*Her fingers waltz through the air. The choir solemnly sings Esenvalds’ Heaven’s Flock. A slow, simple start*— *sorrowful, yet steadfast.*

I didn't dare speak. Silence was the only song audible that night, loud and piercing as ever, accompanied by broken, muffled tears. I glanced around one last time, cherishing every inch of my neighborhood, each embellished with all the memories I'd ever had. Soon, my concept of home would shatter. I was reluctant, afraid to imagine a life other than this. I had little choice, though. In 2017, I left Bangladesh to move to America.

Nothing would remain the same, I thought, nostalgically remembering laughs shared with friends under the mango tree by my house. Never again would there be another serene evening walk by Dhanmondi Lake, where I'd immerse my taste buds in the world of street-food delicacies like *fuchkas.* As I said goodbye to my father, I fondly recalled all the times growing up that we cheered on Bangladesh cricket together. I embraced him tightly, both of us holding our breaths like dams, desperate to restrain an inevitable gush of tears. Now, it was time to leave, to let all I knew fade away into vague memories I'd one day reminisce.

*Her fingers pierce through the air. With each phrase, crescendos amplify and our breaths shorten*. *As our gaze latches onto her every movement, the intensity heightens.*

Leaving my accustomed life to thrive in one with novel, seemingly insurmountable challenges constantly hurled at me from every direction was overwhelming. In Math, I endured judgmental stares when I professed my unfamiliarity with graphing calculators. In English, I was constantly reminded of my accent and mispronunciations from my peers' incessant giggles. I strived, but struggled to adapt to the differences in every aspect— culture, society, language, academics. I yearned for direction, for light at the end of this tunnel.

*Her fingers tickle the air. With sweet, delicate legatos and warm ebbs and flows, the song wraps itself around us with cozy threads, weaving our little souls into one big story.*

But everyday, for a little moment, I found respite— chorus. Chorus was more than just a place to sing. It was a place to freely be myself without fear of judgment, to communicate with others on a visceral level transcending cultural and linguistic barriers. It was the microcosm of my American Dream: people of all backgrounds creating a community to share sweet moments in song. Here, we celebrated our differences in melodies, creating harmony and beauty. We were all unique, yet one. Separate, yet inseparable.

It was not long before the wonder of the Walton Chorus captivated me as I basked in the peace and comfort I felt here. It was in these lush, warm harmonies and this sense of family wherein lay my *home*. No matter how different we all were, in that split second right before we came in, we breathed in complete unison, and we breathed with no other intent but to illuminate beauty, no other desire but to radiate light, and no other wish but to glimmer hope — no other reason, but to sing. As one. As family.

*Her fingers intently pause in the air, unmoving, unwavering. We close our eyes and we breathe together in these silences*— *piercing, aching silences*— *silences full of longing, purpose, and the song of life.*

Since then, I have nurtured my choral passions to make this community mine. When I lead singers to music events I organize at local senior homes, I help give the senior residents the same solace and sense of home music gives me. When I was privileged to conduct a carol in our choir concert, I extended the season's joy to my diverse community, brought together by music I helped create. And when I sang with my fellow singers at the memorial service of a Walton student who passed away, the comfort and peace we gifted the family reinvigorated the sense of unity and purpose within me.

Thousands of miles away from home, I found a home in Walton Chorus, a home undivided. As a Bangladeshi-Muslim immigrant, I cherish those rare moments where all labels shatter when I build bridges with people from vastly different backgrounds— and that is the very fabric of Walton Chorus.

Journeying to college and beyond, I will continue singing the song of Walton Chorus to bring people together and build a community, because I know that the melodies of unity and hope will always ring bright even in tunnels completely void of light, and that the feelings of home and community are only a song away.

*Her fingers delicately float in the air, coming to a gentle rest. The piece cadences smoothly*— *the end. But now, our music begins*— *and we, are the composers, carefully crafting and building the blaze sparked by her fingers as we weave the world into one big story*— *into a family with the spirit of the oneness and greatness that is my home*— *Walton Chorus.*

**-Zaim Zibran**