

DETAILS

MAISHA NAZIFA KAMAL

I have left out all the details,
 For you who reads my scattered words.
 So you can have your own story to tell
 As you dip your toes into the water of this mess.

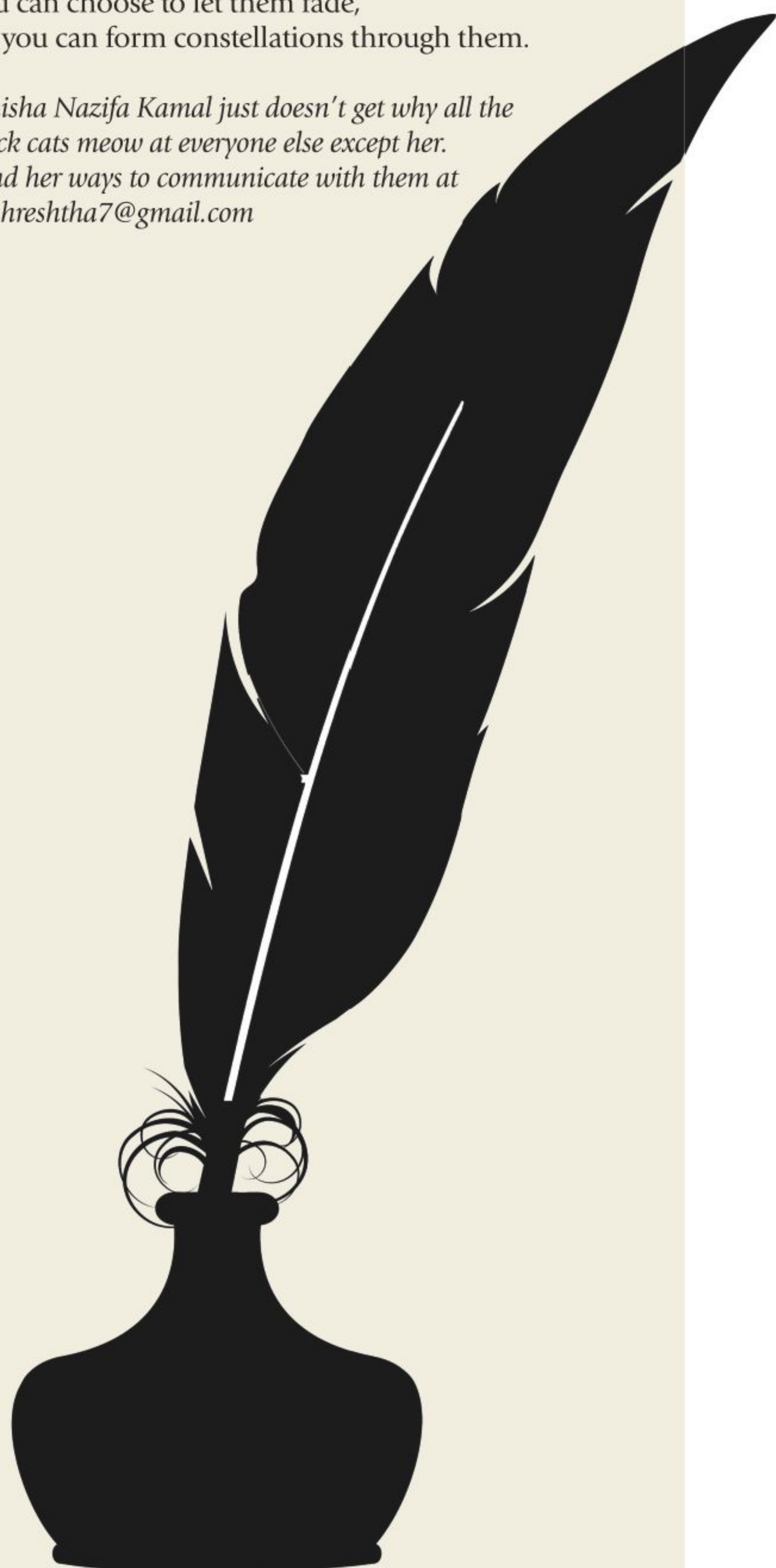
You must run your hands over the texture of my
 poetry,
 To let these words seep into the layers of your skin.
 Shuffling through your thoughts and hopes,
 They will guide you to the land I never dreamed.

