

Staying Strong

By: Shagnika P.

The pain in my stomach was so unbearable, that I started coughing up my own blood.

"Someone, please call the ambulance, she is dying!" a woman shouts.

My mother's tears fall onto my diseased face, while the tears welled up in my brother's eyes were fighting to leave me, just like I'm leaving him. I move away from my own body, even though I'm not dead yet. I see a light that I can go to, but I know, that's a way to heaven.

I'm like a ghost. I'm not dead yet, but I have a decision to die. I walk around my restless body, as I see the big white trucks driving to pick me up. I walk in the ambulance wondering, *should I die, or should I suffer.*

"Sana?" I hear behind me.

I see a ghost! An actual Ghost! I look closely, "Baba?"

Baba is another word for Dad. He comes closer to me, reminding me of the childhood and laughter's I've had with him. Until, the day he was in the army, making his promise to his country.

"Baba? You're here!"

I hugged him tight feeling, himself hugging me.

"I'm here baby, but why are you here. This is a void for death."

I looked above to see his face.

"I got shot."

I was only 16 years old. However, society still views different people as "not good enough". I went to a school, where 85% of the people were white, and 15% of the people were lacking that color. Furthermore, we were the ones who got spit-balled and pranked for our different culture.

Baba weeps, "I never imagined you at this age coming to the void. You need to go back to your life. You still have time."

I moved away from his grip and sighed, "Baba, it hurts. I'd go back to my life, but my body hurts. I cannot suffer through this country. If I go back, I might be back in this void again. Or worse, Mamma and Chiku could come here later."

Chiku was my little brother. He would've been the one to die, yet I sacrificed.

"Yo Chiku!" Some white kids hollered at him. My ten-year-old brother turns around closing his eyes, and he could still see the gun the taller kid had.

"You think because you're a human, you can just come to life. You're a Muslim. A Muslim doesn't belong here."

I walk down the football field to pick up brother, when I see this. My brother falls to his knees, begging, "Please. I'm sorry you didn't get selected for the team. I'll quit for you. I'll do your homework. I'll do anything, just don't shoot that at me."

That taller kid chuckles, "You already made the mistake of coming in this country." He clicks his gun, and I yell at the top of my lungs running towards Chiku.

"Leave him alone!"

I huff my way to save a life. As Chiku sees me, he screams, "Sister! Don't come!"

I risked it anyway. I pushed him to the benches, where the next thing I heard was an explosion of a single bullet. The voice of a poison that entered my stomach rather than a 10-year old's stomach. I fall to the floor looking down at blood flow coming out. That's when my life flashed before my eyes.

"Dang it! I only had one bullet," the tall guy says. Then Chiku ran to some colored kids asking for help.

I saw the white kids running away, and Chiku shedding tears. My mother was called to the field, and I knew this would be the end of my life.

"I can guess how you got shot from your look," Baba says, interrupting the flashback I just had.

"Baba, you understand what it feels like to save someone from the evil lurking on them," I whispered.

"Sana, it will hurt. People turn against each other and someone is hurt. I died from battle for this turnover country, but my heart didn't give me a choice to stay or leave. That's why we need to protect each other no matter the risk. It will ache when you feel your wounds, or when nasty kids punch you. Still, you will stay strong."

"Baba, no one feels strong right now." I complain, looking over my body. I see my mother's face reddened by tears. My brother on the side, praying for my life.

"Your death will affect everyone. Your mother will regret herself. She will blame herself for everything, and your brother will become depressed."

"Baba, why can't you under-"

"Because Sana! Once you die, everyone is hurt. No one is there to protect your mother. Your brother would wish, he could've slept with you in your bed more. Lastly, your mother, wished she could have said 'I Love You' one last time," Baba said overwhelmingly.

I took a deep breath, "I don't belong here. I fear insecurity and self-confidence. What good am I now?"

"Ma'am, you need to step outside the hospital room. Her heartbeat is low. We are going to shock her," I hear vaguely in the reality world. I notice myself on the hospital bed, where the doctors are trying to revive me.

"Sana, you only have a minute. You want to know why you belong here? Because, people still love you. If you die, everyone dies. Nevertheless, if you live, you'll know, everyone will at least have a smile on their faces. They will become stronger with you."

Just with those words, I knew Baba was right. I need to live.

I nodded walking towards my body, "I love you Baba."

With pride, he said, "I love you too. Remember, your sacrifice bought you another chance."

As the doctors put the shock into me, I sunk into my body, and I took the deepest breath of air back to reality.

"She's alive," the doctors and my mother yelled.

Everyone knew, even though was still weak, I stayed strong.