

Hope among other things

SHAH TAZRIAN ASHRAFI

An empty canvas is a horrible thing,
 They said.
 So I spun it into a masterpiece
 That drowned the emptiness in a galaxy
 Poked with stars.

An empty page is a broken mansion,
 They said.
 So I adorned it with words of my own
 That swarmed the mansion with colors,
 And the rainbow dimmed in its presence.

An empty ribcage is a waste of bones,
 They said.
 So I hung the pictures of whom I cherished,
 And painted my own faiths inside my ribcage
 With a brushstroke extending from my heart.

The world always shows me an ocean full of
 contradictions
 But I always dive deeper
 To witness the beautiful seabed.

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To My Beloved

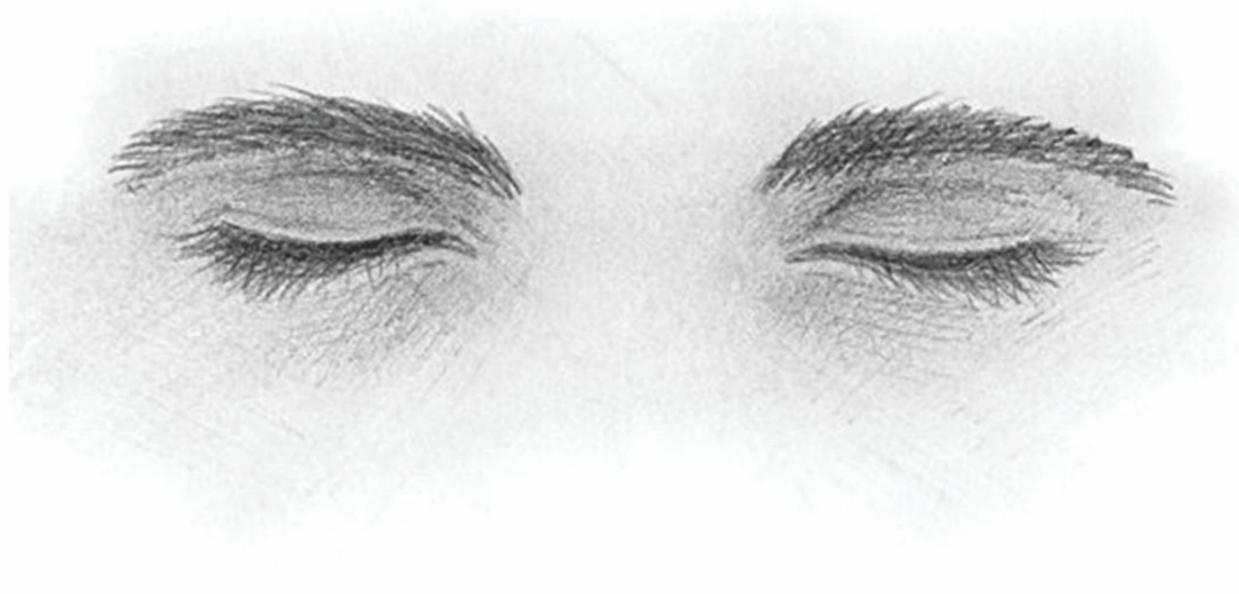
ANUPOMA JOYEETA JOYEE

From where I am sitting, it smells like disinfectants, antiseptics, confusion, anxiety, anticipation and helplessness. It's 4 AM. The doctors have told me to hope for the best. Hope is all I have now. Last month while I was lying on my back inside a doughnut shaped white tube, I told the doctor three times about the fluttering sound inside the machine. The doctor assured me all three times that there is nothing inside the CT scan machine except myself. I did try to put off the procedure for as long as possible but my headaches kept getting worse.

going to run further test. I don't want to steal someone else's thunder.

"Rand, are you scared?" "Yes, I am scared. Please stop talking," I tell it. "I can't stop talking to you as long as you keep thinking about me," replies an eerie, cold voice. I close my eyes. I dream of a little girl, barely the size of an arm, in a fluffy yellow frock trying her best to stand. "You can do it!" I tell her in my dream. She smiles. Four teeth, pink gums. I am kneeling down right in front of her to catch her if she falls. It's all baby smells and warmth when she falls into my arms.

"PUSH!" a woman's scream wakes me up.



I wait at the hospital lobby. The masked doctors run without looking at me. Wings flutter inside my head. "Be patient, Rand," it says. It has been talking to me more and more these days. "Leave me alone," I say to the solitary butterfly living inside my head. "I can't leave, Rand. Believe me, I have tried. Your hold on me is too strong," the creature's voice reaches me from an ethereal void. I am trying to concentrate on my surroundings. I have played this day in my head uncountable times. For eight years, no less. Every single time it ended with someone screaming and crying at the top of their lungs. The CT scan neither found a tumour in my head nor the butterfly. I am a rebel without a cause. I am not

"The doctors look worried. You should go and ask what's happening," the voice inside my head tells me calmly. A doctor is coming towards me. The voice inside my head is louder than ever, the constant fluttering of wings is like dead birds hitting the car windshield in a storm. But I am calm. In moments of stress and fear, absolute nonchalance covers me. I want to freeze time. I don't want to find out whatever he is coming to tell me. "Rand," the butterfly shouts my name. I want to yell at it to leave me alone. "Congratulations! You have a baby girl," beams the doctor. When the wings stop flapping, I concentrate hard and listen to the sky-piercing scream I had always dreamt of hearing.

My Stable Relationship

BENJAMIN HASAN

One, nine, seven, three
 I was born free
 Inside white walls,
 Big wooden doors
 Freedom came to me
 Delivered for a fee

One, nine, seven, three
 I am now forty-four

Inside white walls,
 Big wooden doors: locked
 My love came to me
 Delivered for a fee

One, nine, seven, three
 I count her steps
 Inside white walls,
 Big wooden doors
 She galloped to me
 Delivered for a fee

One, two, three, four
 I count her hooves
 Inside white walls,
 Big wooden doors
 She looks at me
 Delivered for a fee

*The writer hates poetry.
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 poems at
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