

Sankofa

SHAH TAZRIAN ASHRAFI

Nadia lived some 3000 miles away from home. The mountains and oceans were the obstacles. Though she conversed with her mum a lot over the phone, it didn't serve the inexplicable pleasure of lacing her hands around her back and clutching her in a tight hug. She wasn't supposed to come back home this week, but she had to since her mum had a cardiac arrest, and she succumbed to it.

The cavalry of clouds covered the moon that night, and the neighborhood smelled of wet grass since it was raining. Nadia was settled in her bed beside the window under a thick blanket. The raindrops were trickling down the window pane on which the distant city lights flickered, and it seemed like drops of yellow lights sliding down and ramming into the base wooden framework. Like the droplets, salty tears trickled down her cheeks as her eyes couldn't hold them back for long. Her vision was blurred.

As she ran a hand over her eyes, her gaze shifted at the acrylic painting her mum had spun out of some abandoned colors. The background was peanut butter brown, and the figure of a crimson bird dominated the frame. The painting flew her back to a sunny holiday when her mum had decided to use the isolated colors and do justice to their quality. Her fingers were smeared in brown and crimson, and they ran over the empty canvas as if they were ice skaters skating on a snow filled ground after so long.

"Why is the bird fetching an egg from its back, mum?" Nadia questioned as her mum hung the finished painting on the wall opposite to Nadia's bed.

"Do you know what this bird is called?" Mum asked Nadia instead of replying.

"No, I don't," Nadia shrugged.

"It's called a Sankofa. The egg you see is an important lesson that it learned from the past. So it's fetching it from its back to bring it into the present in order to move on with progress," Mum finally answered Nadia's question.

The 8 year old scene faded away like dust jiving against the wind, and Nadia's hands were caressing the photo-as if they wanted to melt in the color and bath themselves with the acrylic smell. The 8 year old painting held no significance to her until that night. As the nippy mosaic floor sent chilling sensation through her feet to every nerve of her body, she closed her eyes. In her mind, she grew a beak and used it to fetch a golden egg from her past. Inside the egg were all the things her mother had taught her. She was determined to bring it into the present and fly with her wings fluttering.

The colors witnessed how she and the painting held a striking resemblance.

The writer is a grade 11 student of Birshreshtha Noor Mohammad Public College.



Late Night Conversations

MARISHA AZIZ

"Aren't fish bothered by being wet 24/7?"

"Are you serious right now?"

"Of course I am. This is a very important question."

"Just like your previous 10 very important questions?"

"Yes. I am dying from curiosity. Dying, I tell you."

"It is 4 in the morning and my flight leaves in four hours. Now is not the time to be talking about the inconveniences that fish might or might not face."

"Now is the perfect time to be talking about this, because you leave in four hours."

"I think they like it. You know, like some weird fascination."

"Really?"

"Yeah. I'm about 80% sure."

"Here's another important question—"

"Oh God have mercy."

"Can you stay a bit longer?"

"..."

"Just for a few more days. Not too long."

"I've been here for two entire months, kiddo."

"It's high time I got back or I might lose my place at uni."

"Oh. Yeah I guess that's true. It's just that, you know, it'd make Mom really happy."

"Mom? Only Mom would be happy?"

"Yeah, I mean no, Dad would be quite pleased too. He'd like to witness the start of the new

Premier League season with you at his side."

"Oh, so I should just hang out with Dad if I stay a few extra days?"

"No, not just with Dad, you know how much Grandpa likes to discuss politics with you. And he's usually so lonely, and he says no one in the family has as sharp a mind as you do."

"Wow, that's nice of him. It's great to know that at least some of the family would be affected by my absence."

"Some?"

"Yeah, not all obviously. Not you, right?"

"Yes, I mean, no, I mean, um, it would be nice to have you around to answer my crazy questions, that's all."

"So you admit your questions are crazy?"

"No, I meant to say seemingly crazy questions."

"There's always the option of a phone. It's this machine that allows you to talk to people who live far, far away. Don't know if you've heard of it, but it's a pretty popular device."

"It's not the same. You wouldn't understand."

A short pause, and then, "I do, kiddo. I do."

"Stay a few more days, apu. Don't go back. Is education really that necessary?"

Another pause, longer, more melancholy and more uncertain.

Despite being a hopeless fangirl, Marisha Aziz lives under delusions of awesomeness. Contact her at marisha.aziz@gmail.com to give her another excuse to ignore her teetering pile of life problems.