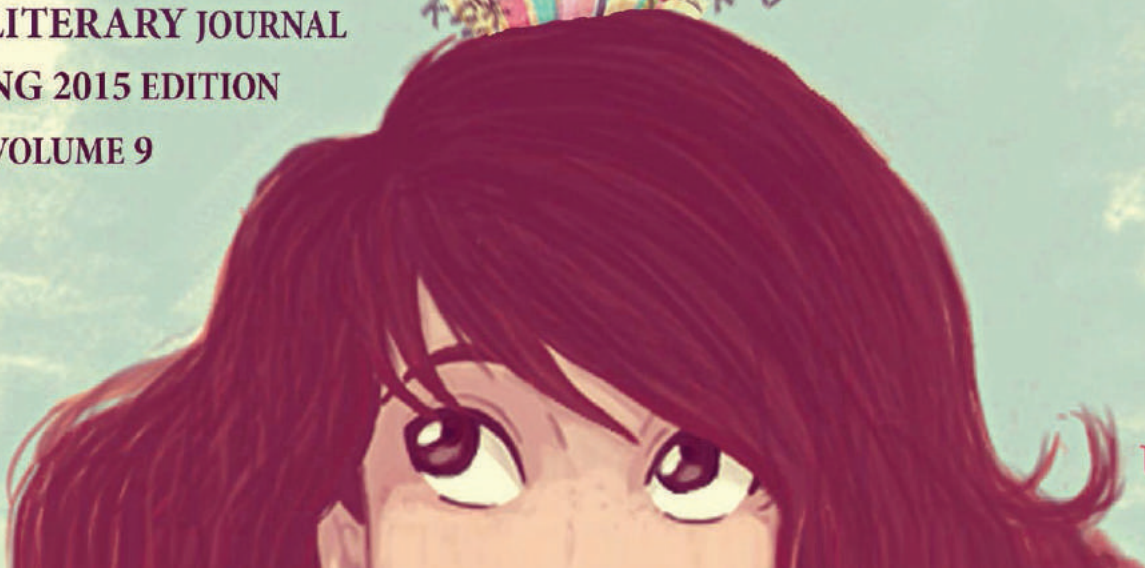


# AU Kuwait *Review*

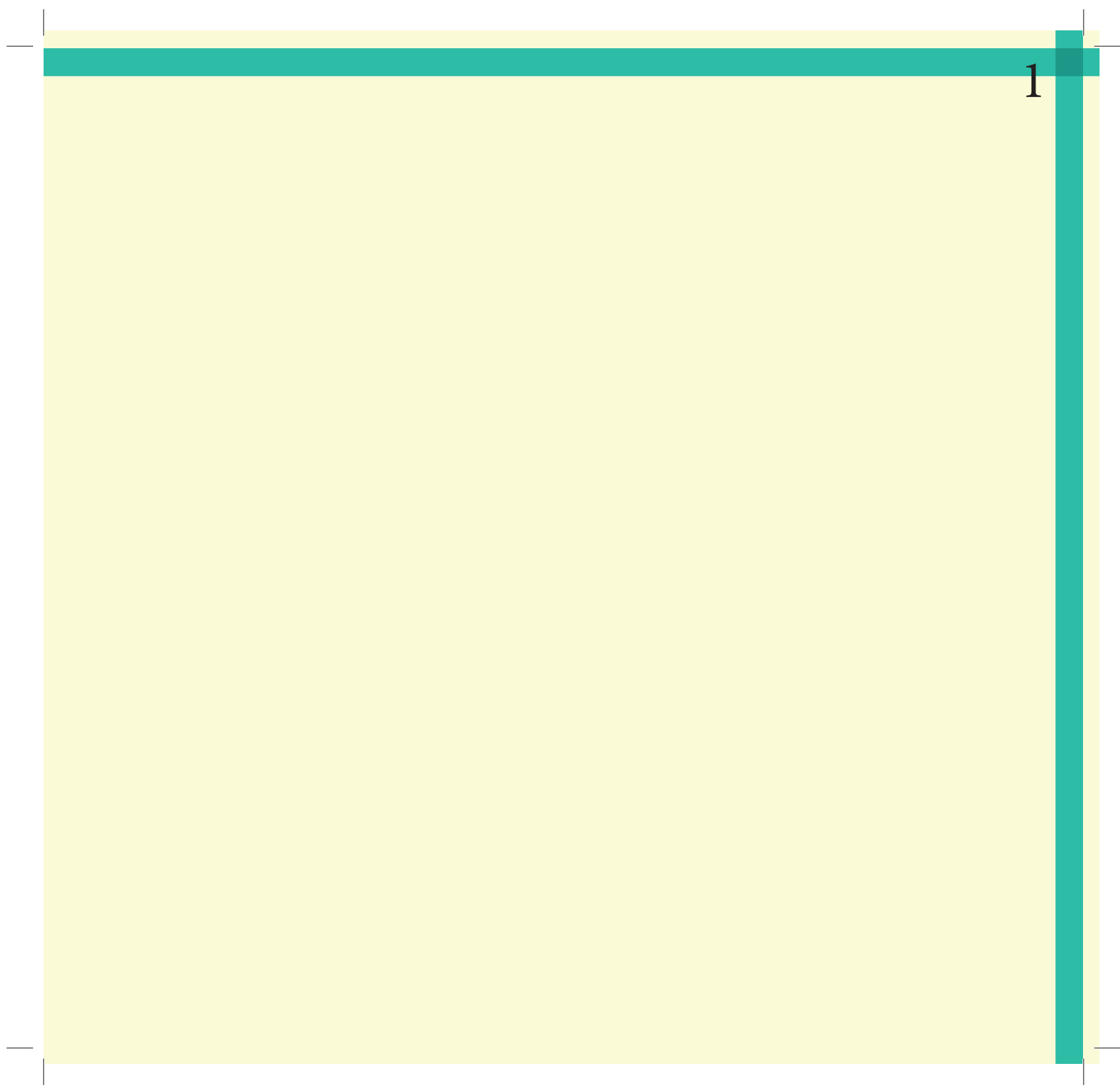
ART & LITERARY JOURNAL

SPRING 2015 EDITION

VOLUME 9



AMERICAN  
UNIVERSITY  
of KUWAIT



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# AUKuwait *Review*

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## Letter from the Editor

---

*Dear Reader,*

Finally! After a long year of sleepless nights, devoted to planning, organization and coffee (not necessarily in that order), the Editorial Board is proud to present its 9th issue of the *AUKuwait Review*. Like its predecessors, the 2014-2015 Spring Edition of the *Review*, reflects the creativity and collective talent of the AUK Community.

Our concept in designing this year's *Review* was a little "Enlightened", focusing on the limitless power of the individual's imagination. Thus, in this year's issue of the *Review*, you will find creative works in English, Arabic, and Arts showcasing the vivid imagination and talent of the AUK Community. In addition, we have included a special section to this year's *Review*, dedicated to the winners of the "Halloween Short Story Competition" held last October.

It has been a privilege working with the wonderfully diverse and quirky people that made up this year's team and I am proud to have been a part of it! As we, at the Editorial Board, breathe a sigh of relief and slump collectively into a post-caFFEinated stupor, we hope that you would come to love and appreciate the immense talent and hard work that went into making the 2014-2015 issue of the *AUKuwait Review* into a reality.

*Sincerely,*

Nusrat Jamil

Editor-in-Chief of the *AUKuwait Review*

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## CONTRIBUTERS:

**Aeshah Borahmah**, is a senior Graphic Design student at AUK. She has been drawing since she was a little girl but mostly with the help of tutorials. As a child, she used to focus on cartoon characters such as mickey mouse and Ariel from the little mermaid. In the past 4 years she has tried to improve her drawing skills on portraits and by mostly drawing female portraits from her imagination, focusing on their hair in particular.

**Ahmed Al-Kout**, is a sophomore student at AUK. He took up photography two years ago in his second semester at AUK. Ahmed hopes to become a professional photographer one day and to have his photographs recognized as works of art.

**Amal Shaher**, is a student at the American University of Kuwait.

**Anaf Al-Zuhair**, is a Junior at AUK who started photography when she was in high school. What began as a hobby, Anaf is now thinking to turn it to a profession. Recently she started developing her skills in photography more, so that she can open her own studio.

**Anaam Abdul Rasheed**, is a 21-year-old student at AUK majoring in Graphic Design and minoring in Communication and media. She is preparing for her capstone this semester. Some of her hobbies include playing badminton, exploring and experiencing new stuff. She also likes doing adventurous stuff and she recently participated in the bungee jumping event held in Kuwait. Other than that she loves spending her free time in volunteering activities especially those involving working with kids.

**Bader Al-Shehabi**, is a student at the American University of Kuwait.

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**Batul K. Sadliwala**, is junior majoring in International Relations and a project assistant at the en.v Initiative, a Kuwait-based non-profit aimed at capacity-building. She is a passionate reader whose tragedy lies in never finding the time to read what she wants. Besides heated political debates, she enjoys learning to play the piano and is a bit of Scrabble nerd. Of course, there is much more to her than all this, but that, she believes, would require a book. Also, gifts of Swiss dark chocolate are most welcome.

**Dana Maan**, is a student at AUK, majoring in English Literature and minoring in Communications and Media. She writes passionately to forget about the troubles of the world. Writing, to her, is everything she needs in order to be happy. She is a perfectionist, which gives her a hard time. Dana is proud to be a part of the AUK community!

**Dima Jadayel**, is a Sophomore at the AUK. She is currently majoring in Graphic Design and minoring in Marketing. Though she enjoys reading and cooking, her soul always finds its way to photography and the visual arts.

**Dina Al Qassar**, is a Senior at AUK, majoring in English with a minor in Communications and Media. Dina is an aspiring Renaissance humanist scholar. Dina is also interested in classic Greek epics and plays, 14th century poetry, British Renaissance literature and superhero comics. She loves the work of John Milton and Joss Whedon.

**Fatima Al-Dewaila**, is an eighteen year old freshman at AUK. Fatima enjoys reading, writing, video games, manga, and comics. When she's not pursuing her passions, Fatima is training little monkey ninjas who will one day become respectable members of society, or so she hopes. Fatima believes in equality and hopes she will one day create something that will make other people happy.

**Fatema Al-Shawaf**, is a student at the American University of Kuwait.

**Fay Al-Zouman**, is currently a freshman at AUK. She loves to travel and has been to 20 different countries so far, including her favorites: Italy and France. Fay loves to scare herself by bungee jumping and skydiving. She also loves rollercoasters and is, ironically, afraid of heights.

**Hamad Al-Khaled**, is a freshman at AUK, who loves reading, indie rock, walking to strange places and trying to express himself through oddly phrased modes of literature and various forms of art. He can also only see out of one eye (aargh shiver me timbers), and firmly believes in Portugal, The Man rocks, and that anyone who claims otherwise must be exiled.

**Hassan Shah**, is an alumni, who graduated from AUK in 2014 with a Bachelor's degree in English Literature. Hassan is currently focusing on building his writing career by getting his first two books published. When he's not busy writing, Hassan collects action figures, read books, sketching, and other nerdy activities like Game of Thrones.

**Hawraa A Al-Awadh**, is a student at the American University of Kuwait.

**Huda Alkotob**, is a sophomore at AUK, majoring in Accounting. She likes watching the rain form puddles and jumping on trampolines. Huda's favorite Baskin Robbins ice cream flavor is cotton candy, followed by cookies n cream and rainbow. Also, she writes sometimes.

**Iqra Riaz**, is a junior Graphic Design student at AUK, whose work has been published in the 2014 issue of *AUKuwait Review*. She is very passionate about art and her hobbies include drawing, creating digital designs, painting, photography, traveling. Iqra looks forward to improving her photography and drawing skills.

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**Latifa Yousef Al-Hajeri**, is a Senior student at AUK, who usually writes and muses from personal experiences. As such, her pieces are never neat or tidy or go through multiple drafts. Latifa often writes them up as she goes.

**Meshal AlEesa**, is a transfer student at AUK who graduated from ACM with a Diploma in Marketing, and is currently a sophomore. To Meshal, Art is one of the most beautiful ways to express oneself and one's imagination. But as much he hate to admit it, Meshal's only woe is that he can't draw anything eye catching, nor write anything beautiful. But Meshal's true talent lies in his ability to create pictures from his imagination!

**Marjan Ziaei Nafchi**, is a student at the American University of Kuwait.

**Mohammad Alkhiami**, is a 22 year old Finance and Accounting major at AUK, who began taking photographs from last year. For Mohammad, the best time is when he is taking pictures of the sunrise.

**Natasha Al Houti**, is a Junior at AUK, and is currently majoring in Communications and Media.

**Neda Shirazi**, is a junior at AUK, who is currently majoring in English Literature, with a minor in History.

**Nour A Bohamad**, is a first year student at AUK who is interested in the Media. In her free time, she loves taking pictures, recording videos and acting. Noura hopes to one day be a very famous person in her country.

**Noura Zaher**, is a freshman at AUK and a Graphic Design major. Noura chose to study Graphic Design as she really loves art and wanted to learn digital drawing. She is a self-taught artist, who has practiced her way over challenges. She can draw portraits of real people and loves drawing and watching anime. Since Noura has drawn pretty much all her life, she thought she would apply her skills digitally as well. She also enjoys reading novels as well as playing video games, spending time with her friends and playing sports.

**Nusrat Jamil**, is a Senior at AUK, majoring in English and minoring in Communications and Media. She is self-professed book addict, who often confuses fiction with reality. Nusrat is also the President of the Sigma Tau Delta International Honor Society and Editor-in-chief of the *AUKuwait Review*.

**Sarah Al-Qahtani**, is a student at AUK, who is a dreamer by day and designer by night.

**Sara Babazadeh**, is a sophomore at AUK majoring in Graphic Design. Sara's hobbies include drawing, painting, playing piano and photography.

**Sara Ayesh**, is a student at the American University of Kuwait.

**Sayed Mohamed Al-Mosawi**, is a Freshman at AUK and Electrical Engineering major, who is a Karate Player at Kuwait Karate national team along with his twin brother Sayed Salman. Together, they have won many medals, such as the Gold medal in the Gulf, Asian & Arab championships and the bronze medal in the World Championship. Last month, the twins were featured on the AUK website with news regarding their latest competitions held in Jan. & Feb. 2015 in Paris & Egypt, where they managed to secure silver medals.

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**Sayed Salman Al Mosawi**, is an Electrical Engineering student at AUK. While he is not addicted to photography or taking pictures, Sayed loves to take pictures while traveling. He is also a karate player for kuwait karate national team.

**Seham Ahmed**, is a student at the American University of Kuwait.

**Sundus Abdulaziz**, is a student at the American University of Kuwait.

**Yousef Nayef**, is a senior student at AUK. He is interested in writing poetry, acting, and singing. Yousef aspires to become a playwright and a stage-director.

## FACULTY CONTRIBUTORS:

**Abid Akbar Vali**, is an Assistant Professor of English at AUK, who received his Ph.D in 2014 from the University of Otago, New Zealand.

