

THIS ISSUE IS DEDICATED TO THE PEOPLE OF GAZA

Other Words

AN INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF CREATIVE WRITING

أهل غزة أهل العزة

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Foreword

Be it poetry of praise, or didactic poems teaching everything from grammar to Islamic law - poetry is intertwined with our heritage. I will let the academics pontificate on the 'why', but we reach a point in history where we are not known for our poetry in perhaps we may have been in prior ages. All the while the jurist-poet-mystic from what is now known as Afghanistan becomes the 'most widely read poet in America' in a language unknown to him and a translation that largely rips his religion out of his verses. Verses that are referred to as the 'Qur'an in Persian'.

Muslim presence in the West, while growing, is still very much an experience governed by the logics of 'minority' and othering. The 'savage oriental' now makes his home in the metropolises of Europe and North America with contested loyalties and dual identities. It is worth noting that this experience is not the norm - the vast majority of Muslims in the world are not Western (in their locale at least!). That said, in what way does the sword of upheaval cut and maim the poetics of a community? In what ways can it jolt us into memory? These are questions for another day - but I believe what we are witnessing is a slow resurgence of connection to the 'Muslim World' - a resurgence jolted by the genocide of Gaza. A Muslim internationalism, if you will.

While the arts (understandably perhaps) lags behind other pressing priorities for the western Muslim community - largely mired with poverty and the bludgeon of institutional racism and surveillance, any revival is incomplete without a thriving artistic output. A revival on its own terms, yes - but a revival of unquestionable beauty and strength no matter the reader. What then of Muslim writing in the English language? In my humble opinion, while tangential perhaps to the experience of most Muslims walking this earth, with the colonial enterprise to thank, English remains lingua franca. Our writing in this language I hope will mirror in some ways the trajectory of Iqbal, the Indian who wrote in (his non- native) Persian, verses that are still read in Iran today - unquestionably strong and beautiful.

We are as strong as our institutions. And I pray the Islamic Literary Society and its efforts are blessed, and they become part of a tapestry of initiatives that sow the seeds for a glowing literary culture that becomes the pride of the Ummah, East and West.

Jamal Mehmood
January 2024
Author & poet

Notes from the editors

When reading poetry from any culture, especially from those within Islamic culture, one might come to think that poetry is transcendental and exists only among gifted individuals. However, this is not true since Allah has stated that He created human beings in the best of forms and bestowed upon them the pen. We believe that poetry exists as a powerful tool within each of us. The challenging part is to discover it, nurture it, and effectively wield its power. It can be difficult to cultivate the talent that exists within all of us due to the negativity that surrounds us— whether from friends who might mock, or family members who may lack interest. However, poetry, in its essence, encapsulates life itself. From the moment of birth to the final breath of death, life is a form of artistic poetry.

The Islamic heritage of poetry and creative writing stands as a gift to the world at large and more particularly to the Western world. In its quest for sophistication, eloquence, value, and even a moral platform, the Western world draws significantly from the Islamic worldview. The map that guides one from Spain, Sicily, Italy to France—these countries are enveloped in Islamic tradition. Scholars and learned individuals indeed were captivated by and indebted to Muslim traditional learning and the creative artistic expressions it fostered.

Often, Western references to the 'Dark Ages' tend to exclude Europe to some extent while focusing on the Orient. With such misconceptions, misinformation, and ignorance, a Westerner many overlook the reality of Islam and paint it as a form of oppression to cultural development, however, historical records reveal a starkly different narrative. The philosopher Bertrand Russell observed

"Our use of the phrase 'The Dark ages' to cover the period from 699 to 1,000 marks our undue concentration on Western Europe..."From India to Spain, the brilliant civilization of Islam flourished. What was lost to Christendom at this time was not lost to civilization, but quite the contrary...To us it seems that West-European civilization is civilization, but this is a narrow view."

It is our firm belief that victory comes from Allah, and soon it will be within our grasp. All that is required from us is hard work and determination. Keeping this in mind, the Islamic Literary Society was established in 2019 to reconnect, rejuvenate, and revive the desire to explore our literary heritage, thereby awakening Muslims from the profound slumber in which we find ourselves. Part of this initiative is an annual journal entitled *'The Other Word: An International Journal of Creative Writing'*. The concept originated from discussions I had with Prof. Nor Faridah Abd Manaf, a retired Shakespearean scholar. The idea is to provide a platform for Muslims of all ages, especially the youth, to express their creative writing, frustrations, ambitions, and experiences— be they personal or collective.

This journal serves as a steppingstone towards discovering exceptional writers and poets. Due to our collective ambition and faith in the Muslim community, the journal has received numerous submissions from across the globe. Hence, it is with great pleasure

that we present the inaugural edition of this journal. We are witnessing an ongoing tragedy, a form of genocide perpetrated by the oppressive colonial apartheid state of Israel against the native inhabitants of Palestine. It is deeply troubling that the most powerful nations on Earth are supporting this atrocity. Our hearts ache and cry out in anguish for the people of Palestine. What is even more shocking is the silence of our Muslim rulers and countries, seemingly more concerned with their interests than the suffering of their brethren. The great poet Abu I-Muzaffar Al-Abiwardi (d.1113) rightfully said

فكيف تنام العين وهي تملأ جفونها هفوات توظف كل نائم؟
وإخوانكم في الشام يضحون بأرواحهم عند ظهور المضاكى أو بطون القشائم
ويكاد المستججان أن يصل ينادي بصوت عالٍ يا آل هاشم

How can the eye sleep, filling its eyelids with lapses that awaken every sleeper?

And your brothers in sham will sacrifice their lives at the appearance of the Madhaki or the bellies of the Qasha'im It is almost to them that the one sheltering in goodness calls out loudly, O family of Hashim.

We pray that Allah grants victory to the people of Gaza and for justice to be served upon the oppressors, holding them accountable for their acts of oppression, As a result, this inaugural edition is devoted to the individuals of Gaza.

We hope this journal marks the start of something significant, a beacon illuminating the path toward a greater understanding of Islam. We also hope that readers will find enjoyment in it and be motivated to contribute their own work, fostering the future application and growth of knowledge. It is important to remember that poetry is an art form created by humans, often involving emotions, and feelings, and sometimes expressing thoughts that may only be fully realised its significance after being published and shared among people. Therefore, if the reader comes across anything in this collection that contradicts the Quran, the authentic teachings of the Prophet, or the ways of the noble companions, it is one's religious duty to reject it and notify the editors. By doing so, such material can be prevented from being published. This collection reflects the views of the respected authors. The editors and the editorial team do not assume responsibility for any misunderstandings that may arise from the recitation or reading of the poems. it is appropriate here to end with the verses from Abū Ḥafs Zayn al-Dīn ‘Umar ibn al-Muzaffar Ibn al-Wardī’s *Laamiyyah*

وَأَدْعُو اللَّهَ رَبِّي كُلَّمَا طَلَعَتِ الشَّمْسُ فِي النَّهَارِ وَغَرِبَتْ
لِمَنْ حَصَلَ عَلَى أَعْلَى الْمَنْزِلَةِ عَلَى هَاشِمٍ أَحْمَدَ الْمُخْتَارِ الَّذِي انْتَصَرَ أَوْلَى
وَعَلَى آلِهِ وَصَحْبِهِ الْكِرَامِ الَّذِينَ لَا يَعْجِزُهُمْ إِلَّا الْبَطْلُ

“And may the peace and blessings of my Lord every time the sun rises and sets. Be upon the possessor of loftiness from the Hashim, Ahmad the chosen one, the one who reigns supreme and on his family, foremost companions, they have no defect except being heroes.

*Prof. Nor Faridah Abd Manaf.
Abdul Hai
January 2024, London*

Refaat Alareer¹

If I must Die

If I must die,
you must live
to tell my story
to sell my things
to buy a piece of cloth
and some strings,
(make it white with a long tail)
so that a child, somewhere in Gaza
while looking heaven in the eye
awaiting his dad who left in a blaze—
and bid no one farewell
not even to his flesh
not even to himself —
sees the kite, my kite you made, flying up above,
and thinks for a moment an angel is there
bringing back love.
If I must die
let it bring hope,
let it be a story.

¹ **Refaat Alareer** (1979–2023) was a professor of world literature and creative writing at the Islamic University of Gaza and the editor of *Gaza Writes Back: Short Stories from Young Writers in Gaza, Palestine* (2013). He was killed by the terrorist and colonisers IDF's airstrike on December 6, 2023, along with his brother, nephew, his sister, and three of her children.

The poem is widely accessible on the internet, yet *The Other Word* journal couldn't trace its initial place of publication. Therefore, the journal is uncertain about its copyright status. Whoever holds the copyright is kindly urged to contact the Islamic Literary Society. Should there be a valid copyright, the Society is more than willing to assist in its removal or acknowledgment upon request. It's noteworthy that *The Other Word* journal has published this piece in honor of Professor Refaat Alareer.

*Abdul Hai*²

Old Women

In Gaza's echo, freedom thrives tall,
Where old women aim and Goliath falls.

Within Golden Mall, luxury's thrall,
Yet your greed breeds slavery's call.

² **Abdul Hai** holds a certificate in higher education and a bachelor's degree in social sciences from Birkbeck, University of London. Currently, he is pursuing postgraduate studies at the University of Wolverhampton, UK. Abdul Hai is the founder and project manager of the Islamic Literary Society. He is a book lover, bookbinder, restorer, and leisure writer. He is interested in book collecting, woodwork, gardening, and fishing. He published his poetry in *Asiatic: IIUM Journal of English Language And Literature* and some of his articles has appeared in Islam21c website.

