

HASINA

By Harry Jivenmukta



Part one

i remember how we sat
across from each other
crouched over the small table.
excited by the tiny paper
packet brought from
a distant place.
you opened the packet
ever so carefully.
it was amazing how
without glue, the packet
had been folded so
it was so tightly closed.
at the last fold you nearly
pulled too hard but
managed to contain
the contents.
magic seeds.
that's what they had said.
lots of tiny seeds
so small even for
our tiny hands.
you counted them out
slowly, one by one.
in all seventeen seeds.
we didn't even really know
what to do with them.
eight each, i said.
and you simply nodded.
we barely breathed
afraid that our breath would
blow away the tiny packets
of life.
one by one we
divided them up.
one for you, one for me,

eight for you,
eight for me.
and one left over.
what to do with that
one, orphaned seed?
we were too innocent
to be greedy
and never thought about
one of us having one extra.
you went for a sheet of
old newspaper and
cut out the small squares
the same size as the
original packet.
we tried to fold ours
the same way.
it didn't work.
in the end we just
made our own packets
but made sure the
seeds wouldn't be able
to drop out.
the one left.
we just looked at it.
you slid it along the table top
until it fell into
a little crack.
it sat there safe.
there was no way it could
blow away or
get lost.
you went home then and
i didn't know i wouldn't
see you again for so many
years.
you took your small
packet with you.

it was your father
that had suddenly
been taken ill and
had been moved away to your
grandparents house to recover.
you had gone as well.
i did hear from time to time
about how he and you
were getting along.
i heard that he had a
sickness that held him
between life and death,
neither here nor there.
and that you were there
at your grandparents house.
after a few days i decided
to plant that extra seed
for your father.
and hoped that as it grew
so would your father's health.
i found an old lamp bowl
and went in search of
some good soil.
i spread the clods of soil
out on a stone, to dry.
then i went through it
picking at all the stones,
like sorting grains.
i thinned the soil
through my fingers.
i filled the bowl.
i had to use a sewing needle
to get the seed out
of the crack in the table.
i prayed for your father
as i planted the seed
in the soil and gently

watered it by running
water through my fingers
drop by drop.
i left the bowl on the windowsill
where the sun came
every morning to
wake me.
every day i watched and
dropped a few blobs of
water into the bowl.
but i didn't touch the soil.
i knew that life didn't
come like that.
i knew that one day
i would be a mother
give birth to a child.
i knew it took time.
you had to be patient.
we went away for the
moon festival for a
few days
and i asked my best friend
to water the bowl
and showed her exactly
how to do it.
when we came back
i ran to my windowsill
but there wasn't
any life.
but one day there was.
two tiny green leaves
pointed at the end
peeped out of the soil.
i was ecstatic
and leaped around.
but i didn't touch,
i didn't lift the bowl.

i held my breath
when i was watching
closely.
i imagined your father
with two tiny leaves
of life inside.
but the news was the same
he was the same.
i never saw my eight seeds
again.
i think that somewhere
the tiny packed had been
dropped or collected
with the sweeping.
so i only had the
one,
that one seed that
had troubled us so much.
i did wonder what
had happened to
your seeds.
had you planted them?
or had you lost them
like me?
could a boy's hasty fingers
plant so delicate seeds?
would you have had
the patience to wait
to see what nature
would bring?
or did you impatiently
search through the soil
looking for the
leaves.
had you sifted the
soil at all?
or had you just

stuffed the seeds
anywhere, outside
in the huge earth?
was i being fair
with you?
i know you.
i know boys.
but at least i had
this one, the one
the only one?
people said that plants
should be outside
in the soil not
in old pots that
were too small,
on a windowsill.
but i had given
birth, almost, to
this life.
how could i cast it
outside in the
big earth?
to the rain,
the wind,
the ravages of nature?
no, i would keep it
inside, at least
on the windowsill,
by me.
i found an old box
with holes in the side
and the bottom.
of no use to anyone else.
it was big enough
and i repeated the
job of adding sifted soil.
i transplanted it

as if it were the
most precious thing
ever.
well, it was, to me.
your father died.
my plant lived but
despite all my prayers
your father had died.
the plant grew as
high as me and
produced a few
large purple flowers.
i planted the seeds
from these flowers
for years.

Part two

i had to go away because
my father was so ill.
my grandparents were
very kind and gentle
people.
my grandfather asked
what i held in my fist.
magic seeds, i said.
i showed him and he
said we should plant them.
i asked him what sort
of seeds they were,
but he didn't know.
he had huge hands but
was very gentle.
we planted all eight
seeds and put them
outside, but covered.
they all grew and
were very tall.

there were lots of flowers.

in the autumn the

flowers faded and

my father died.

i always thought

about the ninth seed

and thought that you'd

probably forgotten

all about it.

it would have dried out

and just be

dust now.