

The Monochrome Musing of a Silver Soul

FAIRUZ FAIZA

There she casts a mercurial veil
On a land perched ever so high.
Above the mountains,
Inviolable to the touch,
The sky was her fortress.

Her beauty was deemed ethereal,
Epistles written one after another,
Her sanctity gazed upon.
But why, she wondered,
Must her semblance be culled?

Her strength never reached an impasse
Though she was the collateral in other's wars
Against themselves.

The black heavens elevate her name.
Ever in variance her heart arrests the tune,
The tune of our affliction.
Followed by the clamour
Of our salvation.

When the apex of your forlorn body is upwards,
You can hear the cravings of her melody.
Etched on the endless, abysmal sky,
And in there you shall witness
The fragility of the earth.

She rests in the chasm
Blended by the dark
Amid the blizzards of the starlight
Without the ark.

A soulful marriage of the velvet dark
And the soft spoken truth.
A music for the eyes,
She is the moon.

*The writer has completed HSC from Bir Shreshtha
Noor Mohammad Public College, Dhaka.*

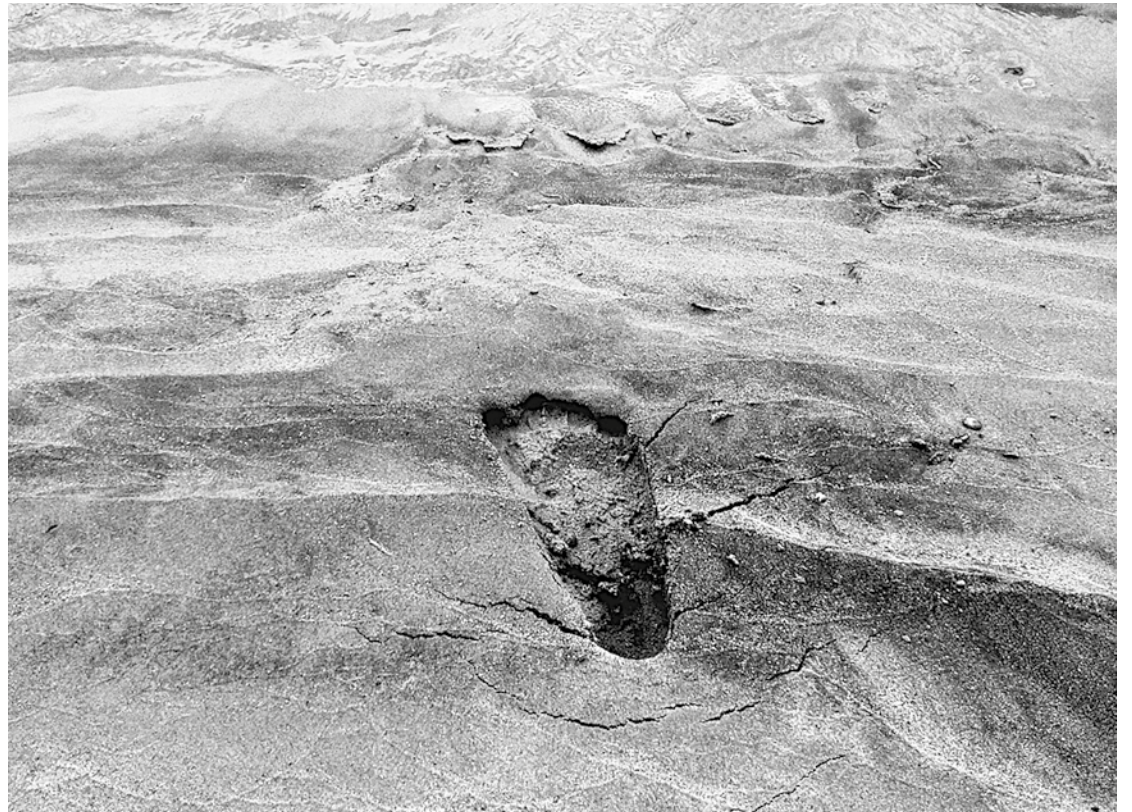


PHOTO: ORCHID CHAKMA

WASHED ASHORE

MAIF MUHAMMAD KRITI

Thrashing the door open, the old man strode towards the bay. A woman followed him, pleading with him. A blustery wind gusted past them as they approached the shore.

Babor ignored his wife's repeated admonitions. The sky was cloudy for sure, but he had survived in weather much worse. He snapped at her, "I will be fine. Now let me leave with no more of your blabbering. Shut your mouth and go to the kitchen. The fish won't taste any good without warm rice."

His wife wasn't sure. She had this presentiment deep down that something bad was going to happen. But she could not summon up the courage to stop her husband. Just before setting off, he said, "If Mirza comes, tell him I will return the money when I come back."

She nodded and saw her husband setting off into the sea, leaving a trail behind his wake.

Babor wasn't a fisher by choice, it was his fate. His father and his grandfather and all his forefathers were all up to fishing. The thoughts of whether he should be a fisher or something else didn't cross his mind for once. He was in this from his early childhood. His father sailed, and he would do the small chores.

Babor knew the sea well, very well. In fact, he claimed to be born of the sea. Others who listened to this thought of it as some kind of joke and laughed off. But Babor wasn't joking.

The sky was growing greyer as time went on. The sombre sky above the raging sea, tides crashing into each other, this scenario was quite familiar to Babor. He threw his net into the sea, waiting patiently. While at this, he opened his wooden vault and brought out a radio. Rotating the dial, he tried to tune it, but nothing happened. He wasn't sure if the batteries were dead, but he assumed hitting it would do the trick. Sometimes it worked, sometimes it didn't.

After a couple of futile attempts, he threw the radio back in the vault; he could tell the weather just by sensing the air. He rummaged through the vault and came up with an amulet. This amulet was his father's. He passed it down to him as a bequest. Babor believed it to be a charm, he believed it had brought boons to his ancestors.

The boat kept heaving up and down, and it was quite painstaking to fish in this situation. However, Babor didn't want to compromise. He had come to fish, and fishing he would do. The wind was mounting stronger than ever; it tousled Babor's unkempt hair even more, splashed water droplets onto his face.

The tides were getting higher and higher. Water kept amassing on the deck; he had to drain it with his bucket. Babor remembered one night, he went to sea with his friends, a sea storm had also surged that night, but they returned with their lives. Many years had passed since then, some of his friends had already died. But Babor was still hanging in there. Age left its mark on his face, years of experience, years of penance, years of struggle glowed from the wrinkles of his seamed face.

But age didn't help him on the battered boat trying to survive the high waves. Water kept rushing and Babor was struggling to keep it in balance. He clutched the amulet firmly in his fist, instead of the paddles. It was his creed.

This time, fear finally shot through Babor. He looked in the shore's direction, where his wife was waiting for him, with warm rice. Then he looked upward, towards the thunder blazed sky, he ought to return.

At the time the storm seemed to ebb away, Zainab had just finished with the rice. Other than her husband, no one had gone into the sea in this weather. She only could pray at that moment.

When the storm cooled off, dusk was closing over the island. Patches of clouds were making their way towards the horizon; the sombre sky was already purpling into dusk. The smell of the brackish water wafted through places; the sea was calm again, tiny waves kept brushing past the coast. An idle wind tousled the pine trees, as gentle waves swayed the grasses.

The tides had carried the remnants of a boat. Amid the vestiges, an amulet gleamed in the light of the setting sun, offering a pale hint of loss. Aside from the flock of seagulls, no one was there to witness it. No one ever knew.

The writer is a student of Textile Fashion and Design at Bangladesh University of Textiles.

