

# (WO)MAN

AFRIN HAQUE ARANYA

And were I born  
To prying eyes, be I a girl of any design.  
I was taught, to not spread my legs too wide, to sit  
straight, skirt not too long, strength not too strong,  
Beneath the foot of a ravenous boy, is where I be-  
long.

I was taught to swallow down my anger like poison,  
be quiet, darling, you said.  
Hush your cries, hide your frown.  
Be not you upset of the purple scars around your  
neck, or the dent on the side of your cheek, under-  
neath layers of false happy, let it seep.  
For upset is not a luxury for a woman to keep.

I was taught the architecture of the world through  
prison bars, I was taught to scratch off my battle  
scars. I was taught and taught to shut the blinds to  
my sisters gobbled down like stolen food, be she of  
any blood. Like the daily weather reports, news of  
her being chewed down does flood.

I was taught to be silent, even when my body bled,  
even when my back hurt,  
I was taught to keep my lips sealed, even when my  
body,  
Now not much mine,  
Was dictated by strangers.  
For the devil's children are God's gift, you said.  
In crimson reds do you write the lines I dread.

I was taught not to shout too loud,  
Even when my life was on a ban,  
At last,  
Do I use my voice, a century and a thousand sup-  
pressions old,  
To ask if it would be the same,  
Had I been a man?

*The writer is a 10th grader at SFX Greenherald Interna-  
tional School.*



# FLIGHT OF THE SONGBIRD



UPOMA AZIZ

My dear Nightingale, today I set  
you free.

This phrase I had repeated  
incessantly in my head without  
being able to voice it, and now  
that I have completed the feat, I  
regret my decision of not letting it  
out earlier. Never did I ever know  
that a simple line could untangle  
all the knots done and undone  
in years. It's so comforting, and  
I can barely imagine the tide of  
relief it has brought in for you.

How did we come to this is  
an absurd question I won't even  
bother asking, for I don't even re-  
member when or what we started  
out as. Whatever it was, it must've  
been better than now, for how de-  
lusively fascinating each mistake  
seems at first! Now that I look  
back, I'm glad that there is not  
even an outline left of our good  
days; they faded away because we  
allowed them to.

I'm not going to eulogise the  
death of a relationship which,  
otherwise, would have marked  
the death of us. Like Kekule's  
snake, we were chewing at our

own bodies, clawing at our own  
flesh, stuck in the labyrinth we  
created for ourselves, a place  
where we believed we were safe,  
ignoring the fact that we still had  
ourselves to be afraid of.

We boxed up the few good  
memories we had, we put them  
away, much unlike the others  
who dust and rewind their own,  
and now that we scavenge for  
them, we realise that we'd thrown  
them out with the garbage, long,  
long ago.

We hid our feelings for each  
other, because emotions were for  
weak people, and we believed us  
strong – strong enough never to  
need them again. But when we  
sneaked back and looked, we'd  
forgotten where we'd left them.  
Maybe when after we have finally  
sated our restless souls, we'll find  
them, and they'd hardly be of  
use. Gratefully, we would bury  
them.

We stayed in this cul-de-sac of  
a relationship not out of love or  
compassionate caring for each  
other, but because of a habit  
we're too wary to walk ourselves  
out of.

Once a cluster of your own  
cells start multiplying, it seems  
harmless at first, no more than  
just another part of yourself.  
Sucking in life from you, it grows  
and grows. You'd fool yourself  
thinking it's you who is growing,  
but soon it grows into something  
bigger than yourself, and you  
wane under its monstrosity. Soon  
enough, it's all that remains.

This is how our relationship  
turned out to be – while it should  
have enabled us to grow into better  
versions of ourselves, it turned out  
to be something we grew to fit into.  
It was claustrophobic with all those  
complaints, confusions and com-  
plications, leaving hardly enough  
room for us.

It's preferable to let go when  
all holding on will ever do is chip  
away pieces of us in a meaningless  
attempt to keep itself together.

My dear songbird, go. Put your  
rusted wings to some use. Free me  
in the process of freeing yourself.

*Upoma Aziz is a walking-talking-tick-  
ing time bomb going off at random  
detonators. Poke her to watch her  
explode at [www.fb.com/upoma.aziz](http://www.fb.com/upoma.aziz)*

# HYMN TO POETRY

MIRZA SABBIR HOSSAIN BEG

Oh! When all rhymes be written,  
With words that too be told,  
And all thoughts as if some sicken'd  
Whispers of the past, like old  
Glories inglorious be;  
That day there will only  
Be a sigh to breathe for me,  
Like a tree standing lonely  
In winter breeze, dead, yet quicken'd.  
As do I, when my grief is spoken.