



Produced by:

**The English and Translation Society
Sultan Qaboos University
April, 2014**

© All Rights Reserved

Brought to you by:



Behind this Booklet

General Supervision:

Dawoud Mansoor Nasser Al Rawahi

Fatma Salim Sultan Al Farsi

Editing Team:

Hanan Ahmed Rashed Al Khanbashi

Hajer Muhammad Nasser Al Rahbi

Abdullah Saleh Masoud Al Balushi

Tamadher Nasser Al Sabaei

Jumanah Moosa Ali Al Belushi

Nouf Hamdan Saif Al Raqadi

Sameera Said Musabah Al Makhmari

Omaima Salim Abdullah Al Amri

Buthaina Hamed Hilal Al Yahmadi

Manal Omar Saud Al Nadabi

Samia Ahmed Al Suliemani

Final Editor:

Sharifah Zaid Hilal Al Hadhrami

Cover Design:

Manal Omar Al Nadabi

Art Director:

Mazin Issa Al Riyami

Booklet team members.....4

Content Page.....6

Introduction.....10

That's My Summer With Thee.....13
Ibrahim Al Azri

A Silent Scream.....15
Laila Al Abri

A Sonnet for My Dear23
Khalifa Al Riyami

A Day Without a Book.....25
Ghalia Al-Harthy

The Darkness Angel29
Noora Al Saidi

A Victim31
Uhood Al-Hattali

I HEAR OMAN SINGING.....34
Zahir Al-Hashmi

Ghazi the Mare.....37
Dhufra Al Kharousi

I Don't Know.....40
Zainab Al Qassabi

Khaldoon.....43
Basma Al Balushi

Illumination.....44
Sanaa Al Khayari

My Wheelchair Taught Me a Lot.....47
Awisha Al Mamari

O GOD.....48
Bashair Al Harmali

Treacherous Illusion.....51
Hanan Al Khanbashi

Of What We Did and What We Did Not.....53
Ibrahim Al Azri

A Dot.....57
Khalifa Al Riyami

Dedicated to His Majesty and all Omanis.....59
Zahra Al Abri

ROSE.....62
Amani Al Maashari

The New Me.....65

Dawoud Al-Rawahi

WhatsApp and Rumors.....69

Abdullaziz Al Rawahi

Unforgettable Day.....71

Idrees Al Shandoodi

Save It!.....75

Khalifa Al Riyami

Get Up, Get Up.....77

Balqees Al Saqri

Al Jathoom: A True Story.....82

Laila Al Abri

Only You.....85

Zahra Al Abri

It Should Have Been a Better Thursday.....90

Khalifa Al Riyami

My Midsummer Night Dream: A Ballad.....93

Ibrahim Al Azri

My Lovely Babies.....99

Lubna Al Maskari

LET'S FLY.....101

Bashair Al Harmali

A challenge.....105

Fatma Al Farsi

Here I am.....107

Dawoud Al Rawahi

Spirit of Princess Salma.....111

Hajar Al Rahbi

English and Translation Society is one of the blossoming societies of SQU, intended to raise the level of the English language in the university. It consists of more than 400 active and ambitious youngsters who have devoted themselves to raise the status of English language to greater heights. The society also gives due importance to literature as well.

Various workshops such as drama workshop, World literature workshop and Creative Writing workshop are some of the activities done to promote the important aspects of the English language.

It was indeed the dream of ETS to bring out something that would showcase their talents and abilities in the form of different activities. We are extremely delighted to present before our readers this work that would enlighten the minds of people who thirst for true knowledge.

This book aims to display the various talents of ETS members in the field of language and literature. The inside pages will enthrall anyone who has profound desire to admire English literature. The various articles, poems, stories, plays etc., born from the deep thoughtfulness and creativity of its members, will indeed be food for thought for the readers.

We would like to express our deep feelings of gratitude to all those who have contributed to make this book a reality. In this regard, our special thanks goes to ETS admins, Dictation Committee, and all those who are responsible for this venture. May Allah bless you all.

We wish that our readers benefit from this humble work of ETS.

Salim Ali Mohammed Al Gufaily

Head of English Group

2012-2013

That's My Summer With Thee

Ibrahim Al-Azri

Pray every second,
Endless Love,
Dreams Hunt,
Read Whate'er,
Write Whate'er,
Movie, Music, Tea.
That's my Summer with thee.



A Silent Scream

By Laila Al Abri

A monster lives in my house, Reem thought at 1 a.m., while lying in her bed. Shouts and screams of anger came from the bed four feet away from hers. She was angry too. The next day she had to wake up early to catch the bus to school at 6 a.m., but the Majnoona was not asleep yet, so how could she sleep? Look at her, waving her arms to the air, screaming and shouting at nobody. Can she see jinns that we can't see?

Hiba was lying on her bed, sleepless as usual, making a noisy party out of the silent night in the bedroom she shared with five of her sisters. She laid in the earthy bed with her uncombed oily black hair, a tiny body that had held her mysterious soul for thirty years now.

Reem felt drums in her ears, drums beating, and with every beat her anger grew. "I just want to sleep," she screamed silently. And as every night, her anger reached the point of hopelessness and hot tears filled her eyes and ran down to her cheeks. She cried until she went unconscious.

The next morning, Reem washed her face and stared at her puffy eyes for a long time; only the thought of her missing the bus moved her away from the mirror. On the way to school, she enjoyed the fresh morning air and rejoiced at the thought of a whole eight hours away from the house.

When she reached the school, she caught a glimpse of Sara, the girl who always laughs, just like a happy child, always laughing and laughing. Doesn't she have anything to worry about? she wondered.

"Hi Reema!" Sara waved as she approached, giggling.

Reem waved back very politely, as she was with everyone.

"Did you just wake up?" Sara asked. "Your eyes are puffy."

"Ah... Well it's the morning. Aren't we all just awake?"

Sara burst out laughing and Reem flattered her with a faint smile. I'm excited about Wednesday," Sara said. "Daddy is taking us to Dubai for the weekend!"

"Oh really!" Reem responded. "How sweet!"

When Sara had gone, Reem thought how she had never had a happy trip. She was the best student at school, but she had never been awarded by a trip with her family. It is all because of that Majnoona, she thought. Why do I have a retarded sister? Why? I prefer death.

She recalled that day when they had been to the park in Muscat, how embarrassed she had been. The Majnoona had kept walking a bit and then leaning to touch the ground. She had repeated this continually for a long time, just as she did at home when she opened a door or switched on and off the light.

Everybody had stared at them that day. How cruel those people had been! Don't look at us, she had wanted to scream. Leave us alone! Poor mother! She'd had to make another sacrifice and wait outside for everybody else. Inside that park, they had stayed for a very short time. That red swing Reem had wanted to play on had

been occupied by an evil girl the whole time they'd been there, so Reem hadn't been able to take a turn before going home.

Before they had left, her father had said, "I want to take you out binti, but it's just not right, just not right." Father was kind, but he was not like Mother. She was very tolerant with the Majnoona; she was very strong. When women came to the house and the Majnoona started screaming and shouting at them, Mother smiled. She made a joke out of it, but she never apologized to them. Of course Reem would never see this; she heard it from the next room where she hid.

The bell rang, announcing the end of a long day, celebrated by every student, except Reem. She loved school because it felt safe and quiet. When she walked from the bus stop to the house, she heard her sister's yells from the neighborhood. She looked around and rushed up the steps of the house, thinking, if she is deaf and mute, why for God's sake can she scream louder than anybody I know?

As Reem entered the house, she found Hiba talking with their mother through awkward sounds and waving signs that her mother understood, but were unknown to other people, for Hiba had never learnt a proper sign language; neither had she ever been diagnosed with having mental disorder. Reem said, "Assalamu Alaikum," and her mother answered her, but then quickly turned back to Hiba, who had immediately began shouting to get her mother's attention back.

