

DECEIT

AFSARA KHAN

Caught in a daze, losing sense of time,
Got a heart cold enough to send shivers down your spine.
But cold things shatter and so does this heart.
It's better to let things go, I've learnt,
To just accept it when they depart.

Nothing's sadder than fake happiness, I fake it everyday.
No one suspects a thing, but be that as it may,
It's draining all my energy, emptying my soul.
Pretense is taking a toll on me,
Keep trying to serve from an empty bowl.

Oh how lucky you are, they say, you must be so merry,
Even calling me blessed sometimes, to top it off with a cherry.
Little do they know, the truth, of my fake identity.
I wish someone would see through this all, through my feigned serenity.

The pain is overwhelming, I'm having trouble breathing,
Limbs shaking, blood rushing, I keep staring at the ceiling.
Don't go telling anyone though, no one must know,
Act happy, act normal and all will be so.

Afsara loves staring at the sky at any given time especially during sunsets. Send her aesthetic sky pictures at fb.com/afsaraakhan



The Fall of the Curtain

SHOUNAK REZA

There was a time when I used to live on a stage with ten other people. There wasn't an audience watching us but we weren't trying to please anyone. We were simply taking part in a play with scenes as diverse as possible. The curtain never fell and the sun coexisted with the moon, each of them being on either side of the dome that shrouded our little theater. I was not left alone for a single second. There we were, running from one end of the stage to the other, thinking our play would last forever, cherishing the change of scenes, the new acts, the charming props.

The moon kept its watch over us, but nothing could stop my fellow actors from leaving the stage when it was time for them to leave. Giving the rest a sad glance, each left for the land of hopes and discoveries. I thought it was simply an illusion; our play would never come to an end. But a play does not need all of its characters to survive. The only thing that brings it to its end is a curtain and believe me, the curtain never fell for good. It fell a few times, signaling the end of a scene, but then it rose again, revealing the sun and the moon positioned on each side of the dome.

Very soon I realised I was the only actor left on the stage. My fellow actors

were dwelling in plays of their own, in identical theatres without the presence of any staff, any audience. Crouched alone in one corner of the stage, I watched in silence as new props appeared on the



stage every other day. There were only three things that remained untouched and unchanged: the star, the satellite and I.

Waking up one day, I found myself in

an exhibition with photos of birds hung on clothes serving as walls. I had been in such an exhibition before, that time with the deserters. Flower crowns had appeared on our heads and, once we

were done admiring all the photos, we sat down on the stage, nobody talked, nobody sang, silence took the reins. We were the temporary rulers of a kingdom that changed every day and never fell

into ruins.

I heard footsteps. My heart jumped — did someone come back? Had their new theatre ceased to be charming? Had they decided to help me bring down the curtains for good? Would an old friend greet me with their arms wide open? Would a smile meet the eyes that hadn't witnessed human emotions in months?

Feeling hopeful, I turned around and found myself staring at a stranger. "Who are you?" I asked. Having not been used in months, my voice sounded raspy.

He whispered, "I arranged this exhibition."

"Did you now?" I asked.

He nodded and then suddenly, he disappeared, leaving behind a mass of fog. I looked around and discovered that the photographs had disappeared too. I was used to such ominous changes of scenes and decided to forget what had just happened. Perhaps the man I had just talked to was one of the many props arranged by the mysterious forces that controlled the play. But then, to my terror, I realised that the sun perched on one end of the dome had disappeared as well. Panicking, I turned my eyes towards the direction of the moon and found it gone as well. But then, to my grim satisfaction, I realised what was happening. There was a metallic sound. And then the curtain fell.