

Let me do your eyebrows



MYAT MOE KHAING

"Let me do your eyebrows." "Why?"

"Cause they are too thin." "No thanks."

Mithila looked uncomfortably at herself in the mirror of the beauty salon. She could have acknowledged the offer as the beautician's attempt to make more money. Even her dad told her not to pluck her eyebrows until she got into college. Did he think she would want to

do so someday? "What about your nose?" "My nose? What's wrong with it?" Mithila asked the beautician, perplexed.

"What about a sharper nose? I can help you with darker shades."

Every time she goes to Farmgate to buy vegetables, almost every passers-by mutters "Chakma" by her ear even though she is not one. What sort of feeling of superiority do they get from this? And all this because she looked different and didn't react?

Mithila sat straight and analyzed her image in the mirror more meticulously again. This time, the reflection of a not-so pretty girl became conspicuous. Blunt nose, thin eyebrows, wavy hair: why would someone try to change any of that? She had an hour left until the wedding, and suddenly felt awkward. She didn't want to feel indecorous for the occasion, but some changes still felt wrong.

"No thanks. Here's the payment." As she stood up to leave, the pictures on the walls held her attention. The medley of her features couldn't match the calculated beauty hung on the walls. Beauty belonged to the girl all guys were head over heels for.

"It's tough to put lipstick on you. Your lip linings are distorted."

Suddenly she started feeling guilty testing the patience of someone trying so hard to line her lips. "I guess I will be better off without it," she smiled.

"You will look ordinary." And so she had ever since school.

All of them asked Mithila what she was majoring in. She replied, "Economics" -gleefully expecting the guests to ask more about her career plans. Instead they kept coming back to her beautiful yellow skin. Knowing that she had a year left to graduate, Anika's mother giggled, "You will be hitched too. Get ready!" Another lady cheek-pinched her and said, "You will look like a princess and the fairest of all. Anika, give Mithila some sweets. She needs to gain some weight."

Who would believe the bride was the person she'd met six months ago? All those months, Anika starved herself to look thin and captivating on her wedding. Beauty was thinness with clear beauty bones; beautiful was powerful and she was beautiful; Mithila didn't want to gamble with what she had always been.

Mithila has been staring at the mirror a lot recently. She wants to be pleasant to look at too. It takes a lot of work to be a woman. It takes more work to look like someone else you don't know: someone everyone is trying to figure out. The more she thinks, the shallower she finds the biologically programmed concept of beauty.

It doesn't make any difference to Mithila because she is scared.

"Hi beautiful! I bought you a saree and a teep."

"Am I still young enough to wear these? You have always been buying me sarees since we got married. We are old now. We have our grandchildren. What will they think?"

