

Section III

On the Ground

खंड - III

जमींतर



पिकनिक

श्रेष्ठा चोपड़ा

बात उन दिनों की है जब हेमा चौथी कक्षा में थी। हमेशा की तरह साल के आखिरी महीने में, सर्दियों की छुट्टियों से कुछ ही दिन पहले क्लास में सालाना पिकनिक प्रोग्राम का सर्कुलर डिस्ट्रीब्यूट होता था। जिसका इंग्लिश से हिंदी अनुवाद करके जैसे ही टीचर पिकनिक की सूचना बच्चों को देती, उसी वक़्त क्लास के सारे बच्चे उत्सुकता से उछलने, कूदने और नाचने लगते। टीचर व्यर्थ ही उन्हें चुप कराने और वापस पढ़ाई में उनका ध्यान लगाने की कोशिश करती क्योंकि उसके बाद बच्चों को काबू करना संभव ही नहीं होता था।

पीरियड खत्म होने की घंटी बजते ही सब ग्रुप बनाकर बातें करने लगे, सबने मिलकर सबसे पहला काम यही किया कि हेमा को उनके ग्रुप का लीडर चुना। इस वजह से नहीं कि उसके पापा स्कूल में क्लर्क थे, न ही इसलिए कि वह क्लास की मॉनिटर थी और न इसलिए कि वह क्लास में सबसे इंटेलीजेंट थी, जबकि यह सच तो था ही कि वह लगातार दो सालों से क्लास में अक्वल रह चुकी थी।

उन्होंने तो उसे लीडर चुना तो इसलिए क्योंकि उसका लंच सब दोस्तों में हमेशा सबसे स्पेशल होता था। और वह बिना किसी भेदभाव के अपना लंच सब के साथ शेयर भी करती थी। कभी किसी को इस मामले में शिकायत का मौका नहीं देती थी इसलिए बिना किसी के विरोध के सब की सहमति से वह ग्रुप की लीडर चुन ली गई थी।

रमा को तो अपनी हर क्लास की पिकनिक बहुत अच्छे से याद थी। पिछली बार वे पिकनिक में डॉल म्यूजियम गए थे, कितनी खूबसूरत डॉल्स थी वहाँ। विश्व में पाई जाने वाली हज़ारों किस्म की डॉल्स उन्होंने देखी, जिनमें उस देश के लोगों के पहनावे और संस्कृति की झलक भी दिखती थी। अकेले भारत में कितने अलग-अलग तरह के गुड्डे, गुड़ियों से बच्चे खेलते होंगे, ये उन सब को वहाँ जाकर ही पता चला था।

तभी विपुल बोल पड़ा, “लेकिन सबसे खूबसूरत तो वह कठपुतली डांस था, है न?” और सभी बच्चों ने सहमति में सर हिलाया। “और उससे पहली पिकनिक पर हम बाल भवन गए थे, भूल गए?” देव ने सबको याद दिलाया, “जहाँ हमने ऊंट की सवारी की थी और याद है मिस रीटा को अपने ऊपर बिठाने में ऊंट कितने नखरे कर रहा था, जैसे हमारी तरह उसकी भी पर्सनल दुश्मनी रही हो उससे”।

“हाँ, और रीटा मैम कितनी गुस्सा हो गई थी उसके बाद, मुझे तो लगा था, वह जैसे हमारे कान पकड़कर हमें रोज-रोज डांटती है उसी तरह ऊंट की पूँछ पकड़कर उसे भी वहीं डांटने लग जाती।”

इस के साथ ही लंबी बातचीत चली उनके बीच जिसमें सभी ने निशा को पिकनिक पर चिड़ियाघर जाना था तो रवि को वॉटर पार्क, समर को हुमायूँ के मकबरे और लाल किले के इतिहास को नजदीक से देखना समझना था तो ईशा को चिल्ड्रेन्स पार्क में तरह-तरह के झूले झूलने का मन था, लेकिन पिकनिक का स्थान उनमें से कोई भी जगह न होकर निकला तो एक अनजानी सी जगह, जिसके बारे में पहले किसी ने कुछ नहीं सुना था।

“हैपिनेस एन्क्लेव”, टीचर ने भी बच्चों से उस जगह के बारे में सिर्फ इतना कहा कि इस बार वह एक बेहद खास जगह घूमने जा रहे हैं, और यह पिकनिक सब के लिए एक नया अनुभव होगा।

पिकनिक स्पॉट जानकर बच्चों को निराशा हुई लेकिन हेमा ने ज़रा भी दिल छोटा न करते हुए सब दोस्तों को पिकनिक की तैयारी के लिए घर से कुछ न कुछ सामान लेने की ज़िम्मेदारी दी। ताकि सबकी पसंद का लंच में कुछ न कुछ होना चाहिए इसलिए उसका एक स्पेशल मेन्यू भी तय किया गया और डिस्पोजेबल प्लेट्स, स्पून्स और ग्लासेस, छोटे मोटे सामान कौन लाएगा, ये भी तय हो गया। रवि ने कैमरा लाने का ज़िम्मा लिया और नेहा ने सफर में सबको नए गाने सुनाने के लिए अपना नया आईपॉड लाने का वादा किया।

पिकनिक से एक दिन पहले तो इंतज़ार ही नहीं हो पा रहा था बच्चों से, पिकनिक के बारे में सोचते-सोचते हेमा देर रात तक करवटें बदलती रही। सुबह उसकी नींद माँ के आवाज़ देने से पहले ही खुल गयी, वह फटाफट तैयार होकर स्कूल बस के आने का इंतज़ार करने लगी।

