

PANCAKES AND DAYDREAMS

ADIT HASAN

The soft buzzing from his phone woke him. His feeble, passive attempt to sleep in by disabling the sound on the alarm was a failure. Ayon deplored being a light sleeper. A slight chill had settled in overnight and he found himself shivering as he moved the blanket aside and swung his legs over the side of the bed. Marsha was already up, sitting on top of his desk, swinging her legs back and forth and humming cheerfully while she fumbled with her Rubik's Cube. She still hasn't managed to solve it even once.

Mom. Dad. Shiro the cat. The sparrow flying around. The construction noises. The baby crying. Rubbing the sleep from his eyes, he pushed himself off the bed and motioned for Marsha to follow him downstairs. Lethargy weighed him down as he lumbered across his room and out the door, trying to ignore the jackhammer outside. The dull throbbing in his head suggested it was his skull the jackhammer was drilling into, not the pavement.

"I hope we get to have last night's cake for breakfast, Mum promised she'd let us," Marsha mused, apparently to herself, as she skipped down the stairs, the cube in her hands. Amazingly, she is actually farther from completion than when she started. "Look where you're going Marsha, you don't wanna get hurt again, do you?" warned Ayon. The sweet smell of maple syrup wafted towards them as they waddled over to the dining table. "Mom, is it raining outside?" Ayon asked. Apprehension crept into his mother's eyes as she hesitated before replying, "No dear, it's completely dry outside."

He shrugged and waited for Mum to place the plate in front of him. It was pancakes, or at least he thought so. It looked like pancakes, it smelled like pancakes, but he could never be sure. It'd

been 3 years since he'd been diagnosed with schizophrenia. He hadn't gotten any worse for the past year, but again, he couldn't be sure. His parents had been incredibly supportive, choosing to keep him at home with bi-weekly visits from

the psychiatrist rather than getting him admitted. They worked themselves to the bone labouring over their jobs and watching over him at all times so that he didn't hurt himself or anyone around him. It was thanks to them that he did

not sink deeper into the alluring world his deviant mind had created for him. In a desperate, defiant attempt to maintain his grip on reality, he came up with a mental exercise that had now turned into a ritual. Every now and then, he would list three things that he knew to be real and three things that are not.

He dowsed the pancakes in syrup and scarfed them down as quickly as he could. He didn't want to be late for the school field trip. When his parents had objected to him going alone and suggested they accompany him, he had vehemently refused to comply. He wanted to leave before they changed their minds.

Uncle Jafor. The pretty new girl next door. The wacky bookshelf Dad bought.

The beggar on the roof. The rain. The bees.

