekend, he brought each of us a gift although he was just a student at the institute. He was very dainty. He always styled his hair with a brush and used hair spray.

Baby Ahad is 15-years old now and she keeps pictures of her beloved uncle, whom she had never seen and will never see again, in a special photo album as she knows, for sure, how much Yahya loved her.