Adiva Nazlina Nahdi - Essay Workshop Draft 1

Just like everyone else when you have an important event tomorrow that you have been anticipating, at night are filled with overwhelming feelings of joy and nervousness. This was exactly how I felt on the eve of my birthday. This year, however, there was something different in the air because this year I was finally happy and had a bunch of different friend groups, I was halfway through junior high, and throughout the year I had no stress or worry every day on my mind during the whole year was just hanging out with my friends and having fun. I knew my birthday that year would be unique because that year was unlike any other.

The morning of my birthday as expected my friends appeared at my doorstep and they brought McDonald's my favorite meal sausage mc muffin with extra hashbrowns, and iced lychee tea as the drink and the birthday cake. It was a feast and a great breakfast at home with my friends filled with laughter and joy. Amidst the feast, my mom called me and suggested that I should treat my friends to go to lunch at the mall. Eager to continue the celebration, we made our way to the mall and we decided sushi would be the perfect lunchtime treat. Little did I know that this decision would unwittingly set the stage for an unexpected dilemma.

As my friends started posting pictures and videos of the surprise breakfast and lunch on their Instagram stories, I received a flurry of text messages from another friend from a different group. They questioned why they had not been included in the celebration and expressed their disappointment. In an attempt to meet me, they even ventured to the same mall. However, I was acutely aware of the tension that existed between these two friend groups, and I knew that their presence together would only complicate matters further.

Walking around with my friends in the mall became a nerve-wracking experience, as I was constantly on edge, fearing an encounter with the other group. To add to the complexity of the situation, my two closest cousins Sheima and Zerrin, whom I had grown up with, bombarded me with phone calls, alongside my insistent grandmother that wanted to meet me during my so-called special day. Overwhelmed and torn between conflicting obligations, I felt a whirlwind of emotions and was on the verge of tears. Despite the chaos surrounding me, I couldn’t ignore the call from my grandmother. It had been ingrained in me since childhood that when an elder especially a family asks for my presence I have to drop everything and attend to their request. And I taught to myself why do I have to get mad at her? She just wants to meet me and that's what grandmothers do always asking to meet their grandchildren. I then answered the call and my grandmother asked me to go to the big box supermarket on ground level.

Stepping into the supermarket, I scanned the aisles, searching for my grandmother's presence. She called me and told me to go to a small café/bakery nestled within the store. As I approached, I noticed my two cousins holding their phones, recording the moment, while holding a cake in their hands. Together, they sang "Happy Birthday" to me, creating an intimate, heartfelt celebration that unfolded amid the gaze of curious onlookers. I blew out the candles on the small simple cake, realizing that it was a last-minute purchase from the supermarket. Yet, the simplicity and authenticity of this gathering filled my heart with immense joy. At that moment, I discovered the beauty of genuine connections and found solace in the presence of my family. I realized that I didn't need extravagant surprises or lavish lunches; what truly mattered was the love and sincerity of those closest to me.

The lesson I got from this is that the value of genuine connections and the love of family should not be underestimated. Despite the initial excitement and surprises from different friend groups, the conflicting expectations and tensions created an uneasy and chaotic atmosphere. However, when the day took an unexpected turn and I found myself surrounded by my grandmother and cousins in a simple and intimate celebration, I realized that it was these genuine moments of love and sincerity that truly mattered. The experience taught me to appreciate the simplicity and authenticity of familial bonds and to prioritize meaningful connections over extravagant gestures. It served as a reminder that amidst the complexities of friendships and conflicting expectations, the support and presence of family can bring immense joy and contentment.