

# THE PARIIAH

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The world seemed to be moving at its own pace, hectic and chaotic, just like any other day. But it didn't sound the same. The world felt muffled, and the world looked blurry, as if there was something blocking his ears and his eyes. He couldn't tell what was in his eyes, but he had a hunch. Was it tears, or was it the dust blown up by the cars on the street?

He tried to lift his arms to rub out whatever was in his eyes after lying on the sidewalk for all these hours. But for some reason, he couldn't – as if he didn't have arms. Startled, Rashik tried to lift his head to take a look. To his shock, he couldn't even do that. In fact, he couldn't feel anything, let alone move. All he could feel was a strange, numb terror. A terror of the unknown.

He realised that he was paralysed. But this didn't feel right, he couldn't recall himself feeling this devoid of any bodily pains and pleasures. The fact that he couldn't move his eyes could've been normal. But it's the fact that he doesn't even feel the faintest buzz in his head that bothered him. Neither comfort, nor discomfort, and that was what terrified him.

Is this really paralysis, or are these his last moments? If these were his last few moments, isn't he supposed to have flashbacks of his entire life?

If it wasn't for the strange numbness, Rashik wouldn't have been so worried. This wasn't the first time he found himself lying motionless on the sidewalk in his tattered old clothes. He had had bad nights before, and he had woken up in strange places before. But this numbness – he just couldn't get over this weird



PHOTO: ORCHID CHAKMA

numbness!

"Wait, wouldn't numbness be a feeling too? Guess I don't 'feel' that either then," thought Rashik.

Rashik just lay there on the sidewalk, motionless. He had to get help, and fast. There were several people walking past him. He could try calling out to them, but he wasn't sure if that was possible. All of a sudden, Rashik saw a fly materialise out of nowhere above his face. It slowly landed on his nose, probed around his face a little, and walked just as slowly down the parts of his face he couldn't see.

"Did it just walk into my mouth?!" Rashik exclaimed to himself. He was wondering if his mouth was left gawked

wide open the entire time. What did he look like to others? Doesn't anybody else wonder what's wrong with him?

Through his blurred vision, Rashik saw a figure approaching towards him, prancing its way towards him playfully. The figure was definitely human, and it was prancing out of the crowd of people walking on the sidewalk. The figure was smaller in size than the multiple figures that were walking past him. Was it a little girl?

"That's it, kid. Come over here and notice the mess I'm in," thought Rashik as the little figure pranced its way closer to him. Once closer, Rashik could now surely tell it was a little girl, she must've been somewhere around 6 or 7 years of

age. He noticed that she was holding a little piece of paper in her little hands.

She leaned down and left the little piece of paper on his hand very gently. When she looked at his face, the little girl stopped for a little while, her expression of two slightly furrowed eyebrows and puckered lips indicated she felt worried. Yes! She noticed!

"Go on little girl, tell someone!" Rashik wanted to cry out. And just as if she could hear Rashik's thoughts, the girl scampered to two larger figures, most likely her parents. She was telling them something, something urgent. But Rashik's heart sank when he saw the shorter of the two large figures shake its head negatively and urge the little girl to continue walking with them past him.

As they walked past, he could tell that the little girl was looking at him the entire time until they walked past his line of sight. The three human figures walked past him, without a second look – except for the little girl. Was it because of her age that she couldn't look away? Did she know that people like him "aren't worth" a second look?

Curiosity or not, Rashik knew they weren't coming back, not even the little girl. He also knew they wouldn't notify his state to any of the authorities for help either. It might get them into trouble for helping him, a suspect even for his state.

So there Rashik laid. Motionless, companionless, and perhaps even lifeless.

*Aka is a tiny bleep on the world's radar, and he finds peace in knowing it. Ruin his peace by poking him on akaaraf@hotmail.com*



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