

When The Sun Reaches The Sky

Life doesn't always come as you expect it too. Life can hit you hard, sometimes so hard that you can't come back up again, so hard that you lose control. My name is Leila Hong. I was born on **January 1**, 2000. Yes, the day of the New Year. I was born when the **sun** first reached the sky, when the birds joyful beaks twittered out to awaken the rest. The world was strange to me that day, same as it is to me now. The same way the waves will always come back, the same way my father will never come back. Even if you have built the biggest sand castle in the world, the waves will always come back and knock it down. Piece by piece, brick by brick. But there is a single question stuck in my head. Do accidents happen on purpose? Is that why, three years and twenty one days ago that the accident happened? The one that messed up my head, the one that pierced my heart with arrows? How could you? Don't you know that after all this time, I still remember? Though I cannot ask you these questions anymore, you have left this world with a responsibility. A responsibility to fix my life, to clear away those waves so that they won't wreck the beautiful things in my life, like the way they wreck sandcastles. I beg of you, please mend my heart. I would give anything, and everything. But for now, I will tell you my story starting from the beginning.

It had been a calm day- the skies were blue, and a breeze blew softly across my face. The air was salty, and I could taste it as I gulped down handfuls of air. I dug my fingers into the cool sand, and looked up at the sky.

I **sat** there for a moment, thinking only of what a wonderful world I was in.

My brothers and sisters were somewhere near our hut, playing. I could hear my mother's laugh, which was something of wonder. It sounded like honey, each note ringing in my ear. That moment felt nice, where I didn't have anything to worry about. You may be wondering, why would I say that? Well diary, it is because that was the last contented moment I would have.

I opened my eyes, panting. My brothers and sisters were already asleep, their stomachs rising up and down with each breath. I fell back onto the thin blanket, my eyes open. I tried breathing, but for some reason breath wouldn't come. My stomach felt sick, but I couldn't make out what was causing my 'panic attack'. My face was burning, and I dug my face into the soft blankets, it's warmth comforting me, but just a little. Slow tears started to fall out of my eyes, and for some reason, I had let them fall. I wasn't the one to cry very often, and I had let them fall. I had a hard time falling asleep that night. I had a feeling though, that it was because of the nightmare I had. And oh, what a nightmare it was.

I was walking down a small dirt-paved road that lead down to the ocean, my favorite place in the whole world. I saw something in the distance, but I had ignored it. I kept on walking down the road, dragging my feet through the mud, feeling it's cool, slimy touch against my bare feet.

Once I had gotten a little closer, I focused my view towards the ocean. The dot was bigger now, forming some sort of a curvy shape. I kept my view towards the thing, and I quickened my pace. I was feeling a little worried. By the time I reached the shore, the thing was already setting it's anchor. It was huge, and it loomed over me. I gulped. A hatch slowly opened, and I gasped at what came out.

There were strange creatures that came out. They were just like us, though their skin the color of the white clouds that floated overhead. I was scared. There was nothing I could do, so I just stood there, open mouthed, staring. They looked alive, so I knew for some reason that they were human. They started walking towards the rest of us. I backed away, frightened. They started speaking, but not in a language I could understand. My stomach felt as if it had just been punched. I shook with fear as I called out for my tribe.

"Help me!" I called "Help me..." I took a final shaky step backwards, and then fell. That had been my nightmare. You may think it had not been scary, but it had been the worst thing that has happened to me so far.

I sat up on my bed, staring up at the ceiling. A million thoughts were racing through my mind. I focused on breathing, as the cool air whistled its way through the thin straw of the hut. My mind felt tight, and my cheeks were burning with heat. I swayed my body from side to side, hoping that the nightmare would go out of my head. But unfortunately, it didn't.

I ran out of the tent and into the fresh smelling morning. I laid down on my back and let the grass tickle my feet. "Maybe here I would be able to sleep peacefully." I thought. I rolled onto my side and let my eyes close just to be awakened by the whispering of my name.

"Sala, Sala. Wake up!" I woke up to see my brother, Paaka, leaning over me, tears streaming down his face. Diary, I think this may be a good time to describe how we look.

My name is Sala, and I am the daughter of the fifth son of the chief of our tribe. People say my brother Paaka and I look exactly like my father, but I don't think so. I am tall, with long black hair that reaches down to my back. I have large hazel eyes, and my mama sometimes tells me that my eyes can see everything. I don't think so, but then again, my mama is never wrong.

My brother almost looks exactly like me, but not quite. He has my eyes, but his hair is

very floppy. He is also very short, though he is only a few years younger than me.

