

FICTION

# THE HOUR

Rarely do I go out. Hours die into days and days drown into weeks to open the doors to months, before I open my ears to the chirping of birds or the creaking of crickets; before I open my eyes to the dawn or the dusk.

Here, I am always in oneness with my shadow; it neither grows ahead of me nor shrinks behind me because for that I need to be in the sun and these luminous filaments trapped in an inert chamber are the only lights that glow within this stagnant demesne of the one God.

Here everything is one and therefore nothing is anything in particular to be identified as something different. Aberrations, minor or major, are just sins; reprobates, thieves, murderers, rapists or judges, are just sinners – everything is one because everything is something of God.

It is around the evenings that the struggle begins within buccal cavity of the confessors. The tongue and the lips, either drowned in saliva or as arid as a desert, twitch and twine in grotesque manners to finally whisper out just one sentence, "Father, I have sinned."

I show kindness and keenness. I listen, or I pretend to. I speak, "It's alright. God is often forgiving." Before the last word leaves my mouth properly, the entity on the other side of the chequered wooden wall stands up in full composure, as if born anew, to finally walk out rejuvenated, forgiven.

I wonder if God forgives because I never heard Him say so. But I forgive in good faith though repetitive visits from the same suitor is not uncommon. Yet, God forgives.

The prison calls were the least enthusiastic. The confessions there were not interesting. The charm was found in the confessions of fornication mostly made audible to my ears, by both men and women in love, after the Sunday mass; those I enjoy thoroughly; may God forgive me.

The prisoner's confessions were mundane and mostly ended in tears. I didn't even enjoy the joy of forgiving and rejuvenating the souls because they were destined for the gallows.

He had a guttersnipe's eye. He reeked of sin. It was everywhere around him. I could see his sins, smell it from afar and almost hear the moans or groans of the lady he slaughtered. He was capricious but meticulous and preferred proper use of the words moan and groan.

With respect to him, I may say that I could hear the throat-slit lady's groan. I waited for a teardrop and looked condescendingly at him but nothing. He had no regrets. I understood that he was accompanying me to finish my act. After all I was a padre; a man to be honoured and revered by the prospective hell dwellers. I was his last acquaintance in his last hour.

The minute and hour hand of the grand clock right above the watch tower were unified and pointed towards the heavens. He walked with an unusual calmness; a homicidal calmness. There was not any last-minute reprieve. The lever was pulled and the body hanged. The body died. The man forgiven.

May be God forgave.

By Zulfiker Hyder

Photo: Collected



## মাদার নতুন বাস



কাপড়ের রঙকে রাখে  
নতুনের মতো ঝকঝকে



কাপড়ের যে কোন দাগ-  
ময়লাকে নিমিষেই দূর করে



সবচেয়ে ফাস্ট, সবচেয়ে কার্যকরী ..