

MUSING



Rain, rain, go away!

The transformation starts subtly enough. A cool breeze caresses bare skins; like a casual hug from an acquaintance you meet after a while. It lasts a few heartbeats perhaps but there is some initial hesitation. The breeze itself is non-committal. The skies around then darken, signalling the wind to blow just a bit harder.

It is a tease more than anything else. Maybe and maybe not swirl in the air. On the ground, a sudden parade of despair begins as black umbrellas start sprouting everywhere in anticipation.

Interspersed among these are the more colourful parasols, a glimmer of hope among a sea of black. Rickshaw hoods begin to be pulled up, lovers draping themselves in blue sheets. A mother covers her child's head with her 'orna' in anticipation. The rains are coming.

Suddenly, the sky begins to burn. A streak of light sets the universe ablaze. The sky growls as if in anguish. Then there is silence. One. Two. Three. And the downpour begins, heavily at first, crashing down on earth.

As the rain drops hit the ground, intoxicating fragrances rise from Mother Earth, her cleansing about to begin. A prolonged session would mean roads flooded with water and overflowing drains become battle grounds and racing grounds for miniature paper boats. But there are less boats now than there were before.

The sky reflectively looks upon the people beneath her - those playing on their roofs and those in the field. Then there are the romantics to whom the rain signals that it is time to sit in the verandah, reading a book and sipping on warm tea. Where were these people? Why did everyone now run towards shelter? Did the people no longer need 'cleansing'?

The sky instructs the rain to fall harder. Faster. Perhaps that would draw them back to the universe's symphony of all senses. Smell the fragrance. Touch the raindrops. Feel the purity. Taste the freshness. Hear the pitter-patters. This was nature at her finest. This was supposed to be her best performance after months of dull cold followed by intense heat. This was relief for the people, wasn't it? Then where was everyone rushing off to? Would these people not indulge like the generation before them? The sky brightens up once again; an invitation disguised as a warning. Rather, an invitation misunderstood to be a warning. Get off the roofs. Get off the fields. Lightning never strikes the same place twice because once is enough. But no great power, no pure beauty can be totally controlled. Does lack of control breed fear? Was it fear?

The rain begins to subside. The pitter-patter grows less pronounced. The sky rumbles, more of a groan now than a roar. Slowly, life begins to trickle below the sky. They begin to return, tip-toes and rolled up pants to avoid contact with the rain.

Full body covered by strange suits greet the remaining rain. Traffic remains at a standstill as if the rain is a license to pro-

voke chaos. The sky begins to clear. A fresh new smell descends upon the population. A foul fragrance to complement the foul waters and the foul tempers the rain seems to have brought about. What happened to the celebrations? What happened to the people's love for the monsoon? What happened to them, the sky wonders.

Her performance comes to a close. No applause. Was that relief in their eyes? But the sky must hold back its tears for they did not welcome it anymore. Like they did not welcome her cool embrace in December and like they did not welcome her numerous colours in February. They just did not welcome her anymore.

But She could not be wholly ignored. As She let another thunder growl, a stern reminder of an encore, a decipherable change could be observed. The black umbrellas parted. The streets, still jam-packed, now played host to groups of scattered children, all excited about the many newly formed puddles; their own swimming holes. As another light drizzle began, droplets of refreshment by themselves, the rickshaw hoods began to be pulled down and car windows began to slide down. They were coming back. Her people were returning to her. But then again, where could they