



WOMEN

SAMIN SABAH ISLAM

I store my tears in a jar,
Unspoken protests hidden far,
For I'm the kind who wears a dress,
We're meant to serve and speak in less.
I want to scream out, I object,
Put into purpose my intellect,
But I'm the kind, who stays indoors,
To please the other and do my chores.
A lady mustn't cuss, and a lady must look down,
She must've deserved it, if beaten black and
brown.
A lady must survive, and a lady must endure,
Must live according to men, no less, no more.
That's how my mother did it, how her mother
before her too,
That's the way of living; what I'll have to live
through.
So as society follows, a mother is oppressed,
Decades down the line daughters put through the
same test.
No protests come from fragile lips, no protests
loud enough.
Fear of being neglected and the fear of sheer
rebuff.
If oppression is a plague and wrong mind-set a
disease,
Silence is as noxious, bringing women kind to
their knees.

White Clouds

MOHUA MOULI

It started with a sudden breeze in the middle of a not so pelting monsoon.

Rosa sat by the window in the dark and sweaty, gunk covered seats of the bus. Her mother had her hands neatly wrapped on her lap right next to her. They were returning home after a very long day at the outskirts of their city.

The journey made Rosa sleepy and curious at the same time. Her mother used to travel once. She'd seen pictures of her hiking up mountains with her friends from college. Rosa hoped she'd do the same one day.

While her mom wished the campus was closer to the city, Rosa pondered over how nice it would've been if it was farther into someplace she didn't know. The city was not close enough or far enough from the university at the outskirts.

Her mother sat, sad, face down, wondering what she was going to do with Rosa. She still doesn't understand so much. After Rosa's father died, they had been living alone in the same house he died in for the last 7 years. If Rosa left, her mom wouldn't know how to go on living on her own. She was certain that she couldn't do it and the thought of her parting ways with her daughter petrified her.

While her mother sighed thinking of a life beyond her motherhood, Rosa, head resting on the window-sill, looked out the window to see the clouds. She was getting too comfortable in the soft summer warmth grazed by a cool wind coming from the east. As her vision began to blur she saw the clouds turn into a wall of ice that stretched out of this world and into another dimension. She heard a voice, right before she fell into a deep slumber.

She was at the top of the ice wall, so white that it looked like a faded shade of blue. She looked down and she saw dark

specks in a sea of golden-yellow and green. "Rosa!" someone called out. She turned around and saw her friends, waving at her from the university campus, now, strangely covered in ice.

As she was about to take a step towards them, someone grabbed her shoulders from behind and pulled her out of the cliff and into a graveyard.

She stood at the edge of a graveyard with eerie white clouds looming above it and heard a long and manic scream from far into the yard. Suddenly, she was running towards the voice, huffing like a dying race-horse. The closer she got the more and more the voice began to sound like her mother's.

Soon, she reached the edge, which was guarded by an enormous ice wall that she had mistaken for eerie white clouds. Once she reached the wall, she could sense that her mother's voice was coming from the other side. She stood there, trying to find a way to get through the wall, crying, banging on the ice as it burned her knuckles, praying for the screaming to stop. Almost out of nowhere a hand broke through the ice and pulled her into darkness.

Rosa felt sweat dripping from the corners of her forehead as her eyes adjusted to the brightness of the afternoon sun. Her mother was motioning her to get down from the bus.

Rosa stared at her for a good few seconds and wondered if she really heard her mother speak, or even make a sound since her father's death and her mother's consequent stroke. She looked into her mother's eyes that drooped so low that it almost always looked like they were closed.

She reluctantly got out of the seat and looked out the window one last time before she walked away. Her mother always wanted to take Rosa to the mountains, she used to say the air was so fresh there, all you'd want to do is sing. The mountains grew cold.

