

CLOSED DOOR

RAMISHA NOOR

The door that got closed forever,
No one has its key.
No hammer will do.
No quirky tools either.

When you walked in,
You didn't know you'd have to walk out, too.
And so that cold hard door stands still,
On that high mountain peak,
With little trace of life ever walking past it.

Oh, what could it have looked like,
Back in its lively days?
Full of laughter and cries,
Of wrongs and rights.

Such little doors get closed every now and then
On every snowy mountain peak.

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PHOTO: ORCHID CHAKMA

Hephaestus

UPOMA AZIZ

I was not Hephaestus, Hephaestus was not I.

If I were so, I would have forged a rose out of the purest of Golds found in the treasuries of Hades, with my own hands – just to watch him twirl it around his fingers.

And since I was not Hephaestus, I had to settle for a rose born out of dirt, very mortal, with fragile petals, in the colour of sunlight caught in glass. The way he delicately held the rose reminded me of you.

What reminds me of you are always the wrong things. Do you remember? The flower I gave you, one born out of mud. You took one look at it, like a deity would, with all the conviction in the world and beyond that, there was simply no doubt about you being deserving of the flower. And then, in true deity fashion, you dropped it into my hands – my offering shrivelled, shrunk and died in my own arms. I sent you the dried flowers in a box with several other silicone-dried emotions, that did not stink, but didn't age well either. You forgot the box under a stranger's bed where it fed on dust thrice a day with miles upon miles of russet potatoes, and old musty textbooks that smelled the way nervousness felt.

When I looked at you with all the admiration in the world, I couldn't see it reflected back because of what I thought was the radiance of your divinity. Truth be told, it was my own naivety that blinded me, not your eminence.

By the dirt-laced pavements of the city, we walked on the onyx road that glowed like amber in the late-morning sun. He kept looking down at the flower with all the marvel of a three-year-old, like the wonders of the world had been bestowed upon his palm. He doesn't know, but I've seen him look at me the same way. Did you ever stop to look at me, or anything I ever gifted you? At anything other than yourself? Or did you scan them with your eyes of a prospector to estimate whether they were good

enough to keep or were they to be thrown away?

He didn't let go, not even to wipe the moisture off of his hands. As he held the rose in one hand, and me in the other, the February sun seeped into my skin, my heart, and coloured me yellow. I wore the sun like a shawl, and the sun cradled me like a mother, and at that moment, I felt like a yellow rose.

The yellowest thing I saw that day, however, wasn't the rose, or my own reflection basking in the sun, as reflected in his irises. It was small piles of yellow khichuri someone left on the sidewalks deliberately, to feed the birds and the animals. The brightness lit up the entire road, dimming everything else in the process.

We walk filling our pockets with everything beautiful, all our lives. We take more than we need, we take useless artefacts and stuff our pockets with them. Our pockets overflow and we lose things. We lose what we were looking for, we lose what we already had; we lose sight of who we wanted to be, we lose sight of what's important.

At the end of the line, as we compare among ourselves, we realise we completed the wrong assignment, and it was never about what we collected. It was meant to be about the journey all along, and that's what we left out.

With him, I think I can make this journey. He doesn't regret being human, he shows me exactly why it's the most beautiful thing instead. He is not my deity, nor am I his. I don't need someone to worship, just someone of my standing by my side.

It took me long enough to say this, but I don't want your Olympus. I'd rather walk the world with all its sorrows and symmetry with someone the same as I. This is purely a work of fiction.

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