Hiba was angry as usual, talking about how she hated this and that, blaming Mother for visiting Rahma, a relative of the family. Hiba made an ugly face, an imitation of Rahma's, and pushed Mother a couple of times with her arm. Reem tried to talk to her mother about school, but Hiba screamed and told her to wait. She was talking to Mother; she was always talking to Mother.

When Reem was watching TV that afternoon, Hiba called her, "Eee, Eee." Reem looked at her sister, who made a sign of a bag by pretending to hold something in her hand, so Reem handed her sister her school bag. In response, Hiba gave her such an innocent smile. Hiba liked to look at the school books, but Reem hated it. One day, she had woken up in the morning and found her books scattered on the floor.

Although Reem felt overwhelmed by having a sister like Hiba and not being able to invite her friends to visit her at home--she did not know how Hiba would react towards them--Reem never hurt Hiba. Actually, sometimes she sympathized with her, especially when Hiba was quiet. But as soon as she started screaming, Reem went into an inner conflict of thoughts and feelings of fear, anger, and despair.

That evening, the house bell rang and the other children screamed, "Fatma is at the door!"

"Oh God, don't we have enough to worry about," Reem muttered, finding her way to the closest room. She wanted to hide, but her mother asked her to stay with the guest while she finished some work in the kitchen.

When Reem entered the room, Fatma was there, wearing her round glasses and colorful clothes just like a young girl. I bet she's 60, Reem thought. She greeted the woman and sat next to her. In a corner of the room, Hiba was sitting, staring at the guest. Her thoughts were unpredictable and Reem could not tell whether she would get mad in a few minutes or not. Then Hiba started pointing to Fatma trying to catch her attention; the woman did not even look at her. Hiba was trying to be nice and start a conversation. What a rude woman! Why wouldn't she look at Hiba?

Watching her sister being neglected, Reem realized things she had never thought of before. She knew why her sister hated their relative Rahma. She knew why her sister monopolized their mother's attention all the time. She knew why Hiba was always full of anger. It was because no one listened to her or paid her any attention. She was screaming out the thoughts and the feelings she could not express, and the emptiness she did not know how to fill. She screamed out, but her screams were silent.

That night Hiba slept early, so Reem stole some time to spend with her mother before she had a peaceful night's sleep that she missed dreadfully.

"Mother, why haven't you ever sent Hiba to a special needs school?" she asked.

"She was my first child and she was born at a time when we did not know what to do," her mother explained with a deep sigh. "Nobody gave us a good advice. "

"But was she always like that?" Reem wondered.

"Like what?" her mother inquired.

"Mentally challenged," Reem answered.

"She grew up as a quiet child," her mother said, "but then when she was about 12, she started to do these things."

"Why don't you ignore her? She only screams to you. Only you." Reem said that, and her eyes filled with tears. She felt sorry for her mother, yet admired her strength, too.

"If I don't listen to her, who would?" her mother pointed out. "Everybody mistreats her. Even her grandmother used to give her toys away to other children."

"But why?" Reem asked, surprised.

"As a punishment. She punished her for being mischievous, but the poor child was just different. It is not her fault she was born this way."

Reem hugged her mother very tightly as if she had not seen her for ages, but her mother laughed loudly and told her she was preventing her from breathing. Again, Mother is making a joke in a serious moment, Reem thought.

That night Reem cried again. She cried for being so ignorant; she cried because she couldn't understand; she cried because she felt ashamed. She had never tried to put herself in her sister's shoes or tried to imagine what she thought of or how she felt. She recalled incidents

when everybody in the house talked and laughed and Hiba only stared at them. She must have felt as an outsider in her own family. What if Hiba was not mentally challenged? What if all she did was a reaction to a childhood she had lived without being able to communicate normally with her surroundings? She imagined herself unable to hear or talk for half day and she knew that she would explode. At that moment, Reem wiped her tears and decided that she would not feel ashamed anymore of her sister. She realized that she did not owe anyone apologies for her sister being what she was. She resolved to be more tolerant.

The next day Reem's father tied a swing on a tree outside the house. She was very excited to play on it, but before that she decided to call Hiba and show her the swing. Hiba was shouting as usual at her mother, but Reem approached her with slow steps and tried to catch her attention. After being shouted at a couple of times, she finally got Hiba to listen to her. She invited her to accompany her outside, and there she invited her to try the swing. Hiba smiled, but she shook her head refusing to try it. Then she made signs to Reem, silently saying what she could not express in words, you sit and I'll push you.

In compliance with her sister's wishes, Reem sat on the swing. Then Hiba began to push her. Their sounds of laughter could be heard from inside the house. As she swung up toward the sky and then down to the ground again with every push, Reem felt as if her soul had touched the pure, blue sky, and she felt the breeze kissing her cheeks. At that moment, she thought, an angel lives in my house.



A Sonnet for My Dear

Khalifa Zayid Al-Riyami

It's been always a blessing, dearest,
Whenever you are in front of me.
I'd always count on you, as you know,
When I seek medicine for my pain.

Not only do you relieve what hurts me,
But you change my mood to the best.
My dear, you always make all so glad,
And you always fulfill their desires.

You are the one who never betrays.
With you, my dear, I enjoy.
With you, I am happy, dearest.
With you, I'm not in need of any food.

Dear "rice, " you really are a blessing,
And I confess that I love you.



A Day Without a Book

By Ghalia Al-Harthy

After reading a good book, a strong desire for writing is always born inside me. Maybe because there are plenty of words flying around my head, or maybe I am so attached to the book that I can't accept the idea of finishing it. I can still remember every single detail of it, especially the ones that I have read twice, thrice, or more--you know, where there is the part that you really like, and you just want it to last for two pages or sometimes even a chapter.

I keep telling everyone around me "I don't feel OK!" My mother would say, "Of course you don't--look at your face. You look like you have not slept for days."

To be honest, she is right, but of course, I cannot admit that, and tell my mom that she is right and I am wrong. It will make her more anxious, more protective and more doubtful. And I don't want that to happen. The thing is, I do not feel OK because I do not like the idea of spending my day without a book and it is hard to find a good book out there, especially if you are living in Oman.

Standing before my bookshelves and examining the types of books they hold frustrates me. My hand reaches for a book, but I stop myself, saying to myself in a low voice, "No, not today. Maybe next week."

I want to read so badly. If it was not for the severe headache, I would have read another book straight away, so I pull back my hand and try to find something to keep me busy. A minute, an hour, four hours pass, and I start feeling so empty, as if some part of the organs surrounding my heart were removed. I couldn't breathe easily, I

couldn't focus on anything for more than three minutes, and I couldn't even walk steadily.

An odd question comes out of my mouth as I ask myself, "What's wrong with me? Can books do this to me?" I know that I broke my reading record by reading 3 books in less than 10 days, but I never realized how addicted I am.

"Are you sick?" a sudden voice asks me.

Oh, it's my sister, I even forgot her voice, I thought to myself. "No I am not," I answer defensively. "What makes you think that I am?"

"Well, you look pale, you don't talk as much as you used to do and I don't know. You just look different."

Of course I look different. I don't have a book that's why I look different. "Can't anyone stay silent without being sick in this house?"

"No." Her facial expression gives me my answer. I have to admit that she is right because being silent is not a normal thing in our house!

At mid night, I lay in my bed lazily, and I catch a glimpse of something on my left side. It is just bedside table; it looks strange, though. No book--nothing on it.

"Today I'll sleep without a book next to me. Today I'll sleep without having an obsessive moment for what tomorrow will bring," I comforted myself. I finally understood what I read once by an Arab writer who said, "I read because one life is not enough for me."



The Darkness Angel

Noora Al Saidi

All my sadness is living there;
Choosing that darkness without fears.
Listening! What is going on there?
My sadness is speaking; close your ears!
Nobody is listening to thee;
They're still looking, see!
I need lots of candles;
Let's light my sweet angel.



A Victim

By Uhood Al-Hattali

How can she not remember me? I'm her sister! That was the thought that came to my mind as I walked away from her bed, crying. But then I thought, Who can blame her?

