

TRAFFIC LIGHTS

TULIP CHOWDHURY

The traffic signal turned red. I was in the front seat. My nephew, Ron was driving towards home, thoughtful as he looked straight ahead. NEPR went on with news updates on the car radio. Emerging spring had whispers of greenery on passing trees. Ron and I held onto silence, as if listening to quiet messages of the changing seasons.

Looking at my right, I could see a gray jeep and a male driver around his late fifties. He looked familiar, kind of handsome with sharp nose and brownish hair. I could see his wide mouth smiling, the twitch on the two sides of his lips, resembling Pierce Brosnan a bit. The sharp nose gave him a Roman look and I couldn't help holding my gaze momentarily. Being an artist, senses somehow got glued to beauty regardless of its place or time.

As my eyes held, the man on the wheel, must have felt my eyes on him. He turned his head and our eyes met. Wow! Yet another lucky star for me, he had those wonderful blue eyes. And so bright and twinkling that in that momentary meeting of our gazes, I could not keep amazement from my face. He reminded me of Roger Moore, hero of my youth and his eyes. Perhaps, I even smiled, a friendly one.

His left hand which was on the wheel suddenly shot out, ever so lightly out the window. My eyes were caught by the wave like gesture of his hand and the sunlight caught the gold wedding band on his hand. He gave it a few twitches as if to ascertain that I had seen it.

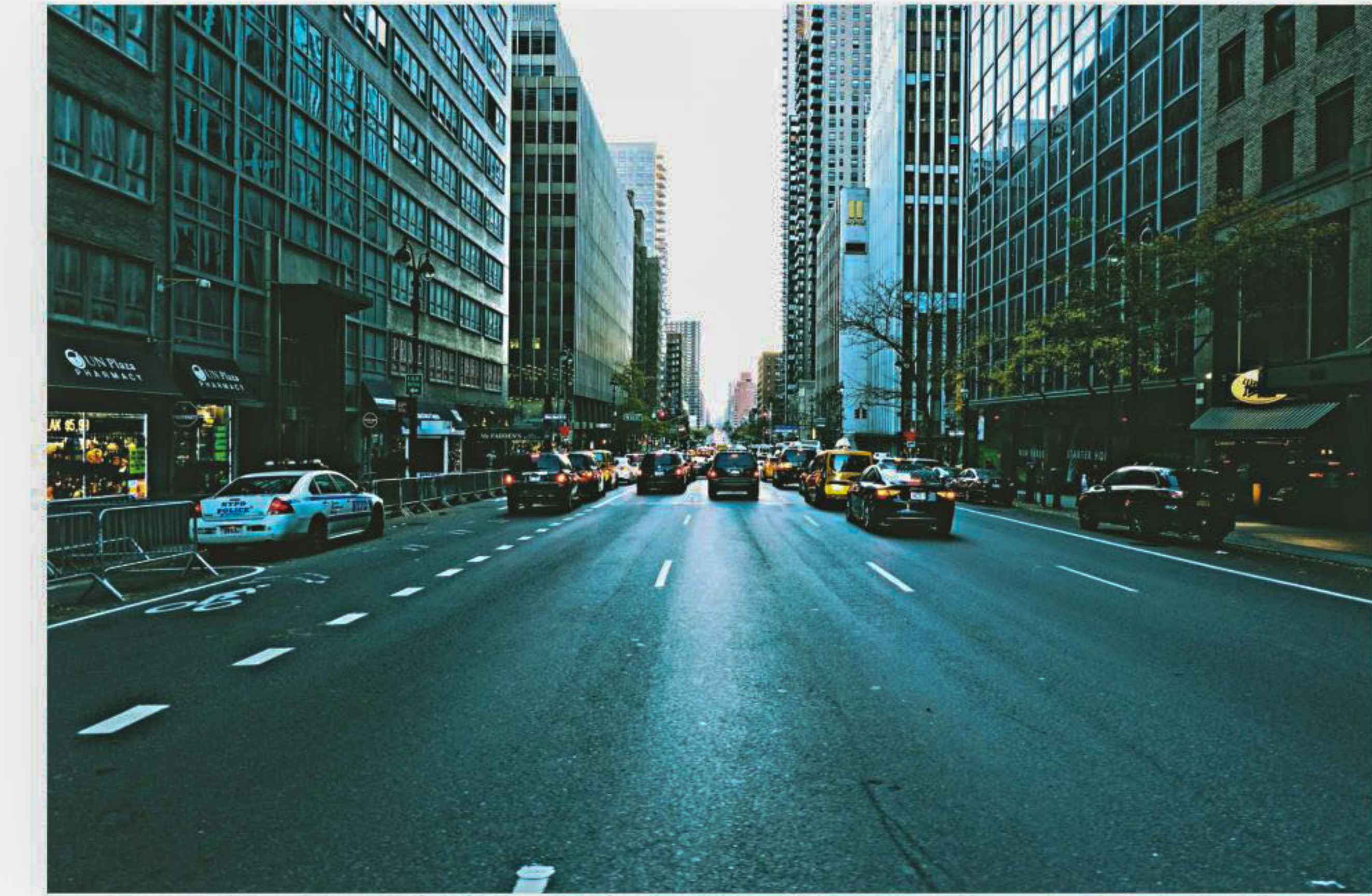
I did. The act was as good as saying, 'Hey don't hit on me, I am married.'

