



## Sand by the Sea

SHAFAYAT SHOPAN

I feel like the sand by the sea  
Picked up by a little girl.  
Only to see how I drift away into the wind.  
And every time I disseminate  
I seem to lose myself.  
Am I the sand? The sea? The wind?  
Or maybe I'm just a particle without an identity of my own;  
That little girl never really picked me up...  
I was wrong all along.

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# HER MOTHER'S GRAVE

ALVI MASUD JAGORON

"Hurry up honey! We'll be late"

"Yes papa, I'm coming"

"I'm waiting downstairs. Don't forget your jacket"

"Okay papa."

I looked at my watch. It was five past ten in the afternoon. The spring gust was a little shivering. The sound of wind came along with a sound of crunching leaves. The day was not a sunny one. It was the end of February, there was this damp weather all day long where it was impossible to escape the cold breeze.

"I'm ready, papa. Let's go."

"Have you taken your jacket?"

"Yes papa."

"You're just like your mother, do you know that?"

"I don't know. You're the one saying that all the time."

"Ha-ha! Yes, you are honey. You are just an exact copy," saying this, I patted her back and fixed her hair the way I like it.

We started along the footpath that was encrusted with brown and orange leaves. While walking, the crunching tone of leaves beneath our feet reminded us of something beautiful about the season. She held my hand as we talked and took a look around the entire neighbourhood.

Meanwhile, we reached the graveyard. I stopped right before the gate. My heart rate went up. I felt like I was going to talk to her after a very long time. As I walked towards her grave, every step started feeling like a thousand years. And then, I stopped right before her tombstone. I exhaled a chest full of air and said,

"Read out the verse now, honey."

"Okay papa. Then can I talk to mom?" she asked eagerly.

"Yes, then you can talk to mom. Any way you want."

I looked at the grave for a while. My eyes stung with tears. I imagined myself right in front of her where she was wearing a red saree. Then a while after I finally said to her,

"It's been eight years honey! Eight years of being a single father."

"I know," she replied. "I've been watching you."

I couldn't hold my tears as they rolled out but I managed to wipe them in a manner so that my daughter didn't see me crying.

"It's very hard...you know...performing both the role of a father and a mother."

"Yes I know, you really make me proud honey."

"You know how much she loves to sit beside me while I drive," I smiled a little.

"She's my daughter too, you know?"

I smiled but asked her a...difficult question, "Then why? Why did you leave me like this? Why did you leave me all alone?" I argued with no exact logic. I forgot my age and started crying like a child who cries for a toy.

"I was destined to this demise honey. Please don't break down. Hold yourself up like you did for me."

I fell on my knees, rested my head on the stone and started sobbing.

"Honey please don't break like this. Where is the strong man I know?"

"I'm strong when I'm complete. But these days, I don't feel that strength. I just don't... feel complete," I stammered.

"Don't say it like this, I'm always with you. Don't you know that?"

"No! No, you're not! You're..."

I stopped suddenly as I felt a warm hand on my head. I could feel her. My tears stopped rolling down. I looked up as she said,

"Why are you crying, papa? Don't cry, I'm with you."



# NO ESCAPE

SHOUNAK REZA

The oaks stand in silence,  
They hide a few Victorian houses.  
The houses are supposedly haunted.  
As haunted as my mind.  
Thoughts invade my mind  
Like uninvited guests.  
They are despicable invaders;  
I never asked them to come.  
I never wanted them  
On the fringes of my mind.

The car drives past the Victorian houses.  
The fireplaces inside haven't seen fire  
Since the last century.  
The oaks speak to me.  
I am no stranger to them.  
Wary of my own thoughts,  
I am no different from these ancient trees  
That have survived the test of time.

A tunnel has led me to this city.  
The invaders followed me  
All the way here.  
As the oaks welcome me sadly,  
I look around and find no escape.

