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Chicken Nuggets

Hamzat Ipesa-Balogun

March 15, 2019 2:20 AM

A slight jolt sends a shockwave throughout your system. Your eyes slowly shutter open. The hospital room appears to be fuzzy. A slight haze clouds your vision. One. Two. Three. You try to blink away the cloudiness. Once your vision is clear enough, you begin to analyze what is happening. You see everyone rushing toward her. Putting two plus two together, you realize what is going on. As your body springs forward toward the hospital bed, you feel a slight ping of guilt. You remember you promised yourself that you wouldn't fall asleep. You remember you wanted to be awake for EVERY last second. You quickly push this negative feeling away, once you reach the hospital bed. Her face looks so calm and peaceful as if she was just sleeping. Your jaw rapidly moves up and down, trying to repeat the words that everyone else is saying. La ilaha il Allah¹ La ilaha il Allah, La ilaha il Allah. This one phrase is all you can say, as your mind is still trying to connect the dots of what is truly happening. Your gaze gradually raises toward the hospital monitor. Your eyes lock onto the heart rate monitor and the numbers quickly begin to drop. 10, 9, 8, ... 0. And before you were able to catch your breath, she was gone.

Inna Lillahi wa inna ilayhi raji'un²

October 12, 2018 10:03 AM

¹ There is no God, but Allah. When someone is about to pass away, their loved ones try to remind them to say this. Because Muslims believe whoever says this La ilaha il Allah on their death bed, with absolute sincerity, will go to Jannah (Heaven).

² "To Allah we come from and to him we shall return". This is apart of the 156th ayah of Surah Baqarah. This a phrase that Muslims say when a person passes away.

A sigh escapes your lips, as you glance over this assignment. Throughout your years of taking PLTW³ courses in high school, you are getting used to the fake medical scenarios they give you to solve. But that doesn't make them any less stupid. You don't care for Sally-Ann, who is diagnosed with Tuberculous or even the Williams family with some unknown disease. Time and time again, you wonder why you must read about these fake scenarios. Putting down your pencil, you begin to wonder about the college applications you have to do. A warm feeling envelops your body and a slight grin is displayed on your face.

October 13, 2018 11:43 PM

Okay, this is the plan. You're on fall break now, which gives you enough time to complete the applications you are working on. Without fail, you successfully hype yourself up for the upcoming work. By doing this, you become very determined to finish everything by the "early action" deadlines. Okay, that "was" your plan, and this is what happened. After one of your family's regular prayer sessions, she sits down with you and your family for a meeting. A slight smile forms on your face, because your family never has formal meetings. And I mean never. So, you know big news is coming. Maybe you are taking a big family vacation to Mecca. Maybe your family is going to get you a \$100,000,000 gift card to Foot Locker. The possibilities are endless. She begins to explain what the meeting is about. The childish grin quickly turns into a somber frown. You hear nothing of a family vacation or new basketball shoes. Instead unknown medical terminology drowns your ear canal. And by the end of her explanation, you want to cry your heart out. What in the world is this disease anyway? You're waiting for the punch line. You're waiting for the April fools' prank. No matter how long you wait, there was no punch line. All of the fake medical scenarios we study in class finally rush at you. Sally Ann is no longer a fake person. She is in the same position as them now. This is cannot be real life.

Inna Lillahi wa inna ilayhi raji'un

A random April evening in my sophomore or freshman year. 2016 7:13 PM

As soon as the last basketball drill is over, your body says listen up: "you have been working me all day, time for revenge." You reach down to take off your Kyries and the soreness begins. Your foot touches the hardwood floor and the aching begins. Right, left, right. You try to coordinate your movements but to no avail. You are practically limping of the basketball court, wondering if your coach is a coach or a professional torturer. Truth be told, you suck it

³ Project Lead the Way. These are the medical classes that I took throughout my four years of high school.