स्कूल पहुँचकर टीचर ने पहले अटेंडेंस ली, कुछ ज़रूरी आदेश दिए फिर पिकनिक बस में बैठकर बच्चे सफर पर निकल गए ।

एन्क्लेव पहुँचकर बच्चों की जिज्ञासा बढ़ने लगी की आखिर पिकनिक स्पॉट इतनी साधारण-सी दिखने वाली जगह कैसे हो सकती है, दूर-दूर तक कुछ दिखाई नहीं दे रहा था सिवाय एक घर के जो देखने में बहुत ही पुराना और मामूली सा लग रहा था ।

तभी टीचर ने उनके आश्चर्य को समझते हुए कहा “देखो बच्चों, आज हम एक ओल्डएज होम आए हैं । यहाँ पर तुम्हारे दादा दादी की उम्र के बहुत सारे लोग रहते हैं ।

कभी-कभी अपने परिवारों के बिना रहते हुए, वे लोग बेहद अकेला महसूस करते हैं, इसलिए उनकी रूटीन जिन्दगी की बोरियत से आज हम उन्हें आज़ाद करेंगे ।

सब मिलकर उनके साथ ढेर सारा वक्त बिताएंगे, उनके साथ लंच करेंगे और उनसे बहुत सारी नई-नई बातें करेंगे । उनके अनुभवों को जानकर हमें बहुत कुछ सीखने का मौका भी मिलेगा, तो बच्चों सरप्राइज अच्छा लगा न तुम्हें ?”

“मैम, क्या उन्हें हमसे मिलकर खुशी होगी?” अतुल ने अपनी मासूम समझ से पूछा, तो टीचर ने मुस्कराकर कहा, “अब तुम लोगों के लिये सिर्फ एक ही इंस्ट्रक्शन है, उन लोगों से मिलने से हिचकिचाना मत, बिल्कुल मत घबराना, उन्हें थोड़ी देर के लिए ही सही, पर अपने ही परिवार का सदस्य मानकर उनसे प्यार से पेश आना ।”

न जाने टीचर की बातें बच्चे समझ भी पाए थे या नहीं ।

उस घर में प्रवेश करते ही बच्चों ने देखा की वह छोटा सा घर उनके आने की खुशी में कितनी खूबसूरती से सजाया गया था। घर के प्रवेश द्वार पर एक आंटी उनके स्वागत के लिए थाली लेकर खड़ी थी और उन्होंने हर बच्चे का तिलक करके उन्हें हैपिनेस एन्क्लेव का संक्षिप्त परिचय दिया ।

“गुड मॉर्निंग बच्चों! वेलकम टू आवर स्वीट होम! हैपिनेस एन्क्लेव में हमारी छोटी सी फैमिली आप सबसे मिलने के लिए बेकरार है क्योंकि आज आप सब हमारे मेहमान हैं।” उन्होंने सब बच्चों को घर के दूसरे सदस्यों से इंट्रोड्यूस किया और उनसे मिलकर घर के सब लोगों के चेहरे बिल्कुल उन बच्चों जैसे खिल गए, कब से आखिर उनकी ही राह देख रहे थे। कुछ देर माहौल में ज़रा हिचकिचाहट रही, लेकिन टीचर की कोशिश से धीरे-धीरे बच्चे घर के सदस्यों के साथ हँसने बोलने लगे।

अंकल हंस कुछ ही वक़्त में सबके फ़ेवरेट हो गए क्योंकि उनके पास था एक कलेक्शन अपने पोते के पुराने पज़ल्स और गेम्स का जिनमें बच्चे बेझिझक मशरूफ़ हो गए और अंकल के साथ सब प्रतियोगिता लड़ाने लगे की कौन पहले पहली बुझाएगा।

इस बीच सुधा आंटी कलेक्शन में डूबे उन बच्चों की खूब सारी फोटो खींचे जा रही थीं, सबसे छिपकर। फिर उनसे मिलने कब कौन आए, क्या पता? लेकिन उस दिन की एक-एक फोटो को हमेशा संजोकर रखेगी वह।

और कुछ बच्चे मिस्टर सिंह के साथ चैस की गेम को बेहद तल्लीनता से समझते दिखाई दे रहे थे। मिस्टर सिंह रिटायर्ड होकर अपनी पत्नी के साथ कई सालों से वहाँ रह रहे थे। किसी से ज़्यादा बोलते नहीं थे। आज उन्हें बच्चों के साथ यूँ उनका टीचर बने देखकर मिसेज सिंह भी हैरान थी और सोच रही थी कि तो क्या हुआ अगर उनके अपने बच्चे नहीं हैं, क्योंकि आज तो उन्हें इस बात का भी ग़म नहीं था।

कुछ बच्चे घर की लेडीज के साथ किचन में अपना लंच शेयर करते दिखाई दिए, हर कोई अपने टिफिन से कुछ-कुछ उन्हें टेस्ट करा रहा था, उन लोगों ने कभी बर्गर और पास्ता नहीं चखा था, बच्चे यह जानकर हैरान थे। वह उन्हें नई-नई तरह की डिश के बारे में बता रहे थे, ऐसा लग रहा था मानो उनमें से हर कोई बच्चों से काफी कुछ नया सीख रहा था।

