

Mismatched Socks

MARISHA AZIZ

"I told you, you shouldn't have worn mismatched socks."

"What does that have to do with getting a flat tire?"

"It's like karma; the universe is putting you into a tough situation because you defied the universal rule of wearing matching socks. You get lazy in the morning and pull on random footwear, you upset the natural cycle of things, and bam, you're standing next to a not-so-golden *dhaan-khet* with your sister... why are you looking at me like that?"

"Why am I looking at you like that? 'Upset the natural cycle of things?' DO YOU HEAR YOURSELF? WE ARE STUCK IN THE MIDDLE OF NOWHERE WITH A FLAT TIRE AND YOU'RE TALKING ABOUT MY MISMATCHED SOCKS?!"

"We're not stuck in the middle of nowhere; we're stuck in between—"

"Just shut up and help me fix the spare. Dad is so going to kill me. I can't believe I agreed to come out here with you on an 'early morning road trip.'"

"I can't believe you wore mismatched socks."

"Oh, for the love of God..."

"Really. Like, doesn't it bother you when you look down at your feet and one is orange and the other is magenta?"

"It would, if I owned orange and magenta socks, which I don't."

"But seriously--"

"I will leave you here, next to this not-so-golden *dhaan-khet*, if you don't shut up."

"..."

"..."

"Have you ever wondered what it would be like if we lived here?"

"Here we go again."

"You know, like if we'd been born here, at some remote village next to a *dhaan-khet*, instead of a city like Chittagong? Have you ever thought of how drastically different we would be?"

"I wouldn't know how to put on a

spare tire, so we'd probably be stuck here forever."

"We wouldn't own a car in the first place. We'd be villagers."

"So we wouldn't have any urge to leave this place, would we?"

"No. You'd probably be working at some corner of the field, planting seeds or watering shoots. Dad would be yelling at you."

"Why would he yell? I'd be doing a fantastic job."

"But you would have been working under the scorching heat of the sun, so you'd be lagging behind. And if we lived out here, our family wouldn't be able to afford to lag behind."

"You'd be there to help me, so it probably wouldn't be too hard. Later, we'd probably play football over at that clearance."

"Yeah, except, if we lived here, I wouldn't be allowed to run around in the fields with boys. I would be at home."

"Learning to cook, and consequently setting the house on fire."

"Trying to sew, and stabbing myself in the nose."

"Going around trying to keep everything orderly to satisfy your OCD mind, and annoying everybody to death."

"We wouldn't know what OCD was. There's a slim chance I wouldn't even go to school."

"But you'd demand to go to school."

"And I'd probably be married off to someone as a result."

"You'd... what?"

"Well, yes, that's what happens in remote villages, right? If I tried to rebel, they'd see it as a problem with only one solution: marriage. If I was married, it would be my husband's duty to keep me 'in line.'"

"And here we are, worrying about mismatched socks."

"Hey, mismatched socks are almost just as much of a big deal as—"

"Just shut up and get in the car."

WORDPLAY

Zephyrs spiraled her belly button where my kisses taste her skin;
'An accolade of unraveling senses cocooned within soft conch shells' -
Her taste is no different; a symphony of zephyrs beating the waves.

Brushing her thighs conched within mine,
My fingers hover over the crevice of her breasts;
Her hair brisk callously between our lips,
Our tongues whisper and echo an eternity.

I breathe; I tell her I love her like an old man setting sail into the seas.

My fingers trace her pompous lips, singing childhood rhymes,
Licking the curves of her ears, holding her like rusted emerald iron;
My lips dig deeper, retracing the marks on her skin, and
Her breaths usher like zephyrs, echoing in conch shells with every kiss.

I tell her I love her like zephyrs carrying an old man's sail into the seas.

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.

Reminisce

MD. WASIF HASAN

I once dreamt of a boy,
Who would hope
In a land of despair.
Until one day,
He would set out on a journey,
Across this darkness
That we call *fear*.

Through desolate plains and valleys,
Vanquishing the most treacherous mountains.
The boy was relentless in his quest,
He would never tire,
Never rest.
But all too soon his eyes lay upon a river,
That would end this brutal test.

The boy's words would echo in my mind,
Every whisper a scream.
Until I learned in one sweet moment of clarity,
This was not a dream.

His cries of agony would pierce the still night air.
Each note reverberating across the plains.
But he always fought on,
A warrior who refused to back down.
Till the day came when his pride and bravery,
Would let him drown.

Word spread like a wildfire,
Across the valley of despair.
They say his body was found a mile down the river,
With a smile that would never disappear.

The people would eventually know,
They would finally rise up from the dark.
With each breath
They would reminisce about
The boy with hope in his heart.

