



Coming of Age

DYUTY AURONEE

Her wrinkles were as mellow as folds in smooth cake batter and her hair smelled of coconut oil. There's something so humble about that, something so earthy. It smelled of home.

Late afternoons were her favourite. She sat around with her girlies. Under the soft sunshine. There were giggles and there were stories. Each of them had a life lesson, she said. I laughed. Ain't nobody got time for the sixties.

Times were changing and I reset my watch. She took up my hands and kissed them gently and muttered something. Must have been a prayer or a blessing. I took her in my arms. She felt so fragile. I promised I would call.

And I did. Four times a week. And then three. Once every fortnight afterwards. Her voice started to sound more and more distant. But I couldn't mull over that for long. Life was busy and that's no excuse. My coffee pot was on the stove and I didn't want it to taste too strong.

This one time I came back home, Dadu was ecstatic. Her age had gone down by a decade or it felt so. She had spread the news among her clan and women with walking sticks and betel leaf stains on their lips came to see me from lands afar. Oh, Dadu. You were so ceremonious. But I never liked 'halwa' smothered in ghee or 'pithas' that looked so artistic.

I had asked her to let me sleep in peace. Jetlag and what not and so many calls I had to attend after midnight. It was morning somewhere else. C'mon. She would lie in a corner of the bed, making sure I had enough space. Her strenuous breathing and irregular heartbeats were comfortably secondary.

She oiled my hair in the mornings. I so hated that. The smell was strong and it felt so sticky that even my mango shampoo couldn't handle it. She wanted to do fishtail braids in my short, thin hair. They never worked. Grow up, Dadu.

We went somewhere by train long, long ago and she had learnt that I had motion sickness. The morning before I left again, Dadu handed me pieces of lemons, jasmines and a handful of mint leaves so that I could fight nausea in the airplane. She handed me something else too. Something terribly ridiculous, her wedding saree that had stones falling off and threads coming loose. Ah, another two pounds in my luggage. Extra charges.

Mornings in New York are frantic and occasionally pastel blue. Poetry like. The salads they sell here are organic and my blow dried short hair stays put in the crisp air. They say this city never sleeps but my eyes feel so heavy. Dead of the night. I wake up startled, at times. My one-bedroom apartment smells of overly fragrant ghee. And sometimes in the shower, my mango shampoo smells like coconut oil. Sticky.

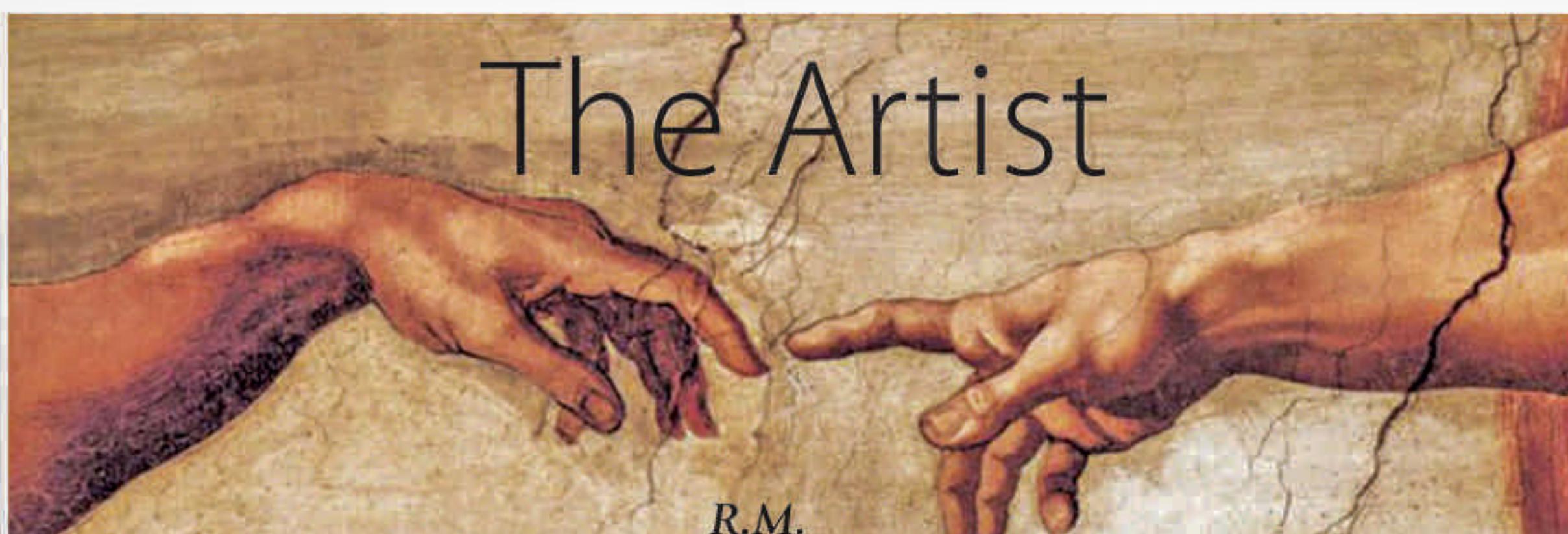
WORDPLAY

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Gnaw and bicker at my woes,
My regrets of the morrows biding to be done;
Invite them as leeches to my dreams
Let them remind me
of the many tears yet to come.
I shall jest with them and their woeful tidings,
Reminiscing in tomorrow, in accordance and fear
In toast,
to a silence that I crave to bear.

ADNAN FAKIR

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The Artist

R.M.

God is my favorite painter.
He has amazing works of art.
Space and time are His canvas
His great reach goes far.

His art is of the highest caliber.
He paints with Almighty strokes.
All His pieces intrigue me,
With you being the most.

I love it when he shows off His skills
By exploding colors in the sky.
Although his paint fades away when the sun sets,
You still see him sprinkling stars in the night.

His skill with the brush is unparalleled.
That's how His talents are proved.
His artwork is so magnanimous
That even denying Him is just rude.

Like all obnoxious celebrities,
He ignores me when I speak.
He remains oblivious about my existence.
Sometimes, He is very cheap.

But God is the Master of The Universe.
Architect of The Stars.
He is His own Michelangelo.
The Heavens, His Renaissance.

The writer is the founder of Thought Kitchen:
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