

TO THE LAST HOUR



MAHERA AIMAN NOOR

'To the last hour of my life, you cannot choose but remain part of my character, part of the little good in me, part of the evil.' — *Great Expectations*, Charles Dickens

Asana hadn't always been graceful. But now she was.

Graceful when she danced and graceful when she killed. But as her silver blades sliced through the night air she thought of a time when she hadn't been graceful. It was a different world back then, a world which was so full of light and dawns that brought about the hope for a new day.

A world yet untarnished by the light eater.

In that world she had been weak and clumsy, always breaking things. Her mother had removed anything made of glass from their home because she was sure to break it. Asana hated glass, it so fragile and so easily broken. But in that world Asana hadn't been a coward, hadn't been afraid of glass. There were so many things she was afraid of now. But thinking of worlds long gone was a waste of time and she did not have any time to waste. She glanced up at the night sky and the stars that were the only light left in this world.

Midnight. Asana loosened a breath. She still had time. She crept up to the palace gates silent as a shadow, not bothering to hesitate as she brought her moon blades down upon the first guard. By the time the others understood what was going on, she had already taken care of two others. The last guard was wise enough to not fight back. He dropped his sword on the ground. Asana saw the fear and the hope for mercy in his eyes and did not care. Mercy was not what had allowed her to survive in this broken world. She brought her blade down and watched him fall and yet the blood on her hands didn't scare her.

Had she always been this cruel and unfeeling?

Asana entered through the palace gates to stop dead in her tracks. The palace was made of glass, clear and sparkling. The irony made a bitter cackling laugh escape her throat. Yet her feet did not shake as she walked inside the palace. She had to meet him. Her brother. He was the one who was supposed to carry out the mission, her job was to simply create the escape route. She

stopped and leaned against a pillar waiting. Her brother would come out any moment now, holding the key and being the golden hero he always wanted to be.

Asana didn't realise how much time had passed until she glanced towards the sky. Two hours past midnight. But that couldn't be, that was much too late. She went deeper inside the palace of glass to the place her brother was supposed to be. He was not there.

Asana felt her fear crawl up her throat and shook it down. But where was he? Against her better judgement Asana became frantic, her footsteps pounding on the glass. She was not going to lose her brother. Her brother was good, he could smile in this dark world; he was the hero. If she was going to lose her brother then this world would lose the last bit of good in it. Surely the universe would not allow that.

Asana suddenly saw the trail of blood on the glass floor and slowed down, following it. Her heart hammered on in her chest, wanting to cry out. And then she saw it, the broken body of her brother on the floor.

She could not move.

She could not move...

Memories flooded in her mind. And

then the last of the love left her soul. She truly was a human shell now. There was nothing left in her except a promise. A promise made in a lost world at the brink of calamity to the one she loved most.

To the last hour, I will be by your side.

She could move again.

Asana dropped down to her brother's side and finally let all her fears crash down on her. Her brother and she had survived the end of the world together. They would cross this bridge together too. And after years, Asana let herself weep—weep for her brother and the lost world and for herself.

The sky was burning a fierce red, signalling the beginning of dawn. And Asana didn't look at the sky with hope but with realisation. She watched as the first dark spots appeared, and then the light slowly being eaten away. A never ending cycle of beginning and end. The light eater was here. Asana felt the light along with her empty soul get eaten away by the light eater and did not feel fear anymore. She had kept her promise.

To the last hour, I was by your side. The light eater heard the thought echo in the very edges of the world as he devoured it whole.

The writer is a grade 8 student at Sir John Wilson School.