

WHAT WAS HERE

SYEDA ERUM NOOR

The soil, it sings with what was here.
The lives that lived, now seeped within.
The air, it hums with weighted wisps
Of things that lived of those who died.
The muffled words in someone's heart
Linger in the fruits that grow.
From trees that sprout and loom over,
Feeding on their corpses of
Whims that never left the mind and
Words that never left their tongue.
What was here stays well put
In what belonged to those who
Don't.
Stay
In the empty kingdom of
What had been of what was once.
What's made is prison
To some old soul
Whose fruit now hangs
From God's henchmen.
A half-read book from when books were new
Left to be read by a veteran
His wounded battles, pressed onto it
Like dried petals on a fresh new print.
A top stuffed bear, loyal companion
To some old gal with Alzheimer's
Lost parts of her, stitched into it,
Like glass bottles that now sail at sea.
All sit in their abandonment
Weighted with who once was theirs.
Living through the there and gone
While adding to what once was here.
For what was here, is here to stay.
Like unsaid words on broken days.
It's presence now a story for
A pondering stranger on their
Wandering way.

Syeda Erum Noor is dangerously oblivious and has no sense of time. Send help at erum.noor1998@gmail.com



DESIGN: ABIR HOSSAIN



PHOTO: ORCHID CHAKMA

Lady from Leo's Dream

RAIDA RAHMAN NAOMI

Leo had just finished his painting. He took a few steps away from the canvas to have a better look – a lady standing on a landscape with a pale smile. Her lips and eyes do not tell her story, but rather implies many. Leo took his eyes away from the painting to the woman standing behind the canvas.

"You are all ready for the show, ma'am," Leo said.

The woman smiled gloomily. The two of them enjoyed a cup of tea after which Leo had taken his leave. He was traveling to the capital city and carried with him the portrait covered with a rag.

Leo was invited to an exhibition in the capital, alongside artists from all across the country to showcase their work. The capital was known to always host pompous fetes. Nonetheless, Leo deserved recognition. And it wasn't only him who reserved such high regards for his craft, the attendants did too. When he first showed the painting to his friend, John, he exclaimed, "Ah! Woman of my dreams!"

Leo responded "Beautiful she is. But not yours."

"Wish she was only my dream and not the reality of others."

At the exhibition, praises and applauses were in abundance for the portrait. The audience wanted to know who the lady in the painting was. Her subtle smile, pale face, and red dress drew everyone in.

"Lady from my dream, my imagination," Leo said.

The painting stood out and was later auctioned off. Justifiably, it came with a hefty price tag.

It was that evening which had propelled Leo to stardom. He was no longer a struggling artist. He earned honour, garnered trust and reputation. Now

with every brush stroke his reputation escalated even further.

With the newfound success of his friend, John came to visit Leo in the capital and stayed at his place. He was astonished and overwhelmed. Even by Leo's standards, he had really outdone himself and John couldn't be prouder. He had always known that Leo had the potential to be great. Now that Leo had reached the summit, John asked him how he had done it.

With a mysterious smirk on his, Leo said, "Pre-tension." John could not understand what he had really meant to say.

The following morning, when strolling around the city, John spoke to the people about the handsome young artist in town. They talked about the painting with gusto. "Lady from my dreams," Leo's painting was a phenomenon. John was eager to see the portrait and managed to take a look at the picture from a man's phone. He was stunned. This is the portrait of the lady from their village.

Back at the village, she was real. She existed. In the capital however, the lady was relegated to being only a fragment of Leo's imagination.

She is now the dream of every man. Leo had supposedly astounded dwellers with his imagination. But that's merely a lie. John finally understood the full extent of their exchange from last night. Pretension. His mind was occupied with another thing as well. Why did the lady take pills on the same night Leo left the village? Was it a suicide or murder? Was it Leo, the Capitalist?

The author is a literature major.