एन्क्लेव के छोटे से किचन गार्डन में अंकल आंटी के साथ गार्डनिंग करते हुए देव ने तो अपने जोक्स से उन लोगों का दिल ही जीत लिया, रीटा मैम और ऊंट वाला किस्सा तो उन सब को बहुत फनी लगा। टीचर सब बच्चों को यूँ उन बुजुर्गों से घुल मिलते देखकर बहुत खुश हुई पर हेमा तो कहीं दिखाई ही नहीं दे रही थी, उन्होंने सब जगह नज़रें दौड़ाई लेकिन हेमा कहीं नज़र नहीं आई।

वह घर के दूसरे कमरों में उसे तलाशने लगी कि तभी उनकी नज़र एक छोटे से कमरे में पड़े बिस्तर पर गई, जहाँ कोई बीमार सी लगने वाली औरत लेटी हुई थी और कमरे की खिड़की से ही सब बच्चों को हंसते-खेलते हुए गौर से देख रही थी ।

वह औरत मिसेस बखशी थीं । वह लकवाग्रस्त थी इसलिए अपने कमरे से ही उस त्यौहार जैसे दिन को अपनी आँखों में कैद कर रही थी । उनके बारे में कोई कुछ नहीं जानता था सिवाय इसके कि एक हादसे में घायल होकर उनकी आज यह हालत थी । उनसे मिलने आजतक कभी कोई नहीं आया था उस घर में ।

हेमा ने उन्हें खिड़की से सब को झाँकते हुए देखा तो वह समझ गई कि अम्मा भी उनसे बातें करना चाहती होगी । हेमा उन्हीं के पास अपने और अपने दोस्तों के बारे में उन्हें कुछ-कुछ बता रही थी और टीचर को ऐसा लग रहा था कि वह औरत अपने होंठों की उस हल्की सी मुस्कान से जैसे उस नन्ही परी को अपना कृतज्ञता भरा आशीर्वाद दे रही थी।

और फिर शुरू हुआ स्टोरी-टेलिंग सेशन, आखिर दादा दादी की शिक्षाप्रद कहानियों के बिना वह पिकनिक अधूरी रह जाती । बच्चे कहानियों को सुनते वक़्त कितने क्यूट लग रहे थे, उनकी कौतूहल से भरी आँखें अपने आप में न जाने कितनी कहानियाँ कह रही थी उन नए दोस्तों से मिलकर । अलविदा कहते वक़्त बच्चों ने उस घर के सभी सदस्यों को अपने स्कूल आने को कहा और उनसे वापस जल्द लौटने का वादा भी किया ।

बच्चे समझ नहीं सके कि उन लोगों की आँखें क्यों भीग आयीं थी उस पल।



श्रेष्ठा चोपड़ा लक्ष्मीबाई कॉलेज में अंग्रेजी ऑनर्स (द्वितीय वर्ष) की छात्रा हैं ।

लेखनी

निशा तिवारी

लेखनी तू चले जा
न रुक तू कहीं
बस बढ़े जा बढ़े जा ।
न कर प्रवाह निंदा की
न देख राह प्रशंसा की
लीन होकर अपने काम में
बस चले जा, चले जा ।
हो प्रयास निष्फल हजार
फिर भी नित नये प्रयास
बस किये जा किये जा ।
आर्येंगे राह में पत्थर अनेक
भले ही मिले असफलताएँ अनेक
पर सफलता के पथ पर
निरंतर तू बढ़े जा बढ़े जा ।



निशा तिवारी आई. पी. कॉलेज फॉर वीमेन में
बी.ए प्रोग्राम (तृतीय वर्ष) की छात्रा हैं ।

My Photographs Talk

————— *Bedotroyee Bhattacharjee* —————

My room was full of them
Photographs.
Colourful and black and white
Sepia and tinted.

I loved talking to them
about the time they were born.

Some wink at me, some complain
of the long moments they had to stiff themselves

Some subtly express their discomfort
about the people next to them,
they are no longer friends anymore.

A few thank me
to catch them off guard
in their beauty

Some ask me
how we look different
older than before

Some seek for a companion
from the same place
to be stranded next to them

Some don't talk
perhaps they are old now
or maybe waiting for their replacement
anytime soon

Some can't get over laughing
the moment was memorable
They make me giggle
even when I am teary.

Some of them weep
out of nostalgia
and keep reminding me that time doesn't return
There are a few more,

some in albums, they are happy when I visit them
Some in phones, they are flipped often
Some in the hard disc, waiting to populate my room.

They talk, of the time they were born,
of the time I silently revisited them,
of what I miss from time to time.

Oh yes, they talk
out loud, but
only for me to hear.



*Bedotroyee Bhattacharjee is currently pursuing
M.A. English from Daulat Ram College.*

तुम बिन

पूजा सिंह

निर्झर खो जाते सरिता में
सरिता सागर से जा मिलती
चंचल मदभरी हवाएँ भी सब
आपस में मिलजुल बहती ।

कोई न अकेला दुनिया में
उसने भेजा सबका साथी
फिर तुम क्यों मेरे साथ नहीं
में दीपक जैसे बिन बाती ।

देखो ये पर्वतमालाएँ हैं
आसमान को चूम रहीं
उठती गिरती जल की लहरें
मदमस्त प्यार में झूम रहीं ।

यह कली फूल से मिलकर
डाली पर कैसे इठलाती है
सूरज की किरणों नित आकर
धरती को गले लगाती हैं ।

धवल चाँदनी आतुर, सागर
का आलिंगन करती हैं
पर व्यर्थ सभी आलिंगन
तुम बिन, दुनिया सूनी-सूनी लगती है ।



पूजा सिंह केन्द्रीय शिक्षण संस्थान
दिल्ली विश्वविद्यालय (प्रथम वर्ष) की छात्रा हैं ।

Heaven?