up and trudge into the silver Toyota Corolla. Once you sit down and get your bearings, you and her lock eyes and a huge smile makes its way to your face. Driving after basketball practices with her is the best. You always have the funniest conversations about pretty much anything. On this particular day, you are driving down the backroads of speedway. You know, with horses, farmland, corn. The basic Indiana stuff. Anyway, you don't remember what made her say the word "sheriff", but after you heard it, you lost it. Your body bursts into uncontrollable laughter. Your eyes burst into lachrimation. Your arms burst into a frantic failing motion. You have almost forgotten about your beat-up body. When you finally calm down, you ask her to repeat it one more time. And again, she says "sheriff?". Your cheeks puff up to hold back your laughter. Alvin and the Chipmunks will feel ashamed if they see my face. You then say, "No, no, no its Sheriff not sheriff." She turns to you in utter bewilderment. Realizing that she has no idea what you're talking about. You go on a five-minute tangent about how her Nigeran accent causes her to say this word wrong. Even though most people will just ignore your cheeky behavior, she finds it amusing. In fact, she finds it is so amusing that she begins to laugh as well. Moreover, for the rest of the car ride, you try to explain to her how to pronounce the word "sheriff". At least your pronunciation anyway. Most people probably wouldn't notice the difference between diction, but you know you did. At least, you think you did.

Time flies when you are having fun
Summer or Spring 2019 10:43 AM

You readily open the green book. This book is written by the greatest author, so you are legitimately excited. You arm yourself with your orange highlighter, ready to mark up the text. This is the best. After the events of March 15th, you have been determined to get closer to God and become more religious. A new flame of motivation ignites your soul. You already consider yourself very religious, but everyone has room to improve: Because no human being is perfect after all. Moreover, you have begun to study the Holy Quran more: in the English text. You realize that up until now, you have just memorized surahs⁴, just to memorize them. You haven't really put much thought into it: until now. In the past that was enough for you. But now you actually want to understand what God says. You genuinely want to understand what you are reciting in prayers. NO MORE AUTOPILOT. You have been going through the motions for so long, but no longer will you make that mistake. I mean it only makes sense. Why look for advice, when you have the greatest advisor ever. God. He is the one that made you, so of course, he knows what will bring you peace and happiness and what will not. You feel like you have been

⁴ These are the chapters that the Quran is divided in. There are 114 surahs in the Wise Quran.

stupid all your life because the answer was right there in your face: But you just didn't see it. Through studying the Wise Quran, you find numerous passages that stick out to you. However, the ayahs that stick out to you the most are ayahs 150-157 in Surah Baqarah⁵. The meaning itself is beautiful, but there is something else to it. Something that makes you naturally gravitate toward it. Something.

Allah created time, so he has control over it.

March 14, 2019 7:48 AM

Yeah, that was tougher than I thought. This thought runs through your head as you pop down into your chair in your first period English class.

You just spent your morning explaining to each one of your high school teachers about your family situation. All of their reactions were the same. At the start, they were glancing between you, a computer screen, a piece of paper, or something like that. And by the end, their eyes were as wide as the moon and they have no idea what to say. *Even though these teachers each heard this story for the first time, you had to repeat it six times, which was really difficult.*

You think back to you to your older sister's, Halimat, advice.

She told you to email them instead of telling them in person because it might be rough. At the time, you thought sending an email would be lame.

However, now it doesn't seem like such a bad idea.

I mean the advice came from big sis. I mean she was eighth in her graduating class and she went to Smith College.

Moreover, you consider her an elitist and a savant. Halimat is pretty much the general of the household. Scientifically, you see her as a macrophage or NK cell⁶. After you finish your sister's criteria list, you still think you did this the right way. *Because this is a subject that should be told in person.* Anyway, you take out your bright red spiral notebook and one of your random pencils that have been stowed away in your backpack and put them on the table.

Your hand reaches forward to open your notebook, but one of your classmates asks you, "did you get the Dual Credit Anatomy homework done?"

