

After page 15

The cop looked baffled. "Jesus?" Carla spoke softly, "I think my husband means Che Guevara, officer."

The human looked at her, irritated, then shook his head. "The way I see it is that this here girl broke in while you folks were out and now she's gone, which was probably for the best. If some harm had come to a human girl in a bear den it would have ended badly for you folks. I'm not saying it's fair, but that's just how

his hand twitch toward his gun holster. "Officer. Whatever it is you think we've done wrong, can't you just let my husband go with a warning?"

The cop's eyes were on Carla as he spoke. "Stanley, buddy, I'd advise your mate to back off immediately."

"Please, officer." Carla must have weighed twice what the human did, but she was abject, tearful. In the background, Junior was softly sobbing.

"Carla, sit down baby," Stan said, even as he was getting up himself, an act ap-

eyes on him. Carla watching from the window. Maybe Junior too.

"It's just questioning. You're not under arrest. I don't have bear cuffs, in any case."

The two waited for the car to arrive, Stan's gaze locked on the distant hills behind their

house where they had lived while his sire built their home. He has been dead for two years, now. The old bear had never learned to sleep on a bed; they woke one morning and found him cold and stiff in his corner of the house—a great mountain of fur and flesh. He and Carla put together a litter and pulled the carcass all the way into the forest, into the den they used to live in, as his sire had requested. His great weight left twin troughs of drag that stretched the mile between their backyard and the forest.

It took months for those lines to fill in. A time in which Stan would wake early in the morning and follow those twin tracks of yellowed grass into the forest, into the den. A lone passenger on a railway of despair.

Squinting hard, he thought he could still see the tracks as they wafted and warbled at the edge of his vision. Behind him, the cop was asking him something, but Stan found himself on all fours, ignoring the human's grunt of alarm as he set off. Nose to ground, he could smell the lines more than see them. There were shouts of alarm as he did so, warnings that if Stan didn't stop, he'd be shot. But he took a step, then another, in the thrall now of something else.

I'm coming, sire.

I'm coming.

No more. No less.

In his addling mind, Stan could see Ibbutsen, his sire, the First Grizzlies, the Talkers, the Sleeping, all merge into one great ursine figure that cast sweet shade over the valley. He sniffed and lumbered along the trail to the forest, even as there was the sad little *pop* of the first bullet burying itself in his back. Stan barely felt it. *There'll be more to come. There'll always be more to come*, as his old bear used to say.

Arif Anwar is a Toronto-based writer, and author of the novel "The Storm".



ILLUSTRATION: BIPOB CHAKROBORTY

things are. And you're not helping your cases with—" he pointed to the poster, "stuff like that hanging on your walls, all brazen-like." He took off his hat and ran his hand through his short cropped hair, making the beaded sweat spray out like a rooster's tail.

"It doesn't mean anything," Stan repeated.

"I need to bring you in to the station to ask some questions."

Carla walked up to the man, who recoiled. She was too distraught to notice

parently less threatening to the cop, who smiled as Stan's wife complied.

"That's more like it, hun. I promise we won't keep your mate too long."

"Husband," she whispered the correction as they walked out together.

The cop turned his back to Stan once outside and called the station to send an AnVan.

"Won't take long at all," he reassured, as though Stan were pressed for time.

"Are you gonna cuff me?" Stan's voice was leached of defiance. He could feel

us on f /Sandalina



ঐতিহ্যের আর এক নাম আধুনিকতা
ঠিক যেমন রূপচর্চার আভিজাত্য মানেই

অ্যান্ডালিনা
সোপ

রূপচর্চার আভিজাত্য...



KOHINOOR CHEMICAL