Story 1

The Eternal

Photograph

“Aaaaa!!! Get out of my mind!!!” cried Ahza, thrashing about as he jolted up in his bed, the vivid images from his nightmare still playing in his head. After realising he was still in his room, he turned to look at the blinking numbers by his bed. 3.15 am. “Why...why can't I get a night of proper sleep? I'm begging, please let me get proper sleep. Just a bit of sweet dreams is enough...tsk tsk.” Ahza held his head, his fingers squeezing his temples in a futile attempt to relieve the pain as tears slowly rolled off his chin. He could not help but to wonder and question why he had been chosen to live in this kind of misery. Why did it have to be him?

With a ragged groan, he dragged his pillow and pulled the blanket over himself before comforting himself back to sleep. The call for *Subh* prayer woke Ahza up at 5.50 am.

With a heavy head, he scooted to sit at the edge of his bed. “Why should I perform *Solat* when my Creator, Himself, did not hear my wishes and get me out of this misery?” The words that have been said by Ahza were a statement that was purely said because of his emotions. Deep down in his heart, he knew God existed but what made him feel this way was that he could not feel God's presence.

Later that morning, Ahza parked his beautiful *Yamaha R25*, a superbike that he named his *chariot of God*, at the parking space in front of his workplace, a magazine company that published magazines about photography skills, scenery, and descriptive essays about those photos. Ahza worked as one of the photographers for the company. Upon exiting the elevator, he heard a familiar voice greeting him.

“Morning Ahza, how is your progress for the next special issue?” asked Melissa. “Oooaa, the *Hari Raya* edition, right? I still have no idea, honestly,” Ahza responded sheepishly with a soft hum while scratching the back of his head. “Man, you should get your ideas right away, Ahza. *Hari Raya* is just three months away,” Melissa commented, eyes wide in shock as she

³ **Adi Irfan** is an art enthusiast, based in Ipoh, Perak, Malaysia. Adi also pursued his degree in English Language and Literature at the International Islamic University Malaysia. He is an avid fan of visual arts and organized various art-based events when he was the President of the International Islamic University Malaysia's Art Club. One of his significant contributions to visual art artists at IIUM, Adi and his team managed to have the first visual art exhibition titled *Unite In Arts: A Visual Art Exhibition* at IIUM after 40 years of the university's establishment. The exhibition's purpose is to show that art visual is an unspoken language but by doing art an artist can deliver their emotions gracefully. Right now, instead of doing visual arts, he is pursuing another art that he used to do as well which is literary art. Adi Irfan idolizes the works of Buya Hamka, Pramoedya Ananta Toer, A.Samad Said, Keris Mas, and Maya Angelou. His current project is compiling his poem in Bahasa Melayu to publish and other short stories in Bahasa Melayu.

shook her head in disapproval. After a quick morning conversation between Ahza and Melissa, Ahza went straight to his monitor, his head full of questions but no ideas about the concept he should bring for the magazine special edition. “Arrr, *this is hard. Is this the first time I need to take some pictures for Hari Raya? Hahaha, I haven’t even celebrated it for years,*” Ahza laughed to himself bitterly. It has been years since Ahza last celebrated Hari Raya.

Since his mother passed away, Ahza has lived a very tragic life. Since her passing, every single day was dark and meaningless as he blamed himself for not taking good care of her. While she was still alive, he always focused more on his career rather than his mother. She always asked to meet him.

Calls after calls; messages after messages; yet Ahza kept shutting it down, insisting that he was busy and he needed this job. Until one day, she passed away due to breast cancer. He still remembered the only quality moment that he had with his mother which was after a specialist diagnosed her with stage three cancer. The last moment that Ahza had with his mother was in the ICU. He was there during his mother’s final moment, gripping her hand with tears streaming down his cheeks as she uttered her last words between heavy and shaky breaths before she passed away. “*I... love y..ou...for...ever.*” Every single day and especially on nights when he finds himself awake, staring at the white ceiling of his room, these words would play in Ahza’s mind, haunting his dreams, and till today, he kept on blaming himself, overwhelmed with regrets and started blaming fate because God did not help his mother.

“Ahzaaaa!!!! Ahzaaaaa!! Mr. Shariff’s going to have an *ad-hoc* meeting in 5 more minutes, hurry up!!” screamed Melissa, frantically gathering her things and the related files at her cubicle. “What!?” was all Ahza could say in shock before hurriedly gathering himself for the meeting. The two entered the war room for the unexpected meeting, eyes shifting about nervously as they scanned the room and mentally prepared themselves for what was to come. “Assalamualaikum and good morning, everyone,” greeted Mr. Shariff, sitting comfortably at the end of the long wooden table before proceeding with the agenda. During the meeting, Mr. Shariff asked for everyone’s progress on their project, going in a circle until his eyes landed on Ahza. “Ahza, may I know what is the status of your project? And can you tell me further about the concept that you are going to do?” Mr. Shariff’s voice was as stern as ever and his eyes focused solely on Ahza, his fists, intertwined, rested on the table. Ahza took a deep breath, hiding his trembling hands under the table in front of him as he scooted forward in his seat. “I...I...honestly, Mr. Shariff, I do not have any ideas about this project. I don’t know where should I start. I’m sorry, Mr. Shariff.” Ahza’s voice was quiet, head lowered in guilt.

All of the people in the war room, including Mr. Shariff, turned to look at Ahza with looks of surprise as they heard his answer. After a minute of silence, Mr. Shariff let out of long sigh. “I did not expect this kind of answer from you, Ahza. You always brought up great ideas and concepts to this table, Ahza, but today, you come unprepared.” Together with the team, Mr. Shariff tried hard to brainstorm and develop a solution for Ahza to spark inspiration for his project. “Ahza, I think I’ve got a great idea for you. Since you will be handling the Hari Raya project, I want you to stay at my late parent’s house in Perlis and try to find your inspiration there.” Ahza accepted the offer, and he made plans to go there this upcoming weekend as he left the office with a heavy heart.

When Saturday morning arrived, Ahza left for the station and took a train from KL Sentral to Perlis. After more than six hours of journey, at last, Ahza arrived at the soil of *Perlis Indera Kayangan*. He booked a grab and continued his journey to his superior’s late parents’ house located at *Kampung Kubang Gajah*. As soon as Ahza arrived at the house, Ahza was amazed

by the scenery of the village. During the entire ride, Ahza stared out the window and slowly watched the city scenery morph into beautiful greenery that he did not see in Kuala Lumpur. Passing by rows and rows of paddy field with skies behind it that touched the end of the paddy field on a beautiful horizon, he noticed a small mosque and soon arrived at a huge wooden house that stood on stilts. There were signs of ageing but he could not deny that the traditional Malay house, once owned by Mr. Shariff's late parents, was still beautiful. As soon as Ahza entered the house, he unpacked his bag and set up his camera. It was 4.40 pm and the *Azan* for *Asar* could be heard. Again, doubts crept into his mind about performing his prayer. "I don't know why but I have a bit of a feeling about performing *Asar*. Aaa, let it be, I'll perform my prayer today," Ahza muttered to himself and left to walk to the mosque.

Walking by himself with his hands inside his pocket to the mosque 100 metres away, his head was full of thoughts. "*I've got another two months and three weeks to complete this project, yet, I haven't got any ideas for this Hari Raya project.*" He stopped short at the front gate of the mosque as he began to hesitate his decision, hands fidgeting with the seams of his pocket. "*Am I ready to meet my Creator with such overwhelming hesitation, anger, sadness, and regrets?*" asked Ahza in his mind. While plagued with these negative feelings, a stranger tapped Ahza's shoulder and interrupted his train of thoughts. When Ahza looked to his right, an older man with a warm smile looked back at him, "*Let's go and perform our prayers, young man. Have you taken your wudhu'?*" Ahza nodded, and the older man walked into the prayer hall as Ahza followed him from behind.

Ahza performed his *solat* at the last *saf*, at the very right end of the row. When the Imam started the prayer, the first *takbir* filled Ahza with an overwhelming feeling of sadness and guilt, leaving him with a lump in his throat and an odd heaviness in his heart. He felt sad because he held a grudge towards his Creator. At the same time, Ahza felt guilty because he neglected his first responsibility in the Five Pillars of Islam. At the final *sujud*, he could not stop the tears from dripping. In silence, his tears fell and stained the mosque's carpet. The mosque witnessed the growth of his soul and emotions that grew like a tree. After the second *salam*, the Imam led the *dua*, and after the *dua*, everyone walked away and left the mosque. Everyone but Ahza. He sat alone near the rack of Quran and other Islamic books and started to think about ways for him to get out of his misery.

While Ahza was sitting alone, seeking solitude, a soft and kind voice appeared, "*Assalamualaikum, young man, are you new here? What is your name?*" Ahza turned in surprise and was met with the face of the old man he saw earlier. He did not think there was anyone else left at the mosque. "*Walaikumusalam, yeah...yeah, I just arrived in the afternoon for business purposes. My name is Ahza Hayyan, sir...may I ask what your name is?*" asked Ahza, mustering a small smile out of courtesy. "*A lovely name, young man. Can I address you as Hayyan, young man? People in this village address me as Pak Karim, just call me Pak Karim, ya.*" Pak Karim sat on the plain carpet beside him and they chatted for a bit, getting to know one another. For the first time in a very long while, Ahza seemed lively because of the warm presence of Pak Karim. He told Pak Karim that he was a photographer and he needed to take a good picture for his company's magazine. Hearing this, Pak Karim excitedly suggested a few places that would be good for photographs and even offered Ahza a ride on his old *Honda EX5* motorcycle to take him to those places. Ahza gratefully and humbly accepted the assistance from Pak Karim.

