

# Towards the Horizon

“Hey Binesi,”

My eyes suddenly opened as Waseyaa called my name and as usual, I saw a blurry world. This is how I know that I cried before I slept last night. I live with my only sister, Waseyaa. Waseyaa and I started a journey looking for our parents about 3~4 days ago.

I’m not sure what day it is since our nation, the Huron nation, got to a point where the existence of our nation was in danger. My sister and I live in the smallest village that is closest to the trading post where the French come to trade. A few days after the French came to trade, the Huron traders started to get sick with diseases that the French brought. Our village suddenly became a grave for a lot of people.

“Hey,” Azaadi called while knocking on the front door of our house made out of bark panels with a round, long roof. I greeted him as I opened the door for him. I met him when I was about 8 years old. He was there for me when my parents disappeared, he was there for me when I felt like I was sinking to the bottom of the world, he was just there for me when I needed him. I told Waseyaa to wait for Azaadi and me until we came back from the field that has food growing in it.

“Waseyaa, I’m going to get some food that we can eat with Azaadi,” I said as I walked to the front door with him.

“Okay, but come back as soon as possible!” Waseyaa said.

I smiled at her and nodded.

“Don’t worry, we will,” I said and walked out of the house with Azaadi.

“Hey, are you still looking for your parents? Azaadi asks me as he stares at his boot while walking.

“Yeah, Waseyaa wants them back so much and I do too,” I said.

“You know what? Do you mind if I join you? I just want to be out there instead of just being at home waiting till the disease visits my house, ” Azaadi asks me, looking me in the eye.

I really want him to come with me. Azaadi doesn’t have a mom, not even a dad to look over him. He hasn't had one since he was 3. He told me when I first met him.

“Yes of course! Thank you,” I said with a slight smile on my face. I saw a slight smile on Azaadi’s face too. As we were getting closer and closer to the field, we were able to see a lot of food growing such as corn and squash. I grabbed some and put some in a bag my mom gave me when I was younger. Azaadi helps me grab some too as I grab the potatoes. My bag was getting heavier and heavier as we both grabbed corn and squash. By the time we were both feeling like we had enough potatoes and wheat, the sun was going down right above the horizon.

“Want to sit and watch the sun go down?” Azaadi asks me while watching the sun slowly go down.

“Yeah, I mean it’s really pretty,” I said, staring at the sun. We both sat down and watched the sun go down. I felt like I was forgetting something.

“Oh no..” I suddenly stood up realizing Waseyaa was at home alone and as the sun had gone all the way down, the orange, golden sunlight was all gone and I felt a sharp, and cold wind blowing my hair and the promise I had made with Waseyaa.

“I got to go! I really need to go. Waseyaa is probably waiting for me,” I said quickly lifting up the bag full of food off the ground.

“She is going to be fine. Okay? Let’s go get her. Everyone makes mistakes. She will understand,” Azaadi said, trying to comfort me, looking me in the eye.

“But, but, I’m the only one she has. She has already felt enough pain losing our parents, she is going to be so worried.” I could not control my emotions quickly heading over to my house. When we got closer and closer to my house I heard Waseyaa cry. Non-stop. She probably has been crying for a long time.

“Hey, I’m here. I’m sorry,” I said. And that’s when I felt the hotness in Waseyaa’s body. I saw marks of Waseyaa’s puke and I started to cry. Azaadi is trying to comfort me. I wasn’t ready to let Waseyaa go. We knew that Waseyaa has gotten the disease. The Epidemic. I held her tightly as Waseyaa and I cried. Nobody has survived the disease so far and Azaadi and I wished that the first person to survive the disease would be Waseyaa. I prayed to God while I held her in my arms. Azaadi was with me and Waseyaa the whole night and that’s when I felt the coldness on Waseyaa’s body. That’s when I couldn’t stop crying, that's when I felt like I was the world’s worst sister ever.

“Waseyaa loves to go to the field and help me grab food but why! Why didn’t I take her?” I was wailing, blaming myself, telling myself to be sorry for Waseyaa for my whole entire life.

“Binesi,” Azaadi said quietly. I couldn’t stop. I didn’t even hear him at first.

“Binesi!” he yelled at me to get me to listen to him. I looked over to him.

“It’s not. It’s not your fault. Please stop blaming yourself!” Azaadi comforted me. I guess, I guess it helped me.. A lot.

I finally got up , Waseyaa in my arms. It was already the next morning. We started to walk. It was a silent walk. A long silent walk. We walked over to the field and dug a hole. Azaadi picked up a lot of beautiful flowers and put them near the hole. We buried her, still tears dropping, trying to be calm at least for one moment. We stayed there for a long time till I actually got to a point where I could finally turn back facing Waseyaa. And Azaadi and I have started walking again to my home but an empty home this time.

I got home with Azaadi, we were getting ready to continue the journey together but without Waseyaa. We packed our bags with some water and some food. I decided to keep all mom, dad and Waseyaa's things here.

“I don’t think we should pack our bags with so much food. We can refill them whenever we see food,” I said without thinking deeply enough.

