

Crossing the Atlantic

It was the beginning of yet another hectic semester when my mother finally decided to go to the USA on an immigrant visa. Although she didn't say it, her eyes showed the burden of stress her heart bore during the process. She was leaving because of me and yet she didn't want to leave because of me. It was a paradigm we were ready to accept.

"What will you do?" she asked me one day. "What will happen to you?" I wasn't a child anymore, I had replied sternly. She looked away, an undecipherable expression on her face. It was a couple of months, a year at most, for which she'll have to stay there. After that hopefully, if everything went as expected, I'll be able to join her. It was very clear to me: I could survive without Ammu. I didn't even give it a second thought. If her absence did bother me in the future, I'll just have to deal with it like a mature adult, I thought.

Before leaving, ammu bought every kind of clothes she could for me. I was not to cook, clean or get distracted in any kind of household matter. She strictly told baba to take care of it and leave me entirely to my studies. The rest, she left Allah to take care of.

Crossing several times zones, ammu called the minute she landed, making sure I

ate my meals, washed up, finished homework and all sorts of things to make me forget she was several thousand miles away. I rejoiced when she said she was merrily welcomed in the new country by her siblings who resided there.

The time difference was tricky. My night was her day. She woke up when I came home exhausted and I woke up when she prepared to go to bed. Sometimes I'd forget to call, sometimes she did and so the first crack in our relationship started to appear. On top of that, the network got so distorted that sometimes we didn't have any choice but to hang up. Things that were left unsaid started to pile up and had the strangest effect on me. For the first time, I was willing to leave things unsaid. Our conversations grew shorter and full of snappy comments from my part.

For weeks, I didn't call her and I'd wake up every day with a heavy heart, not realising the source or caring for it. I started to wake up late every morning with a sigh, thinking aimlessly about the days when I used to wake up early to study in the cool hours before sunrise. Ammu would always wake up right after me, just to check up and fuss about breakfast. I would get so annoyed. Once, when I was feeling lazy and wouldn't wake up, she started singing retro

songs I'd never heard of. And then she started acting them out! Now, my mother was not an actress but the scene was hilarious and I laughed so hard all the drowsiness was gone from my system.

Sometime later, I was asked to co-host an event at my university. The speeches, the preparations, and not to mention the immense responsibility of wearing a sari without any assistance – it was chaotic but successful. When it all ended and it was time to go home, I was suddenly struck by a thought. Somewhere in my heart, I had cherished the idea of sharing all the excitement I had experienced today with ammu. Why should I go home? If a home meant no mother in it, what kind of a home was it?

I excused myself to wash my face and looked in the mirror and witnessed something I'd never realised before. After all these years of being called the breathing Xerox copy of my mother, I could now see why they said that. Wearing her sari, hair tied in a bun and with kohl bordering my eyes, I could almost pass for my mother. And yet we were worlds apart.

I hadn't talked to her for more than two weeks by then for some silly quarrel that had been nurtured by the unstable network and the immense distance between us. On my way home, I thought how messy our

relationship had gotten. This was a woman who had waited outside for me, for hours, while I attended classes in air-conditioned rooms, the woman who had cried the entire time I went to sit for my first certificate exam with a fever, the woman who had tried so hard, only for my sake, to save the marriage she knew was already doomed...How could I even have the guts to argue with her?

The ride back home was a rush. As I entered my room wearing my mother's sari, I silently resolved to make it a rule of calling her or send a message. It was my turn now to make my time hers, to make decisions for her sake and to wait and hope the best has yet to come. It was the least I could do.

The network, as usual, just wouldn't connect. Dejected and exhausted I went to bed after leaving her a text and promising to call back, hoping to fill up all the communication gaps. Next thing I remember is waking up next morning to find a lone text on my phone.

"Happy birthday Gullu! I miss you very much. Love, ammu"

I smiled. Of course Allah's best gift to me remembered my birthday even when I completely failed to.

By Shamayla Alman

WHAT'S EID WITHOUT COLOURS?

It may seem far off, but Eid is coming sooner than you expected. How you look plays an integral role in defining and celebrating Eid, and to make sure you do not miss out on making the most of this celebratory season, look out for your copy of Star Eid Fashion Magazine – the most comprehensive guide to all things fashionable. Also, do not miss this opportunity to show how your brand celebrates the occasion in style by showcasing your products in the

Star EID FASHION MAGAZINE

Participants nationwide are requested to send their selected outfits and accessories for the album.

**Attention:
Designers & Boutiques**

The Daily Star

Criteria for Participation:

1. Materials used should be produced locally.
2. All submissions must be accompanied by name of designer, address, contact number, price and a short description of the product (either in English or Bangla).
3. Designs should be original and suitable for the weather conditions.
4. The attires and accessories sent for the album will be returned.
5. Entry fee per submission is Tk. 500 (minimum 6 entries for each participating house)

**Last date of submission:
19 May, 2016**

For submission of products and advertisement, please contact
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