She must have had a concussion from that terrible car accident and was drugged for almost two weeks. She was a victim of the tragic nightmares known as Car Accidents. She must be experiencing tough and painful moments.

It has been a month now; she is improving slightly, but still suffering. Although she cannot speak because of that pipe inserted in her throat, I can still feel her pain. Her eyes say it all as she stares at the bare ceiling, or even when she looks directly in my eyes--there is nothing! As if she's saying, "What's left for me? How will my life be after getting out of this hospital?"

All the sadness in the world is shown on her face. She seems to be completely depressed. She must have overheard the doctors saying that her vocal chords are permanently damaged and she won't regain her ability to speak. Yet, despite all this, at times, she would smile at me and it makes me feel as if everything will be fine, although I know she smiles so we, her family, will not cry. I try to be strong in front of her--not to cry--but sometimes it is so difficult. I would just go outside, away from her sight, and cry without being noticed.

I pray for her all the time and I always wish from the bottom of my heart that she will be discharged from the hospital as soon as possible and be among us again, just like things were before the accident. What she needs now

is our support, sympathy, and most importantly, love. She just wants to hear someone's voice next to her, a kind, soft voice that will make her feel safe again. She needs someone who will be there for her all the time, someone to tell her it will all be okay, to hold her hand and to be by her side all the time.

Sometimes, at night, I cannot sleep because I will be thinking of her. How long has it been since I heard her voice and her innocent laughter? I miss her dreadfully, and I miss hearing her voice calling my name. When will I hear it again? I pray that it will be one day soon.

To you, my beloved sister, with love.

I HEAR OMAN SINGING

Zahir Hamed Al-Hashmi

I hear Oman singing the song of darkness;
I hear Oman singing the song of bitterness.
Farmers singing, "My children are striving."
Fathers singing, "The prices are soaring."
Anglers singing, "Where are your fish?"
Patients singing, "Welcome, death."
Mothers singing, "Please, we need your help."

I hear the music of change plays,
When the son of his father claims,
The daughters of wind refuse to face,
And the black mountains to pieces break,
The sky rains red ferns,
And the land pushing daffodils,
With lovely breeze they shake hands, kiss each other, and
play.

Children singing, "Good morning, teacher."
Patients singing, "Much better, doctor."
Anglers singing, "Enough food for today and tomorrow."
Farmers singing when ploughing the field and sowing the
seed.

Mothers singing when preparing their children for school
and bidding their working husbands farewell.
In the rustle of leaves and the happiness of rain,
I hear Oman singing the song of a new dawn, of a new
life.



Ghazi the Mare

By Dhufra Al Kharousi

Once upon a time, a handsome, sturdy and brave lad lived with his father, stepmother and his younger half-brother in a small house within a rural district called A'Radda. His name was Faris and everybody in A'Radda, young and old, loved him, for he was kind, helping them and carrying out the district missions. All the other lads there wished to be like him, while every lass in the district dreamt to be his bride. Unlike Faris, his younger half-brother, Rashid, was a dull, fat lazy boy who only liked eat, and did not respect anybody.

When Faris' mother died, she left a pretty mare for him, named Ghazi, which he loved more than anything else. He used to spend most of his time nursing and feeding her. Faris' mare was abnormal; she had a miraculous intuition. Ghazi used to tell him about things and events that were going to happen! She told him several times about the poisoned snacks that his stepmother had prepared for him. Indeed, his stepmother was very envious of Faris, for he was extremely better than her own son, Rashid. She tried many times to get rid of him, but all her plots against Faris were in vain because of the sharp intuition of the smart Ghazi.

One day, the stepmother thought, I shall kill the mare first in order to get rid of Faris; otherwise, I will never be able to achieve that.

The very next day, the stepmother pretended to be severely sick. She claimed that the doctor had prescribed for her a mare's liver in order to recover. Faris' father decided to slaughter the mare to save his wife's life, but Faris extremely hated the idea of losing Ghazi.

He was very fond of her and he knew that it would be easy to fall in his wicked stepmother's traps without her. Therefore, he decided to leave A'Radda with his mare to protect their lives. In the middle of the night, he set off for an unknown destination, and since then nobody has heard any news of either Faris or Ghazi.

I Don't Know

Zainab Khalaf Al Qassabi

I don't know what to do,
Coz I am always with you.
I don't know how to feel,
With a wound that can't be healed.

I don't know how to confess,
That you're the one that I miss!
I don't know how to pay,
Or is it sorry that I should say?!

I don't know if you'll accept,
Or you'll ignore me and forget.
I'm too confused of how to think;
I feel like a ship that is going to sink.

Even crying isn't enough;
Nothing can solve this messy mess.
I have never felt this way before,
But I'm sure I don't wanna feel it anymore.

There is something that now I know;
Life has slapped me, and said,

"Good things never happen twice.
The second time always comes with a price."



Khaldoon

By Basma Al Balushi

In our faubourg lived a boy whose name was Khaldoon. He was 15 years old, and a mute. He lived with his aunt who loved him dearly and took a good care of him. She requested from Allah protection for Kaldoon against anything that might harm him. She could communicate with Khaldoon by using some special signs.

Sometimes, when Khaldoon wandered in the street, boys started would start throwing small stones at him, laughing and saying, "Stupid Khaldoon! Stupid Khaldoon!"

When I saw Khaldoon in the street, I tried to ignore him because I was scared once I saw him. One day, while I was waiting for the school bus, I discovered that I had lost my silver butterfly necklace that my friend and I had bought. I felt sad because we had promised each other to wear it all the time to symbolize our friendship. During my search for my necklace, I caught sight of at Khaldoon on the sidewalk. At that moment, I ran quickly. But, Khaldoon was following me and he was raising his old blue handkerchief and doing strange signs. Fortunately, the school bus had arrived. I stepped on the bus and my whole body was trembling from the experience.

I asked myself, "Why was Khaldoon following me? What did he want from me?" It seemed that Khaldoon knew that I became fearful when I saw him, so he meant to approach me and make me feel anxious. Actually, I did not want to be heartless and unfeeling by dealing with a sick person with this kind of cruelty, but at the same time, I did not like him. I was also repulsed by the sight of his old and untidy clothes.

When I returned home, I quickly did my homework and then went out to our garden. I had a nice time playing there. During the dark and stormy night, I lay in my bed. Suddenly, I saw Khaldoon's face at my bedroom window. I can't explain how frightened I was. Instantly, I let out a blood-curdling, terrified shriek. When Khaldoon understood that I was screaming and saw how how frightened he'd made me without any doubt, his face disappeared from my window and he went away. My mother came into my room, her face pale with concern. She hugged me and tried to find out why I was crying, but I said nothing and continued crying. My father called our neighbor's doctor who injected me with a sedative that made me sleep.

I was absent for many days from my school. Khaldoon stayed in my mind and my imagination as a nightmare since that terrifying night. I could not concentrate on my studies. I stopped eating as usual. Sometimes, I dreamt of Kaldoon kidnapping me from the school. Sometimes, I felt that he would jump from my wardrobe. My parents were very worried about what was happening to me.

One night, I slept while I was listening to my mother reading Quran. I dreamed Kaldoon trying to tell me something by a strange language. But I could not understand him. I woke up and suddenly I heard my father's voice. He was sitting in the garden. When I approached him, he took something from the table and hid it quickly. I was so curious. I asked him, "What was the thing that you hid?" He said nothing for a while then he gave me an old handkerchief. Khaldoon's handkerchief! Yes, it was his old blue handkerchief. "I found it near your bedroom's

window,"my father said. I open the handkerchief. I saw my silver butterfly necklace inside it. My tears started to fall without stopping. I felt extremely bad and shameful for what I had done to Khaldoon and even to myself. Now I understand why Khaldoon was following me; he just wanted a chance to explain. He wanted to bring my necklace back. He wanted me to accept his difference and not to judge him by his appearance. How stupid I was.

