

CONCRETE SORROW

RAIAN ABEDIN

When we sat on top of that tree, you wrote a letter
On its leaves, what did it say? Back then,
I had not the ability to make it out, nor had I ever
wondered.

But tonight is a different kind of night – under a
windless, soulless veil
I imagine birds flying past my craned neck, carry-
ing my message.

Where will my longing go beyond this?
Carry it with you, I tell this world,
Birds in boxes, birds in houses, no room to run
In concrete lines leading to concrete sorrow. The
veil only thickens.

Between here and there, there is something, a speck
in the grey.

We grasp on and we hold tight. For fear of it run-
ning out.



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Chander Buri and an insomniac's drive

ZABIN TAZRIN NASHITA

I've shot myself in the foot again.

This realisation came along with the cool breeze at dawn, which, unlike the biting artificiality of air conditioners, is never unpleasant. It was quite unwelcome at the moment – I shouldn't have been awake to experience its caress. With my circadian rhythm already in shambles, I was about to spend another night envious of those able to fall asleep at will, through storms and calamities.

As a child, my sister used to tell me to count sheep if I had difficulties sleeping, which hadn't ever proven effective. Sure, conjuring the images of white, fluffy sheep came easy, but I never made it past the count of five. They never remained still on an imaginary green field constructed to lull me to a peaceful slumber. Rather, they came to life and ran off, frightened by some wolf or otherworldly creature. I chased after them, and ended up in some bizarre world that defied science and logic – my very own wonderland that demanded I remain awake to explore.

Late night ruminations have not been fun or fantastical for a while now. The bedroom I generally found claustrophobic felt endless. Whatever lousy thriller I watched during the day suddenly pervaded the atmosphere. What if I were to take a few steps to the mirror, would I have seen some balding, toothless witch staring back at me? Or was she under my bed as she waited for my foot to touch the ground before her claws sank into my leg?

I considered calling a friend, and telling her how the night itself haunted me at the expense of being laughed at. I knew that I'd eventually decide against it, and would saunter over to the mirror to find my own face staring at me. And I did.

I knew I'd fish out my journal in a minute, and my hand would struggle to keep up with my racing mind as I jotted down whatever I had been thinking. I'd leave space for a few stickers and illustrations as I wrote my monochrome musings with colourful inks.

I didn't know what I'd write, but I did know what I wouldn't. I wondered, if I chose to forget about that person, will all the poems and songs I'd never written about them also cease to exist? Possibly.

I wondered if I could spin this particular thought into a sci-fi tale – I'm hopeless when it comes to writing romance.

I heard the clock tick mercilessly in the next room. The clock's in the shape of a rudder, not unlike how I used to imagine a *chorka* to look. I looked out the window in vain, the moon is hardly visible from this room, let alone the *chander buri*. As a child, I'd always wondered, why would a lone-some old woman need to spin threads on the moon?

Now, I think I've found my answer.

Poor old woman probably had trouble sleeping. Maybe the threads are the tales born of her own mind, or maybe she'd been tasked with recording what those who refused to sleep are doing in the form of a quilt.

I suddenly felt aware that the universe is expanding. The relative distance between me and just about anybody else, including the *chander buri*, had been increasing. Can she see me tonight? Will she weave my story in her quilt? She had been shifting farther as I spoke, wasn't she?

I'd never felt sadder at the prospect of not being a part of someone else's story. But I supposed it'd become inevitable one of these nights.

Zabin Tazrin Nashita is hopeless at poetry. Help her out at zabintn@gmail.com