



## *Jacob*

Knock, knock,  
on our door.  
I'm busy taking tangles out  
of my damp hair.

My hair is down to my waist.  
No way I am opening the door.  
Someone might mistake me for a girl.

My sister, Raveena, answers it instead.  
"Jacob, come in!" she says.

I peek out of my room.  
"In here," I say.

“Hey, Anoop.” Jacob walks in.

“Almost didn’t recognize you.”

“Ha, ha!” I don’t have to explain to Jacob,

my friend since first grade,

that it’s my hair-washing day.

He knows Sikhs believe our hair, kes, is a gift from the creator.

I don’t cut mine and I maintain it meticulously.

That way I show respect

for everything Waheguru, our creator, has given me.

I bend down, gather my hair.

Twist, twist, twist.

I coil it into a long rope,

wrap it around itself to make a top knot,

and tuck the end underneath.

“That is so cool,” Jacob says. “Almost like magic.”

I laugh. “You’ve seen me do it so many times.”

“So?” he says. “It’s still fascinating. No clips, no nothing.

With a flick of your hand, you get your hair into a bun.”

I tie my patka, a cotton covering,

over my hair.

Now I’m ready to go outside.

“Tree house?” Jacob asks.

“Yup!” I say.

We each grab a can of seltzer from the refrigerator,  
walk out through the porch into the backyard,  
climb up to the tree house, and settle down  
on a rug on the floor.

Jacob and I don't talk,  
just sit, sip, relax.  
It's the end of summer vacation before  
we start eighth grade.  
Even though the late afternoon is warm,  
the tree house feels cool.  
With every gust of the wind,  
the leaves murmur,  
waving goodbye as clouds sail by.

"Do you want to play Frisbee?" I ask Jacob  
when our cans are empty.  
We climb down and go to the garage.  
I get the Frisbee that Jacob's dad gave me.  
I toss it to him.  
He catches it.  
And we head to the backyard.