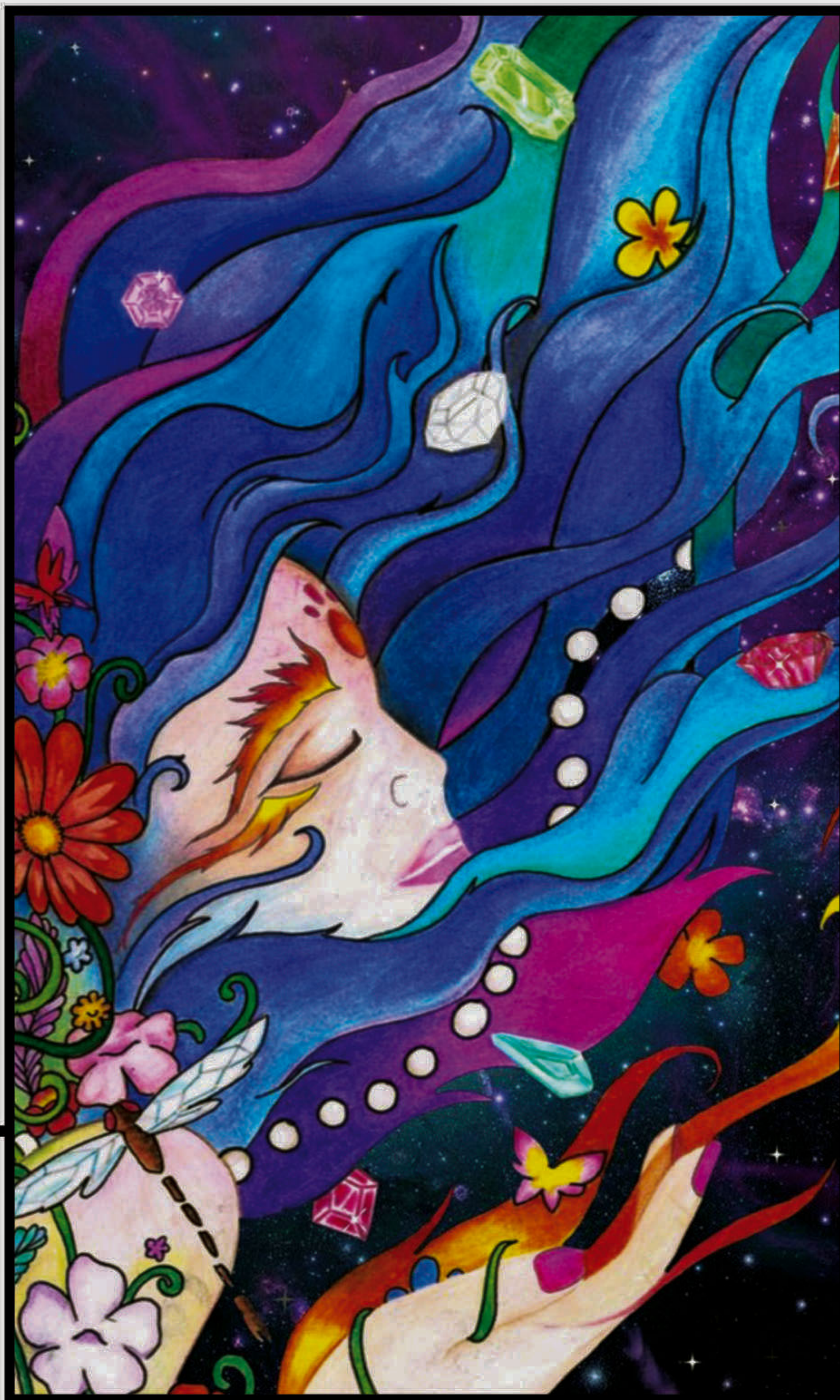
Marsha. As his mind drifted between his delusions and reality, he forgot which world his sweet sister belonged to. She lived and breathed in front of him, and his cheeks ached every time she pinched them during her tantrums, but then again, the beggar seemed very real for the first six months too.

He had thought about asking Mum. But she always got worried whenever she found out about him having another delusion. And more importantly, he was worried about the answer. Marsha is his sister, his anchor when the illness grew overwhelming. Wherever his thoughts wandered, it would always come back to her.

She was home. And he could not lose her.

He gulped down a glass of water and ran upstairs to get ready. He grabbed his bag and headed towards the door. "Have fun!" yelled Marsha before diving back into the pancakes she was so fervently devouring.

His lips curled into a smile as he closed the door behind him.



AYESHA SINHA

Orange Crayon: I heard they're making a masterpiece.

Purple Crayon: Why do you bother? That's grown-up stuff.

Orange: Oh please! Don't tell me you never wanted to draw a something worthy of a big art exhibition.

Purple: Anything a child draws from his imagination is a masterpiece.

Orange: But they lose our work and become embarrassed of us when they get older. I want my work to be immortalized.

Purple: Well that kind of work only appeals to thick-headed art critics.

Charcoal: Hey! What do you think you're doing here?

Orange: I wanted to be a part of the masterpiece.

Charcoal: The artist is doing a sketch. There's no place for colors here. Certainly

not a tacky-bright one like you.

Orange: But the world is in color! We dream in color! Isn't art about all the beauty there is and could be?

Charcoal: You don't know it yet, but feelings are too often black and gray.

Orange: It doesn't have to be like that!

I can be the sunshine in that gray world.

Charcoal: You know nothing about art. This canvas is not for you.

Orange: Who is it for?

Charcoal: Not you. Go back to create meaningless doodles in the most inappropriate places, being chewed on

and broken by toddlers. You can't create art.

Orange: What kind of twisted view of art asserts feelings are black and gray?

Charcoal: Well what do you feel now?

Orange was busy next morning in the nursery school. Little Julian painted Lucy O'Donnell with Orange. His father, John, a grown-up loved the painting. He even showed it to his friend, Paul ("Nice guy", Orange thought "Talks to friends about art"). Paul liked it too, but they started taking about writing a song. Well, you can't see music. Apparently little Julian's crayon painting can't be framed and displayed at an enormous art gallery to awe people.

Orange thought grown-up John forgot about the insignificant nursery-school painting his son Julian made with her. She never got to thank John. Although he made it possible for to hear Orange's painting as he sang the words, "Picture yourself in a boat on a river..."

A NURSERY SCHOOL ART CLASS OF 1967