Arushi Ahuja

She asked me about heaven;
Said how it's subjective and personal,
Puppies or rainbows or unicorns,
Or flowers,
Or thorns;
To each his own.

She asked me about heaven;
Pointed towards the cloudy skies,
With the sun peeking out from behind its fluffy veil,
Illuminating the sky with its magnificent light,
And said that's where heaven would be,
Where you could just float,
finally free,
Detached from your body, your world, your reality.

She asked me about heaven;
Where was mine?
Without hesitation,
Without thinking twice,
I pointed to her,
Because if there is a heaven,
It must be in her ocean blue eyes.



*Arushi Ahuja is a student of
B. A. (Hons) Psychology, Third Year at Kamala Nehru College.*

बारिश और तुम

— अविनाश कुमार —

अच्छी लगती है बारिश तब और भी
कभी हँसती कभी गुमसुम हो जब
झुमके हों पायल की रुनझुन हो जब
ज़रा-ज़रा से गीले ज़रा-ज़रा से सूखे
एक छतरी के नीचे हम तुम हों जब
अच्छी लगती है बारिश तब और भी
बूंदों की आवाज़ आती हो
घटाँ मेघ मल्हार सुनाती हों
तानपुरे के तार से मिलकर
साथ मेरे तुम भी गाती हो
अच्छी लगती है बारिश तब और भी
चुप- चुप सी रात हो अगर
खामोशी से बात हो अगर
चाँद सितारे खुशबू हवाँ हों
तुम मेरे साथ हो अगर
अच्छी लगती है बारिश तब और भी
झूमती हुई फूलों की डाली हो
हाथों में हमारे चाय की प्याली हो
हवाओं ने तुम्हारे बाल बिखेरे हों
तुमने बस अपनी लटें संभाली हों
अच्छी लगती है बारिश तब और भी



अविनाश कुमार संगीत एवं ललित कला संकाय
में पीएचडी शोधार्थी हैं ।

The Sepia Morning

————— *Amit Kumar* —————

The sepia morning nestles
between carbon darkness and golden light
When the early bird sings
and takes flight.

The dew still spread on grass,
the mist hung on trees
the mesmerising calm broken quietly
by leaves rustling in the gentle breeze.

As I open my somnolent eyes
and look at the eastern skies
The sun is still in the womb of the distant horizon
that has just begun to turn a faint crimson.

This is the hour
When the serene and the surreal converge
Into the realm of light
The demons of darkness merge.

As new hope surges
And despondency withers away
The sepia morning rises
And shows the day.



*Amit Kumar is a student of Law
at Faculty of Law.*

Lost and Found

————— *Kashish Koma* —————

"Think again Sara. Is this the right thing to do?", said Nikhil, frowning. I've thought about this already, Nikhil. I have to do this." "Rahul needs you, Sara. How do you expect a 3 year old to survive in an orphanage without his mother?" "How do you expect him to survive with me? I'm a shattered damaged woman, Nikhil. I've got nothing to give him. Not care, not even money. I'm doing this only for him. He will not suffer without me." "I can take care of him, Sara. Of both of you. Don't do this to the poor child or to yourself. Please let me. Sara, is this the future Sameer would have wanted for his son?" Nikhil said quietly. Sara averted her eyes and dropped her head. The tears she had been fighting came spilling over all at once.

Sameer Malhotra, her husband had died in a tragic car accident a month ago. The very same accident that had claimed her eyesight. The accident that had taken everything away from her. Even her ability to be a good mother. With her husband and her eyesight, she had lost her job and was now giving up her son. She loved him enough to let him go. She knew he would never be able to lead a happy life with her. She would cripple him. Be the thorn in his side that he would long to be rid of. How would she sustain him? Or arrange for money to feed him, clothe him, educate him? The decision had been excruciating but she had steeled herself. Her son would never have to endure the shame of having a blind, helpless, jobless mother. He would not live in the poverty she was sure was going to befall her.

No.

Never.

She could not save her husband. But she wasn't going to let her son die too. She would not falter in her resolve. She sensed Nikhil waiting for an answer and replied, "Sameer wanted Rahul to be happy. I won't let my selfishness deprive my son of his right to be happy. I have to protect him." "A son does not need to be protected from his own mother. You can't see anything but not even this simple truth?" Sara did not say anything. Being brought up in an orphanage herself, she knew what was awaiting Rahul, but she knew she had no other choice. Nikhil sighed audibly. "If this is what you really want" he said in a choked voice. Sara could imagine what he would look like right now- his face contorted with pain, his striking blue eyes glistening with unshed tears. How many times had she admired those eyes? The colour of the sun-kissed sky on a clear winter morning.

Nikhil took a step forward to lift the sleeping Rahul from his mother's lap. Sara felt Rahul's fingers tighten around her instinctively. Fighting back tears, she twisted her hand free of his grip and handed him over to Nikhil. Without a word, Nikhil stepped out of the room and out of the house. He heard the engine of the car roar and instantly found herself hoping that the noise had not woken Rahul. She then set about groping for her things to pack, in preparation for vacating the house. The government quarter was no longer allotted to them after Sameer's death.

Days passed.

Weeks passed.

