



POETRY

TWO POEMS

MASUD MAHMOOD

I

Butterflies flit, turn and flutter  
Like shreds of color bolted into air.  
Flowers gaze up in alarm  
at the sparkles in the sun.  
It's the wizard's legerdemain,  
Beyond compare is the phenomenon.  
Flowers check with their apparels  
if their colors have faded somewhere,  
or make sure their fleeting fluorescence  
hasn't rubbed off on these agile aliens  
or if the doubtful strangers have picked  
Their little pockets in broad daylight,  
Their pigments, their only treasures,  
And made them paupers extraordinaire.  
Daylight brigands, thieves — who knows—  
There can be that pass for the gentry  
in the latest fashion and artistry,  
but are forsooth light-fingered gentlemen  
with a fair face and slick hair  
or armed with a cold blade lethal assassins.



II

Like the lovers caught kissing  
By the flash of a sudden light  
In the dark I was embarrassed  
By the discovery of my secret  
Delight, a hidden treasure,  
A trove of glittering desire  
Burning all by itself at night  
When to my privacy I retire  
With a thousand candle lights.  
It's a majestic deep-sea fish,  
That turns and flashes preciosities  
But dies dull coming to strong light.  
Let it alone, and burn a cold silver  
A smouldering smokeless fire,  
A solitary creature of the deep.

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Light Mist

BIPASHA HAQUE

She wished to become a light mist  
to wrap the Earth in its pristine wisdom,  
to overarch the earthbound canopies  
which reminds her so much of the fortunate fall.

Wisdom spurs the soil with its patient hoof  
it trots and gallops through the windowpanes;  
masquerading as a friendly ghost  
for a carelessly careful whisper “are you in?”

And often, in faraway lands when air strikes  
boom  
or cities are haunted by plague  
and they curse the soil for all the mischiefs  
would you not say “I’ve been the light mist  
that had a fortunate fall?”  
And the rest is history.

The rest could fit some bite-size columns of  
newspapers.  
Many a times she has evaporated,  
Merged within elements and eavesdropped.  
So they talk about boredom, chronic ulcer,

dreams small and big,  
and above all they want Freedom.

And Freedom, it sells quick-  
for it is discounted (compromised- to use the  
jargon).  
They’ve squeezed her, to extract some essential  
oil  
Essential to each ego, each purpose,  
as if she's the generic name of a common  
medicine.  
As if she's a Paracetamol.

Her metamorphosis is no mystery,  
she's that quintessence of an ethereal drop,  
that unearthly essence which simply had a  
fortunate fall,  
and the rest became history.

Bipasha Haque is a diaspora writer with particular  
interest in life-the way it is. By profession she is a  
university teacher.



FICTION

The Colours of Tomorrow

RABIUL ISLAM

2140. Earth has been given to  
Mechatron for the protection of its  
remaining animals. Most of these are  
humans and are often the most chaotic.  
Even though Mechatrons never really  
built any boundaries on earth to  
separate the humans, they did however  
re-engineer them neurobiologically.  
Mechatrons cannot control the thought  
process of the humans but they have  
managed to restrict human access to  
their unconscious part of the brain. This  
allows them to keep the humans  
mentally enslaved to their system. But  
this does not apply to everyone.

When the big bold sun just starts  
licking the eastern peak of the  
Himalayas, the wind has already started  
spraying the earth with the tall tree  
kissing parted clouds. Around this  
sappy hilly areas live Automaton and its  
human pet Abid. Automaton left the  
Mechatronix industry and adopted Abid  
when it could not agree with the  
industry's plans for the future. Abid  
quivers a little inside a square building  
when Automaton wakes up abruptly  
from its sleep.

Automaton walks towards the square  
window and the window becomes  
transparent. The skies in the west look  
hazy from such long a distance.  
Automaton schedules the day's plan.  
*Feed Abid, secure the parameter, fix the  
solar,...*

“What are you doing?”  
Automaton rotates its head and  
clears its lenses while trying to adjust its  
internal lighting arrangement of the  
room. “Oh, nothing. Just looking at the  
trees and waiting for the sun! Some of  
those solar panels have become rusty.”  
“I told you to get rid of them and  
order one from Mechatronix.”  
“Oh you foolish human, you already  
know I have left them. Even though I  
have detached the locating chip from  
my system, they can still locate this  
place once they can identify that I have  
been keeping their network busy with  
random glitches for the last eighteen  
years.”

“It's been eighteen years then!”  
“Yes. Of...?”  
“Me being here with you. You never  
told me why exactly you brought me  
here. Each time I try to remember, I



Mechatrons have no registry of why  
humans keep on referring to some type  
of gods each time they hit our thought-  
restricted zone.”

“Maybe we know something that you  
don’t. Can you work on my restricted  
area so I can understand why we say  
stuff like that?”

“Well, I cannot do that.”  
“It's against the policy?”  
“No, it's just that we have no  
conclusive data as to what it might  
bring. We have already seen your failing  
species- the most unworthy kind on the  
Earth.”

“Excuse me?”  
“Sorry if my judgment has hurt your  
human feelings. You know, we do not  
have emotional filters.”

“Was it not your sympathy that made  
you bring me here in the first place?”

“You are now mature enough to  
listen to this. I brought you here as an  
experiment. The question you raised  
today is something that has bothered

me as well. At the Mechatronix, only  
one special unit works on this  
philosophy.”

“On what, again?”  
“Why anything exists. If I could only  
bypass their security walls! But my  
codes aren't that superior. And if I try to  
break that wall from here, I will sacrifice  
my own security parameter.”

“You have normalized your speech.  
You do not sound like other machines. I  
have been watching many human  
shows from the 2000s when  
Mechatrons did not exist. I do not know  
why you do not have new recordings of  
our new shows. Anyway, I saw that they  
were trying to make robots that could  
function like you. Barely two or three  
phrases and that's it!”

“They were only trying to make  
useful toys. I do have access to Earth's  
history since 1980s. But if I try to relay  
it for you, that will again sacrifice our  
security parameter. Mechatronix has a  
network that can detect noises in the

signals. They can clearly analyze its  
source. Even though I have jammed our  
surrounding area, I am unable to stop  
the airflow. If anything makes sounds  
here that is electronic, Mechatronix can  
locate it.”

“We are making sounds. What I  
meant to say is, you are making  
sounds.”

“The sounds I make do not require  
air to reach you. You see, I have  
implanted an auditory device inside  
your ears that allows you to listen to  
me.”

“Then plant another visual device  
which can allow me to see more.”

“Your neural pathways do not  
recognize visual signals this way. Either  
we could not make it or, your brain is  
just incompatible. We tried to relay  
some of these in your dreams.”

“So all my dreams are mechanical  
productions?”

“No. Our device only takes part in  
your dream. It tries to learn the original  
codes which were used to make you  
work.”

“You are telling me that we were  
machines?”

“You are machines. Mechatronix kept  
your race alive with your flaws only  
because Earth needs you as fuels. Not  
just Earth. In the nature's food cycle,  
your race is crucial.”

“What do you mean by ‘flaws?’

“The egoistical thought that you are  
the greatest species in this universe. You  
keep on breeding and spreading this  
idea that your species is special and has  
special purpose. Fools!”

“So you let us live and procreate on  
this earth because it's necessary for  
Earth's survival?”

“Exactly!”  
“Come to think of it! Mechatronix  
cannot detect your voice but they can  
surely detect mine. I am talking to you  
in human voice.”

“Are you?” Automaton looks at its  
human pet and turned to look at the  
horizon. Perhaps Mechatrons were right  
after all. Even in his captivity, a human  
being keeps on considering himself  
special!

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