

Fighting A Losing Battle

Saturday, 2013

The boiling summer of New York City brought droplets of sweat that ran down my skin and splashed onto the hardwood floor of our house.

Waking up this Saturday morning with the excitement of seeing my friends ran a shiver down my back. I felt it all vanish right when I saw my mother running down the hall of our house with a garment in her hand. My heart raced rapidly as she got closer to where I'm standing. I knew this day was coming, but I just wasn't ready.

"Wear this," my mother commanded, handing me a precious hijab. I glowered at her with my smoldering eyes as I thought of ways to reject her command.

"Can I start wearing this from next year? If I wear this out of nowhere my friends will be terrified," I whined wanting to terminate this conversation.

"No, you're wearing it from today. Now go to your room and put it on. By the way, hurry you're going to be late for your tutoring center," she demanded as she disappeared into the kitchen.

I stomped onto the floor, which made loud thumps as I walked into my room, putting my hijab on as quickly as I can. I then roared out of the door shutting it forcefully to show how irritated I am with my mother.

Why did it have to be today? It was supposed to be a pleasant day.

There is a quicker way for me to reach my tutoring center, however, I'm willing to take the longer route because I know my friends never walk this way. I made sure I don't spot any familiar faces by turning my head around minute after minute. The last thing I want is my friends seeing my hair completely covered by this odd material.

I'm trying to fit in with the world, but now it seems like I'm only getting more and more isolated from it. As I continued walking, I spotted an alley between two houses. It only takes me seconds to comprehend what I'm about to do next.

I have to do this. My friends will treat me differently if they see me wearing this hijab.

I checked twice to see if anyone's watching me. I slowly walked into the gloomy alley between the two noiseless houses. This alley is giving me a horrendous feeling, hitting my nose with what smells like dirty water that has been kept in a bottle for too long. As soon as I took off my hijab, the world filled up with nothing but silence.

There is no one watching, yet I felt all the eyes in this world staring at me through their repulsive looks having my knees to weaken. I feel guilty as if I'm performing a crime. Well, to me it is a crime.

As I approach onto the doorstep of my tutoring center, I face my friend Alexandra, who has a burgundy scoop neck shirt on with dark blue jeans. She looks so confident with what she's wearing that she almost doesn't have to worry about what people think of her.

Then there I am, this self-conscious little me who strongly cares about what others think of her, she's even going against the rules of her religion. I feel like a star surrounded by a million shining stars, only mine radiate darkness.

"Hey your hair looks pretty," Alexandra says sending me a slight smile.

"Thanks, I straightened it," I spoke under my breath.

*Little did she know about anything I did before I walked in here. Wait....little did **anyone** know.*

Sunday, 2013

Just like in the name of the day, the sun beamed upon my face reflecting off every body of water, as I stared at the cloudless blue sky. Sidewalks fill with the

aroma of roasting meat with rich and creamy mashed potatoes that reminded me of a memorable time I shared with my family. I'm in need for one of those times to come around so I can get out of this trouble I'm creating for myself.

I keep on looking out the door as my tutor gave us a never ending lesson. Everyone has their hands under their chin as they stared at the clock that's going *tick-tock-tick-tock*.

"Ugh," Alexandra breathed a sign of misery. As the clock reached three, everyone jumped from their seats going outside one by one.

Then there I was, waiting for everyone to leave so I can accomplish putting my hijab back on without anyone noticing. A goal that no one would want to accomplish, other than me.

"Hey let's go outside, what are you waiting for?," Alexandra asked as she got up from her chair.

She wore blue jeans with a gray graphic tee which had "Célfie" written on it. Along with those, she wore her favorite hoop earrings. I know how much she loves those because of the way she kept on swinging it back and forth.

"You can go, I have to talk to Mr.Rocha," I lied referring to my tutor.

Is this how it's going to go from now on? Does my mind always have to do with getting caught that I won't focus on hanging out with my friends?

As everyone leaves, I carefully walk out of the door of my tutoring center looking out for my mother. "Great she isn't here," I mumble thankfully at the thought of my mom not catching me without a hijab.

As those words came out of my mouth, I see nothing, but a blur of a woman standing on the sidewalk with her hands that held the shoulder strap of her bag firmly. I can sense her anger as she turned into a vicious tornado that started

spinning with no control. The sight chilled all the blood that flowed through my body.

My mother.

She didn't say one single word to me as we walked toward our house. I want to see her waiting for me again in front of my tutoring center, but *this time* without my heart bursting out of my chest. *This time*, I just want to be a normal girl who's just getting picked up by her mother as she runs to her without being afraid. *This time*, I want to feel free.

But it's too late.

As me and my mother walked into our house, I had a feeling I was on the edge of hearing a two thousand word lecture. My mother has no limitation of her words.

"Don't you see that you're leading yourself to your own failure? Who even does that? If you had a problem with wearing a hijab, you could've just told me about it and not go behind my back to take it off!" she blusters.

"You failed on every test you took so far, then why are you even going to your tutoring center? You could just stay home, there's no point," she bellows as I spot the hopelessness that is clear in her eyes.

I want to talk back, but instead all I'm doing is nodding. The most frightening part is that all of her words are true. The one that crushed me into pieces as if her words came to life is when I heard,

"You're a failure."

Those were the words I thought I'd never hear because it's what I'm the most afraid of.

She's making me feel afraid of myself and right now it is giving me an absolute pain and stress. I'm starting to wonder, *"Will I ever stop? Will I ever change? Will I ever surrender from this battle that I already lost?"*

Self-acceptance and self-reliance, two words I wasn't very aware of years ago. To this day, I'm filled with remorse that still lives within me somewhere in my heart. It's almost amusing how certain actions can be so simple, yet, **effective**.