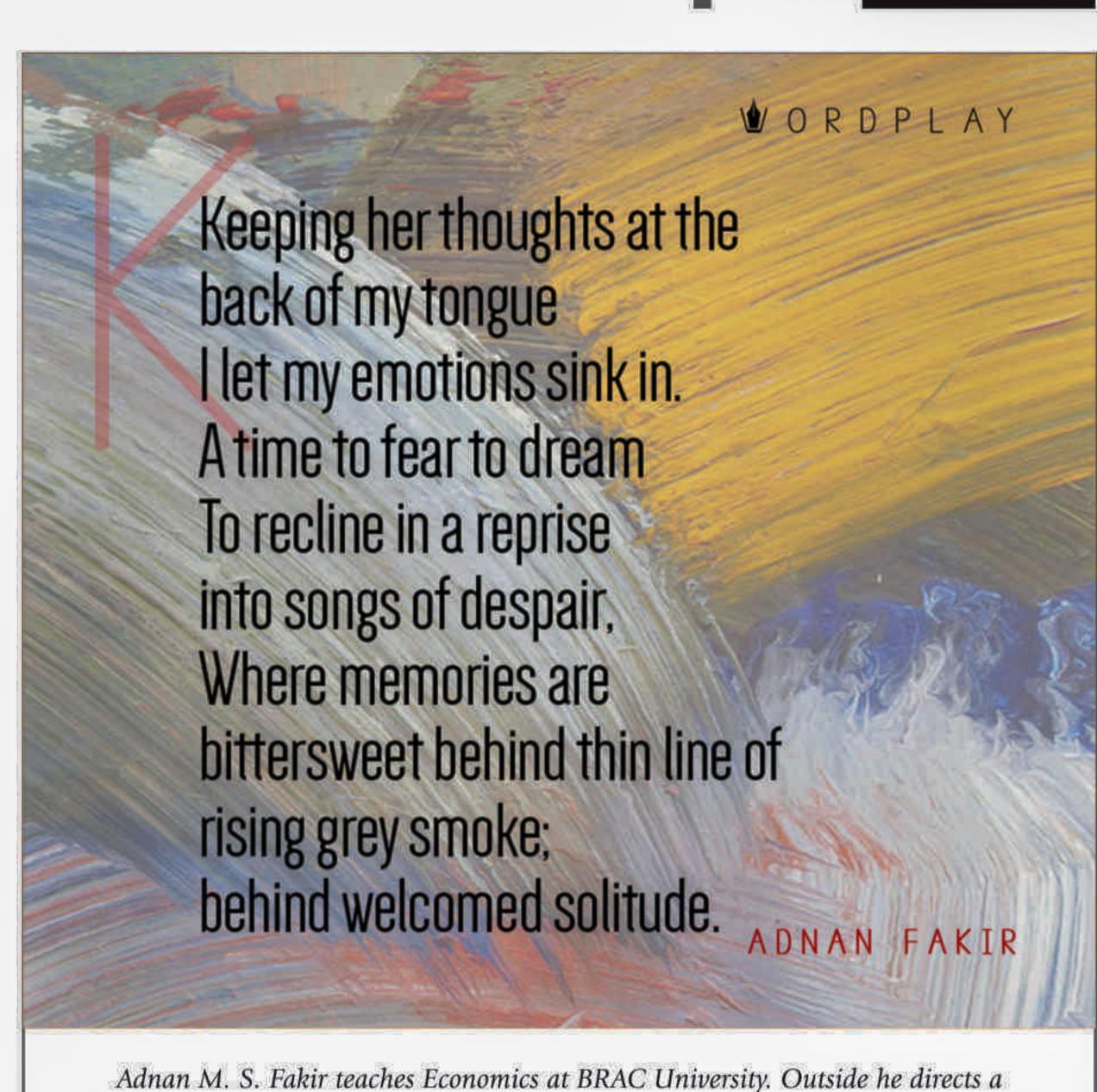
"Let them know how much their grampy loves their grandmother."

Granny blushed. Mithila teased her granny on occasional visits to the village. Aging with love, eh? She wonders how their love began and how it has lasted till today. Why does Grampy compliment Grandma when she is clearly not what the world would find beautiful?

It was time for dinner. As her mother started serving rice, Mithila looked at her wrinkled hands. The aging was clear but graceful. The thin hair, the post pregnancy belly stretch marks for carrying her daughter for ten months, the ever known fragrance, the everything-will-be-alright smile were unprecedented. Why does Ammi's face beam with a smile when she sees her daughter. Why has the child always been beautiful to the mother?

Is beauty equal to love?

Mithila has stopped looking at the mirror the way she used to. She is free.



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An Olympian Affair

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Let the pillars of the earth crumble. Let it all come crashing down. Let Atlas get shot in his giant head, As I go grab some popcorn.

Let Poseidon's oceans over flow. Let his seas be ravaged by storm. Let him drink the blood of countless seamen As terrestrial life goes on.

Let's go steal Zeus's lightning bolt. I'd like to see him rule the worlds then. Maybe I can even sneak in to meet Aphrodite, Maybe we can be more than just friends.

Let the walls of heaven collapse upon itself. I won't be there to watch it fall. I'd be chilling with Hades down under, So I wouldn't care at all.

