



POETRY

# Empty buckets

HASAN MARUF

Strolling through a concrete jungle  
Of no particular latitude or longitude  
Kicking empty cans that should have  
Been recycled a long time ago  
I guess, it was inevitable ---  
I stumbled!

Falling into somebody's worn out  
Sandbox, I came across several  
Rusted out buckets.  
These buckets were filled with dreams.  
Left behind in legerity to escape  
A decline of suburban rote living ---

Why do we leave our dreams behind?  
Is it because we are afraid?  
Afraid of dying?  
Wary of being unshut?

I see it all the time,  
People not really in love  
Nestling down to the very life  
They fled from - only now  
Their buckets are made of plastic  
Filled with empty dreams  
Or ineffectual prayers!

The Author teaches English in DPS STS School, Dhaka.



# In spirit

TARA SATTAR

Wake up, girl!  
That song wasn't sung for you.  
You're not Snow White  
but everyone wants to poison you.  
You're not the Sleeping Beauty,  
not a Prince is crossing the forest looking for you.  
He is but asleep and sound in the castles.  
He will not find you and kiss you awake.

Wake up, little girl!  
That poem wasn't written on you.  
You are not Rapunzel.  
Nonetheless, your hair is in tangles, over-worked.  
You aren't caged in a tower, but your own thoughts.

You are not Cinderella,  
but you work for others all day!  
The ball that you had to go to,  
to find your Prince,  
never happened.  
Twelve at midnight,  
is your ideal bedtime.

Wake up, silly girl!  
That violin wasn't played for you.  
The Prince that you dreamt of  
never crossed your path.  
You're not a Princess.  
You couldn't be.  
So you had to brace yourself,



and become the Queen.

You won every war,  
and conquered the throne!

Wake up, brave girl!  
You're not Snow White,  
but you saved yourself from all the vicious beings.

You're not Sleeping Beauty,  
but you woke up every morning loving your-  
self.  
You shared your happiness and  
made others love and smile too.

You aren't Rapunzel,  
but you have the shiniest hair in the world,  
and stars wrapped around you.

You aren't Cinderella,  
but you have your own glass shoes.  
And you made every Prince on that DJ night,  
desire a dance with you.

You aren't a Princess after all,  
and you didn't need a Prince.  
You are but Her Majesty,  
looking for her King.

Tara Sattar is a poet and blogger based in Dhaka.

# A Prayer for My Daughter

MD. MEHEDI HASAN

(With due respect to W. B. Yeats)

Dear Shyamoli,  
Mere prayer won't do.  
Act.

Send our child  
to a martial arts academy  
along with that, send her to school,  
when she's five:

so that rickshaw pullers,  
hawkers, shopkeepers, teachers  
can't get away teasing or assaulting.



Teach her how to react  
and share it  
amongst the family.

Raise her strong—

in order that she can fight  
four-five hyenas  
on a running bus  
or when they will  
attempt to set her on fire

so that as a father  
I don't have to endure  
dirty mockeries of the constables.

Once more the storm is howling,  
let's pray  
for the safety of our daughter!

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Observer, The Independent, The Wagon Mag-  
azine (Chennai, India), Arts & Letters- Dhaka  
Tribune.



FICTION

# Truth, or Dare

MARZIA RAHMAN

## The Dare

After finishing college, I wanted to stay  
in the city a bit longer, to look for a  
job, read more books, hang out with  
my friends. But most importantly, I  
wanted to find out whether Daniel was  
ready to take the next step.

I could do nothing. I was called  
back home.

My parents informed me that  
they had fixed my wedding. As they  
had said they would do as soon as  
I finished my studies. Now it was  
my turn to fulfill the promise. I met  
the boy of their choice: Akram, an  
electronic engineer from a well-reputed  
family. Twenty-four years old, average  
height, dark, lean, went to prayer every  
Friday. What else to wish for? They  
asked.

I wanted to tell them about the  
boy of my choice: Daniel, a Christian,  
eighteen years old, tall, fair, funny,  
loves going to parties, hates going  
for prayers. I had little idea about his  
family. Things I could never tell them. I  
wouldn't dare.