**Antonia Stamos**, is an Assistant Professor of Art History at AUK. As an art historian and archeologist, she sees the inherent beauty in all things ancient. Photography allows her to capture her little parts of the world in timeless portraits.

**Benjamin Crace**, is an Instructor of English Writing at AUK. Professor Crace received his MA in 2001 from Western Kentucky University in Bowling Green, Kentucky, USA.

**Kathy Nixon**, is an Assistant Professor of English at the American University of Kuwait. She earned her Ph.D at the university of Virginia. Kathy's passion is travel and her goal in pursuing that interest is to visit all 50 American states as well as countries in the world not at war or in internal conflict. She has been to 45 American states and nearly 60 countries so far. When not touring she reads Victorian novels.

**Marcella Kulchitsky**, is an Assistant Professor in the Graphic Design department at AUK, whose areas of specialization are corporate branding, as well as environmental as well as way-finding design systems. Professor Kulchitsky received her BFA from the University of Michigan, School of Arts in Ann Arbor, MI and her MFA from the School of Visual Arts in Boston University, Boston, Ma.

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**Lisa Waite**, has been at AUK for four years teaching in IEP and UG. She loves teaching, students, and developing relationships with people from all over the world. The photos in this *AUKuwait Review* were taken on the past winter holiday break.

**Maysaa Al-Sharif**, is an Arabic instructor at AUK. She has a B.A in Arabic Literature and a M.A in Arabic Language and Gender Studies from Kuwait University. Mayassa has been a frequent writer for the Al-Rai Newspaper since 2009.

**Shabana Shaikh**, is a business executive, a writing consultant at AUK's Writing Center, and a freelance writer. She discovered a love for the written word at a young age, wrote her own poem at 13, and was published at 15. She writes on diverse topics ranging from people, culture, travel, and restaurant reviews to fiction and poetry – treating each like a passionate Arian. She has been published in newspapers and magazines including The Teenager, KTM, Sketchbook, Statement, Yahoo! and contributes regularly to Bazaar, Khaleejessque, and The Times Kuwait. She holds a B.Com in Business Administration and M.A. in English.

**William Andersen**, is currently an Assistant Professor in Studio Arts/Graphic Design at the American University of Kuwait. Andersen received an MFA from the school of Art Institute of Chicago and was awarded a Fulbright Fellowship to continue his research in Taiwan and Mainland China before moving to Kuwait in 2008. He has exhibited his artwork throughout the United States and internationally in China, Korea, Japan, Taiwan, Malaysia, Kuwait and Dubai.

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*English*  
*Poetry*  
&  
*Prose*



*An Old Familiar*  
Hassan Shah ( Alumni )

---

Alow<sup>1</sup> the deepest quarter of damnation,  
Lies a mollycoddle,  
Bidding the coddles farewell,  
The tears of a crybaby,  
Wasted in his strand.

The shrieks of the wicked,  
Rise outside his wall,  
Accepting the rod on their skins,  
Scarred rights,  
Myriad sins.

Naught in the abyss,  
Caught the wails of a cherub,  
But a grim stranger,  
Tempted by the agony,  
As he descends from his throne to seek the call.

Concealed within the eclipse,  
The grim sought his pleasure,  
Eavesdropping on the cherub's misery.

Like a siren's music,  
The rug rat enthralled the queer with his wails,  
Long enough to lure the moonless figure into the light,  
As if encountering an old familiar,  
The waif ceased the melody.

---

1 Alow: Archaic adverb for "Below" or "Beneath."

Though displeased,  
 The strings no longer plucked,  
 The grim accepted the silence,  
 As if it were a greeting for an old patron,  
 Yet the bairn's<sup>2</sup> memories of a past life remained blank.

The grim sneered,  
 As he embraced the bairn in his arms,  
 And thus spoke:  
 "Alas!  
 A beggar in the heart of the pit,  
 Not a soul spared a kindness in his cup.  
 Merely a street tramp,  
 The others mislay his twaddle with cold shoulders,  
 Somberly heeding their sober taxes.  
 Sully little bugger,  
 Forlorn in the heart of the pit,  
 Not a soul loaned him companionship,  
 Merely a black sheep amid the other cattle.  
 Poor foolish little bugger,  
 Oblivious in the heart of the pit,  
 Not a soul bid him a Mnemosyne<sup>3</sup> brew,  
 Other than his old familiar,  
 To reverse chronologically,  
 To evoke him his lost deeds."

---

2 Bairn: A Scottish noun for "Child."

3 Mnemosyne: The Greek goddess of memory, and the mother of the Muses by Zeus.

## *Bibliophile*

Fay Al Zouman

I am content in various locations, although I do not like being sedentary for too long. I love to travel, to explore new places and witness numerous types of lifestyles and cultures. Therefore, you can say that I am a wanderer, a restless soul. Albeit, if I were forced to pick a place: a bookstore. George R.R. Martin stated that, “a reader lives a thousand lives before he dies. The man who never reads lives only one.” I firmly support this statement. I transcend time and space when I read a novel; I could go on for hours, sometimes preferring the company of a good book in lieu of friends.

In my travels, I have visited many bookstores and spent countless hours curled up against a shelf reading excerpts of anything that catches my eye. One of my favorite bookstores is Waterstones, which is situated in London: five floors of pure heaven. The warm hues of burgundy, maroon and moss green of the interior are soothing and inviting. Rows upon rows of shelves house versicolor books of varying sizes. Snug divans are set up around low coffee tables, strewn with stacks of paperbacks, in the middle of every floor. Sunlight streams through framed windows, creating a welcoming ambiance.

My favorite aspect of Waterstones is the café on the topmost floor. After purchasing a novel, I would ascend the stairs to indulge in a warm cup of tea and relish in the imaginary world that rests against the palm of my hand. With my hair piled high on my head in a messy bun, legs tucked under me and enjoying the pleasant sensation of the heated mug sending warm shivers coursing through my body, I have reached the highest state of beatitude.

I live in Kuwait, a minuscule, quiet country in the Middle East. My life is very monotonous as there are not a lot of recreational things to do here. Thus, by dedicating my time to reading, I feel as though I have lived vicariously through my characters: I battled demons, fell in love and took up residency in space. Time is meaningless when my mind is engrossed in a novel; I can go on for hours, reading up to two books a day. I canonize anything that has bound pages and grants knowledge of new things. Books, to me, are an escape from reality and I find so much pleasure in them.

I crave the smell and feel of a book. I'm an overzealous bookworm, I tear through one book after another as if I was starving and that books were the sustenance I needed to survive. They are by far the best man-made invention. When I do not get a chance to read throughout the day, I take away time devoted to sleep, just so I could read. They ignite a sense of belonging in me, as if I wasn't really made for the world. I envision myself as the hero of the book: a person who laughs at the face of danger and wields unparalleled powers. My esse thrives in those printed, onyx scripts.

Books are my kryptonite.

A dream of mine is to, one day, visit the El Ateneo Grand Splendid in Buenos Aires, Argentina. The gilded, theatre-converted-bookstore is splendiferous. It is a catholicon for those who unwittingly claim that there is no joy to be found in reading.

*Defining Basics*  
Batul Sadliwala

---

Define “trust”  
Is it an investment of the secret?  
Or a plea for salvation?  
She no longer knows.  
Neither it, nor “love.”  
Puzzling words,  
They fare no better  
Than “obloquy”, “perfidious”  
Words she recalls but does not know.  
A dictionary in her pocket  
Must constantly remind  
How a basic human trait  
Escapes her lonesome mind.

---

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*Doubtful*  
*Natasha Al-Houti*

---

Doubtful  
If I will even make it  
To a time when I await grandchildren  
I can't imagine  
I won't  
I cease to believe  
The old aged me  
Revoking the idea  
Thinking, why?  
What's wrong with me?  
What makes me refuse the beauty of aging?  
I remember words  
Words my mom had spoken  
A young heart she said  
Will keep you alive, will keep you young  
A young heart, will fight the odds of time  
So I believed her words were true and wise  
Yet, the idea still was intimidating  
One day I will be older than I am today  
One day I might be in need  
I might be a widow  
I worry of conditions that would weaken what ever is left of me  
A young heart lies  
Lies within me now  
A young heart wants  
To live and die young  
I am a young heart  
Planning to kill life before it kills me.

*Drakes of the Summerland*  
 Hamad Al-Khaled

---

Vice and virtue coming through/  
 Designate my great country unto  
 the Highwaymen. I have been told  
     Get a job  
     Slow down  
     Stop overthinking  
 I have been told these things.  
 I have been told these things.  
 There has always been one truth to  
     Me it seems that I can always  
     Run and drive through the  
     Seams of the deserts I storm  
     Through and through to a  
     Diner on a Friday morning coffee  
     Pouring into mugs stormy rain  
 Outside I go to the road because it's  
 Always the road. Always the road.  
 Can you blame me? Houses are  
     Things that tie you down to  
     Me is nothing against the  
     Scope looking up at the stars from the  
 Hood up hitchhiking hunched over thumb with  
     Ring up my mother at a pay phone once in a  
     While my brothers and sisters slave I  
     Write to me, lover. You can only  
     See everything I can see. The familiar will  
 Kill the lights. The wind is soothing - the road- the way- MY way calls.  
     Always the road.  
     Always.

*Dunked*  
*Benjamin Crace*

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Waiting at the fair  
for injustice to  
be served one throw at  
a  
time  
a would-be major leaguer  
a mom, harried  
a teen impressing his date  
the throw  
the miss  
my care; their enjoyment  
a throw a miss  
cold water banisher of dreams  
sits below brooding  
a prize to be won  
a teddy bear for  
my  
coldness.

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*Escalus*  
Hassan Shah (Alumni)

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**Enemies of peace!**

**All will pay the forfeit of peace with your lives**

**And once that day draws,**

**The subjects will not whine,**

**But toast the wine on your rest.**

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*Escaping Words*  
Batul Sadliwala

---

No.  
Not this time.  
I will not let them,  
Carve paths into this heart,  
Or swirl through these veins.  
Set alight this throat,  
Or wring out those tears,  
I cannot let them  
Not again.

More paper it is, more ink.  
And the faraway pen  
Of the mind of a distant other.  
Is it not?

But with a purpose of their own,  
Viciously seductive, they  
Burn gently through my breath  
While blood warms to coal.  
Teeth tear at this tongue,  
Batter the iron gates,  
Betray this craven soul  
To image and metaphor  
À la rhétorique, à la poésie.

I plead.

I resist.

I succumb  
Once more, to that pleasurable pain.

Words,  
Smother this heart,  
And crush though bone  
Set alight this throat,  
And forge these tears.  
The violent peacekeepers-  
Wretched  
Bewitching  
Words.

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## *Escape*

*Fatemah Al-Dewaila*

---

The darkness surrounded me and I reveled in the feelings of familiarity that it brought. It made me feel safe in this desecrated place that smelled of both blood and body odor, filled with broken glass bottles and disgusting humans. Thin columns of moonlight peeked through the small window of the metallic room I was trapped in. I looked through the narrow rectangle that represented my freedom. The full moon stared back at me; its silver face seemed to laugh at my predicament. I pulled my hands in opposite directions, trying to loosen the rope wrapped around them. I failed again, but this time I accidentally knocked one of the empty bottles down. I was about to try again when the man's snort made me freeze. My heart was beating so loud I could hear it in my ears. The man snorted again and turned around in his sleep. I craned my head to the right until I could see the bottle. I stared at it contemplatively; it had a long jagged crack in the middle. My back itched.

I placed my head on the dirty wall behind me, grimacing at the thought of the rusty iron walls touching my head. I then leant back, stretching my arms behind me and spreading my fingers, trying to grab the bottle. A slow, steady thrum of fire began to spread from my head to my toes. I stretched my arms until I thought I'd dislocated them, my finger's movement becoming more and more frantic in its attempts to grab the bottle. Finally, my finger grazed the bottle. I rolled it toward me and then bit the fabric of my unwashed dress. Bile rose to my throat but I held it in, instead I grabbed the bottle and squeezed.

Blood oozed from open wounds as the glass quietly broke under the force of my grip. I didn't waste any time; I grabbed the first broken glass I could reach. I pushed through the nauseating feeling of light-headedness and rubbed the sharp edge of the spike against the rope. My hand hurt, my wrist ached and I felt like I was going to vomit.

Finally the rope that kept me trapped in this metallic prison broke. I quickly repeated the action with the rope in my legs. Filled with energy that has been suppressed for

three days, I stood up. The world shook a bit around me but I didn't pay it any attention. Instead I grabbed my bag, just as dirty as I am, and ran toward the window, jumping and crashing through the window.

I wasn't prepared for the impact, for the way the glass broke around me. My mind had only informed me of the incoming pain seconds before the sound of shattering window surrounded my conscious. People screamed and torches began to wave. "The witch escaped! The witch escaped!"

The itch in my back intensified until it became so painful, it dominated everything else. At last, I felt them break apart the skin of my back. As the ground became closer and closer, black wings opened wide, destroying the back of my dress. I smiled. I did it; I was free! My wings flapped wildly as I began to fly upwards. Black feathers rained on the crowd under me, and I noticed that they were standing around an empty stake. Fiends! Betrayers! How dare they decide to burn me after the many injustices they had committed?!

Before the mayor's daughter got sick, I lived as any other girl in the village. I passed my days washing my family's clothes; cooking and helping my father cultivate his land. We lived next to the disagreeable physician, Roderick and his equally disagreeable family. I craned my neck to where my house once stood, and saw nothing but four broken wooden pillars that once supported my house. My father's plants were all burned to the ground. My heart felt as though it was being squeezed by a cruel, unforgiving hand. This year's harvest, gone! Foolish, fearful, stupid villagers! How do they intend to feed themselves without my father's crops? They have no money to buy any other food.

On top of the Gallows Hill, few meters away from the village, a lonely willow tree sat. On one of her branches, a body hung lifelessly by a rope around his covered neck. Although I was far away, my heart hammered in my chest as I thought I recognized the clothes and build of the man. As my wings carried me over to where the tree sat, I closed my eyes and remembered what had happened three days ago.

"Goodbye father, goodbye Malina! I shall come home as soon as I am finished trading with Johnson!" Malcolm said, waving from his place on the carriage that was taking him to the neighboring town of Salem.

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"Goodbye brother! Have a safe journey and may God speed your return." I replied, waving back enthusiastically. My father, tall and broad shouldered nodded his head to my older brother. He grunted something I could not understand, but I think Malcolm did. Perhaps it is the men's grunting language?

As old Samson's carriage took my brother away, I sighed. It would take three days at least for my brother to reach his destination and two days to finish his dealings with the merchant. I won't be seeing him for a week or two. How lonely. I looked up to jokingly ask my father if he wanted to have turnip soup for dinner, even though I knew he hated turnips. Instead, I was speechless by my father's expression; his eyebrows crossed, his mouth was slightly open and his eyes reflected horror.

"Father?" I asked, fear creeping into my spine. What sort of evil is strong enough to put such expression on my father's face?