I got the message and wondered if he was happy or not. Marriages are under challenges these days. Meanwhile his companion, a man of similar age was looking at me. Through the window glass I could see them laughing and imagined them talking about the lady on left, *me*. The driver's friend waved his left hand suggestively and I

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could see his ring finger was empty. 'Hmmm...I am still available.' I read in the movement.

Amused, little irritated too, I pretended to scratch my right ear, making sure that they had a glimpse of my ring finger. The friend's hand dropped and the car started moving on. My finger had a solitaire diamond on



it, by mistake I had taken my sister's one while we were catching up on gossips. Traffic light was green and our car too started moving on.

It was innocent flirting I suppose. I actually don't wear any rings at all. Marriage has never been my cup of tea. But I wished I had no ring that day, I rather liked the driver's friend.

Still quiet, Ron and I came to the next traffic signal. I could not believe it, but the jeep came to a halt on my right. Both men looked on their left and smiled, as if meeting an old friend. I pretended to move my hair, I had opened my sister's ring from my hand by that time. The driver's friend looked at me. Our gaze held, he had blue eyes

too and a nice smile. Just then the signal turned to green. I watched as he turned his head, perhaps to mark our license plate?

Two doves flew past the windshield of our car. I wondered what was coming in the revival of spring.

Tulip Chowdhury writes from Massachusetts, USA.



THE GREAT BURIAL

REHNUMA SIDDIQUE

The heron had dreams in her wings
Dreams that I weaved
With violet threads that dripped like webs
From my empty soul
How I had wished to travel the world
On that white expanse of velvet
Condescending coyly, like a virgin maiden.

Those gravitised dreamers kept growing
As the Krishnachura's glowed like mutants
Ready to burst into series of wildfires

And while I dressed in beautiful gowns made of smog
With an insinuation of the dusted truth
The heron flew higher to never return again.

So, I kept sending herons into the heart of the sky
Everyday till my breaths turned into little puffs of black smoke
And now, they are all those oscillating clouds

Those are all my herons...

Of Music and Passion

AINON N

The *sargam* falls silent
And tiptoes
through the maze of longing
to catch a glimpse
of unexpected presence

In her heart a wild flutter

The candle flame dance
Night burns
Thirst of him lingers
Beyond the moment
Beyond touch

A mist-laden night
Spiced in cold
Shapes the nemesis
of an obscure dream
Tangled in the madness
of an unfinished embrace

There she becomes
The overture
The legato
The motif
As the notes rise in tonight's darkness
As the tempo heightens

Her eyes let go of the tears

Such is the madness
Of music
Of love
Pure in content

In quiet
The sitar plays on...



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