“Yeah, I guess so,” Azaadi replied but he didn’t think enough either. As we left the house, we smelt the worst smell that you could possibly imagine. It was the smell of everyone suffering from the epidemic. Maybe.. We walked for about an hour or two, and we started to feel tired and hungry. I could not keep my emotions inside of me, and I wanted to just go back. Turn back. Retrace my steps. But then I heard Azaadi.

“Binesi, look over there, there’s a cave. Let’s go in there, eat and rest a bit,” Azaadi said excitedly. I was too. I was hungry and my legs were not listening to me. Azaadi and I crawled into the cave, took food out of our bags, used our bags as a pillow, ate and rested.

“Wake up,” Azaadi said as I rubbed my eyes and woke up. This reminded me of Waseyaa again, but I didn’t want to show Azaadi that I wanted to give up. He’s helping me. We both woke up, checked our bags to see how many potatoes we had left and right. When I was looking over to my bag, I saw animal paw prints before I looked into my bag and the food was gone. Not even crumbs. Nothing was left. The water was leaking and watering the ground. We have nothing.

I was in shock.

“Azaadi, do you have anything left in your bag..?” I looked over to Azaadi and then we heard.

BOOOOOM!!! Our heads quickly looked over to where the sound of a gun was coming from and it was the field. Our only food storage. We don’t have any food or water.

“Hello?” A stranger said hello while looking at us. We greeted him as we walked out of the cave.

“I am one of the Huron warriors. And I will have to tell you to head over to the north. There will be a canoe waiting for everyone,” The warrior said while looking around. “The Iroquoian and the Aldonquain noticed our population dropping by over half so they decided to attack our nati..” The soldier got cut off from a big big noise again coming from the field area. Just then I realized that all my family’s important things were in the house. I quickly nodded to what the soldier said and I ran in the opposite direction. Not to the north but to my home. I heard Azaadi calling my name but no. I didn’t stop. When I got to our home I didn’t know how many hours it took to get here. I fell and trip on rocks, but anyways I got here I quickly put them in my bag and I heard a gun shooting afterwards I heard multiple gun shots. I quickly grabbed everything I needed.

“Binesi, we got to go!” Azaadi shouted while panting. “The canoe is leaving any minute now. We have to escape!” He continued.

“I know, I know but I can’t leave all these things, Azaadi” I said. “Waseyaa’s here too.”

I knew that I wouldn’t be able to survive if I didn’t get on that canoe, something wasn’t right. Something was pulling me back. I thought that we could be my parents that’s pulling me back. Something deep in my heart that’s pulling back could be my parents that I couldn’t find yet. I ran back to the field and that’s when I saw a woman crying at the spot where we buried Waseyaa.

“Hello? Is everything okay? I said. And I didn’t get a response from that woman just sobbing. I recognized her. I promise I recognized her! And my heart was just so heavy like I won’t be able to breathe like it was a feeling i’ve never felt before. It was heavy like it would drag me down to the bottom of the earth. And I knew who she was. I realized who she was. She was my mother. I went closer to her trying to start a conversation. As I went closer and closer I saw Waseyaa in the woman’s arms crying.

“Are you okay? Do you recognize me? I’m Binesi. Do you recognize her?” I said while pointing at Waseyaa.

“Yes, yes I know this girl. This, this is my youngest daughter. I don’t know how, how she ended up being like this..!” My mother said while patting Waseyaa in the head.

“Mom? It’s me Binesi, your oldest daughter!” I said. She didn’t seem to recognize me at first but she eventually did. She realized that I was her daughter and she hugged me. I asked her where my father was after explaining Waseyaa’s death, she said that he was called to be a soldier of the Huron nation. And she told me that she got a letter from the soldier that my father passed away. My mother also told me about the canoe and that we had to get on. We started sprinting down the hill, up the hill, and we ran. Azaadi was trying to make the canoe wait for us and we saw him yelling at us, saying the canoe is leaving. “Come! Run!, ” Azaadi got on, and we were an inch away from the canoe.

“Go, Binesi. You can do this. Tell Azaadi thank you,” Mother said. And she pushed me onto the canoe and the canoe left. I felt so stupid for leaving mom. I could see my mother trying to get up from falling to push me onto the canoe. And then BANG. Smoke rose up, and I couldn’t see my mother anymore. I cried again and again. That’s when my story ends. I left to Quebec without my mother, father and Waseyaa.

## EPILOGUE

*Banesi was a girl from the Huron nation and she had to manage to flee to the north/ Quebec. In 1634-1640, the epidemics started from the French fur traders. The French fur traders brought smallpox and it swept through most of the villages of the Huron nation and the Huron population dropped by more than half. This is when Waseyaa died. After that, the Iroquoian and the Algonquain noticed the people dying due to the epidemics, so they decided to launch a full-scale attack on Huron. Only a few hundred people managed to flee to the north/ Quebec. People went on canoes to escape the war, and there are few hundred of people still living near Quebec nowadays. The people that didn’t manage to flee to the north all died due to lots and lots of attacks from the Iroquoian and the Algonquain.*





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