

The Swap

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2016 Division B 2nd Place Writing Award

Maria

I close my eyes and cover my ears as the sound of air raids blasts through the air, the worried expression my family wore only deepened my own anxiety. We waited in my basement praying for a moment of tranquility.

Dana

I tied the knot on the ballet pumps to a perfect bow and waited impatiently for my private ballet teacher to arrive at the mansions gate.

Maria

I woke up, with a faint ringing in my ears due to the night before, my mother notices that I'm alert and begins to speak, "Get ready, the bus has arrived!"

I reply, "Fine, bye!" I swallow down my breakfast, and head out the door onto the bus. Halfway I notice a sleek black car with the window rolled down as a girl from the car locks eyes on me.

Dana

"Hurry up, cars here! Get to school!" cried Dad

“Alright, Alright!” I reply

I snatch my bag from the floor, peck him on the cheek and slide into the back seat. Ten minutes into the ride, I observe a rickety school bus from the window; I notice a girl no older than me, staring down at me.

Maria

It felt like I was trapped in an ice bath and couldn't come up for air, when I slowly gained the courage to open my eyes I appeared to be looking at the grimy yellow bus on the other side of the window.

Dana

A painful headache had managed to conjure itself out of nowhere, and the garments that I wore were disturbingly itchy, however my thoughts were distracted as an object was thrown onto the bonnet of the bus, an object no bigger than my hand . . . a hand grenade.

Maria

We had arrived at the school gate which read, “Iraqi private school for girls” when I heard a sound that was too familiar . . . a bomb.

Dana

It all happened at a pace I couldn't keep up with, the bus flew back like paper in the wind and before I could process anything and get back up on my feet, I was slowly drifting to unconsciousness.

Maria

"Go back!" I yell,

"Madame, I can't go back" the driver replied

"GO BACK!" I Scream. The car swerves around and we head back to the bus. We arrive and the sight is ablaze, in the corner of my eye I notice a body lying lifeless, my body.

Dana

I wake up to several nurses surrounding me with concerning looks on their faces, the door swings open and the girl walks in. Abruptly I got up from the hospital bed and began to grasp at the girl as the heart monitor goes berserk.

Maria

It happened in a flash, our eyes met and the world began to spin rapidly, when I opened my eyes I was looking at her and a wave of relief washed over me...