When I was 10 years old, I lived in Baghdad, Iraq. It was a dangerous place to be at the time, with frequent army attacks happening and the sound of bullets and bombs filling the air. I remember having to stay inside most of the time, and the safest place in our house was the restroom. It was a small space, but it was the only place where I felt secure during those turbulent times. Also it had no glass that can shutter if a nearby bomb goes off so yeah, that one too.

As a 10-year-old boy, I was full of energy and curiosity. I loved playing soccer, hide and seek, and other games with my friends in the neighborhood. However, when there were attacks happening, we had to take shelter in the restroom, which left me with nothing to do. I couldn't play video games because there was no electricity, and other basic necessities like clean water, power, and safety were hard to come by.

Our home had a mini-filtration system that would clean the water and make it drinkable, but it tasted weird, like a mixture of liquid sand and trash. Our outside faucet had water directly from the grid, which often came out muddy. I remember staring at a muddy cup of water for hours, trying to see how everything settles and how the separation happens. I found it fascinating, and after months of doing this, I started predicting the settling time of particles and which ones would settle first.

As strange as it sounds, I became obsessed with watching how solids settle settles. I remember I took about 50 cups with me to our spare room, filling them with water that came out direct of a potable faucet, and doing all kinds of experiments, everyone found it odd. I felt I was on a mission to do those cool experiments, I added bread crumps I remember, seeing them float then sink, really spiked my curiosity. I went to my dad, who used to build wastewater plants and I did not know that at the time. All what I know he was an engineer. I asked him what happens to the poop water. He then introduced me to the sewer network, which is like a highway for sewage. He took me to a plant and showed me how sewer water settles using clarifiers and headworks. These are the front-line filtration systems for sewer water, and their job is to operate the water and solids. Understanding how they worked made me realize that it's nothing but a giant cup of water with arms that scoop up the dirt from the bottom and clean the top off floaters - all done using gravity.

I know it might seem odd but exploring the settling of particles and how sewage works gave me something to focus on during those difficult times. It was a way for me to use my curiosity and energy, and it helped me cope with the stress and danger that was all around me. Even though I couldn't play with my friends outside during those times, I found a way to stay entertained and learn something new at the same time. It gave me hope and purpose.

This newfound fascination with wastewater treatment quickly became my obsession during those turbulent times in Baghdad. I started reading every book I could find on the topic, even though most of them were written for adults and contained complex scientific terms. But I was determined to understand the inner workings of this complex system and how it contributed to keeping the city's water supply safe.

My father noticed my interest and started taking me to more wastewater treatment plants around the city. I was fascinated by the whole process; from the moment the wastewater entered the plant until it was discharged back into the river or the kennel. I watched as the water went through different stages of filtration and treatment, and I was amazed at how many different machines and processes were involved in making the water clean and safe to use.

As my knowledge of wastewater treatment grew, so did my appreciation for it. I realized that this often-overlooked system played a crucial role in keeping our city clean and healthy, and that the people who worked in these plants were true heroes, risking their lives to keep others safe.

Today, as an adult, I work in the field of general contracting, and specifically wastewater plants building. and my fascination with wastewater treatment has never faded. I continue to study and research new methods of water treatment, and I am proud to contribute to the ongoing efforts to protect our planet's most precious resource. And I owe it all to those long, hot days spent in a cramped bathroom in Baghdad, staring at muddy water and wondering how it all worked. 15 years fast-forward, I am in my junior year of civil engineering. I can always remember things can really sucks, but always try to make the best of it. One day it will all be behind you. And whatever you make up of it, it can be what your whole life about.

Looking back, I realize that my childhood experience in Baghdad shaped me in ways I never could have imagined. It taught me the importance of resilience, perseverance, and finding joy in the little things, even during chaos and uncertainty.

It also taught me that sometimes the most unexpected things can lead us to our greatest passions and life's work. Who would have thought that staring at muddy water in a small bathroom could have ignited a lifelong fascination with wastewater treatment and water resource management?

But that's the beauty of life - it's full of surprises and unexpected twists and turns. And it's up to us to make the most of every opportunity, no matter how challenging or unconventional it may seem.

So if you find yourself facing difficult times, remember that there's always something to learn and discover. And who knows? Your next big adventure or lifelong passion may be waiting just around the corner.