

Melancholy

MASHIAT RABBY SADAT

The winter has seized my heart,
I can only hear the silence around me now!

I ask myself,
Have I become desperate for company?
Or am I slowly losing myself
In the cage of melancholy?

Have I had enough?
Or do I have to have more?

Why does the past still call me
On the number of my mind?

And lord!
Why does the time remain so blue all the time?

Couldn't it be a little bit merrier sometimes?

Woe!
I never saw any snow in my state,
But all hearts are frozen here;

All men broken
And all women dead!
Is it just me and my buried melancholy?

Or is it the reality?
The harsh, the dark, the cold!

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GOOD NIGHTS

ADRITA ZAIMA ISLAM

Every night as the clock struck 03:30 AM, I opened my eyes and saw a streak of light on the floor facing the northwestern window. It remained the same garish red it was each time. The day had not yet begun, the security light not yet put out.

Untangling my limbs from the knots they had formed with the weathered quilt, I attempted to straighten them. But couldn't. I cursed my memory for betraying my sleep addled mind once again as a dull ache began to spread across my lower abdomen. It always began like this. A small pinching sensation on the left.

In the early days, I had naively believed that pressing my pillow to the area could end it. But the truth was, no matter how much I tried to forget it, there was no escaping it. Slowly but surely like clothes being pulled down to the murky depths of a stream, weighed down by the water that seeped into them without their consent, the pain overcame me.

I tossed and tumbled with it, flailing my arms and legs in despair. My attempts to shake it off becoming not just desperate but necessary: almost as crucial as breathing itself. But all was in vain. I knew it, as did you.

It was in those moments of sheer helplessness that I best sensed your presence. While counting down from one thousand, I imagined each of my whispered digits fell in perfect sync with your nearly imperceptible steps. As I thrashed and fought, I fancied that the hushing in my ears was not the trapped air being circulated mercilessly by the overhead fan but your voice, paradoxically

both gentle and savage, telling me it would soon be over.

I don't hold it over you, you know. I realise you are not the kind to make empty promises or coax someone out of their misery with white lies. At the time I deluded myself into thinking I was suffering from Stockholm syndrome, falling for a cruel captor who denied me respite. But that really wasn't it. It was I who was holding you prisoner. Romanticising you, believing that you were someone or something within my grasp just so I could think, even for a second, that this miserable, horrible ache that became one with my body every night was something I could be rid of.

As the last of the pain abandoned me and the red light suddenly vanished from its spot on my floor, I reluctantly let go of you and let a new day begin.

I wondered sometimes why I never pulled the drapes on the window closed all the way. However, I never strove to answer this silent inquiry because, the truth is, I did know why. Make of this what you will, but I saw it as a ritual. In the midst of the uncertainties and intrigues that ruled reality, this was the one constant thing in my life. A visit from you was something that I even looked forward to. And perhaps the thread of red, the sliver of opening was my way of beckoning you.

But I realise now how foolish it all was. The foolish hopes of a foolish girl who was in love with you. Or rather, the idea of you. Of death.

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