I felt that I was weak because I was afraid of a person who was exactly like me--a human being. I learned that we all differ in many things, but we share one thing that is very important in life, our real deep feelings. It teaches us how to communicate by the language that is just inside our hearts when our mouths are unable to express ourselves. I learned not to ostracize people because of their differences, whether they couldn't walk or couldn't talk or anything else. Their differences do not mean that we should ignore them. We should help them to integrate in the society. We should thank Allah for what we have instead.

The next morning, I dressed and left home immediately, planning to see Khaldoon and ask him to forgive me. I thanked him for what he did for me. I decided to study some signs to be able to communicate not only with Khaldoon, but also with anyone like him. I could then understand Khaldoon in everything he would say without any misunderstanding anymore



Illumination

Sanaa Ahmed Ali Al-Khayari

Faces,
Too much to hide,
Masking, Dissembling, Coloring;
Can I trust you anymore?

Mirrors.

.....

Conscious,
Where humanity lies,
Loving, Caring, Praying,
Can I find you again?

Hearts.

.....

Feelings,
Nails stick into the heart,
Wrapping, Penetrating, Shaping
Would you ease on me?
Winds.

My Wheelchair Taught Me a Lot

Awisha Abdullah Hmood Al-Mamari

I still love life despite its cruelty and harm;
I still love life because my wheelchair taught me a lot about it.
It taught me how to love life because life, for sure, loves me.
It taught me that the way of hope is wide, but the way of pain is narrow.
It taught me that the wheelchair isn't a "restriction" to prevent me from living.
It taught me that the disease and disability will not lead me to death and to destruction.
It taught me that I can live despite the disability.
It taught me not to stay bound by the frustration, so that I don't remain dependent in the prison of life.
It taught me that I can live my life happily and make myself forget laziness and sadness.
It taught me to push it by my hands and do not ask anyone to push it for me.
It taught me not to sit on it for long, but to stand and try once every day.

It taught me that I am greater than sitting on it forever, and not moving at all.
It taught me how to love life because life loves me.
It taught me that life still loves me, because I know how I love it.
In fact, my wheelchair taught me a lot more than anyone can imagine.



O GOD

Bashair Ali Hassan Al-Harmali

O God, my ship loses its way,
From you, it takes me away.
The sky is black,
The moon is gray,
And I am sailing with no ray.
O God, your poor is asking for backstay,
Waves, for my nasty end; don't say nay.
I can't;
I am fading away;
I need my day,
And to you I will always pray,
And ask for sway.



Treacherous Illusion

By Hanan Al Khanbashi

Sitting in the yard of her home, putting her chin on her knees and embracing her legs with both hands, she wouldn't move until she would hear one of the women in the village calling out to her son by his name. Her heart would break and her eyes would redden with tears. Why me? Why me? She would think.

This would happen again at night when all was quiet, save for the voice of the wolf in the mountain nearby their house. She would remember him saying that the wolf is announcing his shift and that all people should sleep right then. She would rush to bed and start putting herself in another turmoil. Dreams of their glorious past, most probably lies, would visit her every night.

They were young when life seemed to be generous to them. They were living on good luck offered by life on a silver plate. They would meet every morning in the village to narrate their dreams, most of which were lies. Not lies, but part of their wide imagination to amuse one another. He would play with her dolls and always get criticisms from his fellows. She, too, would play football with him when he would pretend to be tired and let her win.

Mud fights were also a must in their everyday agenda. They would be in a feverish triumph as they laugh with muddy faces and dirty hands. They used to be one of those noisy kids who would follow Ali, the crazy man, and start repeating the chant with them, "Smell your smelly hands, crazy man..."

He once told her that their everlasting friendship should be symbolized by the flower that he once plant-

ed in her yard. He asked her to water it every morning and try saving it to look as flowery as it should be. She promised that she would be true to her word and that her loyalty towards him was an unwavering one.

One day, he told her that they should set for themselves two different diverging paths, as simple as that. Looking forward, it was difficult to have this thought sink in her mind. She wished then that she would be able to do so, looking backwards. But it was no use.

Winter? The scent of jasmine? Noisy village? It is too much for her. Why does she feel like stranger in her homeland? Why are friends and acquaintances no longer what they were, but merely people? What is she missing? She is missing home, him.

Why is she enslaved by him? Why isn't she able to eradicate the memory of him from her mind? She is overwhelmed and most probably dying out of the suffocating Jasmine smell, the same one he had once planted in her yard. Now whenever she sees it, she uproots it, but it persists in growing and flourishing, especially in winter spreading its aroma all over the village.

How she wishes they meet again as strangers and she never tried to know him. How she wishes she is living in another world far from home, friends, and him. How she wishes she never existed, and neither did he, but she also wishes to see him one last time to hand him the living part of her heart so that she can rest in peace. His image is unwilling to leave her. He is still there in a distant corner of her mind, but unfortunately at the heart of her

heart.

She knows that it is a matter of time, but when will this time come? When will she stop bewailing his loss? He used to tell her that life is all about living it and taking chances. It seems that he has never thought of himself being her world , her own good chance, and her own sweet melody.

Of What We Did and What We Did Not: A Prayer

Ibrahim Al-Azri

In the dark of my mother's womb,
And the darkest corner in my room,
And the darkest bottom in my tomb,
And the very cell of my brain full of gloom,
In the brightness of Earthly gardens in bloom,
And the very thread of my grandma's scarf on a loom,
And the very jot of dust in my mother's broom

In the name of Allah,
In the name of his Grace,
May he forgive us all,
Of what we did,
And what we did not.



A Dot


By Khalifa Al Riyami

Why would people need a school when they had a mother to teach them how to be the best of people? She thought. A great mother who taught everyone how to keep good manners before of every step they take. She was there to encourage all who felt aggravated and uncomfortable. She made them recall the best days they had ever had.

No one could doubt that she had mastered a wonderful way to talk to people and reassure them, no matter what the problem that they suffered from was. She had no Bachelors, no Masters, but she had the warmest heart ever. Her heart made people around her full of a great energy brought from the atmosphere that was covered by the mother's care, love and cheerfulness.

Her boys could not make a step that she hadn't blessed by her support and agreement. All her sons were educated. However, she had no knowledge of how letters were drawn and how words and sentences were constructed. Dozens of golden words came out of her mouth but she had never ever been able to hold a pen and leave a mark or even a "dot" under a "ba," or above a "fa, " or even over her own letter "noon."

Note: This portrait is dedicated to my mother who didn't get the chance to get education, and it's written without using a single letter with a "dot," highlighting the fact that she doesn't know how to do that as well.



Dedicated to His Majesty and all Omanis

Zahra Saud Sulaiman Al-Abri

Oh, we were wandering in the dark,
Waiting for the light.
Yes, a sun rose,
Not from the west, but from the south of Oman.
Yes, a man with determination,
Majestic founder of glory and prosperity,
Authority, strength and diplomacy,
Patriotic, our eyes are the witnesses,
November, the month of our rebirth.
O Kisra! You conquered countries,
But Qaboos conquered our hearts,
Showered waters of knowledge on our minds;
He kept his promise.
See! Ships sail in and others sail out.
See! Those proud schools on the hilltops.
See! The water flows to towns and villages.
Power bee-like buzzes on wires,
He encouraged us to face challenges;
Thinking to broaden our minds,
Motivated youth with love and skill,

Supported the elderly with care,
Taught us unity in every crisis.
Now, I can speak and express my feelings,
Oman is my land and Qaboos is my Sultan.
I have the right to write on this “our birthday.”
Words can’t describe our gratitude,
To show what’s in our hearts.
Qaboos! Thanks for everything you’ve done,
The comfort and guidance you’ve shown;
Thank you for your tender care,
Thank you from the bottom of our souls.
We rejoice in having you,
Happy Birthday, our great Sultan!

