

Commonwealth Essay – The Mad Scientist

Flights of Fancy

Thursday, 19th February 1490

To think, they think I have lost it.

I hear them whispering behind my backs when they think I am not listening. I feel their disbelief and speculation. Their taunts, their insults. They call me foolish. Mad, even.

They did not laugh at my studies of human bodies, did not laugh at my foray into drawing and painting. However, this, this amazing idea, they scoff at. “Fly?” they ask, and then they snort.

Is it really such an impossible idea, such that they cannot comprehend it? So many days I have spent gazing at these wondrous, winged creatures effortlessly glide through the air. These birds are such fine, curious creatures, blessed with such gifts of freedom, of flight!

I cannot even begin to imagine that feeling of flight. The taste of the wind on your face, the sheer delight; the ease of escaping through the cloud – oh! Just the thought of it sends shivers through me.

Humans are such clunky creatures. We spend the first year of our lives stumbling around on our hands and knees while birds are able to take to the skies within a month of their birth.

I see these sweet creatures caged up in the marketplace, and can do nothing but buy the few that I could afford back home. It is a waste, a blasphemy, to let the bird rot life away behind the cold iron bars. When I release them, they flap; a blur, quicksilver, and they vanish into the sky.

How these swift, fragile creatures manage to leave this horrid land confounds me. If only God had given us wings! We are condemned to walk only on earth.

But lately I have been studying about the possibilities of building a device, a machine to help us leave this wretched ground. One day we will soar alongside swallows, diving and dipping in those azure expanses of sky.

Bit by bit, I will dissect these marvels of nature, these creatures of flight. I have spent countless days in my study, scratching down possibilities. My friends give me this looks of pity when I show them my ideas. Some shake their heads indignantly, while some stare at it in incredulity, with smiles on their faces much like those of a parent correcting a mistaken child.

But I ignore them. I will ignore them and continue with my work. I can feel it. I am mere steps away from creating the future.

They say it is against nature to fly, to break free from earth's hold on us. Canards! We are meant to fly. We just have to find the way.

And that is what scientists do. We study, we solve and we create. That is what I have set out to do. When the laws of the earth govern us, we will find a way around them.

I will find a way around them.

They all think I am foolish. But I can show them; I will show them!

One day, when we converse from opposite ends of the earth, when we live in houses that tower over the greatest of mountains, they will take back their words and admit that I was not mad.

I was right.

Man, will fly.

Leonardo Da Vinci

541 words