The following day, Pak Karim came as promised to fetch Ahza from his house and take him to the locations they talked about the day before. Ahza enjoyed the refreshing breeze as the motorcycle sped past all the beautiful greenery that surrounds them. They soon stopped at a paddy field that had a beautiful hut located right at the centre with two tall coconut trees resting on its right. "*Pak Karim, would you mind me taking a picture of the hut for a few*

minutes?” asked Ahza, climbing off the bike and retrieving his camera from its bag. “Go and take the picture, Hayyan, don’t mind me here,” Pak Karim responded with an encouraging smile and a soft pat to Ahza’s shoulder before leaning on his motorcycle. After taking several shots of the hut, Ahza returned to Pak Karim, sweat visibly dripping off the foreheads of both men as the scorching sun shone on them. “I guess the day is getting hotter, Pak Karim, and I also need some rest after going to a few places to take photos.

Do you mind if we get some rest, Pak Karim?” Ahza asked, wiping the sweat off his face. “Sure, Hayyan, that’s a perfect idea. Why don’t we rest at the hut, Hayyan?” suggested Pak Karim while gesturing to the shaded hut nearby. “Ehh, are you sure we can rest there Pak Karim?” asked Ahza, face twisted in confusion. “Hahaha, of course, we can Hayyan, that is my hut,” answered Pak Karim with a warm laugh and a friendly pat on the back as he led Ahza to the hut. Sitting in the hut, Pak Karim poured some tea and brought out some of the food he had cooked and packed earlier that day to share with Ahza.

The afternoon was unusual for Ahza, and he had a sense of calmness and serenity, something he has rarely felt even since before the passing of his mother. It was a foreign feeling. “Pak Karim, may I ask, what did you do before you became a farmer?” asked Ahza, taking a spoonful of rice with the chicken dish. “I’m a war veteran Hayyan. I worked as a Japanese officer during World War II. I do office work and documentation for them,” Ahza nodded in amazement at Pak Karim’s answer. “That is very interesting, Pak Karim. I believe you can speak Japanese fluently?” the younger man asked with genuine curiosity. “Hahaha, I can talk a bit of the Japanese language. Every morning we sang the Japanese anthem song...and also Jibun wo Shinjiro Hayyan-san!” answered Pak Karim, laughing heartily as Ahza scrunched his eyebrows and tilted his head in confusion. “What does that mean, Pak Karim?” asked Ahza. “It means believe in yourself, Hayyan, not everything is bad, and not everything is good,” answered Pak Karim, causing Ahza’s eyes to widen in surprise and he felt a pang in his heart, as if those words were meant directly for him. “Why do you say that, Pak Karim?” asked Ahza. “The day I saw you, you seemed lost, Hayyan. Hayyan, the meaning of Hayyan is Life. You have to appreciate life. Don’t let doubts kill you. Life is a gift from our Creator, Allah SWT,” answered Pak Karim in a very pleasant voice. His voice was soft yet stern. Hearing that made Ahza burst into tears. In between little sobs, Ahza managed to choke out, “Hayyan is the name that my Ibu gave, but she left me, and God did not help me heal her from cancer, Pak Karim.” Pak Karim nodded in understanding and placed a hand on Ahza’s shoulder, looking directly at him. “Hayyan,

Allah helps you. He makes you realise that nothing in this world is eternal, but love and memories are eternal, Hayyan. When I lost my only child, my son died because of leukaemia, and my wife died because of a hit-and-run accident. Those were the days I realised I could not outsmart fate. Those were the days I learned Allah assisted me to be stronger. He made me realise love and memories are eternal. My wife and son are waiting for me in the afterlife. I am here every day making dua for them. My love for Allah is growing every day because I know He is immortal. He will not test his servants without knowing his strength and capacity. Believe in yourself, Hayyan. You are a great son and a great servant of Allah. That is why He tested you. Believe in yourself, don’t blame yourself or Allah. Allah is near all of us, and He loves His servants unconditionally. The same goes for your mother. That is why your name is Life. Live your life to the fullest and appreciate Allah’s gift and your Ibu,” answered Pak Karim with a soft smile as he offered comfort to the young man.

Ahza could not stop the tears from falling and his body shook with ragged breaths and sobs. Pak Karim slowly and very gently pulled him into a warm embrace. The afternoon was hot, but the sky stood witness to the hatred that Ahza held in himself and the Creator faded away.

Since that day, Ahza has spent most of his time with Pak Karim. Ahza has been going to the mosque for *Jumu'ah* prayer with Pak Karim for almost four days straight. Pak Karim always reminded Ahza to *sujud* for a bit longer before *tahiyah akhir* to ask for forgiveness and ease his journey in becoming a better servant of Allah. Ahza has also taken a lot of photographs with Pak Karim and they had dinner together every day.

A Friday morning two days before Ahza had to return to his office in KL, Pak Karim did not fetch Ahza like he usually did. When Ahza called Pak Karim numerous times with no answer, he started getting worried. He kept his phone by his side and tried calling several times in the span of a couple of hours but to no avail and the clock soon struck 11 am.

Restless, Ahza hurried over to Pak Karim's home, that has quickly become his second home in the past few days. His heart was racing and his hand trembled as he knocked on the wooden door. Without any answer, he decided to turn the doorknob, his heart beating in his ears and his chest was heavy when he realised the door was unlocked. With a gulp, he stepped into the house, calling out and searching for Pak Karim in the living room and kitchen but there was no sign of him.

The very last room left that he had yet to check was Pak Karim's bedroom. "Pak Karim?" His voice was shaky and he tried knocking for an answer but there was none. When he opened the door, Ahza was met with the sight of Pak Karim sleeping, a little too soundly. He told himself that Pak Karim was just sleeping, but as he got closer to the bed and softly shook Pak Karim's arm, he could feel bile rising in his throat, choking him as his vision blurred. He shook harder and all he could hear was the beating of his heart. With no response still, Ahza placed his fingers on the side of Pak Karim's neck to check for his pulse, and his heart dropped.

For a minute everything was quiet before Ahza let out a loud cry, finally processing Pak Karim's passing. His chest was tight and he fell to Pak Karim's side, tightly holding on to the older man's arm and dropping his head to the side of the cold bed. His sniffles and sobs echoed throughout the silent room, his entire body trembling as his chest tightened.

Suddenly, something came to his mind. He remembered what Pak Karim had told him about ephemeral life, but love and memories are eternal. With those words in his mind, he was able to finally calm down.

Ahza did not blame the Creator and, instead, he was grateful that he was given the chance to meet Pak Karim. Deep down, Ahza's heart felt calm to see Pak Karim wonderfully meet his Creator. The pleasant smell of Pak Karim; the smile that he carved even with his eyes closed, and as if he was sleeping with indescribable sweet dreams. Everything ran smoothly in handling Pak Karim's funeral. Even the sky was dull and gloomy, as if saddened by this news, and the people of Kampung Kubang Gajah were all sad about losing someone as kind as Pak Karim. Humans might not be eternal, but their actions and kindness will be eternal in people's memories.

Weeks passed after the passing of Pak Karim and Ahza finally got to present his photographs. He brought a beautiful concept that he called *The Eternal Photograph*, inspired by the words of Pak Karim. Ahza mentioned that nothing is more potent than accepting fate. "No matter how far you are from the people that you love, memories and love are the bridge that marks eternal love."

A lot has happened in the three months before raya that year but Ahza believed that the love of Allah to all His humankind is limitless. Ahza believed that Allah granted his dua to escape his misery by giving Ahza the chance to meet Pak Karim. Pak Karim's words changed Ahza's perspectives in viewing this life. He cannot outsmart faith or blame himself every time he

finds a dead end. All he has to do is to accept, conquer the fear, move forward, and believe in Allah's will.

On the fourth of *Syawal*, Ahza knocked on a door. The door of his childhood home. The house that kept uncountable memories. A man who looked similar to Ahza but aged with years opened the door, his expression was first stunned but was soon overshadowed by a hint of guilt and sadness, but also relief. Ahza noticed his hand trembling, raised awkwardly as if wanting to time since you did not meet me. I am sorry, Ahza, for my mistakes. I am sorry for not helping and, instead, blaming you. I am sorry, Ahza, for not being a great father.” Hearing these words, Ahza quickly pulled his father into a hug as the two men cried. “Don’t blame yourself, *Ayah*. It is my choice. I chose and neglected what I still have, and I am sorry, *Ayah*, for running away. If I was hurt by *Ibu*’s passing, you were even more hurt, *Ayah*. I am sorry for not being there with you. Now, I am home, *Ayah*.

I’ve found my way, *Ayah*, I’ve found it. Now, I am home, *Ayah*. I am ready to start a new life.” Ahza’s father invited him into the house as soon as the two of them had calmed down and was able to laugh and smile with each other’s presence. “Welcome Home, Ahza!!” greeted Ahza’s older brother and younger sister as they both embraced the sibling they had not seen in a very long time. It has been a while since Ahza was able to genuinely smile from ear to ear.

The End

Story 2:

When Will I Reach

You Again?

“If I am not here Azlan, wait until the sky turns black, black like your hair, haha, I will be there. I will be among the stars.” It has been 4 years without you, Alya, and not a single day goes by without me hearing these words in my head. I can recall it every single time I close my eyes, when it gets quiet and all I can hear is your honey-like voice and your soft giggle. But amidst the silence, there is chaos, like the earth is shaken aggressively, and I can feel it running through my body. I can’t stop it. So, I let it keep beating and beating until I ran out of breath. God, my eyes, my eyes, please stop.

These feelings are so overwhelming, I can’t take it anymore. As my eyes blur and my vision turns hazy, I feel a cold trickle drip down my cheeks and fall

onto the cold hardwood floor. If you were here, Alya, you would never let it fall to the floor. All I can do right now is just close my eyes, trying my hardest to feel the heat of your palm touching my cheeks once again and extinguishing my pain. I really miss you, Alya.