In an instant, your body sweats bullets, not because of the homework. But because you forgot to tell your anatomy teacher about you know who's situation. You explode out of your chair and dash out of class: leaving a trail of dust behind. Think Sonic the Hedgehog. You fly into the Usain Bolt sprint as you try to climb upstairs by skipping three steps at a time until you get to the third floor. Now standing in front of the door to your anatomy class, your breath is now hesitant and hitched. But you grasp the door handle anyway

⁵ This is second chapter of the Quran and the longest surah.

⁶ Natural Killer

and open the door. A sea of freshmen is waiting for you inside. Their stares almost burn a hole into your cranium. Almost. You shrug off their stares and speed walk to your teacher and get her attention. Your mouth lowers, to begin the same spiel for the seventh time, but nothing comes out. Realizing that this would be a serious conversation, your teacher asks if you want to go outside and talk. You agree to this and both of you move into the adjacent lab room. Now inside the lab room, your mouth moves into a fluttering motion and you explain the dilemma the best way you can. Your teacher has always been a person that anyone can root for. She is extremely scatterbrained, but she tries her best which is admirable. When she hears about what your family debacle. You see her heartbreak into two. Howbeit you barely know this woman, she pulls you into an embracing hug. However, she quickly let's go, which you find pretty funny. Looking at her face, her facial features turn from worried to disbelief, to bewilderment.

She hesitates a little and then skeptical says, “You. You seem really calm and you are handling this well.” She is almost implying that you are a robot or something. Regardless, your eyes raise slowly, so you can look her dead in the eyes and retort, “Yeah, I feel like I have been prepared for this my whole life”.

Inna Lillahi wa inna ilayhi raji'un
December 20, 2018 7:56 PM

You watch her slowly move out of the room. *She has lost a lot of weight.* She appears to be weaker than she used to be. However, she is still as vibrant and beautiful as usual. You notice that she is still wearing them on her feet, which surprises you. They are really old. They are really worn out. They are really uncomfortable because you got the wrong size. But she still wears them to this day. *These simple house slippers that you bought for her birthday are still being worn.* You think to yourself. Although she has a lot of house slippers to choose from, she still wears the old black and white fluffy ones with a broken end and wrong shoe size. A feeling of overall astonishment wraps around you. This is how she has always been, she always does these selfless acts to make others feel better. *You have never met a human being like her.* Just seeing this woman on a daily basis puts ease in your heart. She is coolness of your eyes. She is your.....

Time flies by when you are having fun
September 27, 2019 8:48

You find yourself listening to the Khutbah⁷ that you recorded on March 15th. It feels nice to hear someone talk about her in a positive light. Usually,

⁷ These are the sermons that are given on Jummah.

Khutbahs are not about a person's life unless they are a prophet or someone like that. So, it gives you a sense of pride to hear her being praised in such a manner. Because she lived her life in a way that could inspire anyone. She is such a great person and any good that comes her way is well deserved. The Imam⁸ appears to be concluding his sermon, so your hand reaches toward the electronic device, so you can turn it off. Having said that, you notice that there is still some time left in the audio recording. So, you let it play a little bit longer. After reciting Surah Fatihah⁹, you hear the imam recite some more verses and continues with the prayer: like usual. You freeze. *Hold on a second.* Even though you haven't mastered the Arabic language yet. You are still able to pick up a few words. Sabr and Salah. Steadfastness and prayer. Your hands launch forward toward the English translation of the Quran on your desk. Your fingers rapidly flip through the pages until you reach the desired page. *It can't be.*

A few weeks later your Imam, Imam Ahmad, comes to Butler for an event. He is an extremely knowledgeable person and very humble at the same time. Weird right? You don't find people like that nowadays. In any case, you play the recording for him and ask what part of the Quran he recited on the 15th of March. Just by listening, he can pinpoint what the verse is. Which is pretty incredible because the Quran has over 6,000 ayahs. At first, he makes a mistake though, he thinks it was ayahs 45-46 in Surah Baqarah. But when he got gets a second listen, his face changes. The rhythmic words of God swirl around him and enter his auditory canal. he reveals that the verses are actually ayahs 153-157, not 45-46. A sense of something you can't describe invades your entire being. A feeling of humor. A feeling of melancholy. A feeling of disbelief. Maybe a little bit of all three. You think back to the ayahs that you naturally gravitated toward.

