

FICTION

The Melancholic Man

HASIB UR RASHID IFTI

"Is the defendant here with us today?" asked Judge Mehreen, as she looked around her courtroom erupting in anticipation. It took her eight bashes of her gavel to silence the audience. A new personal record.

"Yes, Your Honour", said Nizam Farooq as he stood up, trying to implant a fake tone of confidence in his voice.

"I see you've denied the defence lawyer provided by the state and decided to represent yourself", the judge said while looking at the documents, "You don't have any prior experience in the courtroom. Are you sure you want to do this? Especially with this session being televised nationwide?"

"Yes, Your Honour", said Nizam, "I don't think anyone else will be able to present my case better than myself."

"Alright, you may proceed."

"Your honour", Nizam coughed when he realised his voice was starting to crack, "Eden has always been a free nation. But what does true freedom mean? Sure, I've had the

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ILLUSTRATIONS: MAISHA SYEDA



freedom to walk around without having to worry about my security. I've had the freedom to elect my representatives and make life choices without any hindrance whatsoever. But is freedom merely defined by our external activities? If I don't have freedom over my own life, how am I truly free?"

An echo resonated across the courtroom as some of the audience members in the back clapped. But one could feel a sense of discomfort and disorientation in the air.

"Your honour, this is absolutely blasphemous", shouted Pinaki Ghosh,

the state attorney, "The nation of Eden has always been active about serving its citizens. Job security, free healthcare, unemployment benefits, paternity and maternity leaves, less taxation—Eden's done it all! Yet, citizens like Nizam Farooq are spreading this disease of melancholy across the nation. What message is he trying to convey to our hardworking youth?"

The crowd erupted in support. They've left their offices early on a Tuesday afternoon, waiting for this despicable man to get publicly humiliated for his deeds and get his deserved punishment. Mrs Ruqaiyah even brought her kids along so that

they could be part of this historic trial.

"Your honour, I'm not trying to convey any message." Nizam's voice broke as he could feel his throat shaking as he spoke, "All I'm asking is that a person's feelings shouldn't involve anyone but himself. A person should have the right to feel melancholic as much as he's got the right to feel happy, without any interference whatsoever."

"Even if that feeling pushes a person towards his death?" asked Mr Ghosh as he pointed at Nizam. As the room

to do the same. I had lost my wife and I really didn't have any friends, to begin with", said Nizam. "As proof, I have presented your honour with certificates of confirmation from my workers who can confirm that I had always been a social outcast. With her gone, it was just me and my thoughts in that cold apartment. I even planned on travelling to another country to see a therapist."

The court erupted in boos once again. The thought of a shrink disgusted them. "How perverse!" one said as he walked out of the courtroom.

"It's absolutely shameful to suggest that the state of Eden should condone the shameful practice of therapy and thereby, validate such disturbing mental conditions", Mr Ghosh smacked his fist against the bench,

will never condone such behaviour. It's simply a matter of yes or no. Did you or did you not jump willingly in front of a train on the night of November 14?"

The whole courtroom held their breath, waiting to hear Nizam's answer. As he nodded in affirmation, the enraged audience got off their seats to beat up the accused. Men threw stones and eggs they had smuggled in, waiting for this moment while the women threw their shoes at Nizam. The police had to empty the whole courtroom before the judge could speak.

"Ending your own life willingly is the most heinous crime a man can commit", said Judge Mehreen, "It's an act of treachery against the great nation of Eden. If criminals like Nizam Farooq are not punished, our society will be gravely affected by the normalisation of this grotesque perversion. This court hereby orders that Nizam Farooq be hanged for 24 hours in the public square in front of the people of Eden."

But Nizam's corpse already had its head dismembered from its body as the train ran over his head when he jumped in front of it. After the gravediggers exhumed his rotting corpse from grave number 8249, doctors had to stitch his head back to his neck. It was an eight-hour long operation but in the end, they were successful in making Nizam's corpse look hangable.

Edenews, the national television channel, broadcasted the entire hanging as Nizam's corpse hung for hours in front of a cheering crowd. The melancholic man had finally been punished for his crimes, even after his death and the nation of Eden could again rest in peace.

Hasib Ur Rashid Ifti is a writer and a student of Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology.

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went quiet, Nizam stood awkwardly, trying to muster all his courage and not have a breakdown. It was time to play his cards right and defend his deeds.

"Yes, I admit that I willingly ended my life", nodded Nizam, as the crowd booed, not letting him finish his sentence. The judge had to bang her gavel five more times to hush them down.

"But I'm not encouraging anyone

"He's wasting the court's precious time by trying to justify his despicable actions. Moreover, since the nation's watching, he's using this opportunity as a platform to preach melancholic behaviour like his."

Judge Mehreen stopped Nizam with her hand before he could continue, "Mr Nizam, there's no point in trying to justify your actions. This court or any other court in this great nation of Eden

POETRY

Lunatic Crow

AFNAN BINTEY HELAL

Limless black crow crawls the backdoor of lunacy,
Lunatic linearity is realized in the place of filial familiarity.
The ravenous raven ruins its own kind;
Lacerating the unfortified,
Picking at the flesh for bad blood to find.
Forging its own fort, precisely
Taking fragility for bricks,
Tears for grout, and
Fear for furnishing glaze.
A form is formed lacking fortitude!
Crow's make-believe habitation attains scarecrows.
The cannibal crow is not above finding a cure for its cruelty;
Stewing in its pungent air, wanting sourness to satisfy!

Afnan Binte Helal is currently pursuing her Master's degree in English Literature from East West University.



ILLUSTRATION: MAISHA SYEDA

A Dream Of Gaza

SURAYA AKTER

What happens when your desire
Lies in being alive?
Same sunrise and sunset
Fear in innocent eyes.
What happens when your desire
Lies in being alive?
Humanity before religion
Screaming of a child.
What happens when your desire
Lies in being alive?
Five waqt became Six waqt
Disquieting to perform janazah.

Suraya Akter is a second year student of English at North South University.

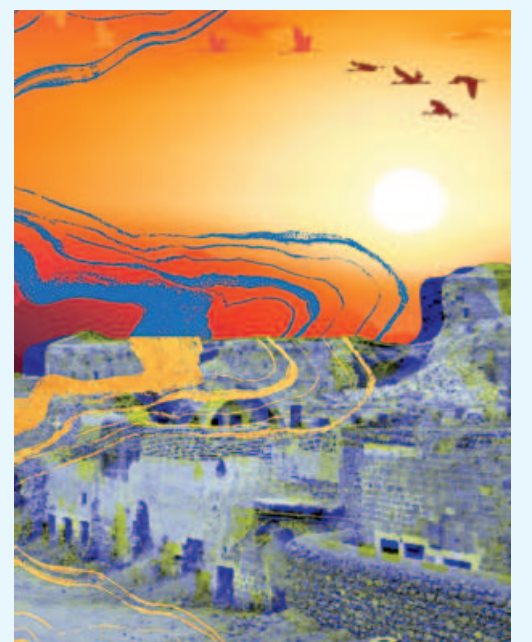


ILLUSTRATION: AMREETA LETHE