Here I am sitting at our favorite spot, a small hill located behind our beautiful wooden cottage. Every night I will be here just to talk to you, my words echoing through the night in hopes of reaching you though you never once responded. This is the only way for me to feel closer to you. I never understood why you loved stars, Alya. You always laughed and smiled whenever you saw it. But you once told me that stars are ancient objects that are not possessed by any human; that stars can be every man’s companion.

The stars witness people’s true side every time the sky turns black. I believe tonight, just as every other night ever since you left, the stars will only see my sadness and loneliness. Every time the sky turns black, I cannot help but to feel this lump in my throat as my eyes pool with tears of sorrows and grief no one else can comprehend; no one but you. So, every night I gaze up at the stars and hope with all my being that the Almighty will give me another chance to meet you, Alya.

But tonight, as I look up at the very same sky I do every single night, I could not help but to notice it was a bit different than usual. There are shiny spots everywhere on this dark canvas of God. It is absolutely beautiful, Alya! The longer I stare, I begin to notice the stars start to move and create a path. A path as if asking me to get into the journey of the unknown. One star in particular catches my eyes, shining much brighter than the others. Before I know it, my hands are stretched out, reaching for the sky. Maybe, just maybe, by any miracle, I might be able to hold the star. But, hold on- That star is getting brighter! It is getting nearer to me. Alya, is that you? If it is, please come closer to me, hold me, grab me and comfort me! The Star- The star is getting nearer, but how is it possible? Am I being delusional or is it just an illusion that has been made up by my mind that so desperately longs for you? I can’t open my eyes. The light is getting brighter as it gets closer and closer to me. The light of the night torch blinds my eyes. I can’t open my eyes; this is too bright!

Before long, the light seems to be fading. As I start to feel more comfortable, my eyes slowly flickered open, only to see the black canvas of the sky, that meets the hill in a beautiful horizon, filled with floating cottons. And all of a sudden, the sky is filled with colors. Orange meets purple and harmonize the sky with these beautiful combinations of colors. How is it possible that the prolonged dark night can change into such a breathtaking view? As I am admiring the surreal view before me, I feel a sudden chill run down my back, as if there is someone’s presence near me. It feels like someone is watching me from the back; the stare of someone who feels as bright as the stars. For a moment, I hesitate to turn back to see who is staring at me with such a warm stare. But I am also curious about how the night can change in a blink. Does this have to do with whoever it is watching me from behind? I will. I will turn

and take the risk. I took a shaky breath as the winds blew, gentle like a pen that wrote poetry on a piece of paper. Gentle like a brush stroke on a portrait of a beautiful lady. Like a work of art, the winds touch her hair, blowing through the soft, silky black hair that I have not seen in years but is still so familiar to me. The winds touch... Alya. Alya stands gracefully like a daisy blooms beautifully in the spring, standing out in all of the greens that blurs in the background. Nothing less and nothing more. Alya. Alya is enough to make the view breathtaking. I can see a crescent moon that lightens the darkest night carved on her lips. The sun that meets the sea in the beautiful horizon during sunset forms the colors of her eyes.

In a heartbeat, I am on my feet, running and stumbling as dried leaves crunched beneath my shoes but my body is light. It feels as if I can fly and touch the sky. Something that has felt so far is now so near. I can't miss this opportunity to pull her into a warm embrace and put my head on her shoulder, feeling her warmth and comfort, something I have not felt in a very long time; something I have been craving for four whole years. I can sense her presence is real.

This is it, the moment that I've been praying for. The moment I get to finally meet her again. Her body was cold and soulless the last time we met. But now, here I am again, at this moment to show her my endless love and yearning for her presence. I grab her, my arms still fitting perfectly around the curves of her warm body while my head rests on her shoulder. My eyes are like two pools of fountain, an endless waterwork. Years full of longing and sorrow falls on Alya's shoulder, staining the soft fabric of her top. She strokes my head in an effort to calm me down. For a moment, there are no words spoken but the both of us know that these tears and cries words of a man that has been yearning for her presence, grateful to meet her once again and prolong grieve. Alya speaks like a cello that creates beautiful melody which will make you feel as if you're near the sea. The cool breeze of the salty evening air, sounds of the sea hitting the shoreline that overshadows the faint singing of the seagulls wandering around the sky. "*You found me, Azlan. I am here.*" I have reached you, Alya, it is true, you are the brightest star that stands out among the rest.

I can feel the heat radiating from her hand as she intertwines her fingers with mine, and it feels like I'm touching silk. Alya gently tugs me along as she heads into our beautiful cottage. She opens the door but as soon as we step into the cottage, we enter the place where we grew up together, the orphanage. The orphanage is just as I remember it, as if nothing has changed. The windows that I once broke is still unfixed and the tree where I usually slept during lunch time still firmly stands on this ground of unchanged memory. Both Alya and I are orphans. I lost my parents when I was 5 years old due to a riot that happened in my village. I was luckily saved by an old lady that found me beneath my bed. Alya, on the other hand, was left at the doorstep of this orphanage when she was a newborn. Alya spent almost her entire life at the orphanage hoping for just a bit of love and attention from our caretaker. When I first arrived, I got no friends nor was I talking with any of them. Alya was the one who approached me first when I was resting under the tree. She would always come and visit me at the tree, bringing some apples and a cup of water. Since that day I've always felt that Alya is something else. She always comforts me whenever I break down remembering my parents. She is always the one that wipes my tears away.

The flashbacks of my life together with Alya keep flashing before my eyes. I find it difficult to believe that I am seeing myself from the past right in front of me. I feel like I am travelling to the past. I have so many questions but I am not searching for the answers right now because Alya is here, holding my hands. "*Azlan, look here.*" Alya points her finger to show me a scene that both of us can never forget. The scene where Alya told me she will be my friend forever if I will not cry when she will be gone from existence. At that moment, I realize that I broke our first promise, not to cry when she is gone. With a heavy heart, I turn to look at Alya with the face of disappointment and regret because I have failed to hold on tight to my words. But Alya, being Alya, simply smiles and told me to smile too. She pulls my hand again but this time, to the orphanage from another time, the time when I am officially her husband.

This is the moment where I swore and took an oath to take care of her until the end of my life. Once both of us was able to leave the orphanage, I managed to become a writer and a visual artist. Since then, I have been writing a number of *sajak*, *cerpen* and novels, all of which are inspired by my bittersweet experiences. My literary art and visual art are known across Tanah Melayu. Alya worked as a businesswoman, selling *nasi lemak* and *kuih-muih* near our orphanage. The moment I managed to make myself stable, I began to show my interest in Alya and confessed to her that I want her to be my soulmate.

I cannot believe that I managed to see this beautiful scene once again with Alya, the moment when I officially become Alya's husband. The moment when I my lips got to touch her forehead for the very first time. The moment when her lips touched my hand. Every night before we slept, Alya and I would sit at the small hill at the back of cottage and face the black sky. Alya will always say that she will be among the stars. And here I am, in my present self, standing next to Alya while holding her hand as we watch our past together. The scene where I told Alya that I will love her eternally but she refused to accept it. She, instead, told me to love the Creator more than anything else. In the past, Alya told me that we met and loved each other solely due to the Creator's accordance and guidance, and only to Him should we submit and believe that nothing is greater than Him. As the scenes unfold before us, I cannot stop the tears from falling. I have forgotten lot of the words and promises that I promised Alya. With her gentle gaze, Alya wrap her arms around me and said, "*Let it flow Azlan, your soul has started to shine again.*"

Once, I have calmed down, Alya, again, drags me to an unknown door that stands at our right side. This time, Alya tells me to open the door and close my eyes when I step into it. I took slow, hesitant steps into the darkness, hearing nothing but a prolonged silence. Alya then tells me to open my eyes. The very moment I open my eyes, my heart starts pounding and my hands tremble, "I want to leave this place." I want to go back to our beautiful past, the beautiful flashbacks. But Alya firmly holds my hand, forcing me to stay in place as she tells me to stay here with her. She says that she will be delighted if I stay here with her, smiling so brightly her eyes close. She seems calm despite the deafening silence in this room. This is the room, our bedroom. The room and the bed where Alya rested until her final breath. The moment when Aliya died because of a fever. This is the memory in which I see Alya from four years ago struggle to speak with me. Wrapped up in blanket, all the blood is drained from her face and her whole body trembles as she tries her best to tell me that she will love me forever. This is moment when Alya reminds me that we will meet again in His paradise. The sign of a temporary departing from each other. In this past, I assisted Alya to say the *shahadah* and after she said it, her beautiful soul departed from one of the most beautiful temporary form of God's creation along with our baby in her womb.

As the flashback ends, I am a sobbing mess. I cannot stop my tears from falling as this sad memory plays over and over again in my mind. Just as she always did before her passing, Alya puts her soft hands on my cheeks, wiping away the tears that fall, never letting them touch the ground. She gazes at me with her smile that has always had the power to soothe any pain or anger. She tells me to not forget my promises. "When will I reach you again, Alya?" I managed to croak between sniffles and sobs, holding onto her so tight in fear of her fading away from me, again. Alya smiles and chuckles like she always does. "*We will meet again, Azlan, and when that moment comes, you will love me eternally, Azlan, but before that, love the Creator eternally. He is the source of strength, love, wisdom and mercy.*" Upon hearing her words, I can only nod my head while crying, each sob coming out louder and more suffocating as I feel Alya's hand grow cold before fading away. The lights that I saw earlier is taking its form back. My beautiful wife grows smaller and smaller until, slowly, she becomes the bright light, the star that shines brightest in the dreary night sky. The star that represents every man's hope. An object that can never be possessed or contaminated by mankind. The sacred torch of the sky. Alya smiles until the end. "*Wake up, Azlan.*"

As soon as I wake up, I hear the sound of the *adzan*. My eyes are filled with tears but, instead of the usual tears of grief, this time it is of gratefulness. I am grateful because my Creator

made me realize that eternal love should be Him. He sends Alya to make me realize that love is nothing without His accordance. He makes me realize that I am not alone and that Alya is always waiting for me in His paradise. And I will reach you again, Alya

The End

*David Jalajel*⁴

Our Maiden's Many Tempers

Our maiden's pure. In seven perfect modes she dwells:
She falls as rain, swells in the sea, is drawn from wells;

She flows in rivers, gushes from springs, as snow wafts down,
And as stones of hail she crashes to the ground.

