



# DANDELIONS

RAYAAN IBTESHAM CHOWDHURY

As the rooster's call slowly shook the whole ranch awake, Xavi got up with the same feeling of indifference he had every morning. The sunlight broke through the curtains of his room and fell on his face. Like every day, he cursed the early rising practices of the ranch. He didn't know what life was like in the city but he had a feeling it had more variety. At breakfast, Xavi could see a clear excitement in his father's face. Catching his son's attentive gaze, the man responded. "Ah, you won't understand. I am seeing my brother after so long."

At around noon, Xavi saw a silhouette on the road ahead. He could see a man, who seemed to be a few years younger than his father. He was accompanied by four cows and a girl who was nearly as tall as him. Xavi called out to his parents, who both came outside to receive their relatives as Xavi's uncle, Armando and his daughter, Ariana, made their way inside. Xavi's father was having a hard time hiding his irritation at the fact that they had been a good thirty minutes late.

Over lunch, the family went over how both Xavi and Ariana, or Ari as her father called her, had both grown so much. "Your Xavi has become a most handsome man!" Armando exclaimed as he glugged down on another mug. Xavi remembered stories about his uncle's drinking habit.

"Why don't you take Ari and show her around the farm?" Xavi's mother suggested after they were done eating. Without saying anything, the young boy nodded and, gesturing towards Ariana, made his way to the door. Afternoon was generally swimming time for Xavi. He would go to the nearby lake and take a swim but his uncle's visit had cut that off for the day and he didn't quite like it.

He made his way to his favourite apple tree and sat down, ignoring the girl standing there. He felt displaying indifference to her presence would be a nice way to extract vengeance for his stolen swim time. Ariana could tell the boy was upset but she didn't know what to do. She thought of starting a conversation but opted not to later on. She slowly went towards the fence of the ranch and sat atop it. Looking ahead towards the dandelion fields that lay on the other side of the fence, she kept thinking of ways to break the ice with Xavi.

As the girl looked on ahead to the dandelion fields, Xavi's eyes fell on her for the first time. He saw the colours on her cheeks and what was a distinct pinkish patch. It was the first time the boy had really noticed a girl his age. He had seen a few in a movie his cousin had taken him to see but never really in person. He began to examine her, trying to be careful so that she did not spot his gaze. A few things did not add up for him. For one, her skin looked too tender. He looked at this own skin and then looked back at hers. It was clearly much softer, he could tell, without needing to touch. He took a few good looks from head to toe and he became mesmerized. He also saw a bruise on the back of her neck. Had someone hurt her?

He had seen women before. He had, of course, seen his mother. He began feeling different around her. And for some reason, he began to sweat. He was surprised at how long she could just stare at the dandelions without noticing his gaze. Trying to grab her attention, Xavi forced a cough.

The girl looked towards him for a second, making Xavi's heart jump, and then looked away. The boy felt elated. Victorious, even. He began to think of a new way to get Ariana's attention, even if momentarily. Seeing her fixation for dandelions, for a brief second he even wished he was one.

Ariana's father called in from inside. "Ari, honey, it's time to go," Armando's now very high pitched voice floated in from inside the house. "Coming, papa," the girl called back and jumped off the fence. As she began to run inside, Xavi's smile began to fade. Just before getting inside, the girl turned.

"It was nice meeting you. Nice dandelions," the girl said before going inside. She didn't notice someone punch the air.

WORDPLAY

F

Forgetting the string of cassiterite beads  
Sliding down her broken shoe lace,  
She walked away leaving a trail;  
As if black pearls glistening in the light  
Biding me to follow.

ADNAN FAKIR

Adnan M. S. Fakir teaches Economics at BRAC University. Outside he directs a documentary film series called "Finding Bangladesh," writes, takes photos, does social activism and travels a lot. He can be reached at [adnanfakir@gmail.com](mailto:adnanfakir@gmail.com).

# ELECTRICITY

AZWAD AHMED

Pour out the visions from  
a retrograde transparency,  
The ceiling is casting you in its  
greyness  
The voices of the multitude  
crashing down onto the mud like a  
knock on the door that never  
opened,  
We would be running.

There are echoes of a forgotten prayer  
Burned into the skin of a cradled newborn,  
Pushed aside like a blade without a handle, the cars were  
stationary, the roads were blank,  
Purged by oblivion's tears

I heard the song you were screaming,  
We were not far from the colder mornings  
I was still chasing the serpentine scales of a verse much  
feared among the anointed,  
Not your whispers in the depths of misfortune

There was a purple night,  
A misplaced songbird,  
Thirteen mangoes falling onto a headline  
Crosswords and red cups,  
An unfinished puzzle,  
Large windows on the sixtieth floor,  
The tears were not mine,  
They were the steps out of an endlessly cloudy morning,  
Out into the black sun's voiceless howls.