I sighed again. Diary, you should know that my little brother loved to play tricks on me and my whole family. I sighed again, thinking this was another trick, and rolled to the other side. My brother started shaking me again, but this time crying louder. I was startled by this action. He had never done this before. Was this a new trick of his? Or was he being real?

I rolled back over again, straining to look at my brother's face. He was hunched over, and his shoulders were shaking, as if he was crying. I took my hand and lifted his face up.

"I had the same dream." My brother looked up with a look of complete horror on his face.

"W-what?!"

"Yes." I nodded my head solemnly.

"Then we need to do something, fast." My brother leapt out of my lap and sprinted across the damp grass.

I took off after him, wondering what he was up to. He was about to go into the house.

"Please, Paaka. Don't worry about it. Mama and Papa would get mad if they saw you. Just forget about it." He stopped. I knew he was listening. I continued. "It was just a nightmare, Ok?"

"Fine. Let's forget about it. But don't tell anyone about it. Pinky Swear?"

"Pinky swear." And we shook on it.

But, Diary, The day after was the day they came.

I finished my breakfast of jumbo quickly, and then motioned for Paaka to follow me. He nodded, and finished the rest of his too. When we got outside, I spoke to him in a serious tone.

"Remember, don't tell anyone about the dream, okay?"

"Yeah, yeah, I remember."

I sighed and then started walking back to our hut when I heard the scream. It was very shrill, and seemed to be coming from the ocean. I quickly swiveled around. There I saw people running in the direction of the sound. I followed them, my heart pounding. When I got there, I looked into the horizon. And there it was. The ships. The same ones from my dream. My heart pounded rapidly, and a million thoughts raced through my head. "What was I supposed to do?" I felt a hand slip into mine. It was Paaka. His skin was cold, and it

was shaking from fear.

“Mama, Papa, Have you heard the news?” Papa looked up from his ax. Mama stopped stirring the soup.

“What news?”

“The news about the new visitors!” A smile came to Papa’s face.

“Of course we have, people have been talking about it everywhere!” Papa laughed.

“Just wait until dinner,” Papa had said. “ Everything will be alright.”

I wish I could tell you this now Papa, but everything was not alright. It was far from that.

We had a great feast that night, and the strangers were given our crops, hunting bows, and the best foods. I think they knew that they had things that we wanted, although they didn’t show it. My chief liked the strangers, and had almost treated them like our own. But I did realize at one point though, that they never gave us anything. They accepted our gifts, and then kept eating the food we had made, ignoring the asking in our chief’s eyes. I ignored it though, and tried to have a good time until it was time for everyone to go to sleep. I was very tired from having to work through all the commotion in the day. I didn’t even need to worry about having a nightmare. I just slowly, slowly, lay down in my bed and fell asleep.

I was awakened by a strange sound. It sounded like barking. I forced my eyes open. There, in the middle of the room, was the stranger. His skin looked pale in the moonlight, and he carried a small branch in his hand. I knew what it was. He pointed it towards us and started barking. My dad leapt in front of us, and started to yell at the stranger.

“Get away! Get away from my children!” A swirl of anger rolled around in my father’s eyes.

“Don’t you dare hurt my children!” I grabbed Paaka and Jaana, while Musala grabbed an ax. My mother grabbed Paana, while tears of worry streamed down her face. I held Paaka and Jaana closer to my chest. Papa was strong, but the man was stronger. He beat Papa to the ground, hitting him with such force that I thought that no one could have felt as much pain as Papa had right then. I looked at Musala, who dropped the ax in fear. Diary, did I mention to you that Papa was old? He was more than 15 years older than my mother. So after that stranger beat Papa so hard, Papa died.

That night was the only time I had cried as much as I did that night. Everyone of us cried and cried and cried. We cried so much that we had let the strangers take us. We didn’t even resist.

We were packed onto a ship, our eyes sore from crying, our hands in cuffs. They

separated us by gender, so that Paaka and Musala went away, while my sisters and I went with Mama. We were sent to a land where we were put to work. We worked and worked. We worked for something called sugar, for I had tasted the thing the first time we were sent there. It tasted sweet, and I instantly recognized it because my mother had used it when she cooked. Many of our people died, while the rest of us were changed into the strangers. We ate their food, we wore their clothes, and we acted and greeted like them.

I have many sorrows in my life, but there is one that stands on a whole new level.

I ask myself over and over again, “Why didn’t I listen to my dream? Could it have saved my whole village?” That question spins around and around in my head, leaping and jumping like I no longer can do. That question has aged me, and though I am old, it makes me feel a thousand times older. I now think of myself as not the hero of the village, but as the one who let the whole village down. So diary, share this letter to the world, to show that everyone should have a right to share their dream.