You can keep these words under dainty sea shells,
 Fill them up with the sand grains that have your
 footsteps.
 You can tear them off into ghost pieces,
 And feed them to the ones whose eyes have bled.

For my ambient words are like peacocks,
 They are elegant in the wilderness,
 Humble of the vivid culture they represent,
 Their feathers are yours to collect.

I have left out all the details,
 Have hidden ciphers under the shadows.
 You can choose to let them fade,
 Or you can form constellations through them.

*Maisha Nazifa Kamal just doesn't get why all the
 black cats meow at everyone else except her.
 Send her ways to communicate with them at
 01shreshtha7@gmail.com*



City of Strangers

UPOMA AZIZ

To the city that never sleeps,
 Hello, dear old friend. Even after so many
 years you never fail to marvel me through
 your surprising change of attire at the tran-
 sition from day to night. We are no longer
 strangers, not after the countless sleepless
 nights we shared, though sometimes I
 cannot help wishing that we were; as young
 as we were once, raw and so full of life,
 prepared to throw ourselves straight into
 something that resembled a mistake, and if
 we were so, I'm certain I'd retrace my steps
 through your crisscrossed roads without any
 sort of hesitation whatsoever.

I could thank you for being a silent
 acquaintance, or maybe you could thank
 me, but I believe we're all past that. Little
 remains of the fascination I held for you and
 your people; your, I say, for I don't consider
 myself a part of you anymore. But you knew
 that.

You were once my sanctuary, but now
 I'm in need of running away from you too.
 I came here, fooled by fantasies I knew were
 vain, but to which I clung onto, for what else
 did I have to live for? I knew no one back
 then, and I know no one now, certainly not
 beneath the several layers of masks that
 each of them don. Oh dear, dear city, why
 couldn't I see that you were crawling with
 strange strangers?

Too many memories you hold in every-
 thing you simply are, every piece of you a
 blazing scar in my mind, but just for the sake
 of our association, can I ask you one last
 favour? I'm letting go, and am asking you to
 do the same. This really won't work out if
 you keep haunting me, and this way it will

be easier. Maybe not at first, but eventually I
 will manage. I will have to.

There have been nights I woke up gasping
 for air, my monsters looming over me, and
 I couldn't breathe. It felt like someone was
 hammering my insides without bruising the
 skin. At the preset of each day, I, a stranger
 trapped among strangers, had to choose
 from my own set of masks, and at the end,
 I felt like hiding my face in the nonexistent
 darkness I longed for, and to howl till I lost
 my voice. You were big enough to house
 millions of people, but certainly not huge
 enough for our souls to roam free. We had,
 unknowingly, agreed to sell our souls to you,
 to keep up your reputation as the city ever
 awake.

So I would go out and look up at the sky,
 the only part of you I hoped would not feel
 like a cage, but I would be bedazzled by the
 strange red halo – the concoction of myriad
 versatile lights. Despite the lights, your skies
 looked utterly lifeless, desolate and aban-
 doned, deserted by the life I longed to see,
 and that I was drained of. And despite this
 wild goose chase, I cannot find what I seek,
 it's simply too much – too much light to see
 the stars. Too many masks to see the person
 underneath.

City of night, flooded with golden lights,
 I once thought I couldn't get enough of you.
 How wrong I was.

Years I've spent blinded by your ersatz
 flash. Now I'd like my eyes back. I'd like my
 stars back.

Yours never,
 A dreamer no more.

*Ask the city to provide Upoma Aziz with answers
 at www.fb.com/upoma.aziz*

