

# COFFEE AND CACOPHONY

NUREN IFTEKHAR

*She and I, both being guilty of nostalgia, came to the mutual agreement that we would meet up over coffee every year on the day we parted our ways. Over the following years we never said a single word to each other on any of our rendezvous. I don't remember that being a part of our deal, but I guess years of resentment does that to you.*

The first cup of coffee we had after our pointless agreement tasted like our outlived relationship, bitter and cold. She looked livelier though, seemed happy for a change. I've always had a thing for seeing her in ponytails, which is why I suppose she had it untied.

I could taste our vitriol in the coffee up till the sixth year. I found out she had a man on the seventh year when I saw a ring over the tan line on her finger that mine had carelessly left. The bitter aroma I got used to over the years was replaced by the pungent flavor of pity. We never said a word but if I could I would have told her that I'd rather have my bitter coffee back.

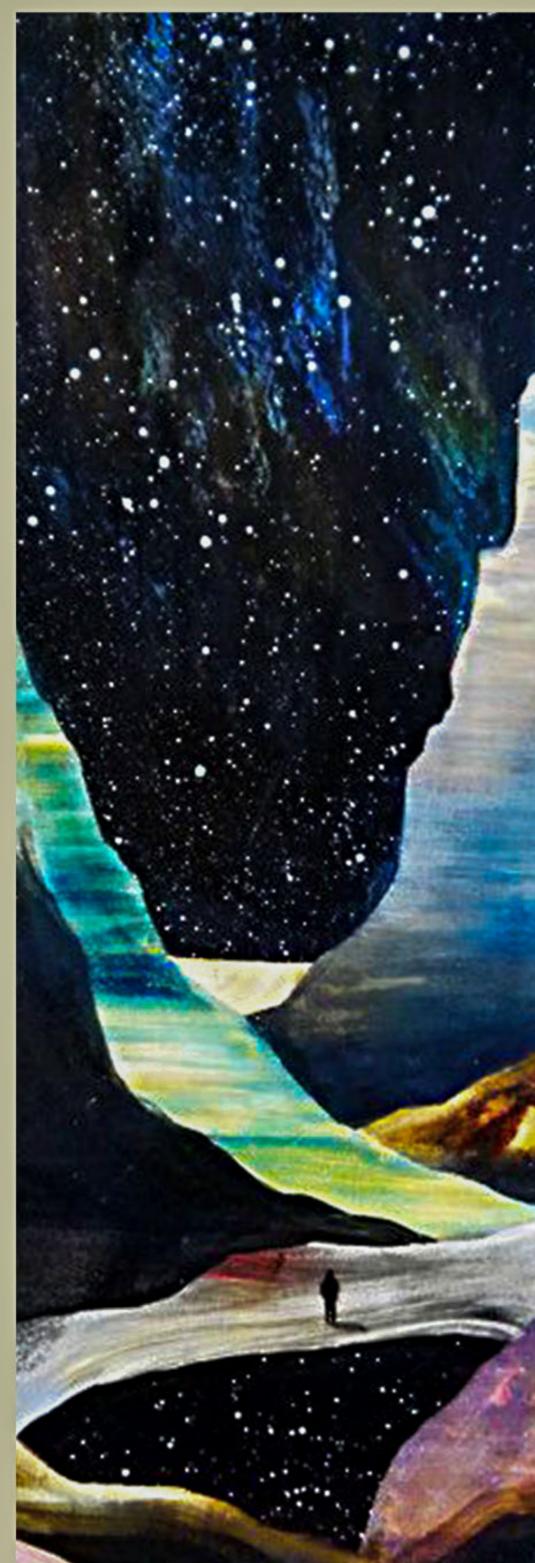
We saw a different side of us, near the end of our time together. Our conversations drifted to a structured pattern where we knew what the next sentence would be. Her lilac dress turned into a faded kameez. My hands looked for the remote instead of a hug. But no matter how much justification or morality we try to put behind it, this was in the end a pure, unadulterated, raw part of ourselves; one that we didn't hide beneath a dozen layer of formalities. We understood it, but that's not the same as acceptance. Our dream of growing old in a porch as equally worn out as ourselves with hands held tight disfigured into what we are today, two petulant adults

resenting each other over an excuse of a coffee.

But I don't think her new lover took things for granted like I once did. I could feel their love through the tiny details, her rapping on the coffee table, the tune she was humming to a song I never heard, the smile she had - O, the smile she had. She didn't need to say a word to tell me she was happy. But I wish she saw the same picture when she looked at me, which was not the case judging by her pity. If she did take a good look at me she'd see how I shaved my beard so that I don't hurt my new lover, or how I wear cologne now to impress women even though I detest the smell, how I don't stare at my phone all day anymore. The only reason she could perhaps pity me for is the fact that I still wore the cufflinks she gifted me a long love ago.

We broke our unwritten vow of silence on the 9th year over our 9th cup of coffee. She said that she was leaving, I said that her new glasses looked good on her. I didn't say anything else because if I could open my heart we wouldn't be here in the first place. She said a lot more with the ponytail she had on her.

We left that table on the far right for one last time leaving two empty cups closer than we could ever be.



# Dreams

SAFWAT OMAR

Dreams,  
the foolish thoughts of humans.  
Hopes and wishes  
Unfulfilled.

As age sets in, letting go,  
calling it "The Reality",  
I call it a Rot, inside out.  
Dreams...impossible, imaginary, they say,

Torturing themselves to a slow and painful  
end.

I call it Possible,  
I call it a way of life,  
Dreaming the extraordinary day and night.

Do you dare to dream?  
Or are you stuck on Reality...  
A blank piece of paper.

*The writer is a grade 6 student of American International School Dhaka.*

# OVERFLOW

ARUBA ADIL

Everything real  
Has lost its appeal  
Help me  
Help me heal  
I want to-  
I need to, feel.  
You make me

*Feel*

So come fast  
And go slow  
Make this last  
Till I