



Dénouement

UPOMA AZIZ

"Come on, man," Irfan ushered Tahmid on "You have officially lost the bet, and now we get to hear THE big, dark, evil secret that you have been keeping from us!"

The five of us were sitting inside our regular rendezvous spot, which was Raju mama's tea stall and this was an intense moment, we were trying to get Tahmid to spill the beans.

"Guys...just let this go," Tahmid tried to let out a weak protest which was immediately trampled under the excitement of the rest of us.

"Yeah, what's the fuss about, anyway?" asked Rafsan, the miser who spent his words carefully, barged in. There was no way Tahmid was getting out of this now.

"Is this about a girl?" asked the Mahir. Tahmid looked uncomfortable.

"Isn't it always?" Irfaan grinned.

"Fine. I'll tell you," said a defeated Tahmid. I ordered us another round of ginger tea, and Tahmid started speaking.

"Magnificent magentas, rich purples and gorgeous greens; the versatile range of umbrellas burst open into action like blooming flowers as the rain came tumbling down.

"I had just stepped out of my office, and so had the majority of Dhaka and she decided to present us with a little surprise. As a result, we were stuck on the road at this peak hour, and it got muddier and wetter by the minute.

"It was July, and though the smiling weather lady said there would be no rain, I had decided to sling my umbrella across my wrist anyway. Most others did too, as I noticed.

"Not all of them, though, as I would discover soon enough..."

"I had stepped out of my cubbyhole of an office in a good mood, which was rare. I was pleased because I had just received my paycheck. Soon enough, my happiness started evaporating rapidly.

"I stood, probably looking like an idiot for the next five minutes, before I had this odd, tingling sort of feeling in my gut. I glanced

sideways and jumped up a bit in surprise.

"A girl, *stop sniggering, Irfan*, was standing right behind me. I found that a bit strange before I discovered that she had probably forgotten her umbrella.

"She was nearly drenched, so I scooted a bit over. She took the cue and stepped right under the umbrella.

"I sneaked another look at her. It is always hard to guess a woman's age, so I won't try. But she was still a girl, and not a woman. Her features were delicate, and there was a lovely innocence in her eyes.

"She had applied kohl in her eyes earlier, which was now smeared across her cheeks. But it suited her. The distressed, lost look in her huge, clear eyes created the impression of a doe.

"A few minutes passed, and I felt her stirring beside me. She gave me a ghost of a smile, and the next moment she was gone, swiftly shifting herself under the umbrellas of another handful of strangers.

"I should have gone after her and maybe

offered my umbrella? Heck, I should have given her a ride home or something. But I did none of these. I just stood there, mesmerised, and watched her while she disappeared amidst the crowd.

"I felt something warm spring up inside—a feeling which was completely alien to me.

"And she had taken away more than just a few minutes of my life, something more vital and of much more importance.

"And that, gentlemen, is the story of how I lost my first ever salary, my house keys and a few pieces of candy to a mysterious girl."

Tahmid finished his tale, and took a long sip of his tea, while we sat there with our mouths hanging open.

"So that is why you never use umbrellas," Mahir said, breaking the momentary trance.

"And also the possible reason behind his distrust and hatred for womankind," Irfaan pointed out.

"Shut up," Tahmid said grumpily as we all burst out laughing.

COLOURFUL

MOHUA MOULI

Colour the trees and shade my eyes
As I look into the sun through luminous leaves.
Lay down beside me as your spirit dies
And let the tears slide down as you breathe.
Let the earth and the worms feel your skin
As you try to feel alive within
I'll sing a song about caving in
And pick flowers from where the graves have been.

You can look at me while I walk,

You can wish for me to stop,
You can wish to drown and rise again,
You can wish the sky to drop.

But when I come back and wake you up
Don't think that it's all gone.
The pain is here, on the dreams they snare
But you'll know how to lead them on.
Don't pack your things, come sit by me
And I'll fix your hair and smile.
I'll colour Spring in orange and green
As you walk into the light.

