WORDPLAY

P erhaps I left my heart on that corner chair
Beneath the three women
as if painted only for us to neglect
and to remain as fond memories washed
within red walls and serenades.

Perhaps it was that smile,
That riveted me, grounded me;
Perhaps it was that henna you put on –
'the rising sun on your palm'
with my name etched slyly in a corner;
Or that slender stare you carried so precisely,
Yet never coming close.

Perhaps I carefully left my heart, somewhere there.

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.*



# The Tale of Tridania

**ZAHIN ZAMAN**

There was an enormous crowd in front of the Great Palace. King Ogeron had thrown a feast, welcoming everyone in his kingdom to celebrate the birth of the first of his blood. No one had seen the baby and until two days ago when the King himself had confirmed it, it was just a whisper among the people of Tridania. But now everyone knew it was true and were desperate to get a glimpse of their beloved King's little boy.

The feast started at dawn, and went on for hours as jugs were refilled with sweet wine and plates restocked with delicious food. There was dancing, singing, role-playing and many other performances with the motive of pleasing the King. But King Ogeron seemed to already be pleased, and why wouldn't he be? He had finally had a son who carried his own blood.

However it would be wrong to say that this was King Ogeron's only son. Luc Ogeron was the King's adopted son. Luc was found by Ogeron's army as a baby, abandoned during the Battle of Lanaerea. The order was to eliminate every Lanaerean they could find, but the commander of the army, being unable to take the life of an innocent, abandoned child, brought the little baby to King Ogeron. Surprisingly, Ogeron seemed pleased with the commander's mercy and decided to raise the baby as a child of his own, as Prince Luc Ogeron.

Though Luc was only in his 20s, he had earned the highest of ranks and was one of the most feared men in Tridania. He was also said to have single-handedly beaten sixteen horsemen at the Battle of Rosewood Lake, and this was only one of the many heroic stories they sang about great Prince Luc Ogeron.

However, only a fool couldn't tell that the smile on Luc's face at the feast was a fake one. Perhaps he wanted to be the heir to the throne, which clearly now he wouldn't be. But surely he loved and respected his father enough to accept this and be content with it.

The feast was at its end, and it was time to let everyone take a look at the King's son for the first time, the moment they had all been eagerly waiting for. One of the King's servants carried the boy, wrapped in a golden blanket, to the King. Everyone silently waited for the King to lift him up and unwrap the blanket that was keeping the baby hidden from view. And finally the King did. Everyone became silent at once. He was beautiful. His eyes were blue, just like their King's. The baby seemed to be puzzled to be in front of so many people looking at him all at once. But the people just kept staring at their future king with utter amazement.

"To you who serve me," shouted King Ogeron, "I present your prince, the one carrying my blood, the one superior to all others in my eyes, Prince Adam Ogeron!"

The crowd was filled with awe.

"Now," said Ogeron, "kneel before your prince."

Immediately everyone kneeled. Knights, advisors, peasants, farmers, fishermen, everyone fell on their knees at their King's order. All except one, a lone figure remained standing at the very front of the crowd. Everyone looked up to see who it was. It was Luc Ogeron.

"Luc," growled Ogeron. "Kneel!"

"Why father?" Luc asked. "Why must I kneel before a baby?"

The crowd, still on their knees, looked up at Luc with shock. Ogeron lowered little Adam and handed him back to his servant.

"Because he is your prince, Luc," explained King Ogeron, in a steely tone. "He possesses my blood."

"And that makes him superior to me?" asked Luc, grinning. "I am a prince too. I don't have your blood, but I have fought wars for you, made sacrifices for you. I am the most honoured and highest ranked fighter in your kingdom. And yet you ask me to kneel before this baby, who has done nothing for you?"

The King frowned, but kept his cool. "Yes I ask you to kneel, and you have already shown why. Your pride is what makes you inferior. As long as you have pride of the weight of a grain of sand in your heart, you will always remain inferior. I am telling you one last time, to give up your pride, and kneel."

There was a pause, and the crowd remained dead still, watching silently.

"Father, I will not kneel to a newborn," said Luc. "I will prove to you your blindness, and your son's worthlessness. I will show you his disobedience towards you and lead him to evil. Only then, you will understand me."

There was another long pause, the crowd was still silent and still kneeling, but watching curiously. King Ogeron and Luc were looking at each other, Luc with rage and Ogeron with disappointment. Finally Ogeron broke the silence.

"Very well then. You may do so. But remember I will always be merciful to my son and will never hesitate to forgive him as long as he repents. As long as he seeks my help, he will have my help."

Luc nodded and stormed out of the Great Palace as everyone watched him leave. Ogeron's disappointed expression remained, and so did little Adam's puzzled expression.

Several millennia passed by. Adam Ogeron had children, and they had children, and so on. To this day Ogeron watches over the sons and daughters of Adam and observes their deeds. As for Luc Ogeron, he is still on a conquest to lead Adam's children to evil. Though he no longer calls himself Luc.