

Parallel perspectives

AUGUST 2023



In the bustling city of Jerusalem, Amina and Leila were chatting together, as usual. The two friends, one with silky black hair and almond-shaped brown eyes, the other with dark brown curls and green eyes, had been best friends since childhood. Their families had always hated each other, due to their different faiths and for being business rivals, but that hadn't affected the personal friendship between the two young women. In fact, they had always been curious about each other's life and recently Leila had devised a plan to experience that.

"Amina, imagine experiencing my world for a while," Leila said, her eyes sparkling with excitement "Wouldn't that be amazing?"

Amina nodded, a shy smile spreading across her face. "I'd love to see life from your perspective, Leila."

"Well, I have found something that might help us with that!" - the Jewish girl said, revealing an ancient pendant, covered in ancient inscriptions.

The ancient relic, a mystical pendant that had been passed down through generations, dangled from Leila's hand. "Then let's touch this together and we'll trade lives!"

PARALLEL PERSPECTIVES



As their fingers delicately intertwined around the pendant, an electrifying surge of energy coursed through their intertwined hands, causing their surroundings to blur and twist.

In the blink of an eye, Leila found herself transported into a typical apartment in the heart of the Arab quarter. The walls were a masterpiece of intricate designs, rich, vibrant tapestries adorned the halls, exuding a sense of history and culture that enveloped her senses. It was undeniably the very house Amina shared with her handsome husband – a place where Leila was never welcome before her transformation.

Her gaze was drawn to an ornate mirror placed nearby, its frame an exquisite homage to Arabic artistry. As her reflection stared back at her, she locked eyes with those same dark, mysterious irises that were unmistakably Amina's trademark. Her skin was much darker than before, mirroring the same complexion as her the Arab friend. Leila realised she really had the chance to experience a different life for a while.

PARALLEL PERSPECTIVES



When Amina opened her eyes, she found herself in the heart of a sprawling Jewish house. A sense of awe washed over her as her eyes settled on the vibrant mezuzah gracing the doorframe, and the tantalizing aroma of freshly baked challah teased her senses.

Stepping into the bathroom, her reflection in the mirror revealed her the extent of her transformation. Her once sleek hair now cascaded in joyful curls, releasing an enticing aroma. The hue of her skin had taken on a delicate olive tone, a much lighter complexion than her original shade. Even her brown eyes had changed, now a vibrant green. Amina's heart swelled with curiosity as she began to immerse herself in Leila's life.

Days turned into weeks, and Amina enjoyed the novelty of her experience, although she struggled to hide her discomfort adapting herself to the customs and traditions of Leila's community. She attended Shabbat dinners and learned the significance of Hanukkah, but in her heart she always praised Allah and begged for his pardon for what she was doing. Spending time together with her Jewish friend made her forget about their cultural differences, but being surrounded by Jewish people and having to live like one of them was something different.

PARALLEL PERSPECTIVES



Leila, on the other hand, happily navigated the complexities of Palestinian society, attending parties and mastering the art of henna. For the first time in her life, she entered a mosque and learned to praise Allah, although she remained faithful to the God of the Israelites. Her fluency in Arabic surprised herself in the first place, but she realised it was some sort of muscle memory linked with Amina's body. It also shocked her that when she tried to speak Hebrew, although her vocabulary was untouched, she had a distinctive Arabic accent, like many Palestinians who had learned Hebrew at school, but never mastered it like natives.

She learned to dress more modestly than before while in public, but she deeply enjoyed sharing private time with Amina's Muslim husband, for which she loved to dress provocatively. Within this intricate dance, Leila found herself liberated from the short-lived connections she had once shared with Jewish men. The allure of those past experiences paled in comparison to the enigmatic charm of Amina's husband, a man whose dominance resonated with her on a visceral level. Seeing Amina's silky black hair cascading on her naked brown breasts while lying in bed with her husband multiplied her sexual euphoria. Being in her friend's body was so liberating, everything felt more intense to her! Slowly but surely, she began realising that she would rather keep her friend's body than returning to her old life, so she started plotting a plan.

