

GRAD CABLE

The official newsletter of the Texas A&M University at Qatar
Graduate Student Association



UPCOMING EVENTS/NEWS

DEC. 8-9, 12-13

FINAL EXAMINATION PERIOD
FOR ALL STUDENTS

**BEST OF LUCK ON
YOUR FINALS AGGIES!**

DEC. 18

QATAR NATIONAL DAY

DEC. 19-23

SEMESTER BREAK (OFFICES
CLOSED)

DEC. 26

OFFICES REOPEN AFTER
SEMESTER BREAK

The Fruitless Pursuit to Perfection

by *Fatimah Khan*

“Think outside the box”, they say, but when the box is an abyss and the abyss is perfectionism and I’m a hundred feet deep, it’s going to take a lot more than a rope to get myself out.

Ever since I was a young, I had the tendency to hold myself at very high standards—ones that can only be achieved with great difficulty. While my perfectionism served me well until high school, I slowly realized that it’s more of a curse than a blessing after joining university.

For example: when asked to weigh two grams of a compound in a chemistry lab, I would hover over the balance for longer than necessary, adding and removing compound until the balance read exactly “2.000 g”.

Seeing “2.002 g” would dishearten me immensely. Looking back now, it was a tremendously futile task to exert my time and energy in, but that is how I approached almost every other task I was given. With the fast-paced and heavy workload of my university courses, my perfectionism obviously backfired—I simply did not have the time to perfect each and every task. My inability to meet my own standards frustrated and disappointed me beyond measure and caused me to doubt why I was even admitted into university in the first place.

One year into my courses, I realized that perfectionism was an unsustainable method for approaching my responsibilities. I had to sit back and reevaluate my priorities. How much value would spending an extra hour perfecting an already okay assignment add to my grade? Sure, maybe it would raise my grade by 1 or 2 %, but

was it *really* worth sacrificing my time, energy and health over? Constantly questioning how much value worrying about the tiny and often unnoticeable details added to my life helped me lower my standards. And with lower standards, came better grades—a direct result of improved mental health and wellbeing.

Of course, I’m in no way the perfect imperfectionist—lowering my self-imposed standards is a more daunting task than most would imagine. I realize my fatal flaw is that I’m ironically still trying to perfect imperfection, and this just goes to show that unlearning preexisting behaviors is a lot difficult than picking up on new ones, but I’m still on a journey to embracing imperfection, and every day, I progress a little further to thinking outside the box.

PHOTO BY SARA AMANI



Unbounded Bliss

by *Muhammad Danyal Imam*

The landscape passes by in a blur. The bustling chatter of workfolk and clamor of wheels slowly disappears into a hum, with reminders of human civilization becoming more infrequent with ...

...every passing moment. The rows of houses are replaced by a foray of trees extending forward, as if the world I lived in just a few minutes ago no longer exists, emphasizing the portal-like effect as I continue on. Beneath me is not the whirl of an engine or the crunch of wheels on tarmac, but rather the steady stride of my thoroughbred stallion, Max.

I am aware of a distant rumble of flowing water, and shortly, the path meets the bank of the river, much like companions at the onset of an indefinite journey. Across the expanse stand the Himalayas in all their glory, with their snowy tops disappearing above the canopy of clouds. I stop and dismount, allowing Arion a well-deserved drink from his favorite spot. The air is crisp, with the sweet scent of early spring rejuvenating my spirit, as if it wasn't already, for I was in my element. I walk up to Max and run my fingers through his glistening, chestnut coat, and silky black hair, and he responds by turning and offering me his muzzle which I duly take and caress. Satisfied, he returns to the stream to complete his drink and proceeds to graze along the riverbank, as I stroll along the flowing water. I can sense Max's gaze on me as I move away from him, always watching out for his master, as I do for him.



“ACRYLIC POUR ON CANVAS.”
PHOTO BY MALEK HELALI

There are few things as marvelous as the bond between a rider and his horse, something that can never be replicated with the modern-day automobile. A car simply responds to the commands of the driver, under full control, and on its own, just a pile of worthless steel. But the horse has a mind of its own, with each one in possession of a unique personality. Mares are more docile and well-behaved, while the stallions are stronger and feistier. While less trusting and more difficult to befriend, stallions are fiercely loyal to the one they choose to accept, a fact I learned largely through experience myself. Mounting a horse puts your life, to a certain extent, in his trust; unlike a vehicle under your command, your control is restricted to the instruction he chooses to accept, and accept he will, for the mutual love between the master and his horse is unparalleled.

I call out to Max, and he trots up to me, resting his massive head on my shoulder just as he used to do when he was only a baby. I oblige with a scratch under his neck, and he burrows his face in my hair, our bond having been firmly established from the time I found him abandoned as a foal. He was now full-bodied, with muscular legs toned from years of training and a frame that stood over six-feet tall. No one since has been able to approach him, for his is an intimidating stance, but he softens in my presence, submitting his will to my own.

I mount him now and we start again, refreshed from the momentary pause in our journey. Slowly we make our way away from the river and along a different path weaving through the green expanse, towards the giant peaks. A fresh breeze picks up from behind, as if aiding our journey. I sense a spring in Max's stride and the tension in his muscles, his ears flicking from left to right, eagerly waiting to hear the command he so desperately wanted. I loosen the reins, gently dig my heels in his sides and make a short click with my tongue, voicing my permission.

The green fields become a blur, with the sound of the wind in my ears drowning out everything but the sound of Max's hooves as he gallops to full pace. In that moment, the shackles of worldly responsibility are broken and forgotten. The spirit flies free, and both rider and horse experience unbounded bliss.

I open my eyes and I find myself back in the confines of my office. I had been daydreaming again. With a sigh, I finish my coffee and make my way down to the lab, hoping to one day experience the joy of that ride again.

ADDITIONAL DEADLINES

UPCOMING

DEC. 5 - LAST DAY OF FALL SEMESTER CLASSES REDEFINED DAY - STUDENTS ATTEND THEIR THURSDAY CLASSES PURSUANT TO STUDENT RULE 8.3 ([HTTP://STUDENT-RULES.TAMU.EDU/RULE08](http://student-rules.tamu.edu/rule08)), NO REGULAR COURSE EXAMINATIONS (EXCEPT FOR LABORATORY AND ONE-HOUR COURSES) SHALL BE GIVEN DURING THE 15TH WEEK OF CLASSES.

DEC. 6 - READING DAY (NO CLASSES OR FINALS)

DEC 7 - READING DAY (NO CLASSES OR FINALS)

DEC. 15 - FINAL GRADES DUE FOR ALL STUDENTS BY 6:00PM, OFFICE OF RECORDS

FOR ALL DECEMBER 2020 DEGREE CANDIDATES

DEC. 16 - ACADEMIC DEGREE EVALUATIONS CONDUCTED AFTER 6:00 P.M.

DEC. 17 - ACADEMIC DEGREE EVALUATION RESULTS AVAILABLE.