

Wondrous Woes

SULTANUL AREFEEN

Being remembered by someone is
 Probably the best thing that
 Can happen to one.

The vivid imagery of your existence,
 Formed in between the cells of
 Someone's hippocampus,
 Igniting a spark in their hearts,
 While they beat rhythmically
 To the everlasting
 Thoughts of you.

Ah, the festivity of recollecting these
 Warm bits, while hiding behind

The flesh of a martyr, is
 Nothing short of
 Celebrations.

Being remembered by someone is
 Probably the best thing, that
 Can happen to one.

The only thing that disregards
 Is that you won't be there to
 See it, when it's really
 Happening to you.

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PHOTO: ORCHID CHAKMA

WAITING ROOM

ADRITA ZAIMA ISLAM

"This is why I tell you never to go out alone."

My eyes were heavy, my mind even more so. But who was I to avoid a question from her? The box creaked as I turned around to face her.

There was no light in the waiting room. The hour was beyond late and the usually cacophonous place, packed with impatient parents whiling their time away by chattering with each other as they waited for their ever-so needy, pre-pubescent children to step out of their classrooms, was empty. Empty, except for the two of us and Kimchi.

The darkness allowed her features to evade me even as my eyes squinted with all their might at the face framed by the voluminous, coarse waves of her hair. Much like his partner in crime, Kimchi was using his luxuriant white coat of fur and ability to curl up into a ball to escape my scrutiny.

I sighed.

"I don't know what you want me to say really."

There was a fly on the wall. The buzzing sound of its wings as it rose and settled back on the wall and then reiterated this ritual was driving me to the edge of insanity just as its constant rhythm was retaining my sanity together.

The reminder of this living organism, this pathetic thing that lived in dirt – was trapped in the same space as me and her – was my only source of irritation.

Every time the fly buzzed, it caused an itch, deep within my throat to arise. And I couldn't scratch that itch away. I

wanted to and I didn't want to scratch it away.

"What happened this time?"

As she said this, the last streak of light in the room spent itself getting caught in the movement of her chapped, thin lips darkened from nicotine.

"I don't know. Nothing. I suppose it was something but it wasn't much. He was shouting. I couldn't sleep and when I did, he was there. Shouting. I felt angry and upset and I wanted to say something but of course I couldn't. How could I?"

I let out a breath. My lungs ached

with the effort of exhaling. A sharp knife-like sensation. Everything hurt, most of all, my scrapped knee. Idly, my fingers reached out to the bruised elbow and ran a phantom caress over it.

"Why do I feel like this? How is any of this fair? I don't think fear should be an emotion a daughter should harbour towards her father. I don't think it is fair that every time I hear his voice, every time he says something from a room across the house, every time he opens his mouth, I flinch. And I cower and I run."

The sound of a chest tautly expanding as air flowed into healthy lungs followed by the whimper of a tom-cat with a thick coat of white fur followed by the buzz

of a fly on the wall of a school waiting room were the non-verbal responses.

The verbal one came after a long pause. A pause that seemed filled with discomfort than thoughtfulness.

"Is that what you did? You ran?"

"No, not immediately. I showered with the lavender soap that he got me last week in the bathroom of the house he bought last year, ate the breakfast made of the bread and filling his wife purchased with his money yesterday. I took the fare for the rickshaw from his hands and I stepped out of the door that he bought from Keraniganj, wearing shoes and clothes that I bought out of his salary. And then I ran."

The darkness still lingered. The light still evaded her face. But I didn't really need light to tell me what I knew her face was saying. It said nothing. A blank canvas waiting to be filled by the words and emotions and gestures I would use to articulate how much I resented the man whose Y chromosome I inherited.

"You ran and ran till you had to be stopped."

"Precisely."

"Did the guy apologise?"

"Of course, he did. A teenaged girl in a school uniform hit by a motorcyclist in broad daylight in a road busier than a tree full of bees during spring. It was either an apology or being trampled and hit to death by the fast-forming crowd."

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