



# BUG

ASIF AYON

There is a bug on my back  
Dangling cause it could no longer grasp  
What it had set out for  
Why it had carved a home on my chest  
But it plagued nonetheless  
It had spoiled my bones to no end  
The bug had made me his new home

I could share a meal with it  
Perhaps a little chatter with the git  
But a home of its own on my chest?  
That I could not bare  
Nor could it last

I asked nicely at first, "Bug on my back?"  
But by then he was everywhere  
He had stopped being a thing of the past

I asked hesitantly, "Bug on my back?"  
"Stitch me a new home  
For the one we've shared  
Can no longer be ours anymore"  
He said as he cradled me on his lap

There was a bug on my back  
It turned out to be someone I knew  
He never rested  
Wouldn't let me be  
Couldn't stop with just a hole in my chest

My back's against the wall now  
Now fly I wailed  
I had risen to the boil  
My fists clenched  
Blur then after

Soon after  
I awoke  
Not knowing the difference between a lie and a false

There is a bug on the wall  
Crawling on its last limbs once and for all

# JIGSAW PIECE

FARAH MASUD

I am a jigsaw piece.  
The puzzle is my home.  
I am the heart of the problem,  
I fill the hole in the center.  
Alone, I'm indecipherable.  
With the rest, indistinguishable.  
I sit comfortably in the background,  
Perched on top of piece 95,  
Right next to 89.

I am a jigsaw piece.

I fit only where I'm meant to fit.  
Every curve, every edge, every bend, is mine alone.  
I bear them with all my pride.  
I have my own part to play.  
Yet, I am part of the bigger picture.

I'm a jigsaw piece. I am different. But the same.  
I am unique  
And  
I am unanimous.

*Farah Masud is a humanbean and that is all you need to know about her. Please don't try to contact her.*

# Jar Man

MASHIAT LAMISA

I still had so much love to offer you when you left. I wanted to give you it all, let you build snow globes with it—but you left earlier than I thought you would. I learnt from you how volatile love was, and I wanted to keep the rest of what I had safely in an airtight space. So I put them inside a plastic jar tightened with a metal lid and pickled them for a long time with preservatives that smelled like acid, tasted like scars. When I needed some love to give to someone else, the lid wouldn't open no matter how much I tried, no matter how much strength I used to make it pop. So after trying once, twice and thrice, I gave up. I kept the jar in the corner of the room that once smelled like your honey cinnamon perfume and forgot about it. I began to meet people who would never demand whatever it was that I kept inside the jar, and if they did, God forbid if they did, they were people I could say no to, without hesitation and without guilt.

It was after years that I met a strange man who thought I was an aluminium foil ready to be put inside a tandoor, who thought I was a lampshade that did not need a bulb to be lit. This one strange man had a laughter that sounded like a Tibetan singing bowl being played by a maestro, and he had a voice that echoed through windows made of agony and rage. His palms were shaped like Africa, and his shoulders smelled like the ocean. And when his eyes met my eyes under light bulbs made of tungsten and soul, the universe didn't seem so heavy anymore. This strange man had terabytes of magic in him, and an entire village of charm to offer. Little did he know, I was no aluminium foil, I was no



lampshade; I was used up silverware that could not be used to cut cakes anymore. My love was burnt up, the remains lying in a plastic jar in a corner of my sparsely lit room. Little did he know the music on my playlist had no lyric in them, that you had taken the words with you when you left.

So when time came, I told him to leave.

I told him to pack his elbows with my memories and to take a sandwich on his way. I told him that my plastic jar wouldn't open

no matter how much I tried. That the airtight seal was too hard to take off, too old to cut open. I thought he would listen, that he would open the refrigerator, take a sandwich and never look back. But this strange man took out two sandwiches, gave me one and stared at me like I was a glass bottle bought from an antique store.

A day later, he found his way to the jar without ever asking me where I had kept it. The jar had lost its firmness over the years and as we looked at it together, we knew that even if he managed to open it with his arms that resembled the rudder of Peter Pan's sail-boat, the remains inside might not work anymore. But this man knew not how to give up. He wrenched open the rusted jar lid and poured all the love inside it onto his head like pixie dust.

And it fell, oh how it fell on his head like gold and diamonds whisked together with joy and calm.

You took half of my love when I had all of it to give you. He gained all of my love when I had nothing to give him.

*Mashiat Lamisa believes in unicorns, flashlights and everything nice. Prove her wrong at mashiatlamisa@outlook.com*

