

WHEN DREAMS BURN...

Dul Johnson



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MY FATHER AND ME

JANFA DID NOT GO OUT every night as his father did. On many nights his father slipped out while he was deep in sleep. He did not know whether it was to urinate or for some other reason. When he asked, his father said that elderly men emptied their bladders every night, and sometimes more than once.

“Why, Father?”

“You will know the reason when you get to my age.” That ended the matter. But any day he was pressed, his father accompanied him—the invincible protector over his little boy.

He started sharing his father’s bed from the time he could speak. They had many conversations and his father told him many stories. Many of the conversations and stories faded away as he grew up, but many things that happened stuck with him.

One night when he was four, his bladder was full and they came out. The moon, a bright and perfect circle, lit up the ground, making the night look like day.

A chorus of cockcrows started, mingling with, and drowning his mother’s song as she attacked guinea corn on the grinding stone. They took a few steps towards the back of the round house and the urine shot out of his tiny erect penis, his two hands clasped atop his head, still drowsy with sleep.

By his side, his father squatted, his penis cupped in his left hand as the urine drilled into the dry ground. Done, Janfa turned and faced his father, his eyes fixed on the cupped hand. His father took no notice of him until he spoke.

“Father, where is your own penis?”

“I do not have any.”