

WORDPLAY

Unless I stopped writing
I knew I would be trapped in that tiny world of ours;
Where waterfalls and shadows
Lay restive to Bourgenvillas and Plumbagos,
and those Jasmines snuck aroma
as far as eyes could breath.
You stood there like a goddess,
beside the lone Chrysanthemum
Waiting for my fingers to slip in between yours,
For me to hold your eyes
and for my air to fill your breaths.
Unless I stopped, I knew your love would remain
and I would always find you
where the Chrysanthemum lies;
and so I linger; and so I write.

ADNAN FAKIR

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There's no poem for the accountant

MASTURA TASNIM

No romantic ballad about his nine to five routine
No sonnet for the bee in her bonnet
No stanza that depicts them hunched over that crooked table
Streams of numbers
Newly printed paper

Their morning coffee is just coffee, not inspiration
That cigarette she nurses isn't for the ache of her soul
His trembling fingers aren't borne of fear or hunger
They're both just striving for another weekly wage slip
that doesn't stink
Of cheap alcohol and easy As

She takes the bus and sits in front and hears the new jingle
And it's catchy and it's cute and it's all about beauty and yes, she's hooked
Hums it through the day while punching on the calculator
Some day she'll get the hang of that Excel data

He's found something wrong with this new entry
Fraud or loss or some major flaw that gets him all sweaty
And worried and cross because who's gonna take the blame now
It's all so exciting this moment he gets to take
A decision, so sweet, the exhilaration he can barely contain

And they're both heading home on the metro
The sun is slipping quick, it's winter
The storm of emotions recedes into the ether
There are no words for this silence that echoes
No painfully decorated portrait of depression
They're just two people whistling away on the metro

And trust me, I know,
Capitalism didn't burn their heroes
And yet.
There's no poem for the accountant

PAPER CUT

SHREYOSI ENDOW

Darkness closed up on him once again, the room grew colder. The last time they had come in, he heard that it had started snowing. He remembered the last time he had felt the snowflakes fall on his face, cold and feather-light, and melting into nothing within a moment of contact. He remembered the fur overcoat, the leather boots, and the crisp sound of them against the lifeless white, the starry nights and his mom's hot chocolates.

He had lost count of days and nights, he had forgotten about time, which hardly ever mattered. But he could understand when winter came, for stone walls turned even stonier during the cold. The walls shrunk slowly each day, or that was how he felt for the last six years and by that time, his pupils had gotten used to the darkness.

Back home, they called him Prisoner of War, and every year on the day he went missing, the marines and his family spent a moment of silence. His life itself had become a moment of silence in the last six years, except for the gut-wrenching screams during his torture sessions.

All those years, he had held onto the little linear gap beneath the door, through which a little yellow light sneaked in. It was the only source of light, which mingled with the darkness as soon as it entered and disappeared within a few centimetres. It was the only source of warmth, and the only pathway through which they passed his food- a piece of stale biscuit on a paper, and he was sure the paper tasted better.

He crawled towards the door, for his legs were too weak and numb for him to walk. He placed his fingers on the gap, like he used to place his hands over his fire-place for warmth. He traced the gap slowly, to get as much warmth as possible, but in vain.

Suddenly, he felt a sharp sting on his index. He took a moment to remove his finger from the gap; six years of torture gave him poor reflex. Unable to see the spot in the confined darkness, he inserted his finger in his mouth. His tastebuds detected the



sweet and familiar taste of blood, so he quickly took it out and stared blankly at the paper cut, which burned like a bushfire.

His fingers quivered, and his eyes welled up. His pupils shivered, as a croak escaped his throat, which soon turned to a scream. His face became distorted, his lips spread wide. The man, who had never shed a tear, even when he was repeatedly battered with barbed wires, broke into a flood of tears. He screamed and groaned and cried like a child, holding his hands in front of his face. The biscuit, served in the malicious piece of paper, grew staler in the cold, as he cleared his heart out, sitting with his knees close to his chest. His heart thumped in his chest like a drum, and tears gushed out of his eyes and down his cheeks like the Niagara Falls.

In the dark, he shook vigorously. He was in a world of pain.