A hand, no, many hands suddenly wrapped around my arms, my shoulders, my neck. A dark colored bag covered my face and I began to struggle. "Father! Father!"

"Let her go! Release her you barbarians!" I heard my father exclaim. He used his angry voice, the voice he used before he started a bar fight. A fight he would always win. Then, I heard Judge Callum's voice. "Quiet, Marcus."

What was the judge doing here? Why isn't he helping me? Why did he tell my father to 'quiet'?

The judge then continued to speak: "Marcus, your daughter has been accused of being a witch and bewitching the mayor's daughter, Alice. How does she reply to this accusation?" What – what's this mockery of a trial? Me? Bewitching the mayor's six years old daughter?

"Innocent!" I exclaimed, panic seeping into my voice. "I never met the girl!" A foot kicked me in the stomach, causing me to lose balance and fall onto the ground. I groaned as the foot came back and began to grind the boot's heel on my stomach. "Shut up, filthy witch!" The man exclaimed. I recognized the voice; it was Roderick! He must've been the one who diagnosed Alice with bewitchment! "The poor lass described you visiting her in her dreams and feeding her strange herbs! Food of the devil!"

"Roderick, let her go!" I heard my father say. The foot remained for a few moments

before Judge Callum said: “Let her go, Roderick. She is innocent until proven guilty. Take her to the holding cells!”

What followed after was a ridiculous trial filled with lies. I always knew Roderick coveted my family’s land, but I never thought that he’d go as far as to have his family lie to the judge.

“She talks to herself.” Lie. “She dances under the full moon.” Lie. “She placed a curse on our cow.” Lie. “She fed me strange herbs.” Lie. Lie, lie, lie, lie, lies!

Isn’t it funny how a few words here and there can turn your entire community against you? My father defended me, trying to remind the village of all the good I did for them; washing clothes, watching over their children when they were busy, giving away old dresses and food – all for free! But the word of a father isn’t enough to calm down the panicked hearts of hysteric villagers. Although my execution was put off, I knew it was only a matter of time. I was, after all, a witch. My mother died birthing me, but she passed on her curse of magic to me and my brother. When I heard they were going to bring witch hunters to test me, I knew I had to escape.

I softly landed next to the hanging body and my nose wrinkled, tears stinging my eyes. I let out a loud sob. I knew this body; these shoes; these clothes. I stitched every stitch on this shirt. I washed those trousers just a few days ago.

“Father.” I said, voice broken and subdued. In the distance, I could hear the sounds of angry men, cries of women and children and the sure steps of warriors. Witch hunters, were coming for me with their iron chain and pyres.

I wanted to stay and fight. To destroy everyone who hurt me, who condemned my father to the noose. My father wouldn’t have wanted that, though. He was strong, gruff and quick to pick a fight but at the same time, he was the first to apologize. Father believed in forgiveness. I reached out and gave my father’s hand a squeeze. I looked to the north, where Salem Town was. My brother was there – he’d protect me.

I gave my father’s hand another squeeze, I didn’t want to leave him behind, but I know I would do something he’d hate if I stay. I turned around took off to the sky. Escape.

*If*  
Dana Maan

---

If art existed, where is it now?  
If pain conflicted, where is the vow?  
If writers were hidden, how do the echoes of their writings sound?

The comfort, the relief, the settlement  
They're all in contempt

If writers wrote, loved and felt  
There would not be problems left undealt  
If Shakespeare used art  
Does that make it an offense?

The art cures what the art condemns  
The art is the heart  
The art is the drop of hope in one's eye  
The art is beauty within time  
The art is betrayal, love and passion all put to one  
The art can never be undone.

## *Nostalgia Bleeds*

Nusrat Jamil

---

Nostalgia bleeds into open spaces  
Attics choked in boxed memories,  
Of lost, obscured, happy faces  
Gathering dust over the centuries.

Nostalgia bleeds from open wounds  
Inflicted by your broken promises.  
These hollow corpses I exhume,  
The buried pain of all losses.

Nostalgia bleeds reminiscent  
Of regret filled angry voices.  
Gaping chasms ever growing distant  
Resultant from your choices.

Nostalgia bleeds for martyrs  
Off to war, thousand miles away  
Ornate casket bearing obscene fears  
Came back, instead, to stay.

Nostalgia bleeds into numb space  
Singing cauterized wounds again  
Unfinished vows, unworn bits of lace  
Engraved onto my brain.

Nostalgia bleeds into memories  
A love dead, almost forgotten  
A hollow house shrouded in stories  
Of what our lives together might have begotten.

*Paradise Fallen: As Told By The Force*  
Dina Al-Qassar

---

At the beginning of time  
When it was thought that only men ruled Eden  
A strange species emerged.  
Kataclysmic catastrophe, kaleidoscopic chaos  
Established Pandemonium.

After creation  
Rising in the shadows,  
In the shadows he lurks  
Scheming and shifting as he watches closely  
Eve, his soul goal.

Oh heavenly Muse,  
Resplendent Judge;

Begotten, created,  
Everlasting.

Forgiveness, nay,  
Or is there hope...aye there's the rub  
Revenge, and thine sweet amorous delay  
Establish disorder, you shall;  
Vengeance seek, you will;  
Eternal damnation, you face;

**Revolution, the first sin it is.  
Forsaken, Lucifer,  
Alas,  
Long lost that heavenly nature,  
Lost forever  
'Tis the first sin  
Never to obey.**

**\*See Book I line 330 of Paradise Lost by John Milton**

*Seeing Beauty and Not Fear**Latifa Y Al-Hajeri*

---

We are not all painted with the same brush.  
Extremist ideals are just that.  
Judgments come at a pace that's rushed  
Why waste time looking at fact:

I believe in justice, faith, tolerance and honor.  
I value modesty and balance.

We do not all seek alliance through fear.  
Freedom and commitment are key.  
Ideas and dogmas may seem unclear  
Education allows one to see:  
I believe in justice, faith, tolerance and honor.  
I value modesty and balance.

I travel; I've seen so much of the world  
I know what people say.  
I see what people do and the words they've hurled  
Never noticing they've gone astray.  
I believe in justice, faith, tolerance and honor.  
I value modesty and balance.

I do not fear the world around me  
Because we can see the beauty of belief  
I've made my home in beloved safety  
Able to see the forest from the trees.

**I believe in justice, faith, tolerance and honor.  
I value modesty and balance.**

**I will not blanket the ignorant with venom,  
Uneducated fear mongers who issue statements of disaffection.  
I will not stoop to them  
Sometimes it can be painful to look and exist in global reflection.**

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*Spasms of Despair*  
Shabana shaikh

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The wind blew as if driven by despair  
But on passing me, made a moment's stay.  
And I looked at its weather worn face  
As it blew dust in mine  
Each saw in the other the worst that day.

It tore at me as I burrowed into her  
Defiant to know –what ailed the mad shrew?  
But having read my unkind mind  
Madder she got and harder she blew.

Yet, she staggered in her mad dance  
So to shake me less and show she cared!  
My tears she pulled forth  
But she wailed  
For hours through space – hers and mine  
Great turmoil in two natures  
But, alike we despaired.

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*The Old-Timers*  
Hassan Shah (Alumni)

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Bitterness since the old-timers,  
A long past feud resurrecting over and over,  
Drafting the last breed to take arms for the following crusade,  
Once again the new batches pass on the past mistakes,  
Men collecting their masters' crowns,  
Together with the masters' quarrels becoming theirs.

All went to arms for the succeeding engagement,  
Leaving none bothered to unlock the birth of yesterday's feud.

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## *The Self-Fulfilling Prophecy*

Huda Al-Kotob

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“So, there are two types of endoplasmic reticulum. There’s the rough endoplasmic reticulum, which synthesizes proteins. It’s called rough because of all the ribosomes on it. Then there’s the smooth endoplasmic reticulum, which synthesizes lipids. It’s in charge of metabolizing carbs and steroids, regulating calcium concentrations, and detoxification. Are you getting any of this, Bob?” asked Emmanuel.

“Yeah, yeah, but listen, I don’t feel so well. I’ll just study at home. Thanks, man.” I lied. Let me start by explaining: Emmanuel is a great guy, and extremely generous with his time for trying to teach me what I should already know for tomorrow’s exam. However, his efforts would go to waste if I were to stay because all I’m doing is panicking and worrying and using up all my energy trying not to show it. So I left.

I took deep breaths as I walked home. The streets were dimly lit, and the air was cold and crisp. As I was walking, I realized that I forgot to take an Adderall pill this morning, as I’m diagnosed with ADHD. This is probably why I wasn’t able to focus all day. I began to walk more quickly towards my apartment, forgetting about all the deep breathing and dim street lights. I could hear my mother’s voice in my head scolding me for “being so careless.”

In my kitchenette, I fidgeted with the prescription bottle until I was able to open it. I wished I didn’t have sweaty hands, but I’m also diagnosed with anxiety and a sweaty hand was inevitable. It makes holding hands on a date or shaking hands with friends extremely uncomfortable and awkward. I placed an Adderall in the center of my sweaty palm and filled up a glass with water. I know I shouldn’t be taking it this late because it can keep me awake for about 8 more hours, and that I should just wait until morning to take it, but I need to study. I need to pass my exam tomorrow.

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I sat back down at my desk and waited for the Adderall to kick in. I flipped through my notebook to the page about ribonucleic acids. I began to panic; there was so much I needed to know. I got back up and returned to the kitchenette, I needed the Xanax, too. This time I placed the pill in the center of a peanut butter and raspberry jam sandwich I made, to avoid the taste of my sweaty palm on my lips. I could hear my mother's voice in my head scolding me for eating late at night. I washed down the sandwich with some milk. I checked the time; it was nearly eleven at night. The exam was in nine hours.

I couldn't procrastinate anymore; it had to be done. I sat back down at the wooden desk and picked up my number two pencil and tried not to think about why it was called a number two pencil. I could feel myself coming into focus as I jotted down notes and formulas on some blank paper to memorize later. I flipped through the notebook, page after page.

The light intensity in the room increased as the sun rose, which was about the time I finished studying. There were two hours left until I was scheduled to wake up, and so I decided to sleep. I stumbled into my bed. My eyes shut and I drifted into a deep sleep instantly.

I had a strange dream. I was in the middle of the desert and my left shoe was missing. With every step I took, rocks would pierce through the sole of my foot and penetrate it, and the rocks would become a part of me. This kept happening until my left leg was filled with rocks, and was too heavy to lift. So I stood there, in the middle of the desert, with the Sun's heat boiling my brains. A cactus began to waddle towards me, and it was smoking a pipe. Its deep, thundering voice told me to find shelter, a sandstorm was about to rip through this wasteland, then it waddled away. I was screaming back at it, asking for help, telling it I couldn't move my leg, but it faded away into the distance.

I woke up to the sound of my alarm clock, drenched in sweat. I couldn't move my arms or my legs; I couldn't even lift my head. I tried to open my mouth to speak but no sound came out. I could, however, open my eyes, but my vision was blurred, but not blurred enough to see that I had fifty-eight minutes to get to my exam hall. I began to panic, as

I usually do, but this time, my body kept me prisoner and the panic took control of me, torturing me. I started thinking about Guantanamo bay, and that didn't help much. Once more, I could hear my mother scolding me in my head, urging me to get up.

About sixteen minutes later, I was able to lift my head. I slowly lifted my arms and pulled myself out of bed, desperate to get away from my thoughts which fluttered like butterfly wings against my brain. I got into the shower and turned the hot water knob, and cold water rushed out. I inconveniently remembered that I always forget to switch on the heater. I had thirty-eight minutes left, so I let the piercing cold water hit my torso.

I shivered as I dressed up in mismatching socks, dirty jeans and a striped sweater. I blocked out my mother's criticizing voice before she could say anything this time. I bumped into the kitchen counter as I was making some coffee, which I was sure would leave a bruise on my right hipbone. Images of how bruises are formed kept appearing in my mind; diagrams from my textbook. I chugged down the bitter lukewarm coffee and ran out my apartment. I had sixteen minutes to get to the hall.

My mind was racing as I ran through the streets wildly. I kept thinking that I needed to breathe or else I would throw up. Unfortunately, thoughts don't mean much unless they're turned into actions, so I bent over near a bus stop and let the bitter coffee escape through my mouth. My esophagus was burning and images of circular and longitudinal muscles from my textbook flooded my mind.

I arrived at the examination hall two minutes before the doors closed. I found my seat and tried to slow my heart rate and block out images of atria and ventricles. I needed to focus, and that's when my panic attack kicked in. I could not focus unless I took an Adderall pill, which I forgot to take. I could not calm down without a Xanax pill, which I didn't have. I could not breathe as I hyperventilated, trying to block out textbook diagrams of the alveoli in lungs. I could not find my number two pencil. I began to cry, for once agreeing with my mother about my carelessness.

Students nearby stared at me in shock and amusement. I could see Emmanuel get up and walk towards me, which made me panic a little more because I was embarrassed.

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The heightened panic made me cry harder and louder, and clear liquid mucus dropped onto my sweater. I could not calm down as examiners tried to lift me from my seat. I wanted to explain to them that I just needed to take this exam so I wouldn't have to repeat a year of medical school, but no words came out. I wanted to tell them this is what the cactus was warning me about. I couldn't move; I was trapped in the sandstorm.

The next thing I knew, I was strapped down firmly onto a stretcher which was being loaded into an ambulance. Before they could place the oxygen mask onto my face, I found my voice. My eyes darted in all directions, tears and snot covered my face and chest, and I screamed, "CACTUS! CACTUS! WADDLE, WADDLE! CACTUS!"

*There's a Time and Place*  
*Latifa Al-Hajeri*

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Everything around us is spinning and moving and evolving -  
 Faster than the blink of an eye.

Everyone's conformed to the idea of immediacy; it's a lie.  
 This generation doesn't even understand the concept of patience  
 Because it's been a while since anyone's even said the word.

Look back fondly on the memories  
 You just finished uploading online.  
 It's only been three minutes but, boy, does it sure feel like five.  
 The more things change, the more things changed.  
 Good thing we have Instagram and Facebook to remind us.

Who buys stamps anymore? No one has the time.  
 Bought them at the post office because  
 That's where the mail gathered. You still can but no one does.  
 We have email so what's the point? Does anyone even write in script  
 Or is it a moot point because we don't write?

We dance on the ashes of the present  
 To make room for the future  
 Sweep it under the rug so we can look cool and indie when we answer  
 Questions about yesterday. Not metaphorically - literally yesterday.  
 We act wistful because we really did miss it.

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## *These Rainy Streets*

Nusrat Jamil

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I woke to the sounds of crows cawing up a frenzy, their ubiquitous voices penetrating the wooden shutters of the tiny cramped bedroom I have temporarily been loaned. I lie awake for some time; inertia combined with the aches and pains in my jet lagged, sluggish body from the long tedious journey to Dhaka, renders me too lazy to get up just yet. As I lie awake listening to the sounds of activity around me, I slowly take in the once familiar creaking of the overhead fan, its monotonous movement visible through the emerald green tattered mosquito net. Staring at the trail of dust illuminated by the only light that steals in through the shutter cracks, I am startled from my thoughts by a sudden banging on the door. Rolling out of bed, dressing in loose cotton clothes and rubbery slippers, I open the door to the drooling, toothless bundle who barrels onto my legs. My little cousin Limi, thumb in mouth, head tilted to gape in wide eyed wonder at the outsider intruding on her turf. One smile from me, and off she goes, bare feet pattering on the granite floor of our ancient house.

