Dear Journal,

I wake up with a start. The swishing sound of gondolas out on the water below my two-story house always make sure I don’t sleep in. Even on weekend days. Also, if sometime, somehow, that sound failed to wake me, the shouts of merchants’ products out on the city streets are always the universe’s Plan B. Anyway, back to when I woke up. I woke up with a start. The music of the “Italy’s Founder Celebration” below me sounded like the call of some elegant species of bird who loved to sing dubstep music. The annual “Italy’s Founder Celebration” was exactly what the name implied. A day to celebrate the birthday of the person who founded Italy. And they play the founder’s favorite music. So that morning, I listen to the music and let the lyrics sink in…ah I love music. As I listen to the music, I think about the journey ahead. Today, I am not going to participate in the wonderful festivities of Italy’s Founder Celebration, I am going to trek across the Sahara Desert and cross my fingers that I make it to Makkah. Well, I need to get ready to leave, so I will be back later.

Wish Me Luck,

Alika

Dear Journal,

I just finished getting ready, and now I am walking downstairs to eat breakfast. I hop down the ridged gray stone until I get to the last step, where I stop. I see my mom and my sister enveloped in a big bear hug. I know that my leaving was really hard for the both of them, mostly because after my dad died, I basically became like another parent. I got my driver’s license as early as I could, and drove my little sister and brother around. I also went grocery shopping by myself a lot, and made dinner even more often. I of course went to school instead of work, but other than that I did everything that my mom did. So, when I see them standing there, I just think about how grateful I am that my brother is still sleeping. If he was awake, he probably would have said something stupid like, “Ha, ha. You just got eaten. BY A BEAR. Get it? BEAR hug? Hahahahahaha” or something dumb like that. Anyway, I better go comfort them. I will probably not write to you again until after the start of the journey, so goodbye for a while.

Wish Me Luck,

Alika

Dear Journal,

I just left my home, my family, and everything that I knew. Right now I am about to cross the Italy border and get on a boat that will take me across the Mediterranean Sea to Africa. If I make it, I will have to make the journey across the Sahara Desert to get to my destination, Makkah; that is where I will learn about Islam, and maybe learn a little Arabic. Anyway, I will talk to you on the boat.

Wish Me Luck,

Alika

Dear Journal,

I am on the boat going across the Mediterranean Sea. I only have two more weeks until I arrive in the boat port in Africa. Then, I will travel across the Sahara and try to make it to Makkah in time for the celebration concluding Ramadan. There will be a big feast because Ramadan is the month of fasting, and at the end the people are so hungry they feast. So, I guess you could say they go from fasting to feasting. Anyway, I have to get there by that time to be able to see my family and friends that live in the Arabian Peninsula. When I get there, I will stay with them in Makkah for a few days, and take a plane back to my own home in Venice. Anyway, today the fishermen on here with me caught a GIANT salmon fish that we are going to have for dinner. Anyway, talk to you later!

Wish Me Luck,

Alika

Dear Journal,

I am walking off the ship now to start my journey across the Sahara Desert. I see what looks to be the start of the desert. I notice that my boat is already taking off. They are on a tight schedule, and they have to make it to their next destination (London) so that they don’t get in trouble. Anyway, I am walking through a tiny valley made from sand dunes and officially entering the desert. I hear a rattle. Um, I’m ru-u-u-nning no-o-o-o-w. B-y-y-y-y-y-y-y-y-y-e!

W-i-i-i-i-i-sh-sh-sh M-e-e-e-e-e L-u-u-u-u-u-u-ck-ck-ck-ck,

Al-i-i-i-i-i-i-i-i-i-i-k-k-k-k-k-a

Dear Journal,

Well, I got away from what I found out was a rattlesnake, and I am already tired and hot from all that running. What am I going to do for the rest of the trip? I see a little pool of water over to the northeast, and I know I am thirsty. It is an oasis! Well, I will talk to you later!

Wish Me Luck,

Alika

Dear Journal,

I am in Mecca and celebrating at the feast! Thank you for all your support thus far, but I won’t be talking to you any longer. I am bringing you to the history museum for all to look upon you with wonder! I might visit you once in awhile, but for right now it is goodbye. So goodbye!

Wish Me Luck (With the Rest of My Life),

Alika