PARALLEL PERSPECTIVES



Amina, on the other hand, was learning to make the most of her time in Leila's skin by enjoying her newfound freedom as a single, wealthy Israeli woman and soon enough flirting with the young wealthy Jewish men of her new community became her favourite occupation. Sure, she still disliked being part of this community but she also enjoyed the novelty of the situation. She felt like she had no external expectations to match as nobody really knew who she was.

Any attempts to stay in touch with her Arab identity failed miserably. One day, she covered herself and tried attending a mosque but realised she could now only speak Arabic with a thick Jewish accent, which made her skin crawl. People were staring at her when she spoke, and this made her uncomfortable, so she eventually gave up, regretting having ever agreed to try this experience.

During her frequent chats with her friend, she made her understand that it was almost time to put an end to this experiment the two of them were secretly carrying out, but each time she mentioned this, Leila would ask her to wait one more week to give her a chance to enjoy the life-changing experience a bit longer. Weeks turned into months, and eventually Amina gave her friend Laila an ultimatum: she wanted to be back in her body before Ramadan began, because her soul needed that purifying experience, and because Leila would have never managed to endure such an experience without the support of faith.

PARALLEL PERSPECTIVES



Leila had to do something soon, so she took a deep breath and put her plan into action. One day, the Jewish-turned Arab girl called her friend to tell her of something terrible that had happened: her husband had found the ancient Jewish pendent that made them trade lives and forced her to destroy it, saying that it was Haram to own such artefacts. It wasn't entirely false; in fact it was basically true, the only part Leila avoided mentioning was that she had planned this all along. She simply left the pendent in full sight; once she got to know her new husband well enough, she realised his controlling nature and his deep hatred of anything Jewish would have done the rest.

"I'm afraid we're stuck" - the Arab-looking girl told her friend, her voice cracking "Touching it together again was the only way to reverse the swap."

"How do you mean stuck? There's got to be a way out of this..." - Amina replied, unconsciously touching her face with her hands. Was she really stuck as Leila Abarbanel, her beloved Jewish friend? She had recently straightened her now curly hair to have a more familiar feeling, and now she realised she might have to live as Leila for much longer than expected.

PARALLEL PERSPECTIVES



While a twinge of remorse lingered within Leila for stealing her best friend's identity, an overwhelming tide of happiness surged through her as she wholeheartedly embraced her newfound existence as Amina Awad. She was a happy wife and she knew she would soon become a mother given some hints her husband gave her. Not that she minded it.

Her views on politics were also affected, as the Palestinian perspective, once distant, became a vivid tableau of understanding, evoking profound empathy for their enduring struggle. At the same time, she also experienced prejudice by Jewish Israelis, which further estranged her from her own community.

She grew distant from her old friend, partially due to the lingering sense of guilt, partially due to her trying to alienate herself from all her Jewish connections.

As time went on, Leila's devotion unfalteringly shifted towards the Muslim faith, solidifying her immersion into this newfound life. The resonance of her choices echoed not only in her identity but also in her convictions, painting a portrait of a woman content in her chosen path.

PARALLEL PERSPECTIVES



In contrast, took a while to accept the loss of her own identity, but when she did, she adopted a new identity and morphed into a figure reminiscent of a Jewish American princess.

Casting aside the veils of modesty, she assumed the role of a captivating femme fatale, a luminous star that ignited the fervor of her social circles. She eventually settled for a young Jewish man, the son of a prominent politician. Yet, her allure masked an intricate dance of power dynamics as she completely dominated him, basically using him as a living cash machine while having countless affairs with other men. Not only that, she also exploited her husband's family connections to extend her power well beyond her own social circles.

With each passing day, the tenets of her faith dimmed, her soul awash in disillusionment with the very fabric of existence. Her existence, once tethered to deeper beliefs, now thrived solely in the realm of the immediate, the transient.