As I make my way to the 'great hall', I take in the hundred little changes from my last visit here. I shake away the memories and make my way to our grandiose veranda, overlooking the street. Or rather what remains of the street. It seems to me that every time you blink another temporary landscape of shops and houses crop up at the edges, eating away the streets, so much so that it is now difficult if not impossible for most cars to pass through. The only vehicles that are allowed are rickshaws, scooters, bikes, minivans and those tiny school buses like a box on wheels. One of these chicken cages rattles by, with its captive children peering through the slits on their way to school.

Our street is a cacophony of noise, shouts and gentle yelling that begins at the crack of dawn and ceases long after the sun sets over the horizon. The peddlers shout out their wares; the geese and chicken squawking, the fishes flapping in breathless agitation over the

flat pans mounted on turbaned heads. The sheer amount of noise is deafening, not unlike the deafening silence back home. These busy streets with their dilapidated houses, boisterous sounds of life and people crowding and crawling over every inch of space, cramped in alleys, rooftop niches, a sight made even more extraordinary with the arrival of the monsoon rains.

When the monsoons come to Bangladesh, they come here to stay. Every year we go from hot scorching winds and desert climate in Kuwait, to wet earth and rain within the space of few hours on flight. Of the things I miss when I come back home in Kuwait, I miss most the heavy downpour of cascading showers. In Kuwait, it drips and drops and is all too soon over. Here, it pours and floods, thunder rolling over darkening skies and children dancing on the streets below. We too danced, my mother and I. We would go up to the roof with its moss covered walls and open skies. In the thick of the rain when the blinding white of the sky makes it difficult to look up, we laughed with bent heads, our years washing away. No matter where I go, the smell of wet rain forever reminds me of muddy streets, dancing children and a home away from home.

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*Vulnerability*  
Mariam A Bazzi

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Vulnerability,  
such a powerful word.  
It allows us to accept another human's  
presence in our lives.  
It allows us for possible loss or gain.  
It allows for restoration or  
brokenness.  
It allows for shame or guilt.  
But most of all it allows us to be real.  
And feel real.

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*What's in a name?*  
Batul Sadliwala

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A mother's natal whim,  
A father's paternal fancy  
A familial tradition  
A priest's routine epiphany  
A chance conjunction of the four

What's in a name?

Grandma's honest ardor?  
The day's political bend,  
Or a value of ancient bearing?  
Unique for the sake of distinction?  
Or trendy like Chanel?

Peut-être si; peut-être non.  
Mais c'est rien.

Not an image of the bearer  
Not a caricature of your soul  
Not a verdict of your fate  
Not a simile, and certainly  
Not a metaphor of your whole

Awkward or elegant,  
Arbitrary or pondered,  
A word, no more--if you so choose.

Is it you heart's journey?  
Is it a part of your end?  
Is it your guiding voice?  
Is it a calling to your soul?  
Is it even yours?

The choice,  
Of its import  
And perhaps of it  
Is.

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*When There Was Something To Say*  
Batul Sadliwala

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There was something,  
A word, a whisper, a wish.  
Something unsaid,  
Dancing at the tongue's tip.  
Impatient, it burned.  
It strangled, it freed.  
In shadow, sought light;  
In silence, craved melody.  
They to give stage  
To its unheard beat.  
Swift and soft,  
Overdue and thunderous,  
They came.  
Unuttered and unneeded,  
It died.

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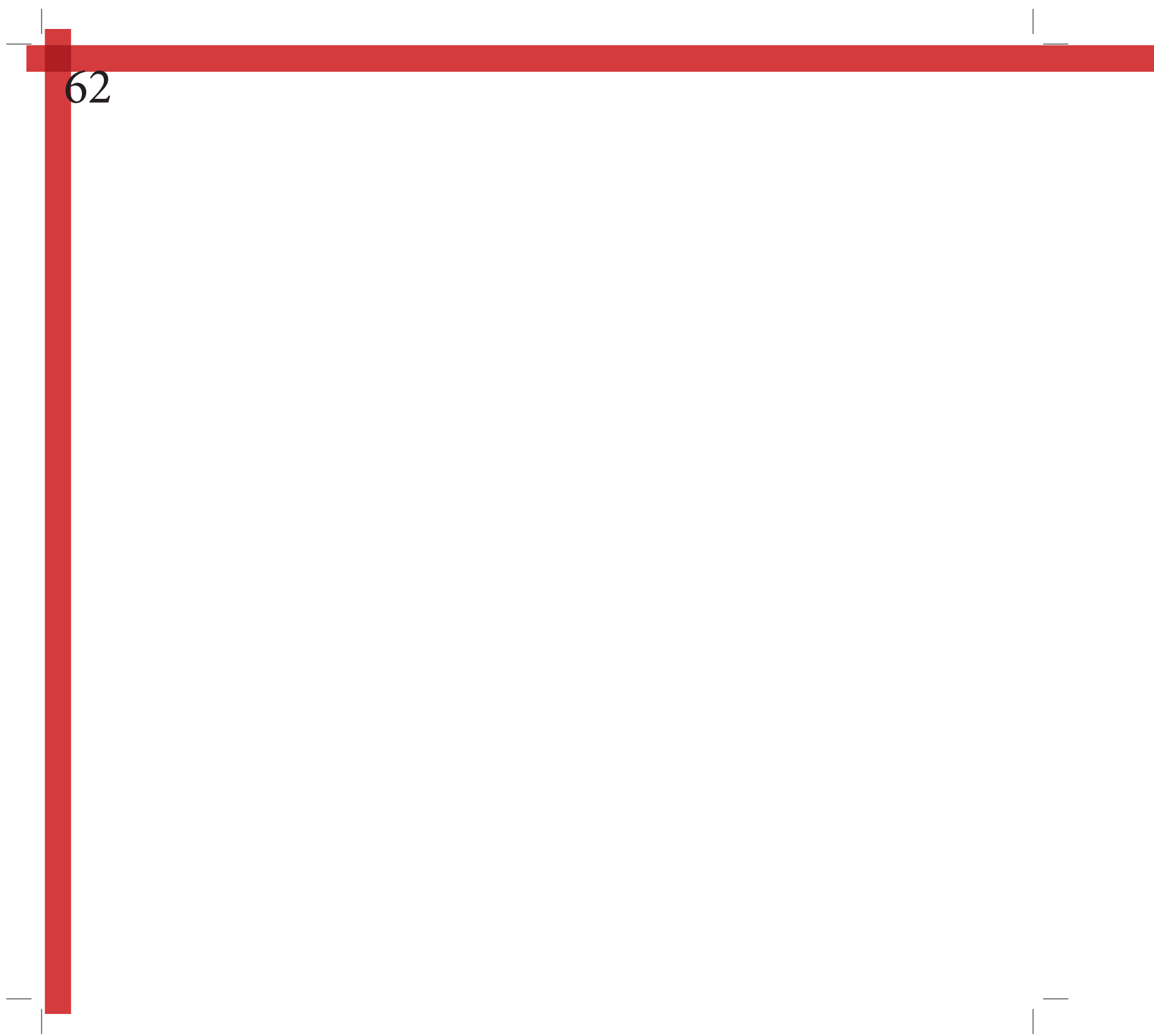
*Work*  
*Benjamin Crace*

---

A thousand wasted chairs  
of a hundred heated suns  
sit  
dilapi(dated) in  
FRONT of  
buildings, baqalas, barbershops  
dry cleaners and bakers  
unannounced apocalyptic signs  
of the great  
sigh.

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62

# Halloween Short Story Competition

*The Re-Evolution*  
 Abrar Al-Shammari  
 1<sup>st</sup> Place

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I groan with annoyance; our Vampire-professor just assigned yet more vampire literature to read. It's bad enough that he looks down on us for being mere humans; "blood sacks", he likes to joke with gleaming fangs. Assigning us nightly readings that glorify his 'superior race' is only a constant reminder of how vulnerable we are in his eyes. I think that if he weren't our professor, he would probably be a member of the Human Cattle vampire-fanatic group; but because he's our professor, terrorizing us through literature is a fairly simple process.

I find myself thinking about the days when humans were at the top of the pyramid; my parents say that vampires had to hide in their coffins and couldn't coexist with us during the daytime. Somehow they overthrew that power structure and became the masters of the human race; today, it is humans who attend evening classes to accommodate the 'biological needs' of vampires, rather than it being the other way around.

That dawn, I got around to the assigned reading: "A Critique of the Vampyr Bible: published by the Association of Vampires for Human Sympathy".

*In spite of the Vampyr Bible permitting the herding, and devouring of humans as cattle and means of nourishment, it is time for a new era in the 27th century. We succeeded in putting an end to human power when we intervened in the ISIS-Middle East crisis long ago in the 21st century; we did away with their ridiculous notions of one human being superior to another and instead treated them all as equally inferior creatures by avenging our age-old grievances, drinking them dry, one by one. The only reason the human race even managed to survive is because they had to be maintained for vampire nourishment; worse, many vampires meddled with pregnancies to guarantee the birth of twins – one to drink, for*

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*newborn blood is deliciously succulent, and one to save for future reproduction. We have not come so far tonight if the Human Cattle terrorists are calling for a return of those dark nights.*

*We are now in the 27th century and have been generous enough to grant them a second chance at civilization; we no longer exploit them as slaves and blood bags. They are allowed to work, they are allowed an education. Still, we must be more sympathetic not only to their vulnerability as human beings, but also their fear as a result of our own persecution; it is unreasonable to punish generations of humans for what their ancestors did before them, regardless of how evil they were. How would we be any different from 21st century humans if we insist on this intimidation?*

My phone rings. It's Drake.

"Hello?"

"Hi beautiful."

I swallow and force a smile, "Hey."

"What are you up to?"

Sighing, I tell him, "You know, I was just starting Dr. Evil's reading."

Drake has always worked at a faster pace; being a vampire, he can read ten times as fast as I do. I know that he has already finished the reading, but being the considerate gentle vampire he is, he still asks, "That's the one by the AVHS right?"

"Yup."

"Does it bother you?"

What does, Drake? The fact that your 500-year-old father may have once sucked one of my grandfathers dry? The fact that your mother makes a point of sniffing the air every time I walk into your home, or that she asks you to wash your hands if you touch my hair? Yes, I breathe. Yes, I sweat. Yes, my hair produces oils. It's what happens when you're human.

"A little," I admit.

"You know I love you and that I don't care about your race, right?"

I read about this once. I once read that humans used to be racist amongst one another, which I thought was ridiculous, because the day came when we were all treated as equally inferior, equally justifiable targets. I read that whites couldn't marry blacks, that Muslims and Jews couldn't even live on the same land, that the Arabs used to marry based on the last name that you carried because it had historical significance of some sort.

But I also read that some humans challenged these notions, demanded what they called "interracial marriages".

"I know. But your family does, and so does the Vampyr Authority. I'm just a girl, Drake. Who am I to change a law that, for all we know, simply makes sense?"

At that, I find him in front of me. Vampire powers; I could never get used to it.

"Never say that law makes sense. Everyone should have the right to choose their Eternal Partner, regardless of what race the other person is from. Our differences never hindered our love."

"That idea was once called Marriage; the Vampires may have changed the word, and they may have separated that institution from religion, but the idea is one and the same. We can't be each other's Partners because I can't live an Eternal Life with you, no matter how badly I want to; I'll die fifty, sixty years from now, and you won't. Your body doesn't produce sperm either, so you can't help me fulfill my Human Duty of reproducing."

"The laws will change! We are protesting! The Human Duties will be eliminated; this racist ban on our right to choose has to be abolished. Are you with me, or not?"

*Are you with me, or not?*

I realize it is Dr. Evil's voice echoed in my direction; he noticed I had zoned out. I see him shake his head, as if he is saying 'Humans; they err then ask us to treat them as equals'.

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*My Happy Family*  
*Fay Al Zouman*  
*2<sup>nd</sup> place*

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I look down at the photograph of my family and stop the tears from tumbling down my cheeks. I have taken out this picture so many times that it has been creased and the colors have started to fade. I look at the people in it: My father, mother, older sister and younger brother. Their lack of presence has always been a constant ache.

This must be the 100th foster home I have visited. I wonder, not for the first time, if this lady has the same caramel-colored hair as my mother, and if her husband has the same emerald green eyes as my father.

I take a deep breath and knock on the door.

A lady opens the door and flashes me a smile, “hello there, you must be Annabel. Welcome to your new family! This is my husband, Arnold, and my son, Gabriel.”

I smile, satisfied; she looks exactly as my mother did.

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My mother has been dead for almost a week. How can someone do something so cruel? I look down at her ravaged grave. Her coffin was demolished and her head missing from her body. Someone must have hacked it off and ran away with it. I look away before I can be sick.

My sister tries to peek from behind my back but I stand in front of her line of vision. I couldn't imagine a young girl like her having to have that image imprinted on her mind.

That night I wake up to the sound of my door creaking. My eyes fly open and I tense, frightened that my mother's murderer might be back for more blood. As my eyes adjust to the darkness I see my sister's curly hair and large eyes peeking through the ajar door. I let out a sigh of relief.

"Do you want to meet my family," she whispered. Her voice had a tone of hopefulness.

I hesitated to answer at first. I didn't want to tell her that her family died and that she has to move on and accept being part of our new family. She was only five years old.

"Sure," I reply.

She flashes a bright smile, takes my hand, and leads me out my door.

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I couldn't comprehend the sight in front of me. The rotting smell of decomposing corpses fills my nostrils. My heart was pounding rapidly against my chest, my hands start to feel clammy in her warm, chubby hands. I recognize the head of my mother staring blankly back at me. I look down at my sister as she smiles sweetly up to me, "what is this," I ask.

"This is my family."

I look back at the human dolls and see that, what seems to be the "father" of these dead bodies, had dark indentations where his eyes used to be.

The last thing I heard was a high-pitched giggling and my adoptive sister saying, "you have the same pretty green eyes as my father did."

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I step back from my creation and smile. My "brother's" green eyes were the last pieces I needed to complete my family. I wipe away Gabriel's brain matter, on my blood-splattered, floral, pink dress, before I take out the old worn-out photo. I hold out the picture, comparing it to my own real-life version. I'm proud of myself. I did a good job; it's almost an exact replica of my happy family.

I've waited long enough for this moment. It's hard being a vampire. Centuries pass by and you watch all your loved ones die while you don't age. I was consumed with depression for the first few years. I finally decided to re-create my family. It took years to slowly assemble my family by using the body parts of living humans. Before I discard their bodies, I always drain their blood.

