



# HYPNAGOGIA

PHOTO: DARSHAN CHAKMA

MONEESHA R KALAMDER

The moment when you are not fully awake, not fully asleep either. Your eyes are closed. But you can see the half-moon shining. It was a time when power-outage was an occasional occurrence. An occasion for you all to go out to the roof and play in the moonlight supervised by your grandmother. There is a bamboo thicket right behind your three-storey house. The smell of fresh bamboo leaves is intoxicating. You're playing an intense game of freeze tag, and you're frozen for the time being. You see the bamboo leaves rustling in a breeze, and seconds later you feel the breeze on yourself. It blows you away, along with the feel of summer.

When you all tire of running around and jumping so much, you sit down and huddle around your grandma. "Dadi, tell us a story!" Your tiny five-year-old cousin demands. "Yes, dadi, the one with the robbers!" another chimes in. Everyone nods in agreement. "But you'll get scared!" Grandma protests. You shiver a little bit, you know this story and it does scare you, but you still want to hear it. So does everyone else. She begins.

*See that tall red building beside the lake? The one that looks like a ship? It wasn't there then. Your boro apu was just born, she would only eat, sleep and poop all day.*

You all laugh at this description of boro apu. It's hard for you to imagine your oldest, college-

going, serious and composed cousin as anything but. Dadi continues.

*The robbers had to come to your Ali dadu's house first, with two large rifles. They wore black masks. Back then, our house was only two-storeyed. You could jump from Ali bhai's roof to ours, and that's precisely what the robbers did. They tied everyone up at Ali bhai's house and robbed their almirahs. Then they came up to the roof and figured they could enter our house as well. But your boro chachi was awake because boro apu wouldn't sleep at night. She heard shouts first, and then heard footsteps on the roof. The robbers possibly wore heavy boots. She woke your chacha and your dada. They locked the front door, and stacked up your choto chacha's wooden cupboard against the door to the staircase. Our landline wasn't working. Your choto chacha yelled through a window at Daktaar next door. While we were doing all this, the robbers were trying to break the door on the roof. That door? Yes, that one, we had to replace it after the incident.*

You're all huddled a little closer now, as close as you can get to Grandma. What if those robbers come back one of these days? The thought keeps you up late at night sometimes.

*Daktaar called the police station and good thing he knew the OC on duty. He sent a few men with arms. The robbers had managed to break the door on our roof and were on the staircase. They were trying to break the door to enter our top floor when police arrived. I suppose they decided it wasn't worth the hassle as they had already gotten a lot from Ali bhai's house, so they ran away. The police never managed to catch them but at least nothing worse happened to us.*

You all know how the story ends, but you still breathe a sigh of relief as another gentle breeze rustles your hair. Then you hear a clatter. And another. The sound of a hammer hitting metal. You wake up. You look outside through the sixth floor window of an apartment you only come back to visit your practically ancient grandmother. This building is something built on the memories of the house you once lived in. The bamboo thicket is long-gone, replaced by another high-rise apartment complex. You smell a little burnt smell. The heat haze makes everything look a bit unreal. Or is it the afternoon light? A workman in the next building is hitting away on a rod with his hammer. The building that looked like a ship isn't on the horizon anymore. It was built, it was there and then it was not. A young boy is sitting on the footpath below, selling bananas. People walk by. Rickshaws crawl. A few cars squeeze in. They honk. You blink. This, this is real. Then why do you feel like this is the dream? You've told yourself a thousand times that you are happy and content that you got to make those memories. It is moments like these, between sleeping and waking, when you don't hear the crow but see an owl flying past, your heart trembles and you don't feel so sure anymore.

*Moneesha R Kalamder is a former Hogwarts student and celebrity Quidditch player. She is looking to live a quiet life in the Muggle world but struggling to find her place. You can talk to her about magic and other things at [mkalamder9.75@gmail.com](mailto:mkalamder9.75@gmail.com)*