

Pantsed Ninja by Shadman Rakib

"What the heck!" my older brother, Nazmus, said.

"What? I did nothing wrong," I said. "You're the one who photoshopped your report card."

"Why the hell did you snitch?" He shoved me against the wall.

"I didn't do anything wrong. Dad asked me why your report card was so blurry."

"Watch out!"

"Don't do anything stupid. There are thousands of other people in the mosque."

"I don't care."

"You know what? Have fun in the back with the other kids. I'm going to go pray."

I went to stand in a row near the front. I was behind about 20 rows of people who were all silently standing like me with their bare feet on the firm red carpet and their hands relaxed by their sides.

Hashem recited the call for the nightly Ramadan prayers in Arabic.

Right before I raised my hands to start the first prayer, I felt a tug on my pants. I looked down and saw my bare legs.

I pulled up my pants and covered my face with my hands. I glanced behind me. A tall teenager with a patchy beard grinned; it was Abu Ashfaq, my brother's friend.

"Dude! You be smellin' fishy like cat food 'cause you ain't wearin' underwear," he said. "Spray a whole can of Axe on that!"

My brother was laughing in the back of the room.

I rushed towards him and sat next to him.

"We're even now," Nazmus said. "Hope you learned to not snitch on me."

"I guess, but what you did was worse! All I did was tell dad you faked your report card. You know I don't wear underwear."

"I'll buy you purple Doritos."

"You had me pantsed, but this doesn't compare to the time you shaved my eyebrows. Whatever! We're even now."

Abu walked toward us with his hands in his pockets.

"Yo! I'm going to the park to play," said Abu. "You comin'?" I shook my head.

My brother looked over at me. I shook my head.

"My brother has to come with us," replied my brother. "Otherwise, he'll tell my dad."

"Why would I lie for you?" I said. Abu smirked.

"It's not lying. It's an omission," Abu responded. "What do you want?"

I paused for a moment. "Nothing. I'm not going to the park," I said. "Who goes to the park at night?"

"Naked drunk men, teens who snort powdered sugar, and smelly raccoons," my brother responded. Abu laughed.

"Stop with the negativity," I said.

"I'll make you a deal," Abu said. "I won't pants you anymore, but we can't stay in the mosque."

"Why not?" I said. "You can play in the front courtyard."

"Sure," Abu replied, grinning.

I rolled my eyes. People who smirk when making promises are bound to break them. I told him I didn't trust him, but he made a pinky promise. He would definitely keep his promise now; no one wanted to sin by breaking a pinky promise.

"Okay," I said, standing reluctantly. "But, we can only go to the courtyard."

We went to the main lobby where our shoes were. Abu and my brother put on their shoes and left through the front entrance. I couldn't remember where I placed my shoes, so I had to look through a pile of shoes on the floor and on the shelves before I found them.

I opened the door, and the wind whipped my hair around my head, hindering my vision and sending shivers through my skin.

No one else was in the front courtyard; they were all inside, praying. There were, however, some teenagers on the

opposite side of the street, passing around a cigarette. My brother was standing between the door and northeast tiled minaret, which sparkled from the luminance of courtyard lights.

That's when I felt something grab my leg. I whipped my head around. Abu was on the floor, grasping onto one of my legs. I screamed, vigorously trying to shake him loose, but I couldn't escape his clutch.

"Help me out!" Abu said to my brother. I turned towards my brother who stood frozen. "He can't snitch if he also goes with us to the park."

My brother tried to grab my left arm but I managed to push his hand off. He tried again, grabbing both my hands with force. I tried to wiggle out, but it was useless.

They carried me through the steel-fenced perimeter, panting from the burden of carrying a 89-pound third-grader. I got tired just from the sight of it.

"Wait till I tell dad!" I yelled.

"Was that a threat?" my brother said. "You're literally in our hands." Abu laughed even though it wasn't funny.

"I'm a king being carried by his peasants who sound a lot like grunting horses," I said.

"Really?" Abu said. He swung me back and forth like a human pendulum. The only reason I didn't scream was that I was concentrating on keeping my bladder from exploding.

"You shouldn't have exhausted your energy like that. You only carried me to the end of the block. We still have three blocks to go."

"Crap," my brother said. "We should go back."

