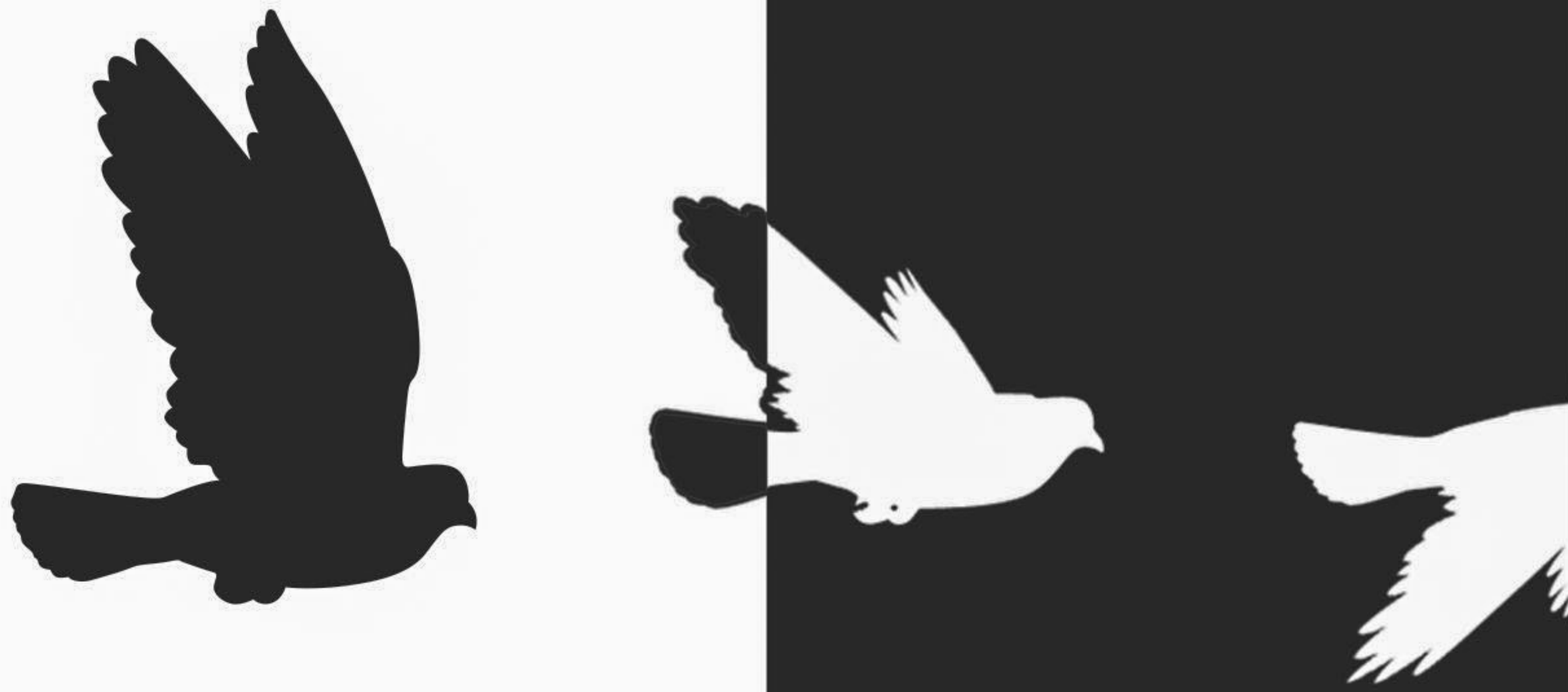


# The Magpie without Wings

ABHIK HASNAIN

"I am from the future."  
 "Are you? You look like someone from the past!"  
 "Yes. Then I am from the past."  
 "You cannot be from both the past and the future. If that were so, two opposite worlds would have collided and we would have perished. This conversation would not take place."  
 "Then I am neither from the past nor from the future."  
 "But you're not from the present either..."  
 "Can't I be someone above time? Someone beyond the three phases?"  
 I smiled. "No, you can't. In a world full of time-keepers, you must be in one. You must."  
 "How about being time itself? If I can't be anything -- why not be everything, all at once?"  
 I stared at The Magpie Without Wings. It/he/she was of a bright blue; black on his beak, brown on her claws and a red stripe down the tail. A festival of colors -- a festival without end.  
 It would be then that I would come to know what it truly means to fly. Wings? No, you don't need wings to fly. Wings are merely an illusion, a deception, a soft veil between those who flew and those who didn't.  
 Yes, I flew with the Magpie, without wings. The clouds drifted apart, the wind rushed beside us, serenity was no longer a luxury and we...we aimed for the zenith, Magpie and I. And in the midst of flight I realized why time was never relevant.  
 The Magpie flew boldly, as if all had bowed down to him, and I with a hint of fear inside me, as if something would rise within the clouds and turn this heaven to a graveyard of solitude. But no, that would not happen. The one beside me would protect me and nothing, absolutely nothing could come in between. I smiled once again.  
 "You put too much faith in me."  
 "Yes. You seem to have given the impression that I could."  
 "All of it is unreasonable."  
 "Faith is anything but reasonable."  
 "What happens when I fail?"  
 "When you fail, the temptation of life will be no more, I fail with you."  
 "What if... what if you went on without me? What if I depart now...? Would that change things?"  
 "It would only be waste of your courage. I cannot last without you. I shall lose my purpose."  
 The Magpie Without Wings stared at me. I, in utter despair, stared back. Afraid that if I looked away it/he/she would no longer be there. And in that very moment... time stopped.



## FABLE FACTORY

This Month's  
 Prompt:  
**Borderlands**  
 Deadline: **29/01/15**

# The Wedding

Winning entry for last month's prompt  
 'The Disappearance'

KIDWA ARIF & SALMA ALI