Your faithful daughter: Zahra



Rose

By Amani Al Maashari

He seized my hands tightly, whispered in my ear that he is deeply in love with me, and that he is elated being my fiancé. My engagement party was perfect. I'm marrying a rich man from a well known family, having a fancy life and a satisfied mother. A mother who compelled me to marry someone I really, truly hate. What an irony! I feel nauseous every time he gets near me. I can't stand his perfume, his passive attitude towards life and his squabble over petty things. I stared at him with mournful eyes, wondering where is my escape?

"You are under a spell that controls your stupid head!" my mother told me once after I treated my fiancé coldly. After my engagement party, my mother asked me to reschedule my wedding day to an earlier date. She did not like the fact that they will wait for nine months to have the wedding. "I am not going to discuss this again! Being engaged for such a long time is unacceptable!" My mother said angrily. "Give me time till tomorrow to think about it. I am going to set up a new wedding date! It will be as soon as you wish!" I answered.

The next day, my mother honored me by a visit to my room, which was very rare for she always let the maids do the simplest things all mothers should do. She rushed into my room saying excitedly, "darling, good morning! So, what's your final decision? I hope you thought about it carefully!" She switched the lights on, but found no one. She leaned to take off my bed's sheets. Shockingly, no one was there.

Simply, I just ran away. I could not bear my life and my undesirable marriage. That was the hardest, the fact that I could not tell my mother--never.



The New Me

Dawoud Mansoor Al-Rawahi

I have no idea where this would take me,
but I need more faith now,
more time,
more love,
more warmth,
more of everything that make me numb.
I have no idea what the end would be,
but I need to be,
more stronger,
more ambitious,
to face the coming without being anxious.
I need to be, the new me,
where the smile, the love, and the warmth,
are next to me.



WhatsApp and Rumors

By Abdullaziz Al Rawahi

Technology is one of the aspects of life that never stops developing and facilitating our lives. However there are many disadvantages that can change some cultural concepts and principles. For many decades, Omanis have been known as honest and kind until WhatsApp appeared. This useful application of communication can also be a source of rumors, and honestly, this is what we are witnessing in Oman nowadays. This problem became viral in our society because it increased incredibly and is still increasing. I think it is the right time to consider this problem as a serious matter because I really believe that it will negatively impact our reputation around the world in the coming generations. I think such an issue needs to be investigated and studied. There are many broadcasts that we receive via WhatsApp that we later come to know as just false rumors.

In order to stop this harmful act, we first need to build a strong cultural background through two common mediums that are media and schools. I think the role of media and schools in raising awareness about this cultural attitude is completely absent. However, I believe it is a powerful source for changing people's way of thinking. In Oman, there are certain laws which have been made to regulate telecommunication. One of these laws prevents sending rumors but not everyone is aware of this. Therefore, I think it is the media's obligation to raise awareness about such laws widely. Rules must seriously be applied. Another way is to educate students in schools some cultural ethics. They must know the consequences of sending rumors and Islam's view about it.

We, as WhatsApp users must do something as well:

- 1- Not to send any broadcast unless you make sure it is proven by a source.
- 2- Remember, as human being, you are responsible for your actions and words in front of Allah on Judgment Day.



Unforgettable Day

Idrees Al-Shandoodi

Though the time slips away,
And you have gone away,
I will not forget that day,
When you were about to fly,
Like a beautiful butterfly.
But I caught your lovely wing,
And I put around it a ring,
A ring, works like a spy,
Tells me where, what and why,
You go, you stay or cry.
Forever and ever till no end,
My sweet heartbeats I will send.



Save it!

By Khalifa Al Riyami

A group of youngsters sat around an enormous tree one day, playing and singing, and few meters away sat a tall well-built man with a big mustache. Before he came closer, the children didn't know who he was and why he was there. Calmly he walked toward them, but he suddenly turned around and went running in the other direction.

"Did you see him?" shouted one of the boys, but he received no reply. Everyone was busy playing, except that boy who was wondering who the man was and why he had run away. For over an hour, the boy sat, looking in the direction where the man appeared from, and surprisingly, left running.

"Get the ball, Hamzah!" he heard one of the kids calling him. Hamzah's brain was so occupied with thoughts about the strange man, so he could barely move a muscle. "It's there, you slow turtle! Hurry up! "

Joining the kids again was not an easy option for the boy, as he felt like he should go home immediately and tell his older brother about what he had seen. He entered the house, shouting, "Khalil! Khalil! Khalil!"

Long moments seemed to have passed in the child's young mind, though it was just a few seconds in reality, until Hamzah found his brother. "My friends and I saw a strange man coming toward us while we were playing, and suddenly he changed his direction completely and left the place."

Nobody could believe these words more than Khalil, who had experienced the same incident few days before when he saw the same man that Hamzah had described. One's memory must be evoked by such an incident. People in the village were not familiar with such a man, with a well-built body and a mustache.

Quickly Khalil decided to tell his father about what he'd witnessed the day before and his brother had witnessed today regarding the strange man. "Rashid," their father said very happily, and he rose immediately and asked his sons to guide him to where they had seen him going. Suddenly, and before they reached the place, they saw a well-built man with a mustache coming toward them and calling for the boys' father. The boys felt terrified to see him coming towards them and they held their father's hands. Unexpectedly, at least by the boys, the father shook his hands with the man and hugged him, and the boys were in a complete shock until they learned that that man was a friend of their father who used to meet the father under the same tree they liked to play under.

"Vivid memories under the great tree, Rashid," said their father. "We were just like you, my sons," said Rashid to the two kids. "The tree will be cut down soon unfortunately by the municipality because it's taking too much space, as they said!" said their father. "You should not allow them even to touch it because it's our past, the kids' present and their sons' future," Rashid said furiously.

Zeal and enthusiasm looked like flame in the kids and their father's eyes, so they went and succeeded to con-



Save it!

vince the neighbors to defend that enormous tree, and the blessed tree stayed loftily in the middle of the village until now.

Note: This story has been written following the order of the alphabets at the beginning of each sentence.

Get Up, Get Up

Balqees Said Al-Saqri

I was lying on the ground;
They seemed up so high.
I reached out my hand;
They told me to hold on tight.
But they were so far away.
How did they get there?
I thought I'll never know.
I lifted my feet up,
I watched them with a faint smile;
Get up, get up.
How can I?
Will I ever fly?
And cross the sky?
Will I ever get that high?
So I sat up straight,
And they all smiled,
But I fell down again.
I was afraid of looking up;
It was an impossible dream.
So why wish and scream?
I ignored them for a while;
They were just too high.

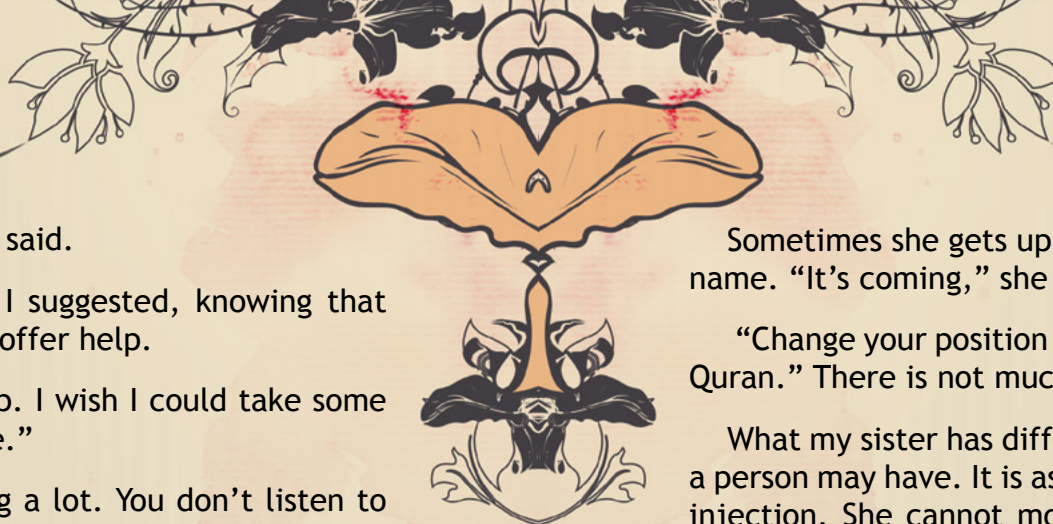


I opened my eyes;
I climbed the mountains;
I jumped, so that I fly.
Then I remembered,
I am not a bird!
But I never reached the ground.
They held me tight;
They taught me to fly.
I fell repeatedly,
Until I reached the sky.
I can now see them by my side.
The sky is endless!
So I'll just keep on flying.
When will they leave me? I just might cry.
Will it then be my turn? To teach how to fly?
And tell them to get up, get up.



