



THE TREE

SHOUNAK REZA

There is a window in this room
And outside a chestnut tree alive and happy.
It is a century old but barely withering.
I met this tree when I was eight,
Years before they wanted to take it down.
They have conjured photographs from its bark,
The old, greasy pictures are not that old either.
There was a time I didn't know you
And you didn't know me.
The chestnut tree knew us all back then,
It has survived the test of time.
One day it will only stay alive in a photograph
Just like your smile and mine will stay
Stuck only in photos, separated by time.



JINX

MASTER OF PING PONG

Stainless steel spoon,
Dishwasher detergents,
Angle of convergence,
Ohnos!

Cute little toe,
Watch your head.
Edge of the bed,
Ay dios mio!

Crisp white shirt,
Big bite, boss.
Chilli garlic sauce
Five-second rule!

Right eye twitch,
Left hand itch,
Matrix glitch,
Bad luck, fool!

The Man with Beauty

ALVI MASUD JAGORON

Before the birds rise, while the city's at rest, before someone hits his dream road, he's awake and active, preparing their road to be walked on. With a big long broom swinging in his hand, he sweeps away at the roads. He sings lyrics with a broken voice, not understandable to anyone else, and in a low tone, sometimes whistling. The rhythm of his music seems to match his rhythm of his sweeping. "Ah! What a day," he starts talking to himself. "Even the crows are yet to awake. I'll get their company at noon, during my second shift. Ugh! Dirty people all around. Why can't they simply throw the packets into the dustbin? What's this?" He bent down to pick something. "A packet of *biriyani*! Huh! That too uneaten. These people have no sense of their needs."
He took that packet and wrapped it

somehow in another packet, fashioning a loop with a knot at the top, which made it easy for him to carry. He put the packet in the pocket of his pants that had torn edges. "If I were the president, I'd declare the highest penalty for wasters," he exclaimed. "Huh! The sun has started to show its basic shades. The sunlight still feels soft. I wish it was the same for me at noon. Well, I wouldn't need to come if these people learned to stay clean. People in this city really need to learn some cleanliness. If all the cleaners would leave this city for a week, I bet they'd learn to be clean. But there again, my daughter goes to school these days. She can't miss school."

"Woof! Woof!" A dog interrupted him. "There you are Tommy! I was thinking of you," he rested his hand on his back. The dog started wagging his tail fast. Meanwhile he took out that packet of *biriyani* from his pocket and put it down.

"Here you go! A good meal, a good day!" Then he continued his work aimlessly but correctly.

A while after, the sun rose up. The cars started hitting the roads. The birds started chirping. He took his broom, tied it to the back of his cycle and took the road silently. He is like a parasite of dreams. He is active when others are in dreams and lifeless when they start working for their dream. His work is what makes the world beautiful yet, there's no beauty in the way he lives.

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