I look at the woman sitting beside me. She has on a flowery dress and her silvery-white hair is cropped short. She has to be around my age, a bit younger perhaps. She is asleep now. We had talked while we were waiting at the airport. Every word that came out of her mouth was about her two grandchildren. How they'd want her to buy them ice-cream every time the three of them went out for a walk or how much they loved her stories. I smiled. I have always imagined what having grandchildren would be like. I would definitely spoil them with ice-cream, tell them stories and cook them anything they'd ask for. Everyone always says I'm a great cook, that no one makes better casseroles than I do. My daughter, Maya, loves my casseroles. I shrug the thoughts away and try to concentrate on what the flight attendant was saying.

The apartment I live in isn't in good shape; the walls, the kitchen could use some renovation or maybe it would be easier to just move. But I can't get myself to consider moving, the four-room apartment holds too many memories. I remember the most vivid one, it happened four months ago. Maya and I were setting the table; we had invited Chan for dinner. I recall clearly what Maya was wearing - a bright blue knee-length dress with matching earrings and she'd let her hair down so it fell to her waist, in a dark blanket. Unknowingly, she had dressed perfectly for the occasion; that day was one of the happiest in her life.

Chan, the gentleman he is, had walked in with a bouquet of assorted flowers and Maya stood up to hug him. What Chan did next had made tears well up in Maya's eyes; he reached into his suit pocket and held up a sparkling ring and looked up at her, there was no need for words. As Chan put it on her finger Maya looked the happiest I'd ever seen her. I couldn't have been more content - Chan was kind and polite and he was the only man I could trust with my Maya. Granted, I feel a little dejected now knowing my life won't be the same anymore without her. Like it has been for the past twenty years, after her father had died. But this was life and my little girl was going to have a perfect one. And, hey, she and Chan might just be able to convince me to move in with them.

The venue, date, guest list and everything else has been decided upon. Maya will be marrying Chan on 20th March. She had flown to China a month ago for the preparations. As the days till the wedding are becoming less in number Maya's excitement has kept growing. She has been bugging me for over two weeks to join her. She says, she misses me terribly. I keep telling her she has to get used to it. I smile thinking about the tantrums she throws every time I say that. She'll never grow up!

Our plane starts to take off, and I try to get comfortable. It's hard, I never like Air Asia flights, the seats are so uncomfortable. Before I doze off, I make a decision: I'll move in with Maya and Chen if they promise me grandchildren.