Sara was now living alone in a tiny single bedroom apartment she had managed to procure on rent by selling her remaining valuables. Not a day passed when she did not think of Rahul. She wondered if he had been adopted by someone yet. If that someone was able to give him the same love she had given him. Did he miss her? Did he remember her? Did he still sing his favourite teddy bear to sleep? Did he still cry at night? Was his hair the same mess it used to be?

She yearned for an answer but was afraid that the answers might make her go back on her word. Any knowledge of Rahul, any information about him, any mention of him might break the walls of tolerance and self control she had so carefully built, with so much effort. She had forbidden Nikhil from telling her anything about Rahul. So, she buried her son in a far corner of her mind, along with her questions and his memories.

Nikhil came to visit her regularly. He had offered to let her stay at his house but she had refused. Already, she felt weighed down by the debt she thought she owed him. Nikhil had been her best friend since childhood. He had done a lot for her- providing them with financial aid, helping them get married, being Rahul's 'ideal' uncle and being a pillar of strength for her after the accident. She could not let herself become a burden for him.

Three months after the accident, Nikhil entered her house excitedly one day, saying, "Sara! I've found you an eye donor. You will be able to see again. You can bring Rahul back. You can be happy""Are you serious?", she asked not daring to believe her ears. All her problems could be solved if she could be cured. She could bring Rahul back home! Back to where he belonged. Back to his mother. She would give him a wonderful life. She would fulfil all the dreams they had ever had for him.

The next day, Sara was at the hospital, escorted by Nikhil. He wheeled her to the ward, squeezed her hand lightly and said, "All the best Sara. Have a good life." Before she could respond to this, he was gone. She wondered about his abrupt departure but her excitement drowned any apprehension. She could hear doctors and nurses buzzing anxiously. Her last thought was about Rahul before the darkness succeeded by the prick in her arm pulled her under.

-X-X-X-

Sara Malhotra opened her eyes to the world. She could see a doctor bent over her anxiously.

She had her sight back! She let the moisture flow from her eyes while listening to the doctor explain about the surgery. Suddenly she asked, "Where is Nikhil? I want to see him." "Oh yes, Maám. Sir has left you a letter of sorts. Here it is.", the doctor said handing her a sheet of paper. Sara unfolded it, puzzled. It read,

"Dearest Sara,

I'm sorry I had to leave suddenly. There is a confession I seek to make. I did not take Rahul to any orphanage. He was, and still is, at my house. Please retrieve him from there.

I will never be able to see you again. Believe me, it is for the best.

Yours sincerely,
Nikhil"

After the shock of discovering that Rahul had been with Nikhil all along had worn off, bewilderment took its place. She was confused. She did not know what to make of her best friend's abrupt departure, seemingly from her life. At that moment, the doctor brought her a mirror to glance into. She took it in her shaking hands and distractedly looked at her reflection. Her face seemed familiar, and yet not her own. It was a while before she realised that the eyes which stared back at her were blue. Blue as the sun kissed sky on a clear winter morning.



Kashish Komal is a student of B.A. (Hons) History, First Year at St Stephen's College.

टपकती दीवारें

— सत्यम प्रियदशी —

मैं उस समय महज पाँच साल का था। सब साथ में ही सोते थे। मैं माँ के बगल में सोता था और माँ दीवार से सटे सोती थी। दीवार पर दुर्गा माँ की तस्वीर को फ्रेम करा कर लगाया गया था। जब कभी मैं माँ के साथ रहता कभी उस दुर्गा माँ के चेहरे को देखता और फिर माँ के तरफ देखता और सूरत में समानताएँ ढूँढता। माँ मेरी इस हरकत को देख मुस्कराती और फिर मैं शरमाते हुए उनके सीने से लिपट जाता।

मुझे ठीक से याद है, बरसात का मौसम था। लगभग रोज़ रात को उस समय बारिश हुआ करती थी। पापा जब भी उन दिनों दुकान से आते तो बरसाती पहन कर ही आते। रोज़ की भाँति उस रात भी जब हम खाने के बाद बिछावन पर सोने गए। मैंने माँ से पूछा कि माँ तू रोज़ दीवार के तरफ क्यों सोती है।

माँ का जवाब था “ताकि तुम्हें देख सकूँ, सामने से”। मैं भी ठहरा नादान, माँ की बात मान ली। उस समय उतनी बुद्धि कहाँ थी कि ये पूछ सकूँ कि अगर मैं भी दीवार से सटे सोता तो भी वो मुझे देख ही सकती थी वो भी सामने से। खैर एक दो रोज़ बाद हम ननिहाल जाने वाले थे, गए भी; और एक सप्ताह बाद लौटे। कमरे का दरवाज़ा खुला तो हमने पाया, माँ दुर्गा की वो तस्वीर बिछावन पर गिरी पड़ी है और पूरा बिछावन गीला। दीवार पर दरारें थी जो पहले उस फ़ोटो फ्रेम से ढका पड़ा था। चूँकि दरार फ्रेम के पीछे था और उसी दरार से पानी रीस कर सारा बिछावन गीला हो गया था और पलंग के किनारे से टप-टप कर पानी नीचे गिर रहा था। पाँच साल का अबोध बालक ही सही पर तत्काल तो सबकुछ समझ में आ ही गया था और मैं जाकर माँ के सीने से लिपट कर रोने लगा। शायद माँ भी समझ गयी थी और कहने लगी- अरे ! रोओ नहीं बेटा, पापा से बोलकर ठीक करवा लेंगे।

