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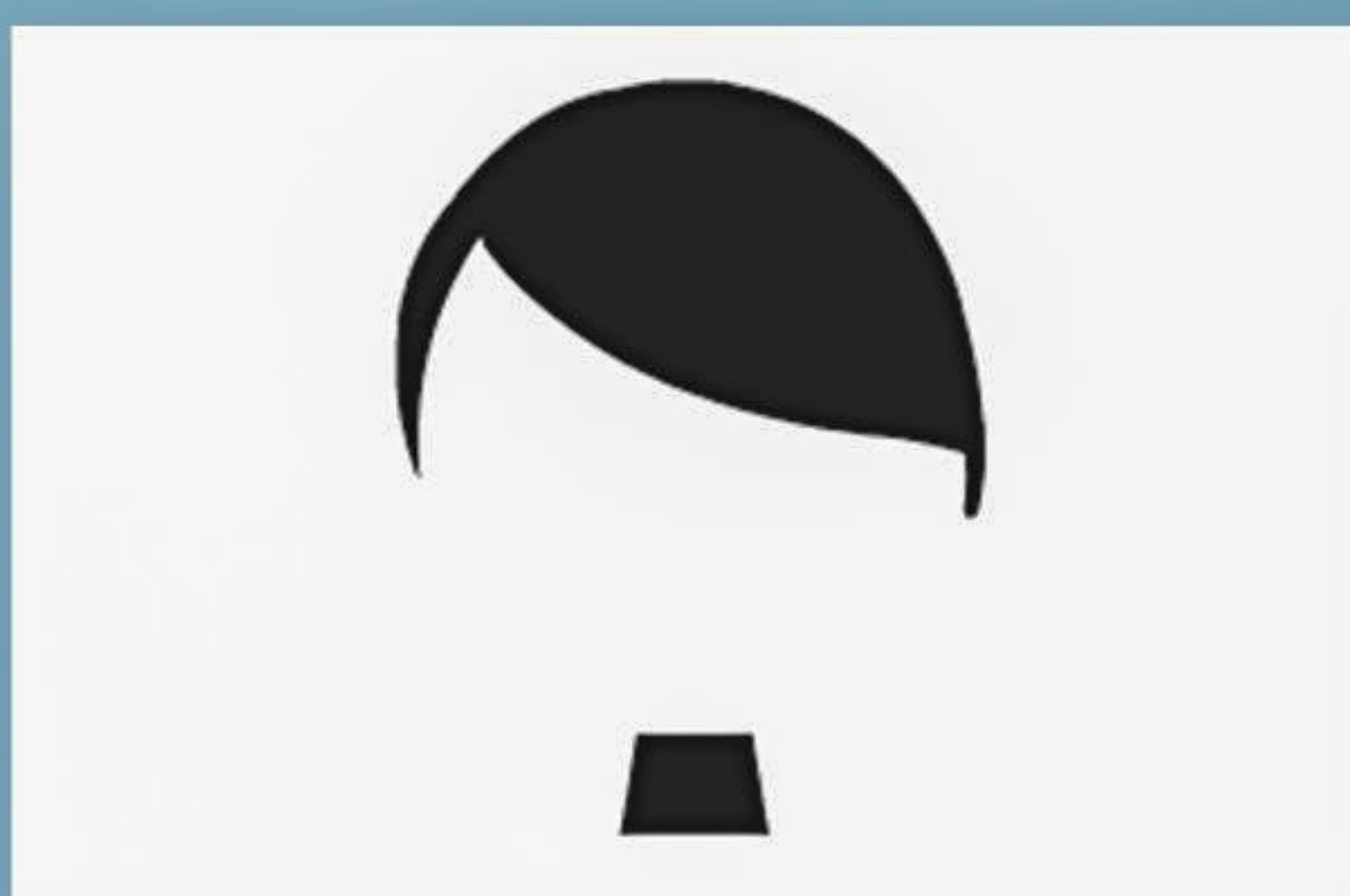


THE TOOTHBRUSH TWINS
FARAH MASUD

Far away in the East, in a wooden shack, the Old-Eye sat with a crystal ball clutched in her frail hands. The crowd held its breath as she made plain the fate of the world. She spoke in a trembling, raspy voice:

*Amidst hardship and pain,
 Poverty and fear -
 The birth of two boys,
 In the same month and year.
 Only four days apart,
 But a thousand miles between -
 One will make the world laugh,
 The other will wipe it clean.

Charlie Chaplin: 16 April 1889; South London
 Adolf Hitler: 20 April 1889; Austria-Hungary.