"Fine," Abu said. "Let's take a small break." They placed me down on the sidewalk and sat down.

It seemed as though the cool night air heightened my senses despite my weariness. The leaves on the nearby oak trees fluttered gently in the breeze, reflecting the moonlight off their waxy coating. The beauty of Allah's creations was everywhere.

"What do we do now?" my brother said.

"We could do normal things like play tag, race each other, or pretend to be ninjas jumping across rooftops," I said.

"You know what?" Abu said. "We'll play freeze tag on the roof."

"You're crazy," I said. "No one is allowed on the roof. We could get in serious trouble."

"You have to come with us, or we'll tell your dad you went outside," Abu said. "You know he'll want to hear you swear to Allah that you didn't."

"Why would you ruin my dad's trust in me?" I said.

"Because we can," my brother said, snickering.

"I guess I have no choice," I said with a sigh. "Can you at least carry me back?"

"No way!" Abu replied. We all stood up and walked back to the mosque. Abu went to the main office to get the key to the roof, while my brother and I waited in the main lobby. There were two doors, a glass one that led to the prayer room and a locked mustard steel door that led to the roof.

Abu returned to the lobby breathless, with a keychain in his hand.

He unlocked the steel door, shoved it open, and flicked on the light switch in the stairwell. There were dirty mops, used paint brushes, and paint cans littering the stairs.

Abu and my brother walked up the staircase, and I followed them.

Abu opened the door at the top, and the cool night air rushed into my face. The muted white roof was wide open and had tiny bumps all over its weathered surface.

I turned around; a large golden dome with hundreds of tiny scratches rested on top of the large brick cube that we exited from.

"Yo," said Abu. "Let's play tag here."

"Sure," my brother said.

"Tag wouldn't be fun with three people, so I'm not going to play," I said, sitting in the center of the roof because there was no fence.

My brother ran around, trying to escape Abu who was always the tagger.

"Dude!" exclaimed my brother, panting. "I can hear someone coming up!"

"Crap!" Abu said.

My heart raced, and my hands began to sweat. The rattling of keys from the staircase grew louder.

"We need to hide," my brother said. I noticed he had started biting his nails.

I looked around. There was a small space between the brick entrance and the edge of the roof.

"There!" I pointed it out. "He won't look there."

"Stop being an idiot and whisper!" Abu screamed.

We fled to the trim of space. We crammed into it, my brother's elbow jabbing into my side. I was one mistake away from death.

"Crap!" cried Abu. He was shivering. "I have to pee!"

"Stop shaking," my brother said. "I swear to Allah I'll kill you if you knock me over."

"You'd die if you fell off the roof," I smirked.

I heard the door creak open. Abu peeked at the door.

"It's Hashem," Abu whispered. "I really messed up. I took his keys, and now he's probably looking for them."

"You idiot!" my brother said.

"My dad would believe me if I told him you guys kidnapped me. It wouldn't sound outrageous once he learns you guys were playing tag on the roof," I said. "I can scream, and you two would be dead."

"You're a piece of crap," Abu said. "My dad would kill me."

"You know what? I think I can fix this as long as you guys do anything I say."

My brother remained silent.

"Fine," Abu said.

I made them both swear to Allah that they would follow my order. I knew no one wanted to burn in hell by breaking a promise in Allah's name.

I shimmied out of the tiny space and made Abu give me the keys.

Hashem was facing the other direction, examining the floor for his key.

I tiptoed to the center of the roof and placed the keys on the floor with the tips of my fingers. Then, with gentle steps, I returned to the tiny space and waited.



"I'm so blind!" Hashem said. The sound of his footsteps grew louder. I heard the familiar rattling sounds of the keys.

"Ew! Why is it wet?"

Then, I heard the door creak open and slam shut.

"Go check if he left," Abu commanded.

"No. I'm not listening to you anymore. I own *you* now."

Disclaimer:

I have not committed academic dishonesty. I received advice from the writing center, classmates, and my friends.

Vision Statement

I could continue this story by talking about what the narrator does now that he has blackmail on his brother and Abu. Him choosing whether to use this new power could lead to further character development, as it would be a major event. I could continue with a story of what happens on later days during the nightly prayers, or I could develop the father further by having the story continue at home.