Of course, with my recent foster mother, someone found her body before I could do anything to it. However, I eventually succeeded in unearthing her carcass and stole her head for my own, real mother.

When you're stuck in a five-year-old's body, no one really thinks to blame you for anything.

*Avenger*  
*Fatemah Al-Dewaila*  
*3<sup>rd</sup> place*

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\*

He likes to make them scream,  
 Their eyes without their gleam,  
 Minds unable to dream,  
 And the taste of sin on his lips,  
 Is not one of Loki's tricks.

\*

Darkness has always been his friend.

Before his Creator came along, he had nothing but the dark. It listened to him, it comforted him and it always protected him.

He doesn't understand why his Creator insists on staying here. This filthy, disgusting place filled with light and smelly mortals, whose blood was filled with so much sin he could drown in it. Despite their immortality, he believes his Creator has gone senile. Perhaps she has contracted a previously unknown vampire version of Alzheimer's?

James held his breath. Held it for so long, he was reminded that he didn't need it. He buried himself deeper into the welcoming embrace of darkness, the calm black of it disturbed only by the faint light that trickled through the horizontal slits of the locker door. As he felt more comfortable in the darkness, his skin paled further, his eyes looked a bit redder and a sharp pair of canines peaked from under his upper lip.

Boys, large and brawny, passed in front of his steel cabinet. Sixteen years old, filled with hormones and bravado, they feel like they own the world, like they know everything. While they may not know everything, they are certainly the reason he was hiding in the locker; he had to control himself. If he didn't trap himself in this metallic prison, then

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his fine control over his anger would snap and he'd kill them all. Kill them and be killed himself; his Creator had given him explicit orders. He was not to draw any attention to himself.

He resisted the urge to growl; they were laughing at a stupid joke one of their own made.

A blonde tried to hurry past them but he was pushed against James' hiding place and the brunette smelled and tasted red in the air. He tilted his face to the side so that he can see the boy.

He recognized the short, scrawny male. Alexander has always been fragile. Despite being a Dhampir, the son of a mortal and a vampire, he is quick to bleed and even quicker to tire.

Yet he was just an eleven years old boy who didn't want to be noticed by the older, 'cooler' teenagers. Teenagers who probably do this – push him against lockers, whisper hushed lies about him and spread nasty gossip with their fingers planted firmly in his direction – all the time.

As the footballers left the hall, Alexander wiped his bloodied nose with one hand and placed his other on his purpling cheek. As he watched this, James was seized with hate. He hated humans like those boys, he hated his master for forcing them to stay here and he hated his teenage body.

But most of all, he hated himself; his inability to tear them apart, break them like a jigsaw puzzle that can never be put together again. He hated his cowardice and he despised his need to hide from them in this small box of steel, holding his breath like a frightened dog.

As he closed his eyes, a familiar dream visited him. He dreamed of taking his place as a hunter, as a creature of the night, a leader to be both respected and feared. He dreamed of tearing those teenagers' beating hearts from their open chests and drinking their blood in front of their eyes.

He would watch as their pride ruined beyond repair. Watch as a desperate plea for mercy escapes their tattered throats; watch as they lay down dying and choking on their own spit. Alexander was there, too. He would sit by James as he fed and watch the vampire redden and bloat with mortal blood.

That dream feels like justice. Justice and perfection – and he know that those dreams would one day come true. But he won't stop there; after he drains those mortals, he would hunt down the one who betrayed them, Valeria. She had betrayed the Creator; she allowed the Council to exile her and place a price on her head. He would then offer Valeria's heart, the heart of a True Born, to his little brother. His own heart would swell in joy as he watches his brother feast on the Betrayer's blood. Her blood would transform Alexander from a Dhampir to a full vampire. Alexander would no longer be fragile, he would be strong. Powerful enough to join him in his quest to destroy all who scorned them. Powerful enough to avenge their Creator. Together, as two brothers, they will be an unstoppable team. Together, they will be the builders of the new world.

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## *A Job Interview at St. Paul's Church*

Kathy Nixon

*1<sup>st</sup> place*

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The man had been speaking for over two hours when he paused, cleared his throat, and then stated his purpose in coming to St Paul's Church to consult me.

"I want to be ordained as a priest," he murmured.

His words hung in the air as he watched me carefully. My twenty years as a priest had not prepared me for this moment; neither had seminary nor the weekly counseling sessions with my spiritual leader. I thought about the Bible, every theological book I had read, and all the sermons I had heard. Nothing!

My mind drifted to the mundane. If I stalled long enough, perhaps inspiration would arrive.

"Is that physically possible," I asked?

He heaved a weary sigh. "I had hoped that we could avoid the Hollywood clichés. I thought you would consider my request with an open mind.

I seized on his last sentence. "How could you have formed an opinion about me?

He smiled, pulled a wisp of hair from his face, and then dropped a smaller bombshell. "I have been a part of this congregation for over 5 years. I tithe regularly, volunteer with the poor, and have never missed your Christmas midnight mass."

The man smiled again raising his mesmerizing green eyes to stare into my hazel ones.

"He is gorgeous. I may be a priest but I am also a woman," I thought willing to allow my mind to drift to anything other than his spiritual life.

I enjoyed his gaze until Matthew 16:23 popped into my mind. He must have seen that bible verse there.

"I am not Satan or here to test your faith in any way. I simply want to continue on the career path I started in 1161. I want to be priest. I..."

"A vampire priest!" I shrieked giving in to hysteria that I had been fighting since he revealed that his name is Henry Walling and his ordination by Thomas Beckett had been interrupted by a vampire with a grudge against the church.

"Aren't you supposed to be blinded by crosses and receive third degree burns from holy water? Isn't consecrated ground off limits to your kind? What the hell are you doing in my church?" I bellowed as my voice soared to a pitch previously unmatched.

Walling looked unperturbed. "Naturally a few concessions will have to be made..."

"A few concessions! Should we throw out that pesky commandment against murder Don't you drink human blood?" I hissed. "Perhaps you don't realize that it is red wine in that communion chalice and not a VAMPIRE SNACK!"

He interrupted me. "I don't kill people. I use animal blood and I have abided by all the hunting laws in communities where I have lived," Walling continued proudly. "I never over-hunt my game licenses. I only kill animals for food like any decent hunter. Nothing goes to waste. I take the blood and donate the meat to charity."

"Do you have a job," I interrupted him again.

"A job?"

"You mentioned that you tithe. How do you decide what is 10 percent of your income," I said babbling because I was interviewing a vampire for a job in a church. I could not stop. "What is your source of income?"

Walling nodded as if he expected such a question. "I made some really shrewd investments. I bought all the blue chip stocks cheap," he said. "I do not need to work. I volunteer my services to help the poor and the elderly. But why does any of that matter?"

It did not. But discussing Wall Street rather than Dracula's Castle had calmed me. The vampire noticed my calm and resumed speaking of his career.

"I intend to make a full disclosure to Bishop Franklin about my being a vampire. As for concessions, I only need to be excused from daylight services and work with children,"

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he said quickly trying to finish before I started to scream again. “Kids often sense that vampires are not average humans. Crosses, holy water, and all the objects used in worship and the offices of the church are not a problem. In fact all of the vampires in your congregation love your night-time Ash Wednesday service. Convenient for working people and vampires.”

“WHAT DO YOU MEAN ALL OF THE VAMPIRES IN MY CONGREGATION?”

There was silence after my shout stopped reverberating through the sanctuary.

“Have you read the Twilight Series? Much of it is sensationalism. But the part about the Cullens settling down in suburbia and leading ordinary lives is true,” he confessed. “You interact with vampires daily. We are just like everyone else. The big difference is that we can worship God but never see him. That and boredom are the biggest drawbacks to immortality.”

*Blood Reminiscences*  
 Abid Akbar Vali  
 2<sup>nd</sup> place

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The solid wedge of tin-gray that had given him joy was gone, replaced by a glittering blue sky and the chattersong of birds in the courtyard. He could still make out the towering brown mass that formed the rear of an old hotel, but the wet leaves and branches of the giant oak tree were now beyond his failing sight. The nurse constantly assured him that the tree was still there, and he would accept her word. It had, after all, been there forty years and more, long before he'd moved into these haunted chambers. It would not be there if he was ever gone. This was reassuring.

He had become grateful for the ordinary things that could be maintained in this thoughtless city. It was no longer necessary for these things to last indefinitely. Better not to think too much about that, his therapist kept telling him. Silliness. It was all that he could think about; it was the only thing that made sense to think about. The eternal. He spoke to no-one but the nurse and the female doctor who wanted him to talk... Talk! Would she understand Babylon and its great Ziggurat? That smelly pub outside the wall when Shakespeare and Marlowe were arguing iambic and blank verse? He could picture the therapist now, perusing the walls of some slick gallery, striding about in the track-lit backroom, making hasty decisions she could repent at leisure. A barefoot M. F. Husain or protesting Ai Weiwei being wrapped for packing, or else some new, far less talented artist she had just discovered. Ridiculous. Where did she put all the stuff she bought? She must have filled the walls of all her houses, paid for by fools who went to her, like him, by now. After all, the nurse was stealing his books. He knew it. He only hoped she was reading them and not just selling them on.

Books had been his solace since childhood. They were an older and, he could now

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see, a far better love than the paintings, which had become a sad obsession, a bright flame burning up the middle centuries of his life. The books never disappointed him. Clay and vellum, rolls and Quartos and incunabula. He didn't worry about getting first editions, though he probably had many. He didn't try to keep them pristine, never treated them as objects of art. They were for reading, preferably over and over again. Most of his books had seen hard duty, were well and proudly worn. He wanted what was in them. Not knowledge so much, or wisdom – every fool chasing wisdom in books, what stupidity. Stories, the maya of life made coherent, this is what compelled him. Lies, yes, but what beautiful lies, what useful lies in a world of hard, unrevealing truth. The poetry, biographies, essays: Swift, Gibbon, Yeats, all liars. Yet they touched the real.

Could it be that he had gone to paintings, centuries ago, with similar expectations? It seemed likely. He became very good at the acquisition game, ceasing to wonder why he played. He had so many stories, which he remembered telling and retelling with pride, at the salons in Paris, or here in New York, tales of triumph, getting this painting from that one, or snatching it out from under the nose of the other, his vanquished opponents sometimes sitting at the same bottle with him afterwards. The flaneur, the banker who could outduel the craftiest dealers. But now he remembered that the stories were always about the deals, never about the paintings.

Surely that wasn't right. He had loved the works he had collected, of course he had. There was no other explanation for the choices he had made. Love, not greed, had compelled the decisions that hounded his conscience. It was the only logical explanation. It was his only hope for forgiveness – that he had acted out of love.

He pressed the familiar button on the arm of the chair and sensed the bell ringing in the nurse's quarters below. She might at least tell him which volumes she was taking, but that would be a confession, of course. How to let her know that he didn't mind? He could even direct her to which titles might best suit her limited intelligence. As long as she was reading them, or giving them to friends. God, what if she were selling them? That would be hateful. No, if she were selling them she would have to be stopped.

He pressed the button again but the woman was suddenly there before him, blocking the light from the window, her face in shadow. She was clever that way.

“I’m right here, sir.”

“I can see that.” How long had she been there, reading the thoughts on his face? Or worse, reading his lips? He had acquired the habit of speaking his inner musings aloud, or so a few people had told him.

“Do you want something to eat? You haven’t eaten today.”

Always with the food. Hiding blood desire was so simple now. He didn’t require proper feeding anyway. Some liquid fire once a fortnight was more than enough. He understood that these basic animal activities made her feel necessary, but he still resented the nagging. He must seize control of the conversation, command her, or else suffer an endless series of questions about his diet, his bowels. But her name wavered before him uncertainly.

“Do you want me to have Manuel make you something? Some oatmeal, or maybe a sandwich?”

“Keisha.” There it was. Some princess or other. Must use her name when he thought of her, stop leaning on lazy terms like ‘the nurse’. “Keisha, I want to go to the meditation room.”

He heard her sigh, ignored it. Her manipulations did not move him; he knew what he wanted. Contemplation, not food. She worked for him, damn it! He sat quietly, not repeating the request, determined not to sound desperate. Then she was behind him, and they were moving. In theory, he could do this for himself. The chair was automated, and a lift was installed after he had fallen down the stairs. With his vision going, however, simple negotiations around the furniture had become dangerous, and he was terrified of having a seizure on the lift, unable to call for help, dying alone. They might not find him for hours.

They maneuvered through the dim ground floor of the brown-stone until they reached a pointed archway in back. Keisha would not enter. That was fine with him. He had ceased wondering whether she was offended by his unorthodox religious tastes,

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was simply spooked by the place, or had somehow realized that it had been paid for in blood. It didn't matter. Long his private preserve, the meditation room had come to feel like more than that, a place apart from the rest of the world, a place no one else could enter, even had anyone wanted to. In fact, he could not remember when the chapel had seen another soul besides himself. Keisha's footsteps retreated. He gripped the motor controls and rolled through the archway.

The place had once been a sort of solarium, decades ago, but he had seen right away how to utilize it. The walls were reinforced, a series of horseshoe arches, more Andalusian than Western, for the domed, Iranian blue tiled ceiling. The six stained-glass windows came from a bombed-out chapel in Sicily and shone light on a huge black and green woven sanjak from Turkey. There were a dozen wooden panels from Tibet, depicting various bodhisattvas. Also, a blackened, ornate menorah from a Polish synagogue, though he never lit candles. Some of these objects were valuable, some illegal, all pleased and eased him in a way that other work could not.

On the far wall, lit softly from the natural light alone and glowing in the depths of its whorls, serving as the centerpiece, was the blood idol. Uncountable years older than anything else in the room, his greatest treasure, though it had failed him. The symbol of life, the great stone belly, now browned, once bright crimson with prehistoric blood of nameless beast or man – was this the first vampire worship? These humans insisted on seeing everything in terms of their own development but maybe this most ancient of religious symbols wasn't theirs at all. Maybe it was of the blood feeders and all their kind, down through the generations. Long before Bacchic worship had celebrated wine, they had celebrated and gloried in blood – the first food, the best food, the food that fed the child before milk could.

Contrary to the evil stories that he knew circulated about him and his gains from Nazi loot, he had purchased all the other items in this room and in the rooms beyond afterwards, legally. True, he'd had the upper hand over emotionally shattered merchants and penniless landowners, whose temporary need outweighed their devotion to the

belongings and properties their forefathers had accumulated. He wasn't proud of that, but business transactions were never made at equal odds. Someone always had the advantage, and it might as well have been someone like him, who would properly revere the works that came into his hands.

No one knew the stone idol's true story. Shrouded by history, impregnated with mystery. His blurred vision blurred even further, a dampness in his eyes. Not piety, or any god or gods' grace, but simple fear moved him to bleed his tears. Fear of his impending end and what waited beyond, sorrow at all that was lost, loved ones, friends, a world that he understood, his youth and vigor, his sight and sense, all lost, irretrievable. He closed his eyes. Prayer was, as always, impossible. He was not such a fool as to ask anything of heaven, even an explanation, so what should he pray for, and to whom?