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TASNIM ODRIKA

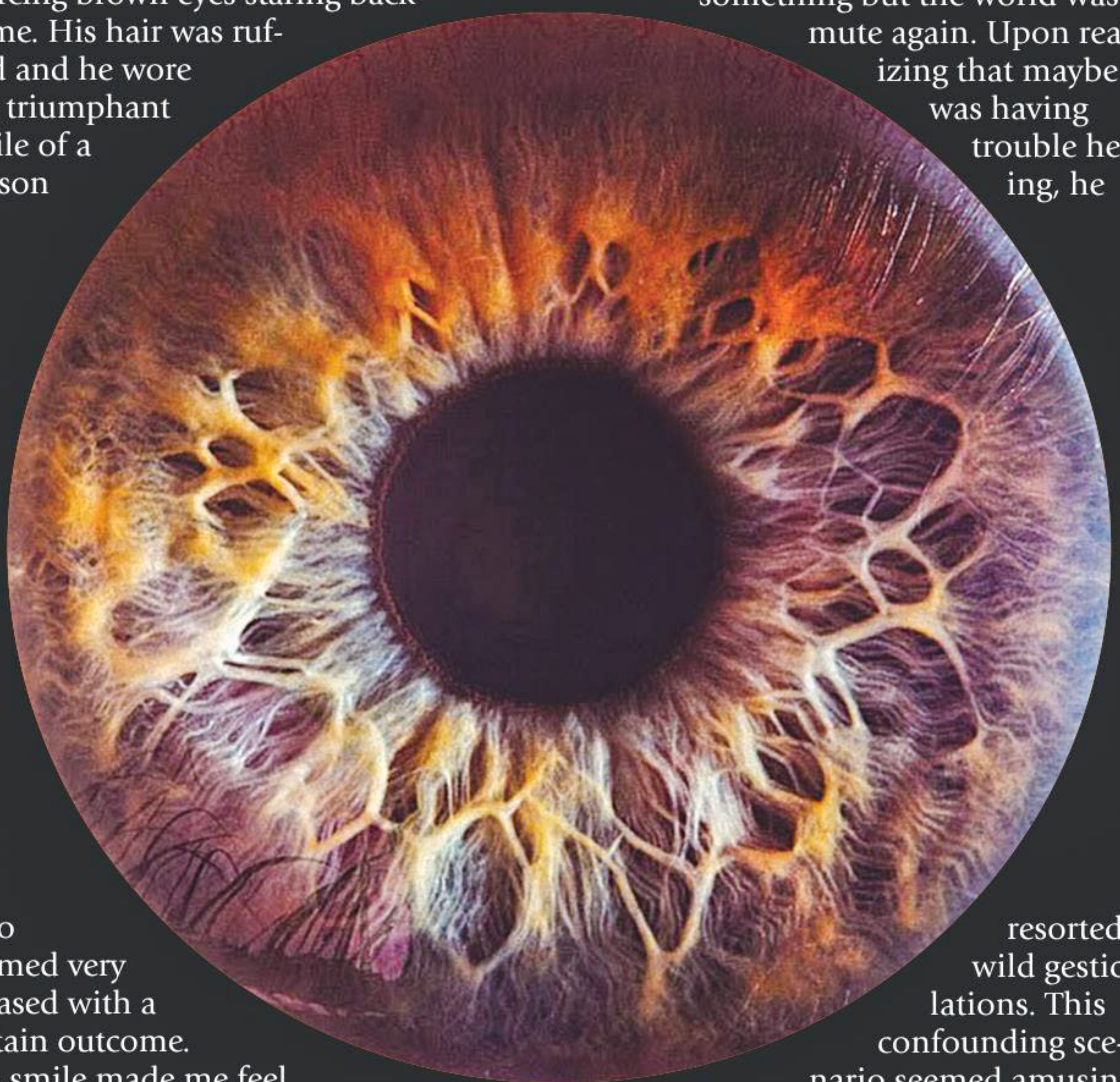
Thud

I felt a sudden blow over my whole body. Then a cooling sensation overcame me. For a moment it was as though the world had become mute and then the sound came back on like someone had pressed the unmute button on a remote controller. But I could not make any sense of the sounds. All I could hear were distant and sirens and the continuous muffled screaming of a person. "Is that a woman?" I wondered.

Suddenly, I was sitting at the dinner table surrounded by people singing "Happy Birthday". My gaze caught two piercing brown eyes staring back at me. His hair was ruffled and he wore the triumphant smile of a person

I mustered up all the strength I had and opened up my eyes. I was gazing at the fuzzy outline of a crowd gathered around me. It was difficult to keep my eyes open, so I closed them again. This time I was surrounded by a group of very lively people. I started looking around for the brown eyes but before I could find him. I felt someone jerking me. Like coming out of a reverie, I stared back at the fuzzy outlines again.

Some sensation came to me and I realised my back was lying on gravelly ground and my upper back was drenched in something warm. A man was kneeling beside me and asking me something but the world was mute again. Upon realizing that maybe I was having trouble hearing, he



who seemed very pleased with a certain outcome. His smile made me feel warm inside but the cold rushed back and the muffled screaming broke through the scene. It was dark again.

"Can't Help Falling In Love With You" was playing somewhere and I felt a hand around my waist. I looked up to see the same brown eyes. We were dancing in a garden. Although the sky above was inky black, the few stars that still remained, emanated an entrancing faint blue glow that made the whole place seem like it came straight out of a fairytale.

Then the scene started to get blurry and it was dark again, filled with car horns and sirens; but they all seemed so far away.

resorted to wild gesticulations. This confounding scenario seemed amusing to me. I felt like an animal at a zoo.

Bemused, I tried to make sense of everything and just as I did so, a searing pain shot across my head. I felt hands grabbing me from all sides and lifting me up. The gravelly ground now changed to a stiff but smooth one. My vision was becoming more and more obscure each passing second. It was becoming harder to stay awake now and I wanted to go back to the warmth of the brown eyes.

The sirens started receding and Elvis Presley was getting louder. I felt the hand come back around my waist.