आज समझ में आता है कि माँ उस समय तो मुझे चुप करने में तो सफल रही पर मैंने उसी दिन ठान लिया था; एक घर बनाऊंगा जिसमें एक भी दरार न होगी और मेरी माँ दीवार से सट कर भी सोएगी तो चैन से सोएगी।

माँ दुर्गा की तस्वीर भी लगेंगी दीवार पर लेकिन इसलिए नहीं की वो दरार को ढक सके बल्कि इसलिए कि हम उनकी पूजा कर सकें । इस तरह से वो “टपकती दीवारे” मुझे जीवन में आगे बढ़ते रहने का पैगाम दे गई । आज भी जब कभी खुद से हार कर बैठने लगता हूँ तो वो वादा जो हाल ही में लिखी मेरी एक कविता में भी अभिव्यक्त हुआ है- मैंने माँ से वादा किया है कि/ मैं अपना वादा पूरा करूँगा... स्मरण हो आता है । मुझे फिर से खड़ा होने का हौसला देता है और कहता है कि सत्यम अपने आप को इतना मजबूत बनाओ कि चाहे कितनी भी मुश्किलें सामने क्यों न आए तुम बस उसका सामना करते जाओ । बस इतना ख्याल रहे की तुम्हें लक्ष्य को भेदना है । मुश्किलें तुम्हें न भेद सके, नहीं तो जिस तरह दीवार में दरार के कारण पानी टपकने लगता है और धीरे-धीरे कमजोर हो होकर एक दिन दीवार गिर जाती है उसी तरह तुम भी गिर जाओगे । और तब मैं फिर से खड़ा हो जाता हूँ ।



सत्यम प्रियदर्शी मोतीलाल नेहरु कॉलेज में राजनीति शास्त्र के छात्र हैं ।

The Nights

————— *Ankita Biswas* —————

There's something about the night
Something Dark, something Silent
That brings out the dark deep secrets of the beings.
Not just of beings, but of things too
Things that matter and those that don't.
Is it because the Dark self finds solace in the Dark Night?
Or because not everyone comes to know of it?
Just a few, just the weird ones,
Who love to taste the storms of minds.

What happens at night, dies at night.
But the spirits of the dead, the silent dead
stay alive in the remote corners of the mind.
Changing the looking glass of the weird eyes.

There's something about the night
That spreads the stink of piled up feelings;
Pushes thoughts and emotions long dead
up the graves of hearts.
Feelings, thoughts and emotions taking birth;
Dying, changing, reviving, struggling
Struggling to live or struggling to die.

The world is at peace,
the minds of the night hawkers
at war.
Silence hears it all.
Some random being hears it all.
Passes it on ahead, to some other being in distress.
Thoughts and beliefs and thoughts and feelings keep moving on.
Travel in silence.
All at night and only in the night.



*Ankita Biswas is a student of B.A. (Hons) English,
Third Year at Shaheed Bhagat Singh College.*

Endlessness

————— *Chirayu Goyal* —————

It is all dark and watery. Water ensuing like a constant, thin layer of plaster form the edge between where the wall and the ceiling meet gives the wall a moaning and distressed face. A man is lying, half in water. He knows he shouldn't be lying like this and must get up, but the awareness that he might lie here forever if only he thought of doing it, if he continued doing it, that his limbs would become stone and so will his mind, doesn't let him get up. Instead, he chooses to dream about the dream he just had, or is he still half in it? At least that is what seems to be true to him right now, but of course it could be the shameful and embarrassing stupidity that dreams induce on waking that makes him think this. He will dream of a pathetic, lonely man, who will wriggle and squirm around like an illegitimate serpent, deformity, dragging his kipple-ized feet, since they cannot be told apart from the squelchy, nausea-inducing kipple, without end, without destination, without reason through a horrific and haunted hell. He is afraid of such a fate, of the pain and consternation of it, of never being able to stop. Never a rest. He will stab this person through the heart, rip out his entrails and throw them deep into the womb of the ancient water to end the possibility of the grave, dreary fate the snake brings to life.

He had killed a man today. His corpse lays with him, as if his undead lover, unforgiving, mocking eternal lover, lying with him in their eternal tomb.

A man walks, kissing, groping lustfully the watery curtain of the lacerated, lesioned, drooping walls of the devouring house of the stalking night. He will walk, endlessly without destination, through the water in the hallway where every door is doom, and the floor pulls you down with its half opened mouth, filled half with water, its teeth showing like mouldering, distorted stone, only because he believes that he can indeed walk forever, making love to the mould, the sick water, something which cannot be done, only if he thought of doing it forever, and he will do it.

His limbs would never stop, his mind would be fixated, his neck transfixed, straining on its moving stump.

He finds a disgusting, grotesque human form half drunk, half sunk in streaking, gleaming, shining water, even though the water's heart is the vilest black. He will kill this man, with utter and arrant hatred and disgust and barbarity, because this man's presence meant that he was not alone. He could end him for being a languishing anomaly, the undead manifestation of a possibility of never moving, never moving a limb. Being with this someone, seeing him filled him with inhuman repulsion. He imagines this hateful figure rising, water stretching, rising to pull him back into its strangling embrace, and with dripping madness, reeking hate, kill him. He raises his hands, already half water, half decaying, unfaithful mortal skin, and pushes the head of the figure into the water, inside the twisting mouth of the sentient, evil water. In the asphyxiating hide of the water, the despicable man starts to dissolve, half mud, half water, and his remains are indistinguishable from the rest- the night that seems to fall on your head, enveloping you with its sightless skin; the nightmarish house that seems to rise from its grave with every sigh of the living; the crying walls wailing with the pain of being; and the water. He is same as the ubiquitous breath of the water.

