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FocusBangla photo

A gentle southern breeze blew dust in the air. The grumble of the rusty engine slowly died as the military truck stopped in the middle of the road. Daylight was nearly fading. The trembling fingers got a hold of the iron bar, and with all his strength the man tried to pull himself up. His battered and bruised body told a story that no would want to hear. His skin had come off at places, revealing flesh. Blood oozed out from his forehead and he felt an acute pain in his right ankle. May be its done for good, he thought. Gasping for breath he looked around. The place was not familiar; he was probably miles away from his territory. His left hand was paralyzed, as dead as a rock and he saw now the wound that they had caused. The hole was big, it got infected a long time back, and now there's no way that hand could be of any use. He looked at the rest of the captives, who were with him all this time. A few were breathing, some had already closed their chapters, and he knew what his fate would be. Suddenly he heard the footsteps coming towards them; and then it stopped. A hand reached out to him, grabbed him by the collar and dragged him down on the floor from the truck. His vision was blurry, his left eye swelled up with clotted blood and he only could see vaguely with his right one.

The General watched the captive on the floor. He knew only this person could tell him the location, but he also knew that this man was strong. He tried every tool of torture in the book, but it seemed as if the man had become invincible. The General was staring at him, not able to fathom how a person could be so patriotic. The captive coughed blood, he was moaning, the pain was getting to him, he knew the consequences but he insisted on enduring it.

The General sighed and looked at the rest of the people. They were twelve altogether. Would he kill them all? May be. They may get dangerous. He had seen what they are capable of. They don't know what fear is. The General motioned and the rest of the captives were brought down. The man saw the General. A faint smile appeared on his bloody face. He understood that the uniformed guy has been brought near the edge, and that he was defeated. He chuckled and let the agony take over. He saw another truck pulling adjacent to the previous one.

The troops got down and he heard shrieking voices of protest and screams as the females were brought down. The man somehow managed to get on his feet. His eyebrows narrowed. He could not figure out what was about to happen. His eyes stopped on a figure, a familiar face. It was she! His heart beat faster; a chill ran down his spine. His wife was almost beyond recognition. She saw him, and her eyes said it all. She didn't speak either. For a moment the atmosphere stood still. The man wanted to say so many things to her, how much he loved her, how it was only her loving memories that kept him alive through the tortures...she had been beaten up badly, and could hardly lift her head. One of the soldiers came and took her to a pond. They all were taken there one by one. They were twenty-six in number, people from different classes, but all with the same meaning of life. The man turned around and found her right next to him. She managed to fake a smile. The time has come. She held his hand gently, a last gesture of assurance that they would make the nation free, a nation that would be independent and if that meant sacrificing their lives, they were ready for it. The General looked at the captives, all with their heads held high. He felt scared. They were united! Their mind was holding the information, but their infuriated eyes showed denial. They would never say anything about the rest of the freedom fighters or their locations.

The General looked at the soldiers, gave a nod and the blazing machine guns broke the silence. The bullets went home; the man felt a sudden jerk, scuttled backwards and fell in the stagnant water. His eyes lay fixed at the endless sky and he wondered how crimson twilight was never as beautiful as his own blood. He felt as if he was old, thoughts reeling through his mind; his childhood, his adolescence. Was it worth dying? He wanted to live, but his thoughts were fading away...

(Student of East West University)