

THE MOON

SHOUNAK REZA

I was not meant to tell a story —
Your story or mine,
Or anyone else's.
I did not bask in the summer sunshine
For the sake of a certain village elder
Who dictated rules and never left anyone at peace.
The goblet on the table has stayed empty.
The village elder has decorated the balcony
With potted plants. Leaves decorated the walls
Like green snakes. My sleeves are green.
Greensleeves is a melody from the sixteenth century.
I dance to it. I dance, dance, dance to it.
The dusk brings new hopes and no absolution.
The village elder dictates rules. There is not an end to it.
The goblet contains the strongest possible tea.
It never appeases me. I need another goblet —
And another. And another.
The moon slowly comes into being.
The moon was not there when I was born.
It had been invited by the sun that night.
It had left the sky. The clouds had welcomed me.
As the village elder dictates newer rules,
The moonlight gets brighter and brighter-
And longing for the moon,
I take one last sip of my tea
And leave the room in silence.

THE SUN THAT SHONE THE BRIGHTEST

NAFIS IMTIAZ ONISH

"Shurjo, my name is Shurjo, sir."

"That is such a beautiful name. I can see how you bring beams of joy to everyone."

"Poor folks like us do not get that kind of luck. It just happened to be the sunniest day of the month, the day I was born. I have a little sister too. Her name is Brishti, because it rained a lot. Our village is not always the kindest. It is either too rainy or too sunny; nonetheless, my sister and I had a lot of fun there. But after our father left us, we had to come to the city to earn a living."

As the scrawny 9-year-old told me all about how he played in the hay in his beloved village, he clutched on to my finger like he had known me forever. Brishti, his little sister, tepidly scampered closely behind us as the three of us marched on towards the hospital.

I discovered Shurjo on a rather gloomy morning, when I really needed some sunshine to brighten my day. As I walked in melancholy, a tinny voice broke my trance. There he stood with a bunch of brightly coloured balloons in one hand and a book filled with animal pictures on the other.

"Could you please buy these balloons in exchange for some money for my mother's treatment? Or could you, perhaps, buy me some medicine for her, please? She is really ill and urgently needs an operation."

I cannot exactly pinpoint to what it exactly was, but the famished kid in his oversized worn-out clothes had something in his eyes. The glimmer of innocuous desperation for his mother



was so apparent and strangely genuine that I could not turn him down.

"No one believes me. They think I am making it all up. But my mother's kidney is damaged. She used to work as a maid

nearby. You can come with me to the hospital and see for yourself." He fumbled through the pages of his animal book and took out a wrinkled prescription from it. The almost

unintelligible scribbles made it impossible to figure out what it read. So, I decided to take him to the hospital's pharmacy and purchase the medical supplies directly.

"My sister sells balloons too just a block away. Can we take her?" I gently nodded and watched the kid who looked burdened with the world on his shoulder quickly transform into a carefree child as he raced to fetch his little sister.

It still feels like a vivid memory now. In my "blissful solitude", I see the kids running off to their mother with the balloons and the colourful book of animals, dearly holding onto the medical supplies. I never got to hear the end of it, and to be honest, I was somewhat afraid to. Yet, I realise, that the sun shines brighter from that day onwards.

Nafis Imtiaz Onish believes grinning is the answer to everything and avidly loves art, astronomy & all things nerdy. Send him Carl Sagan fan art at nafisimtiaaz17@gmail.com