Water pulls him in. It runs its nails through his hair, fills his ears with its distasteful gurgling confession, and fills in his mouth its slimy tongue.

He now lies with the man he killed, like his undying lover, and with every passing moment knowing him more, learning the niches and crevices of his mind. Never moving a limb, not blinking an eye, knowing that this could remain forever if he continued, if he only came up with the thought, he switches his paramour, from the indefinite trepidation of the feet, to the timeless hypnagogic, soporific embrace of the water.



*Chirayu Goyal is a student of B.A. (Hons) English,
Second Year at Deshbandhu College*

बेज़ुबानों को समझो

दीपक

चिड़ियों का चहकना
जीव-जन्तु का चिहाड़ना
अग्नि का दहकना
झरनों का कुछ गाना
हमारे मन को भा जाना
ऐसा हिंदुस्तान है हम सब ने माना ।
पेड़-पेड़ डाली-डाली चिड़ियों का उड़ना
अपनी भाषा में हमसे कुछ कहना
फिर भी समझ न पाई हमारी प्यारी बहना
हमारी तरह न बोलना जानते हैं, न लिखना
फिर भी समझते है हमारा कहना
ऊँचे-ऊँचे अम्बर में नील-गगन में घूमते हैं
नीचे थल में, जल में राज करती हैं
अम्बर में चिड़िया रहती है
और धरती पर हम
सुन लेते हैं उनकी आवाज
समझ लेते हैं उनकी बात
पर क्या ऐसा भारत है हमारा आज ?
क्यों करते हैं हम इंसान
इन बेज़ुबान प्राणियों की हत्या
किसी के घर में अँधेरा करके
क्यों जलाते है ऐसा दीया

मांगते है वो इंसानों से दया
इंसानों में न शर्म है न हया
अब कहती है बेचारी चिड़िया,
गौरैया और हमारी प्यारी मैया
हम निरीह प्राणियों को
मत मारो और प्यारे भईया ।



दीपक

Holocaust Journal

————— *Bhavya Srivastava* —————

NOTICE

All the non-Germans are ordered to wear a Yellow Star of David, segregating themselves from the pure race. They are forbidden to use buses, trams, cars or transport, public or personal, of any kind. They are forbidden to form groups, to attend any kind of social or religious events. Furthermore, they are ordered to restrict their actions, and for the greater good of the purer race, all their basic rights and amenities are curtailed.

Any non-German found breaking any laws will be executed immediately. All of them are ordered to register themselves and their families for further measures and treatment.

Date: 01st Januar 1941
(signed: Herr Nicholas Tvalsky)
burgermeister

I sighed. Already getting the ration was difficult now. With the release of these new prohibitions, it would be tougher obtaining anything to eat at all. Already the air around was filled with hostility, reproaching eyes followed everywhere I went. As if the First World War was our fault, as if we ruined the country.....

Non-Germans, that's what they called us, now, I thought bitterly. After suffering through the Great War, heaving the penance of the great Depression, we all, the Jewish, the Polish, the Hispanics, were anti-nationals, traitors.

We are now forced to lift the heavy cross, of segregation and guilt, just because "Fuhrer" had decided to lead us to progress and development, only if "anti-nationals like us have been taken care of." Like we never suffered as they did, like we never cried the same tears as they did, like we never lost our loved ones to clutches of war as they did, like we never lost our everything as they did.....

Reaching home, I carefully placed the loaf of bread and some minced meat. It was a small house, just one room, the dining room in morning, the study room in afternoon, the kitchen in evening and for bedroom at night. Glancing upon from her dirty toils, my mother gave me a crinkly, weak smile, and said, "sehone tochter, I knew you will get something for us, your dad would be so happy, when he comes back. These are enough for all of us, enough for feast, and to save for....." Glazing over, she left that poignant note, hanging in the air. She knew what was coming, like everyone, our inevitable doom. Maybe, the only saving grace was having an only child, therefore, having to fill a small number of always-hungry stomachs. After staring into space for few minutes, she resumes her work. I grab my favorite book, which once costed our entire ration for the day, and began reading it.

After the cold dinner, we join our hands, thanking our god in gratitude, for another safe and gracious day, as safe and gracious it could be. "It's not we are suffering that we forget to thank Him, we thank Him for every breath we take, every deed we commit, every bite we eat and every scrap we wear." My dad is not very religious, but he deeply revered the Rabbi, who lived next door, and believed that my birth signified a good omen; He shall be there for me, His hand always over my head. Some things are beyond my explanations and reasoning, but I never crossed beliefs with my father for this.

Later that night, very late I think, I was jerked awake and forcefully pulled out of my house. Chaos was everywhere, my dad was bleeding from his one side of forehead, and my mum was closely clutching her saved items.

They casted a long, forlorn look at each other, before giving me a weak smile. Even though things were too messy for a twelve-year old, I perfectly understood it all. I just watched my neighborhood being burned to ashes, most with people inside them. Some of my friends didn't make out, neither did their families. Inevitable is here, Gestapo showed up, we were being relocated.

