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## Keh-Kahe

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## Keh-Kahe

### Author Bio

Keh-Kahe is an Urdu word for laughter. About the Author Wamika Shoukat is a sophomore majoring in Biology, with interests in political science, writing, and photography. Her writing is most influenced by her experiences growing up in Pakistan, and she tends to explore social issues through the medium of writing."

# Keh-Kahe

Wamika Mansor Shoukat

You hold my tiny fingers steadily, with a seemingly soft yet firm grip. Carefully placing my feet over yours, mimicking little footsteps, my arms stretch artlessly to reach yours. Tiny giggles fill my tummy as I look up, my arms suspend up in the air while trying to match your gait. My eyes lock into yours, entirely enamored and bewildered by your sheer strength and size. You utter encouraging words to me, and I open my eyes infinitely wide, trying to soak in every word you float into the air. In this very moment, I promise, I have made up my mind. I want to be just like you when I grow up! Trying to process every detail around me, I neglect to follow your next step, my foot slips and my muddied shoe stamps the leg of your pants, I ungracefully lose my balance. Instantly, your brows furrow and your eyes narrow into slits. What I understand as love takes on a new form. Without thought, you let go of my hands as I crash onto the marble floor. Your face starts to become blurry. My mind struggles to process you, and my eyes still desperately search for comfort. Your voice gets ferociously loud, and your message is clear. Take her away from me, clumsy fool, she's just like her dumb mother.

You speak at me. You see, I can hear you...yet I fail to understand precisely what you're saying. You snap your fingers at me. Hey! Are you even listening?! You kiss my forehead and slide your slender fingers into mine. I laugh nervously, you've always been my childhood crush. Now crouched on a bench, your eyes flicker in the moonlight, and the warmth of your body radiates on mine. The feeling is strange yet I somehow recognise it as I rest my head on your shoulder. A shadow appears from the darkness, a face with features matching mine. I push you away, but it's too late. We've been caught.

Pulled by the hair, I'm dragged all the way home. Let me go. Stop, I can explain. Clumps of my hair in your hands, you throw me into the house. Out of sheer instinct, I squirm into the corner, closing my eyes tight, desperately seeking to escape. The screams follow predictably, my thoughts are silenced by your fists, my voice struggling to crawl out of my throat. I'll explain, please, I swear. Finally exhausted, you turn your back to me, you decide every single being must know. You pry the door open, screaming into the night. I'm a disgraceful whore.

I'm escorted into the room by your mother, who hugs me tightly before excusing herself. My age has come, I bid farewell to my family, and I now sit on a stranger's bed, with flowers practically filling every inch of the room. I've given up my last name for you, and you barely even know me. Your arrival is grand, you carry yourself in a confident way. It's handsome, I admit to myself. A voice in my head interrupts me: Good girls look down, good girls stay meek. You sit cross-legged on the bed, reaching out for my hand. I place it in yours, and you pull out a ring, sliding it onto my finger. You search my face for an appropriate reaction, but it's not as you expected. The sudden kindness in your eyes fades, as you throw my hand away. You extend your arm behind your head, whipping it across my face. My cheeks are stinging and my heart is pounding. A sense of relief rushes through my body. Soothing tears pour down my face, your features distorting as I stare into your eyes. A smile crawls up the corners of my face. A familiar giggle rushes its way out of my throat. The roar of my laughter fills the haunting silence. I want to be just like you.