Al Jathoom: A True Story

By Laila Al Abri



“I fear bed time,” my sister said.

“Sleep on your side,” I suggested, knowing that there was not much to say to offer help.

“I’m afraid of falling asleep. I wish I could take some sort of pills to keep me awake.”

“These days it is happening a lot. You don’t listen to me when I say SLEEP ON YOUR SIDE.”

My sister has regular nightmares, or night fears, or whatever the thing that wakes her frightened in the middle of the night is called. Almost every week, she wakes up in the middle of the night, scared, crying and unable to breathe. Sometimes it is worse than others; if she has exams, for example, she has it twice a week. I always tell her to sleep on her side, for that is a teaching of Prophet Mohammed - peace and blessings of Allah be upon him. She knows it is better not to sleep on the back, but she keeps forgetting--probably because she’s used to this sleeping position.

One night, when everybody was asleep and my sister was sleeping next to me, I was awakened by a scream that sounded as if it came from the bottom of a deep well. It was my sister. I clutched my blanket. The scream carried so much fear that it pierced me, as if it originated in my veins. The scream frightened me. I could not imagine how she felt. I did not move a muscle until my heart beat slowed down. I looked at her.

“I told you not to sleep on your back,” I said and went back to sleep.

Sometimes she gets up crying. Sometimes she calls my name. “It’s coming,” she says.

“Change your position in the bed and read some of the Quran.” There is not much that I can do.

What my sister has differs from the regular nightmares a person may have. It is as if she is being killed by a lethal injection. She cannot move or talk. She cannot ask for help until the painful fear is gone.

“It is Jathoom,” Mom said. “Your brother used to have it.”

I remembered the name and that my eldest brother used to have night fears. I remembered that he always told us to wake him if we noticed that he was not comfortable while sleeping. But we had never noticed anything. Al-Jathoom was a mystery to me, and as much as people tried to explain or describe it, it remained a paranormal phenomenon, something that we could never fully understand. Once, my brother described it as a shadowy, short figure which tried to strangle him.

Al-Jathoom is an Arabic word which means ‘what sits heavily on something.’ Some believe that it is a Jinn that sits on the chest. My sister’s description of what happens to her matches the description of Al- Jathoom to some extent.

“What is it like?” I asked her once.

“I usually feel it when it’s coming. I am paralyzed. I can’t move. I can’t utter a word. I am awake, not asleep.

I'm conscious of things around me. My chest is heavy as if a car tire is walking on it. I'm scared. I'm screaming, but no voice comes out. My voice strangles me. I try to call for somebody, but I can't. I'm alone and I wish someone would awake me. I read some of the Quran, or hear it, I'm not sure. My fear reaches its summit. The fight stops. It goes away."

Al-Jathoom, I have recently been driven by curiosity to learn, is the superstitious explanation for sleep paralysis, a state of muscle relaxation between two stages of sleep in which the patient is mentally awake, but his muscles are not. Symptoms of sleep paralysis can occur individually and they can also accompany different disorders, such as anxiety disorders. Many factors increase the risk of having sleep paralysis, such as stress, insomnia, physical fatigue and sleeping in the supine position, or on your back. In this position, there is a greater risk of impeding the air in which the patient might feel as if being strangled by a demon or such.

It is interesting that almost every culture around the world has a superstitious explanation for sleep paralysis. In New Guinea, it is called Suk Ninmy, which they believe is caused by a sacred tree which feeds on humans' essences during the night in order to survive. In the Christian tradition, it is a demon that attacks sleepers referred to as "incubus," derived from the Latin verb incubus, which means "to lie upon." In Fiji, it is known as kana tevoru, which means "being eaten by a demon." Boba (speechless) in Bangladesh, khardarakh (when the dark passes) in Mongolia and kanashibari (bound or fastened in metal)

are all names from different parts of the world revealing features that seem very similar to Al-Jathoom.

"They say Al-Jathoom is a demon," my sister's voice shivered. "I have heard it is sleep paralysis," I reassured her. "It is a medical condition that happens when your body is awakening or falling asleep. You know what, you are unique. Only 2% of people have these symptoms."

"Really, so you have been searching for it. At least it makes me feel better to know that I am not the prospective victim of a demon." "But, still don't sleep on your back. They say it raises the risk of having Al-Jathoom--I mean sleep paralysis."

She wants to believe the scientific explanation, but sometimes she has doubts. I have doubts too. I have reasons for some of my doubts. Legends say that the demon only comes when everybody in the house is asleep. I do not remember being awake any time when my sister has Al-Jathoom. Sometimes she awakes me after a while since I have fallen asleep. However, not all my doubts are justified. Mystery adds spice to the concrete boring life. Superstitions are the salt of life. They are the warm fire on cold nights' gatherings. And since human senses are deficient to understand anything far from their surroundings, then maybe the mysterious Jathoom that excited and terrified me once is actually worth reflecting on.

One day, while we were studying quietly in our room, my sister called my name extending her voice, realizing something. "You know something; I've not had sleep paralysis for a while."

Only You

Zahra Saud Suliaman AL-Abri

When I'm depressed and sad,
When my tears fall down like rain,
When all around me make me cry,
I find no one beside me but you.
Yes, only you, my brother.
Sometimes, I feel like I've lost everything,
But I still have you, only you.
When I need to share my sadness and my gloom,
I find you, only you.
If I could touch a rainbow,
I'd write your name on its arc,
So everyone would see the colorfulness of my life,
And the reason is you, dear brother.
No one knows me like you,
How great to have you, brother!
Boredom never knocks our door.
It's lovely to have a brother, of course,
But you as my brother,
Means more and more.
You're my brother, best friend, and we'll always be together.

I thank God for having you,
The one I truly love and trust.
Brother, know that I'm proud of you,
A pride that will never rust.

Your loving sister: Zahra



It Should Have Been a Better Thursday

By Khalifa Al Riyami

Ever since we were little kids, my cousin Mahmood and I had been so close to the extent that many people thought that we were brothers, and in fact we were. We never studied in the same school because my uncle, Mahmood's father, thought that we might not be as behaved as when we were separated, even though I was one year older than him. Our parents' reward for our being good was taking one of us to see the other. They used to live 3 kilometers from our house. However, in 2006 they moved to a house closer to us. We could visit each other by bicycle in less than 10 minutes. Our days were great if Mahmood was healthy.

Mahmood suffered from Sickle Cell Anemia which made him suffer from a very strong and tiring pain that left him in bed, not able to move, for hours and sometimes for days. Sickle Cell Anemia, or SCA, is a serious disorder in which the body makes sickle-shaped red blood cells. "Sickle-shaped" means that the red blood cells are shaped like a crescent. This results in a deficiency in carrying oxygen to different parts of the body which makes the patient struggle with inhaling and exhaling the oxygen he/she breathes. Whenever Mahmood was in the hospital, my uncle would call me immediately because he thought that his son would feel better when his best friend was next to him. I sometimes spent a whole day with him. It was heartbreaking to see a person you love suffering and screaming in front of you, and you could do nothing.

"Khalifa, could you move the pillow a bit?"

"Khalifa, could you call the nurse?"

