

Don't Even Ask

HASAN SHAHRIAR

The other day I met up with an old friend who was planning to go away somewhere far for what she deemed a futile-discovering-one's-own-self-tour-that never-works. I offered to meet her for the last time in the café we always went to. She'd be gone for months and wasn't even sure if she would return or not. She should, I said. What'd I do without her?

"Go fishing or something," she replied.

"Yeah, right."

The café smelled of peanuts and we sat at the back. The curtains, green and mossy with grime, were drawn in.

"You can come with me, you know, if you want."

"I'm fine where I am."

She shrugged, "Just asking."

"Will you be back before my birthday?"

"I'll try."

I wanted to see her off at the airport, but she didn't want me to. The waiter refilled my coffee after she left. That's when you walked in.

You sat at the front. Ordered a pie or something. Waited for it for what seemed a lot of time.

I paid the bill and walked out, the morning air playing with my shawl.

You followed me. Called me up from behind. You knew my name. I turned back. We had met, you told me. I looked at you more closely. You had a certain sharpness in your eyes. As if you couldn't believe it was really me. Recognition is scary.

You were the younger daughter. The quiet one. Your hair was tied up in a bun, your smiles receded as boredom took over. You were left alone in the room full of our relatives. Conversations around you grew louder and you became more still than ever.

I remember approaching you when familial banter was at its loudest and you were at a

position where if you stayed stoned any more you would have risked the stares of everyone. You liked that I made the first move.

"Hi."

"Hello," you said. Curiosity.

I introduced myself. You told me your name. I brought you cake from the dining room. We descended down to my cousin's room, where I promised you there would be less people, less noise.

"So — have any idea how our parents know each other?"

"None."

You laugh an earthy laugh. "Me too," you say. You tell me about college. You're taking a year off.

The room smelled weird. It smelled of a flower I don't remember the name of.

We talked for half an hour. I tried to make you laugh. Failed. You were nervous.

However, you did say you hated my glasses.

Pretentious, you thought. They were too big and stopped being "in" a long time ago.

You had a car. Wanted to give me a ride home. I hated getting buses at night. You had a single CD with only one song on it in your car. You listened to it over and over again.

"Rock And Roll," by the Velvet Underground. You said you couldn't get it out of your head. You liked the part where Lou Reed says, "It was alright". Your hypothesis: "Some kind of enzyme thingy gets secreted inside me filling me with 'hope' when he says that line." I laughed at you. I said you were funny. You really were. I liked how you said all the things you said. I didn't tell you that. I didn't know you enough to tell you that.

I thanked you for the lift and left. We never caught up again. Until now.

"Hey."

"Hi."

"You never called."

"What could've we done?"

"So many things."

"...I should've called."

"You bloody should have."

"Where you off to now?"

"Nowhere. I'm killing time."

"I have no place to be either."

"Wanna go somewhere?"

"I don't know. Where?"

"...Anywhere?"

You smiled. I forgot all about my friend. We had a good time. It was alright.

These are the winning entries of this month's prompt:
PREMSHIKARI.

Next Month's Prompt: THE DISAPPEARANCE
Deadline: 1/1/15



Gangster of Love

MASK

I am the last of my kind,
The remnant of a dying people.
If you look back you will find
That we are a race that fell to the hordes of evil.

The land was ours, conquered with love.
Then came the curse

From
Above

That drove us to our hearse.

I hunt what little is left
To stay alive
And share it with the holy land
So it may survive.

All my efforts
Proved for naught
When mother earth
Began to rot.

I am

Alone

With my inner demons
And as such I stand;
The enduring offspring
Of this once-loved land.

A burdened life.
A
rewarding death.