They were the same ones used that day. No wonder you felt that so strongly about them.

But the question is how can someone who doesn't know much Arabic, able to make that kind of connection? God knows.

Time just rolls by without a care in the world.
March 15, 2019 4:05 AM

⁸ Islamic religious leader that leads the prayer and in charge of most religious activities or events.

⁹ Al Fatihah means the "The Opening" and this is the first surah of the Quran. This surah is recited in every Salah prayer.

Nothing. Absolutely nothing. For the first time in your life, your mind is completely blank. No thoughts about the Pacers' game. No thoughts about an upcoming test. No thoughts about what you want to eat for breakfast. Nothing. One step after another, your body silently takes you out of the hospital room. Now outside, your upper back leans against the tan walls of IU West Hospital. Your gaze zeros onto the room number. 3132. A melancholy chuckle is all you can do as you remember asking her what her favorite number was so long ago. You remember that it is the #9. You look at the numbers one more time and add them up $3+1+3+2=9$. You feel that this is fitting for her. With most of your family starting to file out of the hospital room. It is time to go home. You go in the elevator. You take two rights and a left. You walk down a looooooong corridor and you're out. The cool morning air stings your face. But you don't care. You and your brothers load up into the yellow Volkswagen buggy that you despise so much. But you don't care. You are on the road heading home, but is it truly home without her?

Inna Lillahi wa inna ilayhi raji'un
February 12, 2019 3:45 PM

Aye, today you have an interview with the University of Pennsylvania. Did you prepare for it at all? Nope. But to be fair, you can generally carry a conversation about pretty much anything. So, it shouldn't be that bad. Besides you are going to be talking about yourself, so you know a lot about this interview topic. *Yeah, I am just gonna wing this one. Whatever happens, happens.* This is what you think as you walk out of the bathroom. Suddenly, a blaring siren punches its way past your Pinna and deep into your auditory canal. Your body takes you towards the nearest window and you gently spread open the blinds, so you can see. A bright red ambulance and fire truck are making their way down the street. As you always do, you pray that they will reach their destination safely. The cars appear to be slowing down. You blink once. The cars appear to still be slowing down. You blink twice. *Maybe the neighbors are having a situation or something.* The cars come to a screeching stop in front of your house. Your jaw crashes onto the floor, you let go of the blinds, you race downstairs. You practically trip over yourself as you race down the staircase. *Well, looks like no interview for me today.*

Inna Lillahi wa inna ilayhi raji'un
Sometime between 5th grade to 8th grade. 2011-2014 11: 15 AM

The judges are scrambling to tally the points so, they can declare who the grand champion is. This is the most disorganized karate tournament that you have ever been to. But to give them their credit, you have only been to like three of them so far. The lead judge is a young man in a long sleeve dress shirt and black tie, which accompanies dark dress pants. He quickly

announces, “Hzxy myt Iswka-Blogrpnj step forward.” *If you had a dollar for every time someone mispronounces your name, you would be richer than Jeff Bezos. I mean my God, it’s not that hard. Wait, hold on a second was that your name that he TRIED to pronounce. Can’t be. Not connecting the dots, your head turns to the right then to the left. No one moves. Oh snap! That was your name he TRIED to pronounce.* Your body slowly inches forward and the main judge hands you the trophy. Your arms reach out and your hands gently wrap around the golden figure. You pull your arms back and take a step back, so you can stand next to the rest of the competitors. You think about whether you should be happy or not. *I did win, but he butchered the cheese cakes out of your name.* By the time, the judges dismiss you, any negative feelings turn into fleeting ones and the positivity takes over. You race up the bleachers and thrust the trophy into her face, so she can see it. She appears happy at first, but her face curves into a suspicious expression and asks, “So how did they say your name again?”