"Khalifa, I need some water. "

It was strange for me to see him weak and helpless in the hospital, when outside of it, he was a very active person. He usually spent a week, or less, each time he was taken to the hospital and given pain-relieving medication and oxygen to regain his normal strength. Being in the hospital for too long was the reason he was an underperforming student at school. He was not unintelligent. In fact, he was cleverer than most of his classmates because he could solve complicated mathematical formulas that many students couldn't do. Low academic performance was not the only consequence of the illness Mahmood had--he was very thin to the extent that the nurses struggled to find the right vein to inject their painful injections.

Despite all this, we were happy and satisfied with our destiny, and we hoped for a brighter future. When I was in grade 9, I did very well and was ranked second in the school; however, it was not a good year for my cousin since he spent most of his time in the hospital and missed the final exams. He failed grade 8 because of his sickness. This was not the good news we wanted to hear. I promised my uncle that I would help Mahmood recover from this shock and perform better next year. That summer, we spent a wonderful time together as his sickness seemed to have decided to leave him in peace for three months. Everyone in the family was happy with the progress that he made; however, nobody knew what the reason behind this improvement was. We all expected that he would have his best academic year after a very healthy summer

vacation, and so it was. He spent fewer days in the hospital that year and I spent more time with him to help him achieve better grades. He succeeded with a good score that year.

The year after, I was accepted into SQU and Mahmood was so happy for me that he brought me a medal on which he wrote my name. I was extremely happy and I hoped he would get accepted as well in the future.

Mahmood had so many friends and they enjoyed being with him because he was a very cheerful person. They invited him to join them on many trips but he often refused because he wanted to spend the time with me, but when I had to spend the weekends in Al-Khouth because of my studies, he went with them to enjoy his free time.

In my first year at SQU, Mahmood was in grade 11. The holiday before the second semester of the year was longer for school students than SQU students. They had about a week more than us. That week was our add-and-drop week as I was doing level 5 and 6 of the foundation program. That week happened to be during the days of Muscat Festival.

The Festival was held in three different parks, Qurum, Riyam and Naseem. It usually lasted for about a month. My cousin, Mahmood, liked going to the festival but I was not a big fan of crowded places. So, he decided with his friends to go to Qurum Park on Monday of the first week of January 2009. When he told me, I told him that we should spend Thursday together since I was not going with him and his friends to the festival. We both were

looking forward to that promising Thursday, knowing that it would be as fantastic as usual.

I didn't pay much attention to the fact that they would leave the festival quite late at night and he didn't mention it to me. I woke up in the morning and I was surprised to see that I had received more than 10 calls, and what surprised me more was the fact that none of them was from Mahmood. They were from my mother and my brother. I was absolutely terrified. Mahmood should have sent a message at least on his arrival at home. I called my mother, but there was no reply. I called my older brother, and again nobody replied. What was happening? Could they be all asleep? I tried calling again and my brother replied with a frustrated tone.

"Can you come to Nizwa today?" he said.

"Why?"

"Mahmood passed away last night in an accident!"

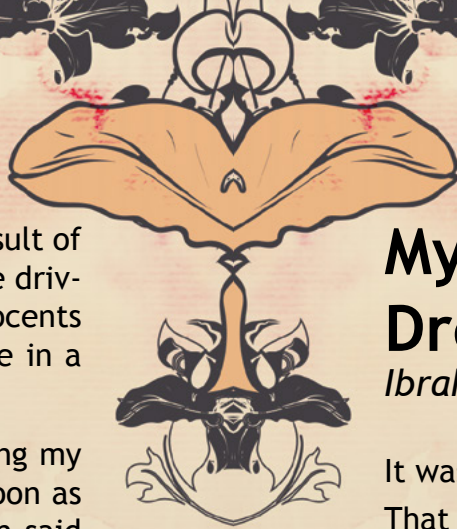
"Mahmood?! Do you mean our brother-in-law?"

"No. I mean your cousin."

How could that happen? He was my best friend. We were supposed to spend a beautiful Thursday together. We were planning for a marvelous weekend at home, not a dreadful one that would separate us forever. Impossible! How was I going to live a life without him? I cried, cried and cried. I couldn't understand why it was only him from all the bus passengers? Car accidents in Oman seemed to be a devil that is chasing our beloved people.

Thousands of souls every year go wastefully as a result of carelessness, over speeding and mobile usage while driving. Unfortunately, Mahmood was one of the innocents who were lost like leaves shedding from a big tree in a frustrated autumn.

After a while, I tried to calm down. I kept calling my friends to ask if they could take me to Nizwa as soon as possible because I didn't have a car. Most of them said that they could only leave on Wednesday. I finally found someone who said that he would leave in the afternoon. I agreed because it was my only option. This meant that I would never be able to see the person that shared most of my happy moments, the person whom I shared the moments of strength and weakness in the hospital and at home with, the person whom I loved and never wished to live after him. I'm so sorry, dear; it should have been a better Thursday!



My Midsummer Night Dream: A Ballad

Ibrahim Al-Azri

It was a moonlit night
That I slept under the moon light tight.

Jumping out of my bed I found myself
Fallen on a stage that out-did itself.

A stage of wood, and silver, and gold;
I saw a man on his stick old.

I asked, "what brought you here, father?"
He replied, "I don't want to pour out my tragedy,
But my I am without a mother."

I said, "Let there be love that knows not
The difference between Life and Death;
Let there be joy, father, let there be laughter,
And you shall live happily ever after."
The Old Man descended the stage, and out of the theater
He got with such self-esteem.
And that was, my dears, my midsummer night dream.



My lovely Babies

By Lubna Al Maskari

It was really a very strange dream I had last night. I dreamt of myself having large wings, spacious eyes and a mix of bright colors covering my feathers. Oh, what a fantastic feeling it was when I was flying up and down around my town. You can't imagine how amazing it is when you fly with freedom.

I met a blowing of a calm wind and we became friends who always raced each other in the pure sky and the sun with her golden threads smiling at us with pleasure. I remember being so beautiful that when I stopped to take a nap in a branch of a tree, I woke up and saw people gazing and taking photos of me. It was such a great sensation.

In the middle of my dream, while I was flying, groups of clouds started gathering with each other and suddenly it started raining. The source of our warmth, the sun, disappeared and I could see nothing at that moment. I just could hear noisy voices. They were other sparrows flying in hurry to their nests and I followed them since I haven't got one.

As time passed, we become one family and I found a good male. Two weeks later, I got three eggs. I waited until they hatched. At first, my babies were cute angels. I loved them so much. Then they started crying, crying and crying. I tried to feed them many times, but they would not stop.

Then, I opened my eyes and I realized that I was sleeping! But wait, wait. My babies are still crying. How is that? No, no. Oh, no that was my phone alarm. Yeah,

unfortunately, it was my phone alarm sounding as the young sparrows (I hated that tone and directly changed it), but I couldn't sleep again! Ooh, my lovely babies why are you crying?



LET'S FLY...

Bashair Ali Hassan Al-Harmali

You know,
That I can fly,
That I can reach the sky.
You know that you do so; travel with me wherever I go.
See,
That is my star;
She is not far.
Twinkling every night,
Calls me to fight,
And keep the night bright.
I need you, dear.
Our united hearts too,
They give her the light.
If we are together, she can last,
And makes darkness afraid.
My dear, every night be there
With no fear;
See my lovely star, close your eyes,
You find me there.
We will spark,
So that all can see our fixed mark.
You, I will wait; do not be late.



A Challenge

By Fatma Al Farsi

There, near to the door, my luggage stands, with my shoes beside it. Pieces of my clothes are arbitrarily thrown all over the room--on the floor, the chair, on my bed, and even on the shelf. My laptop is on my bed, sleeping beside it an empty Pringles container and an empty can of Mountain Dew. Sheets, opened books and pens are covering the table, with drops of tea on some of them. In the sink, unclean plate left at one angle, and on the other my makeup purse opened widely. In the midst of this chaos, I am sleeping on the floor. In short, nothing is in its place. My room is a mess.