What should I do? I asked myself  
again and again. I felt like screaming  
out and every time one name would  
throb in my mind: *Daniel*.

At night, I went to the backyard of  
our house where hundreds of trees  
greeted me. When I was young, I often  
came here to hide, to play the part of a  
captive princess, waiting for someone  
to come and save me.

Should I tell my parents about  
Daniel? They would never agree.  
Marrying a boy of another religion  
would be a sin in their eyes. I needed  
to talk to Daniel. I needed to ask him  
how far he was willing to go for the  
sake of our love. I needed to know if  
he loved me enough to go against his  
family. I knew that I would.

A cool wind blew, and the scent of  
some unknown flower drifted in and I  
suddenly felt calm, happy. Yes, I knew  
what Daniel would do. In a game of  
truth or dare, he had always chosen to  
dare. He was the most daring person I  
had ever known.

The next morning, I sneaked out

of the house and took a bus to the  
city. To ask Daniel to choose—truth,  
or dare.

## The Truth

I knocked on the door of house 13, flat  
A, Southern Street. It was like knocking  
at the door of freedom. Daniel opened  
the door and the moment I saw his  
smile, I knew everything would be  
fine. We would live happily ever after.  
The fairy tale world was not all silly  
and fake.

"Where have you been? I was  
looking for you like a madman," he  
said with a look of concern.

I felt joyous. He truly loved me. I  
couldn't stop grinning, blushing. "Can  
I come in?" I mumbled.

"Oh, yes, of course. My parents are  
out."

"Let's go to your room."

He looked at me, amused. I had  
never been to his room before, he had  
never asked me to. We always hung out  
with other friends in the living room.

He escorted me to his room,  
upstairs. It was a big room with posters  
of football players, a few actors all  
over the walls, a reading table by the  
window, and a single bed with books  
and magazines on it. It was not tidy  
at all, but looked vibrant, colourful. I  
couldn't help but think it would soon  
be my room, too. The thought made  
me blush again.

"I have some good news to tell  
you," he said. He looked happy.

"What?"

"No, you go first? Why did you  
come here again?"

"I left my home," I said abruptly  
and now as I uttered it, it sounded  
foolish to my own ears.

"You did what?" he almost shouted.

I felt nervous, unsure. "My parents  
fixed my marriage. I could do..." I  
couldn't say the rest. My eyes filled  
with tears, my voice choked.

"Calm down. Tell me again what  
happened."

I sat on the chair, he on his bed,  
facing me. I told him everything. He  
laughed and said, "You are quite a

rebel. But what would you do now?"

I looked at him. Wasn't he  
supposed to tell me that?

"Shouldn't you go to one of your  
relatives?"

I stared at him blankly. Was it  
a prank? He would laugh at any  
moment, saying he was just kidding. I  
waited and waited. He stayed silent.

After a while, I said, "I don't want to  
marry that boy. I want to..."

He cut in and said, "Go and tell  
your parents that. You shouldn't have  
run away."

Why was he missing the point? Why  
didn't he get it? Or, was there nothing  
to grasp? Was it all in my head only?

"My application has been accepted.  
I am going to Brown," he said  
suddenly, proudly.

"Wow! Congratulations! I am  
happy for you," I said. "When are you  
going?"

He said this fall, it'd take some time,  
to complete all the paperwork. He  
went on but I had stopped listening.  
What would I do now? Where would  
I go?

After a while, I stood up, taking the  
bag in my hand.

"What will you do now?" he asked  
casually.

"Go back."

"That's the right thing to do," he  
said, patting my shoulder.

"Will you miss me?" I asked,  
looking into his eyes.

"Of course, I'll miss you. You are  
one of my best friends," he said,  
smiling.

Coming out of his house, I stood  
on the road for a while. Which way  
was the bus station? I could barely  
remember. I felt so scared suddenly.  
I even thought of going back to his  
house, knocking on the closed door,  
once again.

In a game of truth or dare, the person  
who chooses dare is not necessarily the  
winner. That is the truth I realised that  
day on my way back home.

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