Time flies when you are having fun.

March 13, 2019 9:57PM

Shoot. I tried. Dad tried. Granny tried. Big Sis tried. Her sister tried. Your oldest brother tired. None of us no matter how hard we tried, could get her to open her eyes. The doctors predict that she will pass away on the 14th, but we all want to see her open her eyes, one last time. *We all tried, but to no avail. Well, all of us but one.* My dad calls up my middle older brother, Azeem, to come forward and give it a try. Now let me tell you about my older brother Azeem. He is one of the most patient and “chillest” guys you have ever met. I mean like freezing rain chill, he is an overall great human being to be around. *Moreover, he has Autism, he is not Autistic. Autism is something he has, but it’s not a character trait.* You always hear the word Autistic and dislike it because people let that define people with Autism, which is foolish. Anyway, because of said Autism, his speech isn’t always “clear”. *Whatever that means.* Anyway, you and your family always notice Azeem’s key phrases that he uses like “Excuse me” and “Carry on”. When it’s his turn to bat, he tries to gently nudge her awake and call her by what he knows her as, but to no avail. You can see that he is starting to get irritated, so you think that he should just stop. But you underestimate your big brother. All it takes is one of Azeem’s famous catch phrases: Excuse me. As soon as he says that, her eyes fly open. As if her biological instinct kick into overdrive. This phrase that she probably remembers hearing hundreds of times, is all she needs to open her eyes. It is honestly a miracle. It is really a powerful moment for you.

We had all tired and the one person that was counted out, came in and scored the game-winning buzzer-beater. Truly a masterpiece.

Time flows just like a river. Never stopping for anyone. Make memories while you can.

A random Sunday in your 2017 or 2018 2:27 PM

Your heart fills with excitement and joy. Your body is shaking uncontrollably. Imagine what will happen to a regular person's body, after eating a gazillion cookies and washing it down with sprite. That is, you times five and a half. She looks over to you and gestures you to calm down, because you are just going to basketball practice. She always tells me that you treat this basketball thing too seriously and it's not a do or die affair. Honestly, you are only understanding this now. She slows the car down and stops because of a red light. In front of you is Dixon Funeral home, which you don't really pay any attention to. She then turns left, and you refocus on basketball.

The hands of time cannot turn back.

September 26, 2019 9:12 PM

New people. New food. New responsibilities. New environment. This college thing sucks so far. Like really sucks. *Butler no offense, it's been real, it's been fun. But it hasn't been real fun.* In any case, you begin to formulate a list of things you like at Butler.

1. The prayer rooms in Jordan Hall
2. The squirrels
3. HRC
4. The squirrels
5. The professors. Shout out to my man Nick.
6. THE SQUIRRELS
7. There is no #7 because everything is trash after that. Just kidding, you have met a few decent people, so they can be 7.
8. Did you mention the squirrels?
9. Vacant
10. Vacant

On the other hand, you are hopeful in God that things will get better.

Recently, you study and learn about many religious figures in Islam. *And a lot of them had hard lives. Like really hard lives, "not like my phone died it's the end of the world" hard.* Prophet Muhammad (PBUH)¹⁰, *Prophet Abraham (PBUH)*, and *Mary (RA)*¹¹, *the mother of Jesus (PBUH)*, all had pretty tough instances in their lives.

¹⁰ Peace be upon him is a prayer that is said after the name of any prophet of Allah.

¹¹ Radi Allah Anha is prayer that means may Allah be pleased with her. This is used after the names of female companions of the prophets, people who are mentioned the Quran, or Siraa (the story of prophet Muhammad (PBUH)).