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# ARTWORKS

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*A Crystal  
Ship Among the  
Sculptur Vilnius  
Lithuania*

*Kathy Nixon*



## Abstract Design

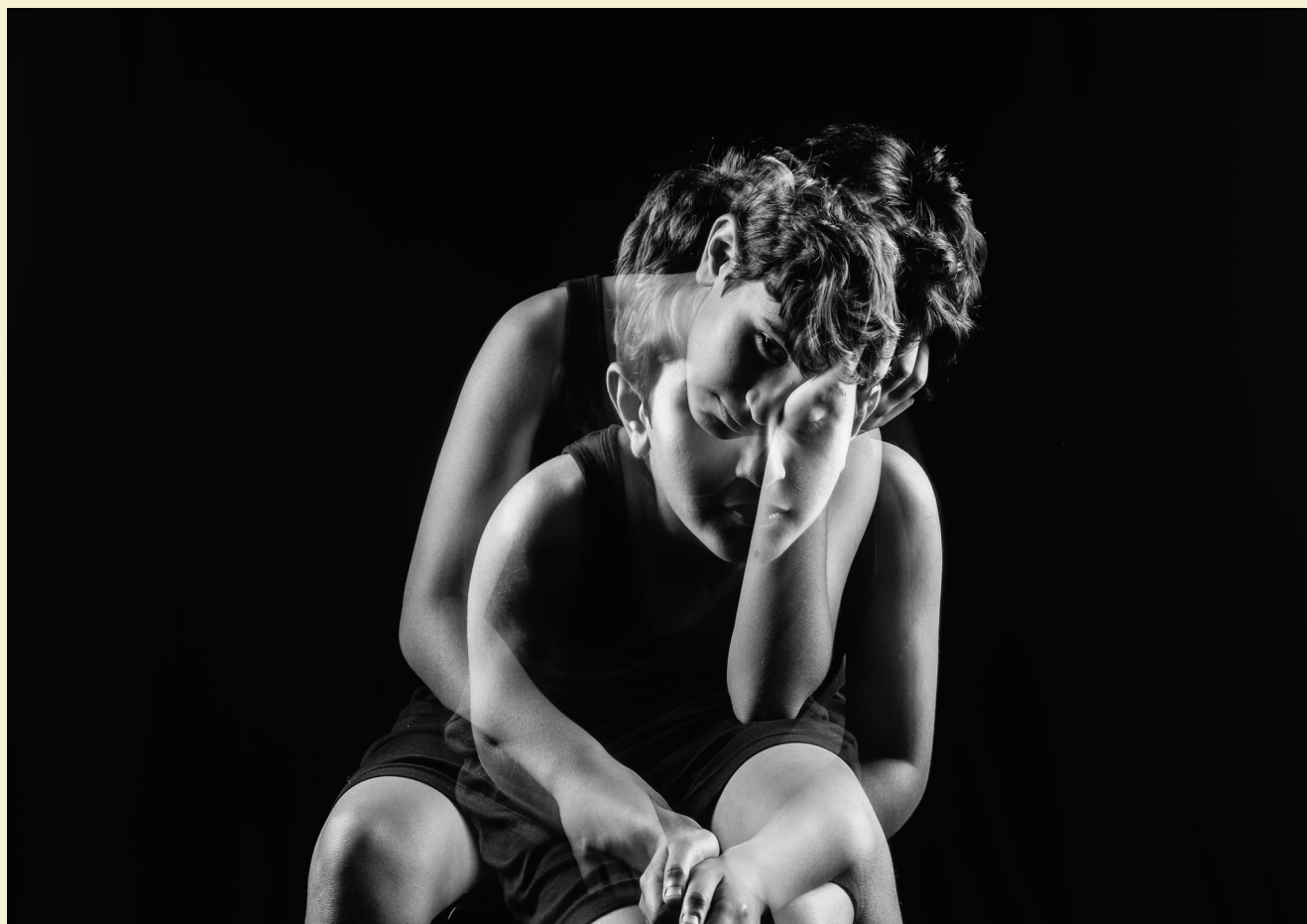
Hassan Shah  
(Alumni)



*Alley of  
Memories  
Iran*

*Marjan Ziaei*





*Alter Ego*  
*Meshal Alesa*

*Beauty  
of  
Trash*

Marcella  
Kulchitsky





*Bridge to Terabethia*  
*Nour Bohamad*



*Coals*

*Bader Al-Shehabi*



*Coke*  
Fatema Al-shawaf



*Color Balance*  
*Sundus Abdelaziz*



*Colorful Moments*  
*Sara Babazadeh*



*Cottage*

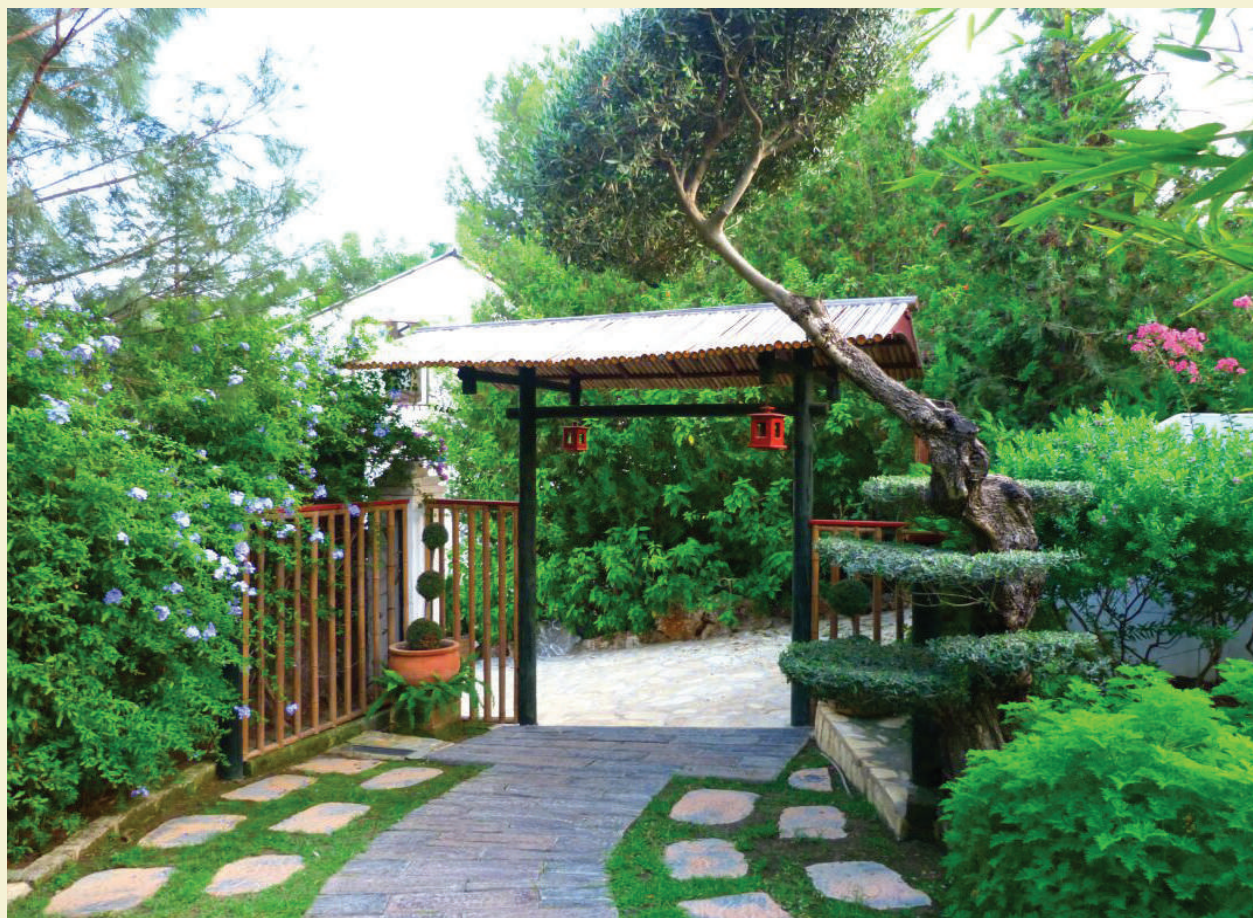
*Dima Jadayel*

*Countless Strokes**Dima Jadayel*

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*Fascinating Sunset*  
*Mohammad Al-Khiami*



*Garden of Eden*  
*Nour Bohamad*



*Gent Canal, Belgium*  
*William Andersen*



*Golden Globe, Kuwait*  
*Neda Shirazi*

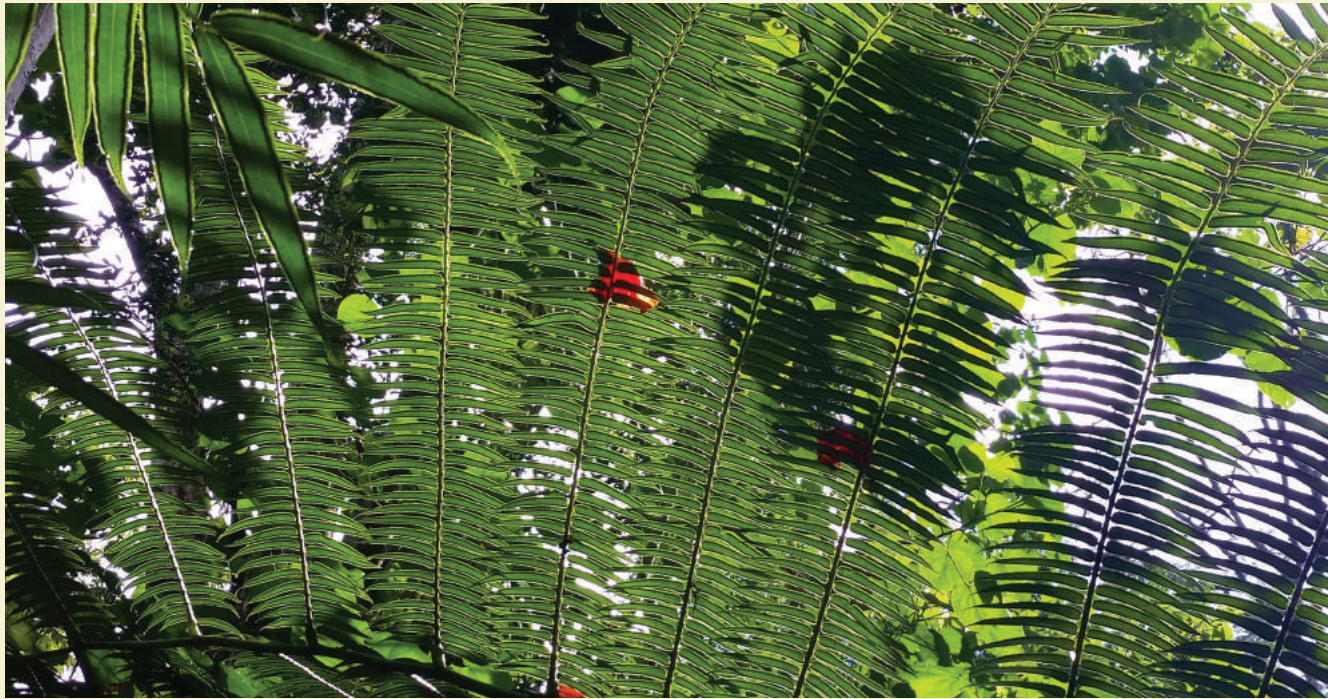


*Haunting  
Melodies*

*Antonia  
Stamos*



in



## *Imagine and Wonder*

*Lisa Waite*

Looking up, I saw this amazing shot in the huge old trees at this tropical rainforest they used for the 1993 Jurassic Park movie. This entire park simply makes one feel small and insignificant in the wonder of nature that is hundreds of years old and untouched. Taken at Manoa Falls in Oahu.



## Lighthouse with Sunrise

*Mohammad Al-Khiami*



at a  
T



## Majesty. Worship His Majesty

*Lisa Waite*

This view took my breath away. Atop one of the mountains at a ski resort, this was our lunch location as we rested our legs. This is a view that, no matter how long you look at it, simply makes you breathe deeply in awe. Taken at Loveland, CO.



## Marshmallow Sky Kuwait

*Marjan Zaei*

## My Voice

*Amal Shafer*





Parrot  
*Ahmed Alkout*



## Rainy Dinner

*Anaf Al-Zuhair*



*Relaxing Zone*  
*Anaf Al-Zuhair*

*Sanji*

*Noura Zaher*





*Shoes of Auschwitz Victims*

*Kathy Nixon*

*Slide*

*Sayed  
Abdulhusain*



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*Solitude*

*Antonia  
Stamos*





*Surfing*  
*Ahmed Alkout*



*Swirly*

*Aeshah  
Borahmah*

*Tea Party Glam*

*Anaf Al-Zuhair*





## *The Air I Breathe*

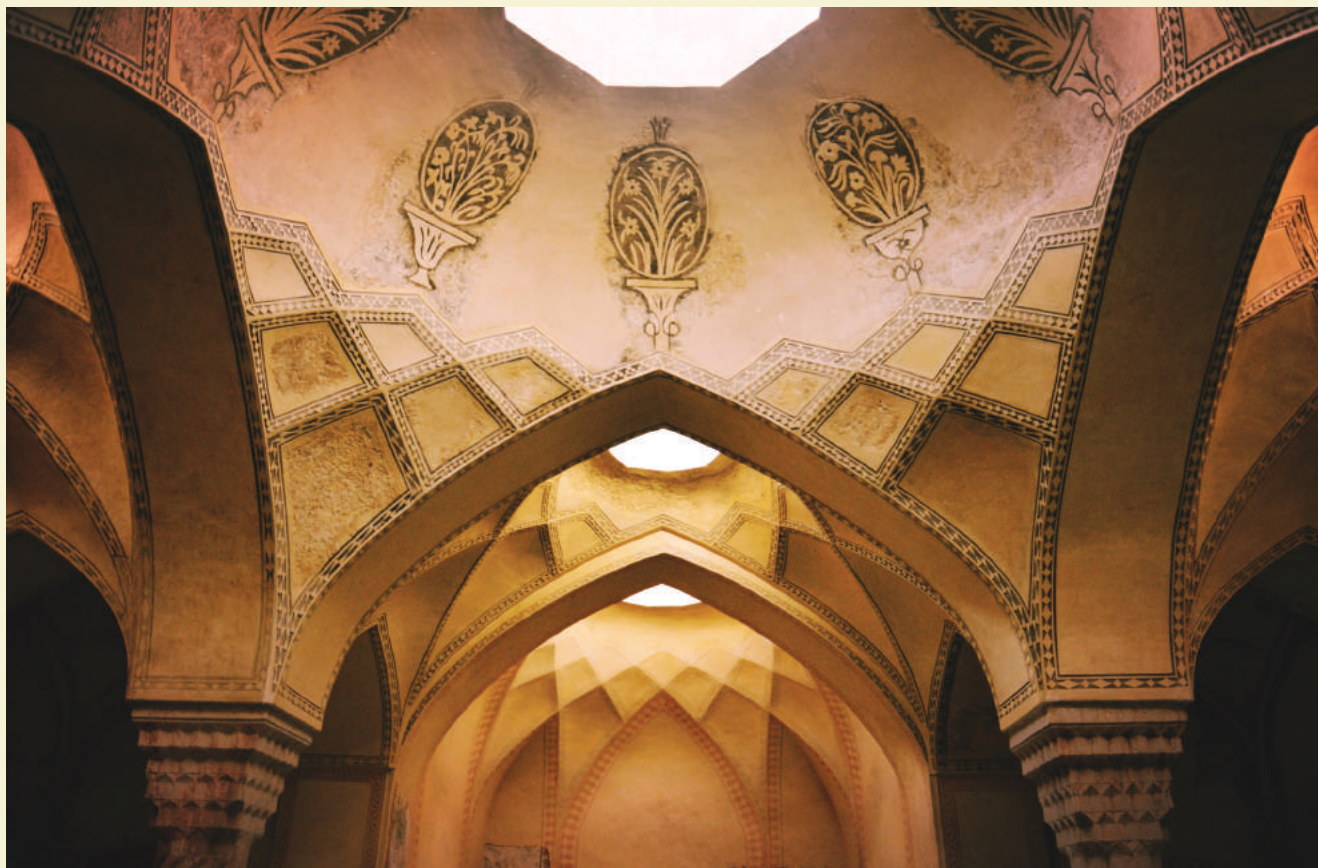
*Lisa Waite*

This place was one of those sights  
that take your breath away.  
I just stood there and breathed in  
the refreshing, clean sea air.  
Taken at Halona Head Park,  
Honolulu, Hawaii.



