

ACCESS TO THE REFRIGERATOR

SABRINA SAMREEN

We must have grown pretty close,
Since you've given me access to the refrigerator.
Even then, I hesitate,
To devour,
The yogurt you got three days before,
Might be your favourite kind.
I like yogurt, too.
I guess I'll make do,
With bread, marmalade and leftover chicken stew.
I've always been the kind to not ask for more.
Plus, it's good to ration.
We can all benefit if we just eat,
As much as we need.
Hell's broken loose and this dire situation.
I kind of feel weird to not even go out, do groceries,
I have some money saved up, ready to be used, if you please.
There you are, working hard, laboring, night and day.
While I just eat, consume, not producing, all I do is stay
At home, eating warm meals at home, "your home".
Mind if I use some,
Mozzarella cheese?
Sprinkle it on the garlic bread I'm baking,
It's a luxury, I know you won't flinch,
But food's all we got, it's worth faking.
Everything's good, and the meals are our disguise.
I see the milk bottles in your refrigerator, untouched,
So I hunt and make recipes that use more milk, less eggs or flour,
Plus you know it's going to turn sour?
Until I stay,
I guess I'll just cook, use the ingredients to cater,
To your taste bud.
I need to thank you for your hospitality.
I know you've given me access to the refrigerator.
But I'd still look for signs of exasperation.
I hope I don't tread into forbidden territory.
Be thankful for this abode and food for free.
One raised eyebrow, one shrug, one nod, one question,
And then I'd capitulate,
My privileges to your refrigerator.



ILLUSTRATION: RIDWAN NOOR NAFIS

Aquamarine

UPOMA AZIZ

Every time I look at you, I am reminded how moot a promise *forever* is.

On the days it rains and on ones it doesn't, a girl walks into the toy store. On rainy days she treads carefully; much unlike a child her age, perhaps in the fear of not being allowed inside the shop with her mud-caked pumps. On her way out, she squish-squish-squishes delightfully, splashing more than usual or necessary, going out of her way to make up for the puddles she missed on her way to the shop.

She doesn't check every aisle or nag for every toy she lays her eyes on – she knows the exact number of turns and steps it takes from the door to the doll she visits. All her hesitation evaporates and her face lights up in relief as she realises the doll is still there. Standing tall at four feet something, she doesn't try to reach the doll up on the six-foot shelf, she pours all the love and longing her heart can conjure up into her eyes and stares at the doll.

And I don't see the girl, because I see myself.

I don't know what the girl is called and yet I believe she has come the closest to feeling what I feel when I look at you. The girl goes back everyday just for a glance of something she cannot afford to have – she doesn't know for sure till she makes that last turn in the shop that her doll is still there. Isn't uncertainty beautiful?

There will come a day when someone will eventually take her doll away. On that day as she weeps and holds her sister, complaining that her doll is gone, she will realise – the doll was never hers, not in the ways that laws dictate,

but love is a weird thing and it comes at strange times with its own set of regulations. I daresay the person who will own the doll will never love it as much as this girl does, and she knows it too. You can see it in her eyes that she is scared. But she cannot stop either, she keeps going back everyday.

I really wasn't ever the kind of person to count the blessings of life – to be very honest, I still don't. Every time I start counting, you are the first thing to come to my mind and that is also where I stop, because that is all the blessing I need for the time being; no one said a temporary gift is not a real one. You are very much real to me and so shall you be till the day you finally slip like sand through my fingers.

You've seen the raindrops on the glass from the inside of a car right? Each time it rains I place my hands on my side of the window and see the droplets remain untouched, unscathed on the other side. The space between us allowed me to see you, but you have always been on the other side of the glass window; intangible and therefore a little unreal.

You're so precious, my Aquamarine. It's like I have you on a mortgage I know I can never pay off, and when the time comes I know I will have to hand you over. You will take away a huge part of me and I will never be the same again, but for the time that I have, I will not hold back. I will keep coming for you. I will stare into the horizon long after your train leaves.

Upoma Aziz is a walking-talking-ticking time bomb going off at random detonators. Poke her at your own risk at fb.com/upoma.aziz