She has four tempers. The first of these is absolute.
Pure and cleansing, never loath nor dissolute.

Pure and cleansing she may be, but all the same,
If scorched in the sun's iron cauldron, she's disdained.

Or pure of temper, but loathes to share her purity,
Since she's been swayed or shifted in her quality

By purest suitors who too often paid a visit,
Though their touch was so unsensual, so implicit.

The fourth? She's shamed by villains who solicit her
In baseness when her strength has nearly quitted her.

Two basins-worth of virtue will suffice her well,
Since she's not stained by evil's touch, or taste, or smell.

But half a thousand cups of virtue from Baghdád
Can heal no other heart until her pity's had,

For nothing that pours forth, or splashes, sanctifies
As deeply as the teardrops welling in her eyes.

And if our gracious maiden chances on a scene
Of wickedness, then blesses it and flows off clean,

Taking up no mortal burden there nor losing face,
She will keep pure, but never more impart her grace.

⁴ **David Jalajel** is the author of *Moon Ghazals* (Beard of Bees Press, 2009), *Cthulhu on Lesbos* (Ahadada Books, 2011), a chapbook in Dan Waber's *This is Visual Poetry* series (2013) and *Rhyme & Refrain* (University of the Western Cape, 2017). His work has appeared in a number of online and print journals, including *Otoliths*, *Shampoo*, *experiential-experimental-literature*, *Recursive Angel*, *The New Post- Literate*, *Gulf Coast*, *Anti-*, *Lynx*, *Mizna*, and *Eclectica*.

Unfortunate news

Yesterday while I was on my way to a picnic with my dear friends, Unfortunate news did arrive,
Of a woman so cherished, whose spirit now does thrive,

Malika Khan, a mother, more precious than gold,
In the tapestry of our lives, her story is beautifully told.

With a heart so tender, and eyes that could see, She became both
our mother and father, you see,

When my father departed at the tender age of five,
She was the pillar of strength, keeping our hopes alive.

Formal education she may have lacked,
Yet wisdom she carried, a treasure untacked, A beacon of light in
the darkest of days, Guiding us through life's unpredictable maze.

Her words, like pearls, in conversations, did flow,
Uplifting hearts, helping spirits to glow,
Never a harsh word or gossip did pass her lips,
Her kindness and love, in our hearts, firmly grips.

In her memory, we gather, tears we may shed,
But her legacy lives on, like the words that she said,
May Allah bless her soul, in paradise she'll stay,

Jannat al-Firdaus, the highest,
where she'll forever sway.

**Legacy of Love:
In Memory of
Malika Khan**

**Where are you,
Malika Khan?**

For three long days, you've been gone, I reach out to you in
dreams, in prayer,
But your phone no longer answers, it's just air.

⁵ **Abdulwahed Jalal** Nori holds a PhD in Political Science and is with the Department of Fundamental and Inter-Disciplinary Studies (FIDS) at International Islamic University Malaysia (IIUM). His research interests include futures studies and political reform in the Islamic world. Email: wahed@iium.edu.my

Are you amidst the gardens of Jannat, my dear?
Gathering flowers, in a world so clear,
Or walking with my father, hand in hand, Reunited after years in a
distant land?

It's been four decades since he departed, And now you too have
left us broken-hearted,
Perhaps you're preparing to visit the Prophet's gate,
In this Maulid month, don't we celebrate?

I don't blame you, I want you to know, I miss you deeply, my
tears freely flow, As I write these words, my heart aches,
For the love we shared, the memories it makes.

Your departure reminds me, life's fleeting grace,
A transit to eternity, a fleeting embrace,
Enjoy your new life, pain left behind,
In a world where suffering can't bind.

I miss you, Malika, with every breath, But I know you've found
peace in death,
May you find solace, in realms above, Surrounded by eternal,
boundless love.

So, walk the gardens and dance with stars, In the realm beyond,
where no pain mars, And when I close my eyes to sleep,
I'll visit you in dreams, my love to keep.

She replied:
Yes my dear son, Remember, my friendship with the Quran, is so
true, A daily ritual, until my final breath, I knew.
Surat Yasin, the last I read, an eternal clue, A sacred page left
open, for you to continue.

In Jannat al-Firdaus, my dear, I now reside, Beside your father,
where heavenly joys abide.
We joined a grand gathering, the Prophet's birthday we celebrate,
His smile, a beacon of grace, in that blessed state.

He thanked me for the Salawat, my devotion in Dunia's land, And
he charged me with a message, a divine command. "Tell
Wahed," he said, "to tread your righteous way,
To join you here, in the light of an eternal day."

Jannat al-Firdaus, my son, it's not easily won,
Through deeds and inactions, beneath the earthly sun.
Every trial, every suffering, endured in the mortal span,

Shall be a treasure, an eternal reward, for every woman and man.

My mother, I lost when I was but a child,
Three sisters, we stood strong, a bond undefiled. Caring for our
ailing father, in his time of need,
My youngest sister, in youth, to heaven did cede.

I played both roles, mother and father, a memory still clear,
In those challenging times, life was austere.
Through the Iraq-Iran war, eight long years of strife,

I ensured your safety, the essentials of life.
Then the American war, sanctions, and despair,
Innocent lives were lost, in a land torn beyond repair.

We migrated, living in a refuge camp, seeking refuge and grace,
I carried what little we had, in that sacred space.

Know, my dear son, in every trial I've borne,
Has earned me rewards, like seeds, they've been sown.
But fear not, for your path may differ from mine,
I plan to return to the Prophet, in celestial design.

If I see him once more, in his presence I'll stand,
I'll plead for Jannat al-Firdaus, for our eternal band.
Please convey my gratitude to Pura Kafi and her kin,
For their care and tenderness, from deep within.

Cherish one another, my beloveds, heed this plea,
Follow my righteous path, to join me in eternity.
Pardon me, my dear, as I join another jubilation,
In Jannat al-Firdaus, a celestial celebration.

With love and peace, my journey takes flight,
In eternal joy, where faith's radiant light shines bright.

**Who am I to say
who goes to hell
and who goes to
heaven? Who are
we to judge on the
righteousness of a
person?**

We have our own faults
We have our sins
Big or small,
a sin is still a sin. Full stop.

Who are we not
to have gratitude in life?
Why are we not grateful,
again, I mention, grateful.

Allah has it all planned for us.
What right do we have to be angry?
Who decides our rights?

The earth revolves around its axis. Every planet has its orbit.
They make up the universe.
The planets do not collide.
The axes do not break.

Oh Allah Such beauty
Such literature
For they tried to snatch it from us

But I come back to You. We will all return to You.
The glorification of stones.

Oh Allah, Believe in You For there were many ways
That meandered
For I became the ox bow lake No longer

⁶ **Fauziah Aman** holds an A levels certificate from Yishun Junior College. She is going to study Certificate in Para Counselling in the Community Settings. Fauziah is the founder of the ground up initiative FININ (Finding INner INTent). She loves stories that are motivational in nature. She is interested in cycling, walks and finds her inspiration from her life. Her experiences. Her contribution appeared in 'Hijab Book', published by Helang Books

Brexit

What is it that defines us? The way we dress.
or the food we eat? Or is it the customs, traditions?
or social behaviour that we are programmed to believe. An
organised group of individuals creating.

a population that shares the same history,
Or maybe the history we were told to believe.
Right, this is for the old man who found it okay totell me to get
out of HIS country.

You go to grab an ‘Indian Take out’,
yet be the first one to shout, ‘immigrants out’, Don’t tell me that I
don’t belong,

It was my ancestors that built your country all along, Indian
Taxpayers supplied ammunition as support in World War 1 and
Over 89.000 of my people died in military service in World War
2.

Or how about the thousands of women who mined coal up until
childbirth?
Or the labourers who hacked out roads for your own benefit.

Not to mention the fact that it was you who invaded my country,
took my material and called it your own.
Profiting from my ancestors and

Advancing on progress only because we helped you. So please
sir, don’t talk to me about taking your jobs.

When you have been using the labour of my people all along.
You’re currently standing on my wealth,

What my people created, and you tell me to ‘Get out of your
country’
Let’s face it, it’s safe to say it’s more of my country
than it is yours

⁷ **Halema Bibi** holds a bachelor's degree and MSc in Sociology from the University of East London. Additionally, she possesses a PGCE in English and is presently teaching English in a secondary school. She harbors a profound appreciation for the written word and derives great satisfaction from critically examining texts.

*Khadija Parvin*⁸

Awaken

They served me a carcass of my spirituality, And I ate it, blind-sighted,
Turned the other cheek, Now I have mud in my eyes,
Dragging my feet to feel the freeway.

Where am I?
Which way out of the darkness?
The fog thickens before me.
I need to find the light,
And I need to feel His presence.

They served me a grail of sweet poison,
And I took it from their hands,
Drank it dry,
Now I've become the zombie they want me to be, Godless zombies
in a Godless nation.

