

# An Ode to a Lifelong Friend

UMME HANI ABBAS

Tonight, Mother put her arms around me  
 And she hugged me tight,  
 So tight, she wouldn't let go.  
 Tonight, she put the broken pieces inside me together.  
 And I couldn't help but break down in her arms.  
 She told me it was okay to not be okay.  
 And after what felt like a lifetime,  
 I took a deep breath  
 and stopped pretending.  
 I had been fighting for too long.  
 Perhaps there was no fight left in me.  
 Between streaming tears and a fragile breaking heart,  
 I heard her gently say:  
 "You are not weak, for I have made you strong."  
 Don't you see what you are made of?  
 But, my mother is a warrior,  
 And so were the women who came before her.  
 The same blood courses through my veins.  
 That same fire rages in my belly.  
 Warrior or not, tomorrow I will  
 Wake up once more and try.  
 I'll be nothing less of a warrior,  
 I refuse to be otherwise.  
 I owe it to the women who came before me,  
 And the ones who come after.  
 But most importantly, Mother, I owe it to you.  
 You were right all along:  
 Yes, you have made me strong.

*The writer is a Biotechnology graduate from the USA.*



# THE WRITER AND HIS MUSE

SAMIN SABAH ISLAM

Luna scrutinised the twenty-nine page long script with yearning eyes, waiting to find herself laced amidst the phrases. With every turn of page, her eyes gloomed some more and the flashy grin from half an hour ago was now crafted into confusion. Luna didn't recognise the protagonist in the story about her life. "What do you think?" the balding man in his early thirties probed. "I know it needs more work. It still lacks some, uhmm... what should I say?"

"Facts?" Luna countered, with the utmost politeness she could muster.

The writer's brows creased, "Excuse me?"  
 Luna shuffled in her seat.

"I thought you were going to tell my story. This isn't *my* story. Sure it has the fundamentals but, look here for example," she said pointing at page 4, line 9, "I didn't grow up in a struggling household with abusive parents. My childhood was actually quite colourful. My parents are saints. And this doesn't have anything to do with what happened."

"Luna, my child," the wordsmith cooed, "The muse of my art, the key to my fame, the check to my rent." He winked.

"This is the build-up. Humans are slaves to sentiments. If we want to reach out to an audience and create a mark, we must make them feel heartache, sorrow and perhaps," he paused and continued in a lower tone, "Pity."

Luna did not want pity. She got enough from her potbellied, nosy neighbour who seems to be losing sleep over the likelihood of Luna's marriage, or lack thereof, ever since the incident. Luna just wanted her side of the story to be out there. Not some gossip-thirsty reporter's version, or the public defender's, and most certainly not her offender's. If she had finished fifth grade,

maybe she could have done it herself. However, she was helpless. She needed the somewhat renowned author's help.

"Are the false tragedies necessary though?" she tried to reason. "It's taking focus off the main incident. And there's no mention of how easy *he* got off. How I was denied of justice. That's what I want the world to know, so people come forward, possibly people who can help me and my family."

The man before her creased his forehead, now slightly irked.

"Luna, you're still a child. Much of the world is beyond your comprehension. I can't just blatantly slander him. He's from a powerful background. There may be legal consequences. I'm only 32, I just can't get tangled in some controversial story."

"Then why did you write it in the first place?" she shot.

The ire was now apparent in his face.

"Easy there kid, it almost sounded like you're being ungrateful."

Luna sank in her seat.

"If I were you I'd be indebted for this opportunity. I approached you when none of those hotshot authors, activists or reporters did. So hopefully, I get my sell-out book, you get a share of the profit and we both go home content, knowing we made the world a better place. How does that sound?"

Luna stared at him befuddled, as if newly realising how selfish and cruel the world could be. She should have known better.

With that, Luna was dismissed.

"Oh and Luna," the writer called out as she was leaving.

"Romance. That's what I was going to say. It lacks romance. Is there a love life I could mention, a boyfriend of sorts perhaps? Readers love that price-charming-rescuing-damsel-in-distress sort of rubbish..."