I arrived that night at nine p.m., and I was extremely exhausted after preparing for that wonderful event, The Italian cultural night, for months rather than weeks. That day was the closing. I was happy for our success, but exhausted, as if I have not slept for days. I took two Panadol pills in order to help me sleep. I thought of nothing but to relax my haunted body. It felt great.

I woke up at three a.m., and the first thing that came to my mind was: I have to give a presentation at eight a.m. tomorrow! Seriously! I was not in the mood to do that, nor straighten my messy room. So what now? I did not want to postpone the presentation. I said to myself, "Do it, Fatma, you still have time." I took my clothes and abayas and put them in the washing machine. Then I started cleaning the mess in my room. Uh, that took a long time, almost an hour. It was almost four a.m., but at least I had done something. The next step was preparing for the presentation. I was working in a group of four, and fortunately, my part was the last. I started reading,

analyzing and putting my ideas on points. Wow, I am unbelievable. I did it and it was almost 6. I think I still have time, let me relax for a while, I decided, so I slept.

I woke up at 8 o'clock. I was shocked, not believing my eyes. I did not have time to think even. As quick as the speed of light, I prepared for the class; the abaya and my shoes are on, I have my handbag ready, and I make sure I have the flash disk that holds my presentation--something very important. I reached the class at 8:15. I gave my presentation once I arrived. I think I won an unforgettable challenge with myself that day.



Here I am

Dawoud Mansoor Al-Rawahi

Lonely at the summit of the world I stand,
Facing so many of life's demands.
Lonely I walk, but strongly I talk,
Thinking before I become a fish in a hook.
Gazing at the horizon of my lovely dreams,
Trying to fulfill them without tears.
Fighting as the knight
In the middle of the field,
Attacking, defending,
Maneuvering in order to be;
So here I stand,
And here I am



Spirit of Princess Salma

By Hajar Al Rahbi



I looked outside the window to the dark calm sky. To me, it looks as if a black piece of velvet had been placed over the sky. I drifted my eyes to the blank papers in front of me; or actually, everything looked blank that day. I hold my pen trying to write something; instead, I just penned his name everywhere. The clicking of my phone broke the silence, announcing a message received from him.

“Dear, I’m not sure if I’m fine. I feel my life is going to end quickly. Just forgive me please. I love you!” My heart was beating quickly. I tried to call him, but he did not reply. Every minute that passes without listening from him makes my worry grow.

I text him back, “Honey, just shut up! Can I call?”

“No, dear, I’m with friends. Just go on doing whatever you were doing.”

“Ridiculous! You know well how I feel now. What is wrong? When can I call? Don’t offend me.”

“I’ve never felt this much disappointment! I feel wistful.”

“Love! Your throne is still existing in this heart, would you like to be kicked out of it? No blues in there! Remember?”

“Huh! You know? Lately I suffered from many serious problems at the same time. I lived a narrow life. I can see our days are becoming night. “

“Shhhhhh! Just don’t make it more of a fuss for me! Look! I’ll never sleep until we talk and I’ll be waiting.

OK?”

It was a long night, the longest in my life. I was very worried about him. I could not sleep nor sit; I kept going around, waiting for his call, but he did not utter a word until I suddenly slept. I did not realize that it was the start of the end.

I woke up that night at 3 a.m. to his call. My heart told me that there was something wrong. I answered, and all I could hear was his sobbing. He cried like an innocent child who had just lost his favorite candy. I tried to understand what was going on.

“Honey, there is no hope for our souls to meet,” he paused to hold his breath and continued, “We won’t be allowed to get married. Never! Ever!”

I still remember that day. It shocked me in a hysterical way. Our plans just collapsed at that moment and I could do nothing more than run to a friend of mine and cry for hours and hours. A thousand tears flow through my cheeks at the same time a star of victory lit up the sky of the unjust, oppressing land. I felt at some point that it is as if I was shedding blood instead of tears for knowing this dreadful bitter truth.

Yes! It is dreadful to live without Haitham, the one who makes me feel like a legend! The one who was a spirit and a soul, but in this part of the world the matter of race plays an essential part in deciding whether you marry the person you dreamt of or not! As simple as that!

And unfortunately, relatives are highly involved in such a lifetime, personal decision. It is unbelievable seeing how a society snatches other's right just because of race! I hate it. This always keeps me thinking, why are we living in such an oppressive society? I always consider that a man is judged by his inner beliefs and principles, by his morals and behaviors; a man is judged by his personality. Why do they interfere in one way or another to prevent us from our humanity and personal right? WHY? And what would make me lose my mind is that mostly all the people of a community believe strongly in such an old, shabby, traditional way of thinking. We are all the same; this is what they have to understand rather than feeding their rusty minds with senescent ideologies.

In our love class, as we call it, I waited patiently for him. It was his last day in the college. I knew that it would be hard for him and me as well. It was difficult to know that Haitham will no longer be near me, although I was sure that we will be in contact for some time, but the distance between my soul mate and me is unbearable. I was waiting, unlike all the previous times when he used to wait for me, and once he appeared I found myself hugging him unconsciously and my eyes were full of tears. He tried to be as strong as he could, although it was hard for him to see me crying! I knew it well.

Looking down, he said, "Listen, honey, know that I'm insisting to propose to you. " He paused to meet my eyes with his, and added, "Regardless of how complicated we know it will be."

"No, No... No," I said.

"What is it?"

"Just don't do it"

"Why? I can't just quit and leave yo..."

"You will not leave me," I said interrupting. "You know, honey, that we both are deeply in love with each other, and no one can stop this love. It will continue to exist."

"What are you trying to say?" He said.

"I know and you know well how difficult it would be for you and me. I don't feel good seeing you suffering by fighting my family."

"It doesn't matter for me, I'm thinking about you."

"And you think it's easy?! Darling, let's rather think about your life after graduation, and never talk to me about this issue again."

I just kept in mind that leaving him and keeping him in my heart forever is more merciful than us both getting into a fight with an entire society to live together. We will simply lose everyone, to live excluded, abandoned and hated, us both as well as our innocent children!

I still remember his marriage, which he was forced into, as he had no other choice. I forgot completely about his marriage and remembered suddenly one night that it was his day with his lady, but unfortunately not me! I felt

that it was a mercy granted from God that I forgot that his marriage was on that day. It was a serious tragedy when I received his photo on that day from a friend of his who knows the whole story. It broke my heart into pieces seeing my Haitham in a full finery with friends around, and he was the only calm and pale face in the photo, although it was his wedding.

I never imagined from the first day of our love that I would write him a letter which will never be sent to him!

“My Haitham! I am getting lost in my memories. Everything is fading and blurring since you left. I am fine, and not fine without you! You gave me a life, made me a new person, and suddenly disappeared.

I am getting used to it, but sometimes I need you to hold, to give me a hand when I am lost, to grab my hand and start fighting me! I still remember that you always liked to pull my nose to get on my nerves; you knew that I hated it, but I liked when I got crazy and start boxing you! Huh, should I laugh honey? Or maybe cry!

You always asked me to shut my fears out, and I did the best I could, but I found life is a jungle without you. I found no world, no shelter when I lost yours. What would have happened if we had run away to our own world? What would have happened if I had fled away with you as Princess Salma had done with her German lover in their ship?



I would live a totally new life, I swear I would be a new person in your company, just like she was, changing her life and her name to be princess Emily Ruete! I wish I had been as brave as she was in facing life. It is too late! Everything has gone... Vanished! Except your memories; they will always live on and remain alive in my exhausted heart...till the end!

Now, I'm only waiting for your daughter to be born, whom you said will hold my name since you like it, so that she would be your spoiled little girl, as I used to be, but please, when she comes tell her that she doesn't have to be like me; she only needs to be as brave as Princess Salma!"

**Princess Salma: Princess of Zanzibar and Oman, daughter of Sayyed Said bin Sultan, Sultan of Zanzibar and Oman, and a wife of Rudolph Heinrich Ruete who was a German merchant in Zanzibar. She is the author of "Memoirs of an Arabian Princess From Zanzibar."*