No Compass to set North from South Where do I go? I'm lost,
Hijacked and shifting into darkness,
Unsteady are my feet, my limbs are in disarray,
I've been here before, haven't I?

I stood tall in a past life,
Before my forehead hit the pavement Faithless and Feckless
It's not supposed to hurt like this.

I don't want to fall for my weaknesses,
I want to fall for Him,
Head to ground with dignity
I don't want the world,
I want Allah.

⁸ **Khadija Parvin** holds a Bachelor of Science degree in Psychology and Business from Aston University. She has experience in working with vulnerable people in the Mental Health services. Currently, she works as a Social Prescribing Link worker. In her role, she helps to build personal and community resilience by empowering patients and connecting them from Primary care to the Third sector and relevant support services. Khadija's areas of interest are Psychology, Personal development, History, Current affairs. She enjoys honing her reflective and critical thinking through reading, journalling, and engaging discussions. Khadija also enjoys Muay Thai and has developed a newfound interest in poetry

*Mizan Ahmad*⁹

Oh my troubled father,

Oh my troubled father,
Stillness in your face,
Rugged like the floating moon,
Thoughts in empty space.

What wicked things you've seen,
Naught but wicked men,
Oh my tired father now
My hope to you I send.

Oh my broken father,
How you stand yet tall,
And hold the weight of broken years,
The grandeur and the small.

Oh my friend, my distant friend,
The smiles that left you sore,
The lengths you've tread, in virtue bled,
From memory into lore.

Oh the empty skies betray,
The empty end of life,
With stories glistening in the blue;
The fiction of our strife.

Oh my blessed father,
Sit for one more breath,
And tell me tales of golden days,
And forget about my death.

Gallop ing Horses

By the gallop of the horses
Behind the break of day,
A blazing thunder courses,
To break heedless fray

⁹ A IT professional who is an avid reader of history and philosophy - many of my creative works carry thematic undertones of the deep nostalgic longing that is present in the narrative of the works that he read. was shortlisted in the top 7 under-16s British Writers Awards for my poetry, and before that in 2005, was shortlisted in the top 3 of the children's category of the Muslim Writers Awards.

The hardened pity wonders,
What used to come in spades,
But forgetful hearts do blunder,
And boons do come to fade.

In every mortal breast,
A witness to the truth,
To justice he attests,
The martyrs in their youth.

The gleaming sun now sears,
And burns away the doubt,
They quiver in their sudden fear,
And look for aid about.

But bodies lie in cold december,
Where children used to sing.
Pride begets bitter surrender,
And stays the hurt within.

The children look up to the sky,
And dream of days to come.
A wintry mist, a butterfly,
An old familiar sun.

Love is limitless.

Love is the fire that ignites our souls,
a warm embrace that makes us whole.
It is the light that shines in the darkest night, a beacon that guides
us towards what is right.

Love is the language of the heart,
a symphony that makes our spirits start.
It is the flowers that bloom in the spring
,and a melody to which our hearts sing.

Love is the miracle that makes us soar,
a feeling like we have never felt before.
It is the touch that heals our deepest pain,
a comfort that helps us face life's strain.

Love is the greatest gift we can give,
a treasure that lasts as long as we live.
It is the force that binds us to all of life,
the joy that multiplies and erases strife.

Love is the sacred bond that we share,
a promise to cherish and always care.
It is the journey that we take hand-in-hand,
and so together we will travel to the farthest land.

Love is the eternity of happiness that we seek,
love is a soulful connection that makes us weak.
It is the greatest legacy that we will pass along,
a memory that will forever remain strong.

The crossroads of love

In spiritual submission I surrendered and kneeled,
I hopelessly prayed and hopefully appealed,
to unite with my beloved to eventually be healed.
My eyes are heavy with swollen grief,
my words are sore and fatigued.

¹⁰ **Mohammed Roziur Rahman** holds BA in Islamic sciences from Darul Uloom, Along with masters in Muslim Chaplaincy from Markfield institute of higher education, Currently,He is pursuing publication of several books on poetry, Islamic spirituality and contemporary issues around the world today. He is currently a faith and spirituality coordinator for Newcastle university.

If only I could unite with my beloved for eternal peace and relief.
Reignite me with my fallen soul,
dear Lord grant me any means to be internally consoled.

I am deeply failing in pursuit of shedding just one tear to make
you cheer,
I am deeply insecure in this worldly realm.
My Lord hear the plea of my burdened heart,

who is destined to be with me eternally?
How do I balance myself between hope and contentment?

As for the one for whom I asked in prayer,
they were never found, despite me
holding on to their flightless wings so dear.

Whatever you have destined for me, O my Lord, only you are
aware. I simply cry to you during the midnight prayer,

my words do no justice to the language of my heart.
My heart is bruised and my soul is buried in pursuit of love.
There shall be a spiritual dusk and there must be a fulfilling dawn,

once when my Lord's decree brings me my eternal love with
immense yearn.
Whatever the heart of my beloved bears,
I shall burden my heart with love and care.

I will always address You through the prayer of my heart,
my Lord, please do not forgo the sparks of my soul.
I desire to be united with my beloved,
to eventually be healed and fulfilled in
Your eternal love.

Dear stranger

If you're reading this then know this is for you,
I wrote this when I was broken, down, beaten and blue.
This is the first time I've let my emotions flow,
I don't know whether from this I'll be able to heal and grow.
I've been ashamed to open up my inner brokenness whilst putting up a
show,

And now, you can see my inner shell, empty, eager to be
enlightened whilst feeling cold.

It is only till now that I've realised my compass has broken,
causing my soul to be

misdirected and burdened.

The greatest lesson is one learnt through pain,
only to hope that from my story someone will achieve moral gain.

So together with my pain let your pain be expressed,

whilst you know that in life you and I are truly blessed.
I don't know you and you don't know me but at least know this,
that you are loved and nothing will ever surpass your internal bliss.

No need for names, tags or barcode referrals,
For every stranger will always blossom in the depths of love whilst
eternal.
You don't need to be strange to become a stranger,
but a focused ranger in a world of plot and plunder.

Goodbye my dear stranger, friendly ranger,
may my love always enshroud
your heart with light through prisms of diversifying colour.

Cross-cultural identity

Who am I and where have I come to?
Why do I feel out of place?
I had begun to love the space
I occupied, growing like a flower.

Through my heredity dark skin, my eyes now see a life full of colour.
But I have continuously been riddled with three layers of bother,

Cause I am ethnically Bengali, loyally British, and spiritually Muslim,
with vitiligo glowing like a butterfly spread across my spectrum.

With these layers I get called names of every type, of dirt,
bearing it all now without feeling the need to negatively judge.
So now I stand proud as a man full of diversifying colour,

determined to highlight the rainbow of my honour.
For the sake of myself, my family and community,
I shall always genuinely love my cross-cultural identity.

*Musammat Parvin*¹¹

Love me

Paint me a picture with your words.
Let the colours be bright and untamed.
I want it to burn like a raging fire,
I want it to calm me like the pouring rain. Paint me a picture with your words.

I want it to empower me at my weakest,
I want it to liberate my chained soul.
Paint me a picture with your words, so that
I may flourish in the letters, so that I am free like the wind.

Paint me a picture,
a picture that only I can see,
so when I look at it I am free like nature,
and alive in every beat.

1

¹¹ **Musammat Parvin** holds an undergraduate in law from the University of Birmingham. She is currently practising as solicitor in a law firm based in the South West. She takes interest in swimming, running, rock climbing and Thai boxing. She enjoys reading an array of genre, both novels and poetry, particularly the works of Rumi.

He will not return.

Everything has come to an end.
Only met for a moment Sadness
and boundless worries,
He has gone far away.
Far from my embrace

He has disappeared from my sight.
Feeling confused
Feeling agitated
He left just like that
It's not possible to be just friends
because the feelings are too strong for him.
So it's better to go far away from him forever as an honour of
friendship

I am a woman, so my heart must be guarded with faith.
Islam will always be the flag of my life.

And my heart is only for Allah.
Love is the most challenging struggle.
A struggle that can bring me closer to His paradise. He's gone
now.

I'm just here carrying a heart
that's shattered because of him
Affection turned to hatred.
Hatred growing stronger.
But hatred still remains as affection.
Only prayers for me to fulfil
the longing for him Praying that
Allah guards his heart for me.

Praying that the guidance of Islam pierces his heart.
As a prayer of affection for him
Islam is beautiful and truly perfect.
May he receive guidance?

May Allah protect him from the fires of hell.
May he fall in love with Islam?

And his heart is filled with unwavering faith.
And so that if destiny is strong.

¹² Nur Afiqah Mohd Azman has a degree in Biological Sciences from Nanyang Technological University. She is a leisure writer and likes to share her worldview through poetry.

He returns to my embrace.
And reminisces the words of longing for me. And builds a life full
of happiness.

And journeys together
And laughs and argues together. Always together until Jannah
(paradise) Amen

Awakening from the dream.

I feel trapped in my dream world.
A terrifying dream I've never experienced before. Is this because
my prayers during Ramadan were answered by God?
At that time, I asked for my destined partner to search for me and
meet me.

In the month of Ramadan, it happened, and I felt like I was
pinched by a beautiful dream.

1

But he doesn't share my faith.
I became scared and quickly withdrew.
But I returned to his embrace.
And we became friends again.
He was understanding and heard
all the journeys of my life.
But fate has already determined our separation

I hope he was just a Ramadan blessing,
a brief and borrowed moment from Allah.
He truly embodied everything
I had hoped for in a partner.

But it's not possible, because it's too improbable,
as he doesn't share my religion.
He's now far across the divide.