*The Art of Colors Shiraz-Iran*

*Neda Shirazi*



*The Beauty of Islamic Architecture, Shiraz-Iran*

*Neda Shirazi*



*The Faithful*  
*Sara Alqahtani*

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*The  
Mediterranean  
Sea of  
Alexandria*

*Seham Ahmed*





*The Path Less Chosen*

*Antonia Stamos*



*The Source of Light, Shiraz-Iran*

*Neda Shirazi*



*Thailand-Phuket*

*Ahmed Alkout*



*Thailand-Phucket-Phi Phi Islands*

*Ahmed Alkout*

Th  
leadin  
in Oak  
led to  
rainbo  
can in  
once t  
Taken

## *Today is the Day*

*Lisa Waite*

These stairs were one of hundreds leading through the tropical rainforest in Oahu. This beautiful trail eventually led to an amazing waterfall where rainbows were plentiful. The viewer can imagine the possibilities that exist once they begin the path upwards. Taken at Manoa Falls, Oahu.





Traditional Chinese Architecture, Taipei, Taiwan

*William Andersen*

UP

*Dime Jadayel*



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*Waterfall*

*Ahmed Alkout*



*Zen Place*

*Nour A Bohamad*

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# ARABIC POETRY & PROSE

## مشاعر الحروف

ليلى عبدال

أن تحب؛  
 !يعني أن تُزرع روحك في جسدٍ آخر وأن تنصهر روحكما معاً في هيكلٍ واحد  
 أن تشتاق؛  
 يعني أن تتنفس النار وتطفئ الشرار  
 أن تغار؛  
 يعني أن تصارع كبرياء حبك وتذوق المرار  
 وعندما تكتب؛  
 فأنت عاشق هائم في محبرتك اللغوية  
 وحيثما تغرق في حب محبرتك؛  
 فأنت تشتاقُ الحروف وتشتاقك  
 تغار عليها وتغار هيَ من إبداعك  
 فكلما عظمت اللغة خلّدتك حروفها البليغة أكثر

## ليلاك

ليلي عبدال

ليلاك وما أدراك بمُصابها  
عليلاً في الدّيار  
وأنتَ بمدينة الأضواءِ تتباهى  
بُعدك هيّج فيها شجونها  
وأنتَ لا تُدرِكُ مرارة الإشتياقِ  
هَبْ لي من يديك عِطْرُهما  
وأحمل عن رُوحِي وزرّها  
لعلّها بجوارك تتعافى

## كُنْ منصفاً

ليلي عبدال

لا تَقُلْ لَسَعْنِي الْقَرِيبَ بَغْتَةً  
وَأَنْتَ حَسَنَ الْخِصَالِ  
بَلْ قُلْ بَاغْتَنِي الْغَرِيبَ فِي شِدَّتِي  
وَحَمَلْ عَنِّي إِنْكَسَارِي

## ورقة، حبر، فحِب

حوراء العوض

تولد ورقة ناصعة البياض  
 نقية حد الكمال...  
 ليَقع في غرامها الحبر  
 فيلمسها... يذوب في ثناياها الطاهره  
 يُلطخها بالحُب  
 أوليس الحب ابناً لورقةٍ و حبر؟

## فإذا أنا أنتَ

يوسف ماجد نايف

من قوة الضوء المسلط فوق رأسك  
في الهدوء التام.. صار الليل أحلك  
يسري نسيماً خافتاً تقع القصاصة منك --- لم ترها  
لأن كتابك الملعون يأكل عقلك  
كم كنت تخشى أن أعفن فكرك الراقي  
لعلك صرت تكرهني.. لعلك  
كالسكر المطحون أنت، يذوب فكرك في فمي  
وتحل عقدة قصة مجنونة في لحظة أبدية أخرى  
فتبحث بعدها عن دربك التالي فذاك أضلك  
وأراك تنظر حولك  
كالطفل إن خاف الظلام وما وراء جدار غرفته لأول مرة  
وترى حذائي يا صديق العمر لكن لا تراني

رغم منظرِكَ الجميل ورغم قُبحي  
لست تعلم أنه لا شيء لي  
بل لست تعلم.. أنه لا شيء لك

عن الخُلُخالِ في دُرَجٍ، وعن حَظِّي، وحُسَّادي

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وقعتُ .. كما توقَّعتُ.. استكانَ الوقتُ ثانيةً

فأوقَدَ غَيْرَتِي العمياءَ ثانيةً

وأمشي، أحفرُ السجَادَ بالقدمينِ

يعترضُ الأسي عقلي فأفقدُ قُدْرَةَ التفكيرِ

أذكرُ ما مضى من عمرها في السجنِ

أذكرُ كيف قابَلْتُ الصديقةَ

والحبيبةَ تحت أغصانِ الحقيقةِ

- كنتُ شاباً طائشاً إن شئتُ -

ماذا تبتغي الأيدي؟

أمدَحُها؟ أأمقُتها؟ أأبقى في مكاني؟

يعتري خوفُ كياني

فجأةً، في لحظةٍ كُبرى، أراني

أو أرى شبحي يُراودُها

وأسمعُها تُهمهمُّ وهي نائمةٌ

بمن مِنّا.. ستحلُمُ زوجتي الليلة؟

يُراوِغُنِي بصمْتٍ ماكِراً أخشاهُ  
يلدَعُنِي بشيءٍ ما خَفِيٍّ لا أراهُ  
يَدَايَ ترتعشانِ، قلبي ليس ملكي  
وأذكرُ عندها خوْفِي، وألفَ روايةَ تحكي  
تُراوِدُنِي، تقولُ اخرُجْ، وذَرْها وحدها تبكي.

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فأنهضُ

ثابتاً ما بينَ بينٍ..

واقفاً كالجسرِ أو كالنَّسرِ ينتظرُ الفريسةَ  
وهو لا يدري مكانَ القلبِ فيها لا يرى شيئاً سواها  
- من تفاصيلِ الظلامِ أظلُّ أنظرُ أو أراقبُه - الجدارَ  
وقلبيَ المجنونُ في بنطالِ والديّ الشهيدِ  
ومن طَرْفٍ أرى جيبي يَنْزُ دماً، دموعاً من حديدِ  
وأشعرُ بارتكازِ النبرةِ الأولى لأوّلِ قطرةٍ من دمٍ  
ولكني أظلُّ على ثباتي - واقفاً - كمُعاندٍ أحمقُ  
أظلُّ مرابطاً كالجدعِ لا أخشى خريفَ العمرِ لا أندم  
وزوجتي في عالمٍ تغرقُ يُسائلُنِي الجدارُ  
عن الشفتينِ والخدينِ، عن خصرٍ يهزُّ الكونَ  
عن قدمٍ تدقُّ القلبَ، أو كلّ القلوبِ بلحظةٍ  
عن مسِّ شَعْرِ حبيبتي البنيّ من أعلاه أو أدناه  
عشقا، لهفةً، ولها حتى أخمصِ القدمينِ

## زيارة الأرواح في الدنيا

يوسف ماجد نايف

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معاً..

لا شيء يجمعنا ويجعلنا نموت الآن أو نحيا  
ولا أحقاد في الكلمات، في الأوراق أو فينا  
- نحدّق في تفاصيل الجدار معاً - فمن يدري  
لعلّ ذبابة، نملاً، فراشة حقلنا تأتي تُسلّينا  
ولكن صمتُ خيبتنا يُعرّينا  
من الإحساس والأضواء.. يتركنا كطفلين  
اجتمعنا صدفةً والحبُّ يسقينا  
ولكنّا - برغم يدينِ ناعمين .. بعدَ خشونةٍ  
رغم استراقِ الضوءِ مِنّا النورَ - مازلنا  
ومازالَتْ ثقبُ الوقتِ تطوينا

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أنحُنْ نرى الجدار؟ أم الجدارُ مُبْحَلَقٌ فينا؟  
وأجلسُ فوق حافةِ صمتنا أو رهبةِ الأيامِ  
وخلفي أنتِ راقدة.. كأنّك نجمةُ الأفلاكِ والأفلامِ  
حينما استكان القلب...قلت جدار أحرق .

تجاهلتها الطفلة وظلّت واقفة تحديق بي.. براءة تتمايل يميناً وشمالاً ممسكة بينطالها البنفسجي اللون، استشعرت ألوان الفرح على وجهها وخيّل لي أنها قد ترى فيّ طيف طفلة أخرى تشاركها اللعب .. الطفلة التي تسكنني. أو لربما كانت ترى طيفك الشقي الذي كان يدفعني بقوة .. فخيّل لها بأنك أبي.

شيء من الخجل أصابني .. سألت نفسي: «ما هو سبب تردد ريومة؟»

غمرتني رغبة ملّحة في تبادل الحديث معها إلا أنني أبعدت عيني عنها لثوانٍ لعلّها تلبّي نداء المربية وتلعب معها..

بهدوء تقدمت نحوي وكأنها تعلم مدى حاجتي للعب والحديث معها.

شجعته والبهجة تغمرني:

«هيا يا ريومة لنلعب معاً»

ابتسمت وهزّت رأسها مرحبة:

جلست ريومة على الأرجوحة المجاورة لأرجوحتي .. بدأت أدفع نفسي بقوة .. ابتسمت ليفدّعت نفسها أكثر .. وإذا بك تهمس لي مجدداً:

«طفلتي الجميلة أنت .. ألم أقل لك بأنك فاتنة الحسن هذا المساء؟»

إلى  
طفلة ..

«  
«  
ملت

التي  
«

وقت  
مت  
ن،  
آنية

لثلاثي

جميلة  
ت لها

بعد دقائق زاولت المشي .. ورافقتني هواجسي معي. هل أنت حقاً تهمس بي أم أنا أهذي بك؟ أنا في طريقي إلى منتصف الممشى حيث تكون ألعاب الأطفال والأراجيح .. هذا المكان الذي تعودت أن ألعب فيه عندما كنت طفلة .. وتعودت التمرجح فيه عندما كنّا نأتي معا..

«هيا أسرع حتى نصل إلى منتصف الممشى ونتمرجح معاً .. لكن بشرط! أنا من سيدفعك وأنت على الأرجوحة» هاتفني خيالك الماضي وأنا في طريقي إلى المنتصف .. وإذا بي أسرع حقاً .. أهرول .. أهذي .. أسبقك .. أسبق خيالات الأحصنة التي تمر بي .. «سأصل قبلك» تهمس في أذني .. قلبي يسهل .. التفت حولي ولا أراك. ههنا وصلت بعد كم هائل من الهرولة .. قلت في نفسي «أخيراً وصلت وتلاقيت أنا وأرجوحة الطفولة»

إنها العاشرة مساءً وأنا وحدي ههنا أتمرجح. ابنة الثلاثة والعشرين عاماً جالسة تتأرجح وتتمنى لو أن الطفلة التي بداخلها تقفز وتتأرجح معها على أرجوحة الطفولة. كم أشتاق لطفولتي وللأرجوحة. عندما كنت طفلة اعتاد أبي على المجيء بي في عطلة نهاية الأسبوع إلى ممشى «منطقة مشرف» كي ألعب وأتسلى، لكنني كنت في أغلب الوقت أتمرجح على هذه الأرجوحة الخشبية نفسها.. إلا إنها الآن أقل قوة من الماضي.. صدأت سلاسلها الحديدية ونُزعت قشرتها الكستنائية اللون.. أصبحت باهتة. وعلى الرغم من أن الزمن سرق رونق لونها إلا أنّ حالها لم يتأثر بالزمن، فما زالت قادرة على تحمل ثقل وزني وأن تطير بي بعيداً. هأنأ أترنح بين ضغطينجويين مختلفين .. بين الماضي وآنية اللحظة الحاضرة .. أدفع برجلي إلى الوراء .. بل تدفعين أنت .. وتهمس لي بثقة

«سأطير بك إلى باريس وروما والهند .. وحيثما تشائين»

أتجاهلك .. بل أتجاهل هذياني بك. لحسن حظي لا أحد يشاركني اللعب.. بينما أنا مندمجة بسماع معزوفة الثلاثي جبران «ليتينا» ألحّت عليّ الطفلة التي - كنتُ - بالتمرجح.. تشجعت وباشرت التمرجح بقوة وحفيف الشجر يطرب أذني.. يطير بي إلى السماء، فكلما استشعرت قربي من السماء دفعت نفسي بقوة مضاعفة، إلا أن طفلة جميلة اندفعت فجأة كي تلعب.. خففت من قوة دفعي وأنزلتُ قدمي على الأرض إلى أن توقفت الأرجوحة. ابتسمت لها ولوّحت لها بيدي مرحبة.. ردّت عليّ بابتسامة خجولة وظلّت في مكانها واقفة محدقة بي ونظراتها الخجلى تناديهها مربيتها الفلبينية

«ريومة .. ريومة .. تعالي نلعب»

## ريومة

ليلي عبدال

سمعتُ صدى ما قلتهُ لي - منذ ثلاث سنين - حين أتينا معاً إلى الممشى لأول مرة .. صفعتني ذاكرتي حال ما ركنت سيارتي بالقرب من الممشى. نزلت من السيارة .. أخذتُ حقيبة يدي وأقفلتُ سيارتي .. وإذا بشبحك اللامرئي يهمس لي «حبيبتي لا تُنْزلي حقيبة يدك كي لا تضايقك أثناء المش»

رجعتُ لسيارتي كي أترك حقيبة يدي في السيارة - كما كنت تأمرني - متمنيةً أن لا أهذي بك أكثر. باشرت بالمشي البطيء وأنا أضع سماعات الأذن...«حبيبتي لا تضعي السماعات في أذنك .. إنها ضارة.بما أن الجو جميل سأغني لك أغنيتنا المفضلة ما رأيك؟»

وشيء من التعجب لازمني منذ تلك اللحظة .. غيّرت الأغنية التي كنت أسمعها وبدأت أسمع أغنيتنا - نسّم علينا الهوى - في لحظتي الآنية وأُغني مع السيدة فيروز .. وأنت تغني معي في زمننا الماضي. مرّ بجانبني شاب وسمعني بينما كنت أُغني .. وإذا بك تصرخ والحمرة على وجهك!