So, you draw on them for inspiration. Even you know who, *who just passed away*, fits this category. She is the most religious person you have ever met. *I mean the doctors said, "you only have so many days to live". And she responded, "That's what you say, let's see what God says".*

Yeah, that's pretty religious there, folks. You begin to remember the moments where you see her patiently preserve through her trial and these moments teach you something. *You can be dissatisfied with your situation, but still have a great relationship with God.* For some reason, you always thought those things were mutually exclusive. Because you believed that dissatisfaction is akin to ungratefulness. Which is 100% false by the way. Now realizing this, you take all your pent-up frustration and hop onto a twin-sized bed. You whip out your iPhone and begin texting the same number that you always contact in case of an emergency. You always call this number, when you want to snitch on your siblings. You always call this number when she takes too long to get home. And at this moment, your digits are slamming against this screen. You are pouring in all of your feelings and emotions. Your concerns and frustrations. After the message is complete, your left thumb hits the send button. Knowing that no matter how long you wait, there will be no response.

Inna Lillahi wa inna ilayhi raji'un

March 15, 2019 2:05 PM

You're sitting in the building that you have been in all your life. The same striped carpets alternating between green and tan. The Islamic architecture elements are the same. The domes and pointed arches, the whole nine. You are sitting in the same Masjid Al-Fajr, but it's not the same. Usually, when you dress up you feel really good. Today, you are wearing a brand-new gray suit. But your shoulders are slouched, and you are infected with the blues. You are not the happiest guy right now, and the fact that her body will be shortly delivered by the Dixon Funeral Home, doesn't help at all. Today's Jummah is kind of rough. *I have been to numerous Jummahs¹² in your life, but today is just different.* Imam Ahmed starts his Khutbah and he explains the travesty in New Zealand. You and your family truly didn't hear anything about the New Zealand travesty until now. Even though you are 8,347 miles away from New Zealand, you can empathize with the suffering families. Why? Because you also lost a loved one today. The Imam begins to wrap up his sermon and the prayer begins. The Muslims in the room begin to stand up one after another. They form long rows that extend all the way to the back of the Masjid. The

¹² A special prayer on Fridays where Muslims congregate at a Masjid (house of God where worship is done). There is a sermon that is done and a prayer at the end.

Iqama¹³ is called, and the prayer begins, like in any other prayer in Jama'ah¹⁴. He recites Surah Fatihah like any other salah prayer. After the collective congregation says "Ameen"¹⁵, Imam Ahmed begins to recite his ayahs of choice.

<https://bit.ly/2Ofldpq>¹⁶ - [Following this link leads to the audio file]

Although you are an absolute novice in Arabic, the words create a reaction within you, something deep down. Liquid Sadness leaks from your lacrimal ducts and slowly drips down to your mandible and stains your peach fuzz bread. These words pierce me. These words dissect me, deeper than any possible weapon.

Inna Lillahi wa inna ilayhi raji'un

May 19, 2019 7:49 PM

You sit across from your rival. You and him engage in one of your many intellectual conversations about life. *Earlier you said that, Azeem is the chilliest guy you know, but this adversary of yours is the coolest guy that you know.* Like too cool for school. He can pretty much beat you in anything. You usually have the upper hand in fighting games like Super Smash Bros. But he wrecks you in pretty much any game that involves strategy. You swear to dunk on him at least one time in his lifetime. If you were the protagonist, he would be the antagonist or antihero depending on the day. You can wish to throw a flurry of roundhouse kicks to his esophagus, but still, look up to him as one of your role models. Yes, you are talking about your older brother, Ahmed. Not to be mixed up with Imam Ahmed. *God willingly, Ahmed will reach that Imam status though.* Nevertheless, You two are in a conversation about the recent events in the family. You tell him that everything came really fast. So fast, that you didn't have the time to register everything. Moreover, you say that you just want one more thing. You want to hear her talk to you, just one more time. It could be a piece of advice, or maybe laughter, or even getting yelled at to sweep the floor. You just want something. *To be honest, you haven't even prayed for this because you think it is impossible.*

Inna Lillahi wa inna ilayhi raji'un

June 8, 2019 11:15 AM

¹³ Signifies the start to the prayer

¹⁴ Praying in a congregation

¹⁵ After Surah Fatihah is recited, Muslims says "Ameen" at the end because this surah is a prayer asking for God's help and seeking his guidance.