And it's better for me to withdraw completely as a sign of respect.
I pray that we won't meet again because it was

a terrifying dream and it's forbidden to enter my life because I'm afraid.
I'm afraid because my prayers are often answered by

God, although not every prayer I must be cautious when praying for my
destined partner.
I fear the terrifying dream will come again like waking up from sleep in
the silent, haunting darkness.

May Ramadan come again to invite me!

Calm Heart

As I traverse the whitening clouds Thoughts swirl like unruly flames
So, I breathe in the tranquil breeze
I grasp at clouds that hold no substance.
They're but thick, gentle smoke, as gentle as my heart.

I send my prayers to the sky.
Praying that this tranquillity will forever reside in my heart and soul.
I lay upon the clouds, I close my eyes to savour the beauty of this
serenity,
I take a deep breath.
A breath of relief, anticipating a new page more beautiful than the
looming storm clouds.

This heart feels joyful and content. My years have increased.
Better that I chase the dreams awaiting me.
For tomorrow, perhaps my life will no longer be. I close my eyes once
more, feeling the wisdom in all my struggles Alhamdulillah!

Entreaty

Your silent pleas in the hidden crevices of velvet skies
Dewy textures moist with the monsoon rain of your eyes
Supplication upon supplication, bear testimony to the intensity of your needs
Rub your face in the dust and hear the earth cry with your cries
Lift your head for a moment dear one
The angels of radiance have descended nigh with full speed
Gentle wings of purity brush your bruised cheeks
Consoling sakinah laced in their other worldly touch
In a mantle of silk brocade they cushion your request
Enveloped and protected they ascend back to heavens high
Their destination reached they alight with utmost care
Perfect conduct is demanded with your weighty load that they share
All-Knowing, Perfectly Wise with a never-resting gaze
The Master puts forth a test to the bearers of your request
“What is it that My servant did ask for in the hidden depths of the dark night?”
“Unveil the request and make it manifest”
“Oh Lord of Perfect Glory, Most Great and Supreme!”
“Your servant made many a plea, intertwined with Your praise, she confessed her iniquity”
“I know well of her entreaty,” is the reply of the Most High
“For I descend to the lowest heaven to answer the call of the ones in need”
“Abased and low, in these moments their souls traverse near with full speed”
And so dear one, in this let there be repose
Do not let your hopes dwindle in the depths of your precious heart
Yes it may be, that your outward request is slow to show fruition in this world
This world - the blink of an eye
But alas, can you not see, the greatest gift is for Him to open your tongue to seek

¹³ **Rehnaz** is an aspiring writer and poet from Wales. Now living across the border in England, she can often be found in a coffee shop with a book or two or exploring nature, particularly amongst trees. With an interest in spirituality, history and social constructs - her work attempts to explore these topics from the prism of curiosity and commentary.

*Richard Van Heeswyk*¹⁴

At sunset

The light skims across the Earth's surface Like highly polished gold
All these colours!
It doesn't need to be beautiful

Become aware of the vastness of Earth Your pinprick of life
So full of experience
It doesn't need to feel like something

If there are simply atoms smashing There's no need for significance
Or the majesty of each full moon

As it accompanies you home
There's no need for your story Yet we long to tell it
And if we are not seen
The heart grows bitter and small

Perfection is not required
Yet look for a fault in all of this 'Again and once again,
Your sight returns to you exhausted'
Try telling your heart It is but a pump
See how it feels
If you've not already wrapped it in cold chains

**On remembering
the sanctuary**

To this sacred land you flew
On light beams dancing starlight racing Haram to Haram divine
wind blew

Upon this sacred rock ascending Unfathomable grace, astounding
peace Pervades the very air we breath
On every stone like polished light
What tears have fallen, what hearts have burned In longing,

¹⁴ **Richard Van Heeswyk** graduated from Sheffield University with a Bachelor's degree in Chemical Engineering in 1996. He currently works for the NHS in the UK as a Psychotherapist, supporting people recovering from depression and trauma. He converted to Islam in 2017 after previously living as an ordained Buddhist for 10 years. Richard has an interest in poetry from many cultures, enjoys Classical European and Jazz music and is currently studying Arabic at the Ebrahim College, London.

praying, weeping nights

As sunlight spreads like rose oil scented
A peace envelopes every being
Of earth and sky and worlds unseen

These ancient rocks as fresh as flowers
This sonorous murmuring
blissful hum
This light from here from there beyond

This all familiar and so unknown
These prayers in hearts and whispers heard
These olive trees of light on light
Too brief our fleeting
Yet timeless too
May all these tears return to You

You too contested by hearts bewildered
Bewilder me your hushed still grounds
Enfold me in your certainty

Of all the blood on blood let here
Yet not a trace of grief remains
All pain turns light and burns away

And now we wondered to our homelands
Strangers now for there we lived
Our truest life our longed-for life
Our truest life
Our longed-for life

Ramadan

And then we saw it
The pure geometry of time
A month aligned, optimised

For the human heart to flourish
Who could better have arranged this affair?
Each breath poised in it's unfolding
Every human involved
Absorbing the longed for light
Who could be more unfortunate
Than the ones ignorant of all this
Wondering through blooming flower

meadows
With eyes engaged in darkness?
What generosity to create these spaces
These open windows to billowing grace?
These soul fulfilments made easy
Plucking pomegranates from branches brought low.

Migrants

Be like the migrating birds
The Hijra to God
From the illusion of what we know
To the prepared safety of His mercy

Follow the sky lines, the trackless paths Some ancient, inherent sense
Set out across the vast seas
Only mountains of cloud for comfort.

Fly in numbers or alone Though the flock flies highest In mellow
movement
Their lives a mystery to those below

O sustainer of all that is
Every atom, feather, moon and star Every beating heart
And creatures too small and delicate

Every fragrance of rose
Each tributary pouring into the ocean Seeds laying dormant in deserts
All beings, born and yet to be

You have conjured us up in your love Your embrace is ever present
Acknowledged or not
You are the ground of our being
The ocean to our wave How can we not tremble?
Knowing how effortlessly You create With a word, a whisp of breath.

The most complex forms appear It is no effort at all
For You who never tire or require rest To support the whole
The incomprehensible whole

How can we not bow down to this?
To the One upon whom everything rests Who extinguishes each creation
But only out of love

From our narrow view endings are a trial We see our heart strings drawn
out
If only we could lie within the field of Your love The ever meadow of
Your flowering richness

If only we could taste the sweet salt The mercy of Your being
Which is way beyond our senses end Creations among creations

Loving One

O loving one
I give thanks for that special suffering Which only Your balm can
sooth
For which there is nothing to reach for Except Your nearness
Purest of musk

For those times when only Your name will suffice Dropping
down to the ocean floor of being Where only you dwell

No falsity nor self-delusion remains
Only Your true word

The maze of complexity dissolves
The otherwise insoluble knots of this world
With its problem upon
problem layered
In this niche of light
This one open secret healing light.

*Sa'diyya Nesar*¹⁵

Al-Mutakabbir

You sit beneath the skies.
Tears build and drench your eyes. You just wish to escape.
You're numb from the last scrape.

There's a tear. There's a bleed.
Your soul yearns to be freed.

Turn to Al-Mutakabbir for your heart to stir. He can remove any stain or
blur.
Witness the brilliant break of dawn. The way the vibrant colors are
drawn.

The hues of blue meet strokes of gold.
The sun breaks for rays to break through, explode. It is a sight that is so
sublime.
Your heart might flutter into rhyme.

Al-Mutakabbir, I just felt my heart stir. It carries words ready to spur.
Your Majesty is ever so galore. Your Supremacy can't go ignored.

I testify beneath my veins.
I am bound by this Earth and in chains. I seek You though my vision is
blurred,

Release this soul, give it freedom like birds. Plant within it hope like
seeds.
Allow it to greet skies like trees.

¹⁵ **Sa'diyya Nesar** is a TEDx speaker, poet, and author of *Hearts that Remember* and *Strength from Within*. She previously received her Bachelors in English Language & Literature from Hong Kong University and pursued her Islamic studies at Cambridge Islamic College. She wrote for a variety of outlets, including the HuffPost, SISTERS magazine, Muslim Matters, and Malaysia's Qalby app. She is Hong Kong's RESOLVE's social justice 2020 fellow for 'DisABILITIES & Empowerment: less assumptions, more conversations.' She directed 'Women in Islam' and 'Community Care in Islam' events in Hong Kong's Muslim space, and was an occasional speaker at the international annual 'Healthy Muslimah Summit,' and 'Disability & Islam' conference.

Salam Baba's

Journey

to the Past

The Damned Index

Salam Baba is an illiterate in accordance with the “World Literacy Index”. The man who recites the Qur’an in a perfectly rhythmic and sweet voice that mesmerises the listener, does not recognise this flawed damn index. He would argue that there are thousands like him who have never set foot on any secular school in their entire lives, yet able to read and understand the most authentic book of enlightenment revealed unto mankind. He argues, all man-made knowledges impress upon you as “Sky is the Limit”, whereas my Lord’s book invites you to an eternal life beyond the sky; as human mind has been created with an urge for eternal life, which of your sickening worldly books can convince me or my better half logically that all desires of our hearts can be fulfilled within this fleeting life? He argues, had Albert Einstein been truly a genius he should have discovered the Almighty Creator. For him those scientists who reject God are idiots. He says, they go against their own inherent knowledge and every time a natural urge pushes them to ponder over the intelligent creations which are impossible to come out without an intelligent creator, they run to their “Laws of Physics” and obstinately convince their minds that there cannot be a God, because they cannot see him; when their inner self keeps pushing them for answers, they lose the battle and resort to alcohol that suppresses the inner self temporarily. “Could you tell me what the stuff, laws of physics is? He asks and says, “all laws that govern this inexhaustible universe were set by my Lord; as some scientists chose to follow the footsteps of Shaytan, he put a ceiling on their thinking power and made sure it doesn’t reach beyond to discover my Lord. In my view, any laws of physics that did not originate from my Lord are Shaytanic inspirations.