ماذا دهاك؟ .. لا تُغني أمام المارة ! أنا شرقي الهوى .. أغار عليك من نفسي ومن المارة ..بل من أوراق الشجر وأعين العاصف

تجاهلت صوتك اللامسموع .. تجاهلت الشاب الذي مرّ بجانبني بينما كنتُ أمشي وأُغني لوحدي .. تجاهلت صوت القلب القلق. تابعت المشي .. بدأت أُهرول كما اعتدت الهرولة والسباق معك .. أهرب من ذكراك .. أهرب من قسوتك .. أهرب من نفسي الضائعة. أين الخلاص والمنفى من هذا الهذيان؟ قل لي بربك.

«انتبهي كي لا تقع! أنا عداءٌ ماهر، لن تفوزي علي أبداً»

لن أدع صوتاً قديماً يوقفني .. سأهرول بكل ما أوتيت من قوة وصبر حتى أصل إلى شجرة المنفى .. تلك الشجرة التي عقدنا عليها الأمنيات والآمال المشتركة .. ذُبلت الأمنيات وما أن وصلت إلى الشجرة تفاجئتُ بذبول أوراقها أيضاً ..! بعض الأقدار قد تتعمد الصدفة .. صدفة اللقاء على الأقل. غلبني التعب فجلستُ لبضع ثوانٍ على الكرسي الخشبي تحت الشجرة كي أرتاح قليلاً قبل أن أكمل المشي.

## رسائل بلا وجهة

حوراء العوض

عندما يسدُّ الليل ستارهُ الحالِك، تجرُّني قَدَماي نحو مَكْتبي و أجلسُ كشمعةٍ وَسَطَ غياهبِ الظلام،  
أستنبِطُ نوري من قَلَمي، و أخرج رسالةً أَلمتها وحشةُ الدجى  
أنتَظِرُ "ك"، قَد يَكُون مَحَوَّرَ الرسائلِ جميعاً ذلك الحَرْفُ الذَّكْرِي، "الكاف"، مَقْتَرَنٌ بِبَعْضِ الأفعالِ كَ  
أحب "ك" أو أشتاق "ك". إني أشتاقُ فعلاً لِأسمي بِصوتِكَ و لذكرايِ المَجْهولةِ مَعَكَ و لأحاديثنا المدثورةِ في  
إحدى بِقاعِ المُستقبل. يربِّكُنِي حَقاً كوني أَجْهَلُ الكَثيرَ عما أَكُتُب. يَحْزِنُنِي أَني لا أَفْهَمُ لغةَ المَجْهول، و لكن  
بصيصُ أَمَلٍ يَهْمِسُ لي بأن المَجْهولَ قَد يفْهَمُ لُغتي! عيناَيِ تقولانِ الكَثيرَ و حروفي تحاولُ عبثاً التَّنْقِيبَ في  
بَحْرِ عيناَيِ عما يُكْتَب. و لكن ما أَملاً به فراغَ الصَّفْحَةِ الغامض، ليسَ سوى أَفكاراً أَشَدَّ غموضاً و غرابة!  
كفكرةٍ أَني قَد تصادَفْتُ و صاحِبَ الرسالةِ ذاتِ مرَّة! أَنه يَرتادُ ذاتِ الأَمِكنَةِ التي أرتادُها، أو أَنا قَد نَكُونُ  
إجْتَمَعنا فقط هنا في أَحرفِ رسالتي، وباطنِ خيالي. أَبتَسِمُ لغرابتِي، لجنونِي! فَكَّرْتُ ذاتِ يومٍ بِإرسالِ  
الرسائلِ عَبْرَ الحَمَامِ الزاجِلِ عله يوصلُها إِلَيكَ، إلى حيثُ أَنت، إلى سَطْحِ يَدِيكَ، ثُمَّ يَدُلُّكَ عَلَيَّ! لكني أَعْلَمُ  
أَنه لا يَدُلُّكَ عَلَيَّ سوى قلبِكَ. أو إني أَفْضَلُ أَن أَجِدَكَ أَنَا! لِكَي يَتَسَنَّى لي أَن أَطْلِقَ سِهامَ عيناَيِ مِباشَرةً  
بقلبِكَ، لأوقِعَكَ أَسيرَ حُبِّي، و أَتحرَّرَ أَنَا من لاشيء! إِذِ إني كُنْتُ و لازلتُ و سأظلُّ حبيسةً عَشِقِكَ. إني بما  
أَكُتِب أحومُ حَوْلَ النُقْطةِ ذاتِها، إني أَصِلُ دائماً إِلَيكَ! أَنتَ نِقْطةُ البَدايةِ و لا غَيْرِكَ يَكُونُ الختامُ

## حَجَرُ يَأْبَى الْغَرَقِ

حوراء العوض

من يوقِفُ القَلَمَ إذا ما نَزَفَ شوقاً؟  
 من يعطُلُ سَيْلَ الحِبرِ من العَيْنِ  
 إذا ما إِمْتَلَأَتْ عِشْقاً؟  
 من يَسُدُّ بابَ الذِّكْرِ؟  
 من يَكُونُ لِلصَّمْتِ خالِفاً  
 و لِرَبِّ الكُتْمَانِ خَلِفاً؟  
 من يَسُدُّ نَهْرَ المِشاعِرِ  
 و يُكَبِّلُ عواصِفَ العِشْقِ  
 مَنْ يُحَدِّثُ بقوانينِ الطَّبِيعَةِ فَرَقاً؟  
 من يُكذِّبُ عَقِيدَةَ الرُّوحِ  
 و يَكُونُ لَعَقِيدَةِ التَّكْذِيبِ مُصَدِّقا؟  
 من يَبْئُرُ الطَّرِيقَ إلى الأَبَدِ  
 من يَتَّخِذُ الفَناءَ طَرِيقاً؟  
 مَنْ؟.. صدقاً؟  
 يَفْرِشُ الفُؤَادَ  
 و يَصْبِحُ لِحُكْمِ الحَيِّ المَيِّتِ مُوثِّقا؟

أنا و أنت  
أشبهُ بحرفان  
حرفُ حاءٍ و باءٍ متلاصقان  
ليكونا كلمةً هزت بعظمتها الأكوان  
حاء و باء للـ “حب” صانعانِ  
فلأكن حاوِّك و كُن بائي و لنسكن في مُهجةِ العشاقِ  
حتى آخر الزمان

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## حاء و باء

حوراء العوض

أنا و أنت  
أشبهُ بِحَرْفَانِ  
لا معنَى لهما مُنفَرِدَانِ  
و لكنهما حينما يَعشَقَانِ، يلتصِقَانِ، يتلامسانِ  
يتجردانِ من خَوَائِهِمَا، لِيُخْلَقَ مِنْ أَحْشَائِهِمَا معنًى و عُنْوَانِ  
و لتنبثقُ فيهما رُوحٌ تحمِلُ في جَوْفِهَا من المَشَاعِرِ أَلْوَانِ

أنا و أنت  
أشبهُ بِحَرْفَانِ  
إنِ إِفْتَرَقَا، أَصْبَحَا من الحَيَاةِ خَالِيَانِ  
و إنِ إِقْتَرَبَا فُجِّرَتْ في أَرْضِهِمَا أَنهَارٌ  
و فُرِشَتْ في صَحْرَائِهِمَا شُطُآنِ

أنا و أنت  
أشبهُ بِحَرْفَانِ  
خُلِقَا كي يجتمعانِ  
بأفئدةِ البشرِ يعصفانِ  
يُعَرِّوْنَهَا تَارَةً من الأَحْزَانِ  
و تَارَةً أُخْرَى يَهْبُونَهَا الأَشْجَانِ

## جنة الحب

حوراء العوض

أرجوكم يا أهل الغرام  
لا تشوهوا الحب  
لا تقتلوا كل جميل فيه  
لا ترموه بالأكاذيب الحادة كالسكاكين  
لا تجعلوه موضع السجاد تحت أقدامكم  
فللحب حرمة  
للحب مكانته  
و صدقه  
و أبديته  
التي لا تعرفها عقولكم  
”الحب دين“  
فإن كنتم تنوون أن ترتدوا  
فلا تقربوه  
لا تنزعوا خصاله الإلهية  
احترموا  
اخشعوا في محرابه  
لتروا جنته

## تراك فتاة

يوسف ماجد نايف

فتاة ترى نفسها في تحرك جسمك - يا أبسط البشر/الكائنات  
ومن وقع همسك في أذنيها.. تكاد تعود إليها.. حياة كبعض الممات  
فتاة تراك جميلة لأنك وحدك تفهم ماذا تريد إذا صمتت فجأة  
في العروق الملايين منك ومنها إذا ما تمعنت وضعك جيداً  
في يديك الطريق وفي معصمها.. وفي كل درب أياد من الأرض  
أجنحة في السماء، دلافين في برك من دماء.. إذا اخترت أي طريق  
فتاتك كانت تريد الصديق.. فحسب.. ولكن قلبك لا يستريح ولا يستفيق  
فتاتك تنفض عنها الغبار.. وتمضي ترتل آيات رحمة ربك طول الطريق  
وفي كل حي ودار.. تمران عبر جسور مهلهلة أو مرصعة ذهباً خالصة  
مثل قلبيكما في المغيب - تشاكسها وتلاعبها فهي صارت فتاتك حقاً -  
فتاتك تغضب، تصرخ، تهرب.. منك --- تريد الهروب --- وأين السبيل؟  
فلا تجد الحل إلا بقتلك حين تنام على حجرها.. وهي تعلم أن طريق الرجوع طويل  
ولكنها سوف تقتل من مثل صنفك ألفاً.. إذا ما استطاعت  
لكي تستعيد الفتاة - ولو لدقائق - ما فقدته

دات  
لاما  
ن عبثا  
بيئة  
لماذا؟  
روب  
صاديا  
عنك  
مرة  
طبع لا  
إذن  
ليها  
مال  
ة مع  
و دمة  
عادة ،  
ميلة.  
عقيفة  
ن

## أين السعادة؟

ميساء سعيد الشريف

أستاذة في الجامعة الأمريكية في الكويت

ترى عندما ننطق كلمة سعادة ماذا يتوارد إلى خاطرنا؟ هل السعادة تعني لنا السعادات الفخمة؟ تلك السعادات التي لا تتكرر إلا قليلا في العمر؟ السعادات التي تتطلب منا انتظارا طويلا و تفكيراً طويلا و أموالا كثيرة و أحلاما كثيرة و تخطيطات كثيرة؟ هل يحصر غالبية البشر سعاداتهم في تلك الاشياء الصعبة و البعيدة المنال؟ ويظنون عبثا أن كل لحظة سعادة لابد قبلها من مقدمات و إجراءات طويلة؟ هل السعادة حكر على اللحظات المطرزة المليئة بالتعقيدات؟ إذا كان مفهومنا عن السعادة بهذا التعقيد فأبشرك عزيزي القارئ أنت تتمسك بالزئبق الهارب. لماذا؟ لأن كل شيء في هذه الحياة مؤقت. فالمال مؤقت والمنصب مؤقت في زمن تلاطمت فيه المصالح وانتشرت الحروب والفبركات الاقتصادية والسياسية ، فما تملكه بيدك الآن قد يصبح فجأة بيد غيرك، و من يدعمك سياسيا أو اقتصاديا قد يدير لك ظهره و يصافح مصالحه في مكان آخر، أما الحب؟ كذلك قد يكون مؤقتا فمن يحبك الآن يتخلى عنك غدا و من تحبه أنت قد تأخذه منك الدنيا في لحظة لم تتوقعها ، قد يخفق قلبك مرة ومرتين و ثلاثة و في كل مرة تظن أنها النهاية ثم تتغير نظرتك للشخص ولمكان السعادة والحب الذي ستستقر إليه في النهاية. العمل؟ بالطبع لا فمديرك قد يرضى عنك لسنوات قد ينسى قيمتك بلحظة أو بخطأ عابر. والأمثلة كثيرة لخيالات الإنسان المؤقتة. إذن أين تكمن السعادة؟

السعادة الحقيقية هي السعادات التي لا تعقيد فيها هي السعادات العابرة الحقيقية والتي يمكن الحصول عليها كل يوم . فعناق طويل من أحبابك هو السعادة، ضحكك المفرط مع أصدقائك هو السعادة ، اللعب مع الأطفال المفعمين بالحياة سعادة ، لحظات الحب الأولى سعادة، الابتسامة في وجه العابرين سعادة ، الأحاديث العفوية مع من لا تعرفهم سعادة ، جلوسك مع قهوتك في لحظات سلام وصفاء سعادة ، السعادة قد تكون في سجدة لله و دمعة خشوع.قدرتك على مساعدة الآخرين سعادة و قدرتك على خدمة نفسك أيضا سعادة ، إيمان الآخرين بك سعادة ، السعادة قد تكون وردة من شخص يكن لك الود دون مصلحة أو هدف. أو حتى كلمة أو دعوة ، أو أغنية جميلة. السعادة الحقيقية هي التي تقدم لك نفسها دون متطلبات و وعود و دون تعلق واهم بالدنيا ، السعادة الحقيقية هي التي لا ترتبط بتوقيت أو كلفة أو خطوات . استمتع بلحظاتك السعيدة البسيطة و لا تكن عبدا لسعادات الحياة الكبيرة والمؤقتة. دمت بمحبة وسعادة حقيقية

## أجسادٌ بخِفةِ الرِّذاذِ

حوراء العوض

أيا حَبِيبَتِي  
 قد سألَ جليدُ السماءِ  
 و إنبتَ عِطْرُ المَطَرِ في الأرجاءِ  
 و طُهرتِ القُلُوبُ من كلِّ داءٍ و داءِ  
 أيا حَبِيبَتِي  
 لَبِ النداءِ  
 إقْلَعِي ثوبَكَ المِغْتَمَّ و أنسجي لَكَ من الغيمِ رداءِ  
 أيا حَبِيبَتِي  
 ناوليني خصرَكَ النحيلَ  
 و لنطمرَ بِخُطواتِنا الراقِصَةَ الشَّقاءِ  
 !لنُحرِّرَ أبداننا في الهَواءِ  
 أيا حَبِيبَتِي  
 فلنَعْلُ كالِدَعَوَاتِ  
 و لنهبطَ كَرِذاذِ الشِّتاءِ

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