¹⁶ These ayahs that are recited are 153-157 in Surah Baqarah.

Dude, you did all that work for this? No way! *You can't tell me that all those late nights studying, the anatomy of a human body or practicing calculus problems was, for this.* You honestly think this is one of the stupidest things, you have ever done. You walk on a stage when they TRY to pronounce your name and you get a piece of paper. That's IT. You are sitting at your high school graduation, wondering what the importance of all of this is. *This ceremony is probably one of the most overrated things that you have ever seen in recent memory.* Now you are grateful to God that you had the opportunity to graduate high school. That isn't the problem. The problem is that you must sit through this long ceremony in the HOT sun. You are practically an ice cream cone melting in the scalding heat. Man, if your older brother Azeem wasn't walking with you today, then you would have tried to find some type of excuse to get out of this. At any rate, after all the funky charades are done and you are FINALLY freed, you want to go home. There is a problem though. Your family wants to take pictures. You are not the biggest fan of pictures. In fact, you dislike them strongly. But on the other hand, you love your family. So, you make the sacrifice and take like a gazillion pictures. Even though it is probably only 50, it feels like a gazillion. Ahmed can almost smell your irritation in the air, so he graciously saves you and Azeem from the mayhem. Next, you and your brothers climb into that yellow buggy again. You don't even have time to think about your disdain of this car, because you are just happy that you are heading home. Once you get home, you can finally start on the fun stuff. You are, by no means, enthusiastic about that fatuous ceremony. However, you are enthusiastic about the food that comes with it. The house is decked out in Chick-Fil-A catering, chicken nuggets, chicken sandwiches, biscuits, you name it. But that wasn't all, your sister orders a double décor cookie with butterscotch icing. *Will you eat yourself into a food coma?* Regardless, you can't wait to dive in. At this time, the rest of your family has come home. They remind you of the box, you must open. It is a time capsule that you made in kindergarten. *Your teacher told you not to open it until you graduate high school, and by the grace of God, here you are today.* You take the box out of the pantry and put it on the kitchen table. Your finger turns into scissors as you shred away the wrapping. Before you open the box you actually remember some of the things that you put inside. *For example, you remember that you put a Pokémon card and a picture of yourself in there.* With the brown wrapping gone, the Nike shoebox is now bare. Your family crowd around you to see what is inside. Your hands gradually lift up the box. *Is the drama building yet?* You fling the box open and you acknowledge some cool items like your stuffed frog toy and the Pokémon cards. Beneath the miscellaneous are the important items. Once you discover these items, this experience turns from leisure to the best day of your life. You notice an envelope and turn it over. It has your name on it, with a line that forms a heart on the bottom. You didn't even need to open the letter to recognize what this is. *All you needed was to see the handwriting. You*

have seen this handwriting hundreds of times. You saw it on field trip permission slips, lunch money checks, shopping lists, etc. Even though she was a pharmacist, her handwriting almost appeared as a physician's. Yes, it is her handwriting. Your mother's. You wonder how something like this is possible. It can only be called a miracle of God. This graduation day started off as an absolute travesty, but now it has turned into something that you will treasure for the rest of your days. You have never felt more grateful in your life. Allah has come up clutch in your life before, but nothing like this. Who could have planned something like this except God? This situation increases your resolve to deepen your faith.

By the time you are done reading the letter, you realize you inherited something. It's not something that is measurable. It's not something that is quantitative. Yet, it's something truly significant. You inherited your mom's inner will to patiently preserve through any difficulty. You inherited your mom's fearless attitude that allows her to be relentless, no matter what the odds may say. More importantly, you inherited the faith that your mom passed down to you. She passed the torch down to you. There is no way you can drop the ball now. You miss her, but you have work to do, so you don't miss her in the next life.

Inna Allaha ma'aa sabirin¹⁷

¹⁷ For God is with the Steadfast. This is found in Surah Baqarah Ayah 153.