Salam Baba's faith

in Allah is unshakably

strong.

One night he saw in a dream himself picking up a seemingly ripe but perished mango in his front garden. He wished it hadn’t been perished. All of a sudden, his mango regressed and ripened. He thought, now he can eat it. But the mango flew from his hand to the tree branch where it came from and stuck precisely to its own twig. That did not stop there, the mango

¹⁶ **Mohammed Asim Alavi** is a prolific writer, fictionist and social activist, and educational consultant. He has involved in various social development and education projects in many countries. He has travelled to 27 countries for social engagements. He has written 17 books, both fiction and non-fiction and hundreds of articles and conference papers on various subjects related to youth empowerment, social and political issues and Islamic revivalism. He writes in English and Tamil languages. His books have been published in Sri Lanka, Turkiye, Malaysia and India.

tree itself began regressing until it reached the level of a shoot and then stopped. Wonderstruck and thrilled he felt his mind switched off for a while.

If a fruit tree regressed and reduced to a shoot, according to what law of physics it happened? He conceived a fear in his mind as if his Iman is apparently shaking; the atheist-like chap in his village appeared to be winning. What he learned in the Qur'an was nothing of this sort. Drenched in utter confusion he told himself, unless my Lord guides me I am certain to go astray like that chap.

He remembered, *"It is Allah Who sends forth winds which then set the clouds in motion, which We drive to some dead land giving a fresh life to earth after it had become dead. Such will be the resurrection of the dead"* (Al Fatir:9)

Fir'awn Comes

Back

While pondering over the above analogy the saga of Fir'awn crossed his mind and all of a sudden, Salam Baba, the fakir who does neither know what a passport contains nor sat on an aeroplane's seat found himself roaming inside the Egyptian Museum where the tyrant's mummified body is kept.

"My Lord has made things easy for me, unlike the scientist who read through complex laws of physics to understand only a single process of nature. My Lord sends rain and brings life to dead plants and in the same way He resurrect the dead; the matter is done!"

His eyes then contacted the tyrant's face and fixed on it. Now he is witnessing a group of workers who placed Fir'awn's body in the museum carrying it back to the Red Sea bank where it was discovered in the late 1800s. What freaky human beings are these workers? Oh they are in old-fashioned attire! Time is in reverse gear now. Fir'awn's mummification process reverses and becomes a full-grown human corpse; the corpse enters the red sea spot where it drowned thousands of years back. Salam Baba witnesses a large number of sword-wielding soldiers surging out of the ocean and on top of them Fir'awn. He hears some incomprehensible plea from Fir'awn's mouth.

It was like a deafening screech, so terrible. Then he realised it was backtracking of, "I believe that there is no god but Allah in Whom the Children of Israel believe, and I am also one of those who submit to Allah" (Yunus: 9), which Fir'awn cried as he was drowning. It was a totally futile plea at the wrong time after losing all opportunities granted to Fir'awn by All-Merciful Lord.

Salam Baba is so intelligent and attached with the book of Allah that if you read any verse in backtrack format, he will read it in the right way.

Fir'awn and his troops backpedalled to his grandeur palace; Prophet Musa Alaihissalam and the Muslims from among the children of Israel too backpedalled to where they were. Salam Baba's eyes are forcefully glued to the spectacular scene he is immersed in witnessing with all his senses. As a Qur'anic expert without any parallels in his village, he knows the story of Prophet Musa Alaihissalam. He can explain how Fir'awn's army pursued the children of Israel, how the Red Sea split and stood like two high walls on both sides and paved the way for Banu Israel to escape from the approaching army of Fir'awn; how then the sea fully overwhelmed Fir'awn and his huge army. As his enthusiasm

aroused he chose to follow Fir'awn to his grandeur palace, instead of following Prophet Musa and fellow Muslims, as he was fully aware that they are destined for the paradise. "Let me see for myself why my Lord promised to save the corpse of Fir'awn as a warning for posterity. Now the tyrant's arrogant actions run through like in a bioscope screen and Salam Baba is a singular spectator to that.

While he was absorbed in this state of utmost ecstasy the tip of his mouth felt a salty taste. He suddenly broke into a furious wake-up on the face of his beloved wife. The jovial woman, seeing him not waking up for Fajr prayers thought, he could be dreaming, so "let me put some salt in his mouth so that he will feel as if he is taking a sea bath in his dream". They both erupted into laughter, like an early morning mood changing pill. Both prayed, but Salam Baba returned to his "Thinking Corner". He thought, if time travels in reverse, for an instance, all human beings would regress and end in Adam and Hawwa. This is how the resurrection should be happening. But one thing is sure, in resurrection, every human being will return to life or probably the day they died, they will not regress and end up in the first father and mother.

He doesn't need a scientist to teach him about the probability of resurrection. The logical thinking power he has nurtured by reading the Qur'an gave him the answer. He was told, "Your Lord can send every man into the root of one man; He also can bring every man into life and stop there". Then Salam Baba glanced through in his mind:

"On that Day We shall roll up the heavens like a scroll for writing. Even as We originated the creation first so We shall repeat it. This is a promise binding on Us; and so We shall do", (Al Anbiya:104).

Embrace

Take my hand and take me away.
For I want to wander this world
And forever be in wonderment.
To see its sights and sounds

And different lands and peoples.
Gaze at history before my very eyes,
be in awe of what it leaves behind.
Even witness endless natural beauty,

and glorify it's Creator, this is my duty.
I want to notice the signs all around.
Then praise Him sincerely
with my head on the ground.

Heartfelt prayers whispered gently
Reaching the Heavens high above,
And a Lord so willing to answer with love.
No matter who we are

Or from where we come,
We all seek connection
To each other, and the One.
The signs are there for you and me

No matter how different you are to me.
We all seek happiness and joy,
Internal peace from deep within.
At times, also experiencing hurt and pain,

And shedding tears just like the rain.
We can all share a moment
of our combined humanity
despite any differences.

By reaching out, having a welcoming heart
Or a smiling face, just curiosity and a kind embrace.
After all, we were made into nations and tribes to know one another,
and to travel this Earth to see His signs.

To witness Him in everything
And be connected to the Divine.

¹⁷ **Ummu Futumu** has a passion for languages and words and loves to connect with people. Her poetry work aims to reconnect people to a deeper sense of Islamic identity. Her work can be found in many social media platform.

**You bombed them
to death**

You bombed them to death
Off the face of this Earth
All these years
But you still didn't realise

their true heavenly worth.
One way tickets to Paradise
And martyrdom achieved
But innocent families

Who haven't even yet grieved
Or felt relieved
From these merciless bombardments
That never seem to cease.

For all the suffering they endured
Lofty palaces await them
Which they just secured.
No compassion and mercy could you show

But despite all your horrors
Their humanity is what the world got to know
Of those with bright faces that just seem to glow
People too good for this lowly abode

Destined for high heavens
With deeds piled like mountains of gold
The world sees the truth and beauty you radiate
Your sheer existence they tried to exterminate.

Felt threatened by such love and warmth,
Passion and faith.
My dear Palestinians,
You've a special place in our hearts forevermore

You taught us so many lessons
with all that you patiently bore
You lifted veils
And opened people's hearts to the core.

As for you, genocide supporters
Now your turn to learn
To see what your hands earned
May your stomachs churn

And conscience burn
May you never feel a day of peace

For everyone's world you upturned!
THIS is what YOU earned.

So have your turn.
Have this lowly life
Of no purpose or goal
Keep accumulating your evil deeds

To the pits you will be thrown
We live for the next life anyway
Where our souls will be returned.
Palestine WILL be free

The whole world shall see
That God made it be
From the river to the sea
Freedom at last

Brothers and Sisters
In humanity
Living side by side
With dignity, unity

Sense of community.
Wealth of opportunity
Justice, freedom and peace is our call
This is the message you came to teach us all.

Ya Allah

The heaviness is too heavy now,
But You burden no one
With more than they can bear.
You only truly care

By giving us all our fair share
Of the trials and tests
That give us breakthroughs
Beyond compare.

So make it easy and light Ya Rabbi
And take away this hurt and pain.
Replace it with Your remembrance
Of Your high and lofty names.

Let the scales be heavy
but not my troubled heart
Cleanse and purify it
And mend every broken par

Scent of a Wife

Your fragrance fills my home
Your eyes in me cause a storm
This ship won't sail far from port.

Until Death do us Part

There is beauty, external and internal
The external will weather and fade
but the internal will always remain.

Ignorance

We are the dust upon which we walk
the air that we breathe
be humble.

Mountains

Be like the mountains
They let the waters erode their surface
Adding to their beauty and grace.

A Grain of Sand

We are fighting
and killing each other
over a grain of sand

¹⁸ **W. M. Aslam** holds a BA (Hons) in English Language and Literature from the Open University, U.K. Currently, he is working on his third novel, which is nearing completion. He enjoys the inspiration he gets for book writing, when working with children in schools. W. M. Aslam is a prolific writer, blogger, visual artist, actor, and keen photographer. He enjoys the great outdoors and marvelling at nature, come rain or shine. He has self-published two novels, four short stories, five poetry books, as well as a book on wellbeing. He has appeared on Islam Channel, British Muslim TV, and was shortlisted for British Muslim of the Year 2016. He is aiming to adapt his stories for the stage and screen. His passion for writing has grown with the passage of time.



Other Words

AN INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF CREATIVE WRITING