We walked, in long lines, shuffling and groaning, but not stopping. My mum clutched my hand, my dad kept his arm around my mum's waist. We were tired, from walking four, maybe five hours, but didn't stop. The sun had lit the horizon but did nothing to dispel the darkness. Those who stopped were whipped, beaten. Few even died. My mum told me that they just sleeping, a long, deep sleep, but I knew better. My childhood was already lost, now innocence was slipping out of my grasp. Only five hundred of us made it to the "RELOCATION AREA." I didn't know what it was called, I was hungry and thirsty, but dare not ask anyone. I was afraid of beating, afraid to get away from mom and dad. Herr Nicholas Tvalsky was there, whip in one hand, cold expression-ed. Clutching my mother's hand, I shivered, from cold, fear or exhaustion, I don't know, maybe all of them. She pulled me between herself and dad, but it didn't make me feel any safer. Herr ordered us to remove our clothes and ordered to hand over everything we had. Being one of the last persons, mum made us eat some meat and bread, before she had to surrender everything. I was still thirsty, but scared to ask, more than ever. Few of us protested, but it didn't matter; it was ripped away from them. Many of them were shot dead. Either way, we were standing there helpless and naked. My mum was weeping silently, my dad kept gazing at the sky, as if asking Him that what we did wrong to endure this fate. They say "Fuhrer" is going to reign in peace over here, is this how will he do it, when half of his people are helpless, and other half is the one inflicting helplessness? How will he do it, when half of us are naked, and other half is the reason behind it? How will he do it, when half of us are dying, and other half is murdering us? Is this how will he do it?

We stood there, hungry, thirsty, naked, helpless, under sweltering morning heat and biting nightly cold.

We tried huddling, to keep us warm, but what could bunch of cold bodies do? At the crack of dawn, we were pushed towards the train. Our feet were numbed from standing all day, so we tripped. Those who fell were killed. Many fell, many died. Freight Trains arrived, where we were pushed in towards a journey, which promised nothing but long, torturous death. I wanted to sleep, to forget all my troubles, but mom kept jolting me, kept me awake. "Snowy sleep, welcoming death", that's what she told me when I was small, but right now, death was an old, welcomed friend.

After what felt like eternity, Freights stopped. We got down, at least those who were alive. Auschwitz, the concentration camp. Someone tallied us, we were only two hundred and forty-six now, six children and two infants included. All of us felt naked and helpless; I could feel guard's disgusted eyes raking over us. I had never felt so lowly, I wanted the ground to rein justice and swallow me whole. I couldn't bear to look at the defeated and slouched. I wanted all of this to end. We were queued for the medical check-up. Except for me, all the children, infants, the old and sick were deemed medically unfit, and made to go in the room. My mom grabbed me, pressing me to her, blocking my view. Dad covered my ears. But nothing could be done about my nose. I smelled it, something burning, burning human flesh.....

We were subjected intense physical labor, given some old uniforms, uniforms of those who had been killed, to wear, with two-time meals-soup and bread. Working like animals, I saw humans turn into one. Someone, once, spilled their soup. Everyone rushed, scooping up more dirt, less soup, but nevertheless some extra soup. Wooden planks were our sleeping pyres, in deathly night. It was nothing, but a never ending cycle of weariness, exhaustion and helplessness. Brawls were common, but guards did nothing, we were entertainment to them, dogs fighting over food. It was hell; making me convinced god didn't exist, because if he did, I would have been warm in my bed, asleep, my mum reading me stories, and dad kissing me god-night, not slaving away here.

After some forever, a man, sick or desperate for freedom, maybe, tried to tackle the guards, and tried scaling the walls, soon followed by others. However, the electrified wire killed him and the others, stench of burned flesh whizzing through the air. Electricity was shut-off to get the bodies off. Suddenly, my dad pushed me through the wires, getting me grazed all over my body. "Run," he shouted, "run away from here, schone tochter. This is your omen, our omen. Survive this, for all of us." I ran as fast as I could. Last thing I saw was my mum sobbing and desperation of my father.

I got on the first thing I saw, and hid myself, in what I saw later, was a train. My world broke apart, as I just sat there, watching it crumble down. Tears couldn't force into my eyes, not even when I ripped-off my Yellow Star, not even when I discarded my religion, my identity, the cause of my suffering, cause of my childhood's death, the cause of my separation from my parents. Desolation over-powered me, and I longed for my mommy. I needed her, her warm hugs, daddy's brilliant hugs, and safety of their embrace. Nobody came, as I wailed. Grief took over me, as I fell asleep; I knew that my faith had abandoned me. I stayed like that, for many days hiding in utility room, stealing food, crying myself to sleep, cursing my destiny, lamenting my destiny. Then one day, train stopped, reaching its destination. I stepped out, and looked around to see where I was. I was safe, finally. I had survived it, gotten out of there. I fulfilled my promise, to my mom and dad. I had no faith left in me, I had no trust in me, nothing to love, nothing to live for. I didn't trust Him, he was selfish enough to rip my parents away from me. But, I wanted to hold on, because I knew that mom and dad will never lose hope, they will fight this. They will come back to me, because they love me. They are not like Him who abandoned all of us, they will return for me. And if they don't, they will wait for me to come back. We will be a family once again, when we meet, and that is the only thing I look forward to. That's the only thing that kept me alive. Faith is nothing, all I had is just them, and surely, god can't be so cruel, right?



*Bhavya Srivastava is a student of B.A. (Hons) English,
First Year at Kalindi College.*

काश मै भी लड़का होती

आयुष शुक्ला

हर बात मुलाकात पर वो कह ही देती थी
की काश मै भी लड़का होती
कोई न फब्तियां कसता
कोई न उरोजों को घूरता
आधा पहनती या पूरा
कोई बात-बात पर न टोकता
काश मै भी लड़का होती.....

मेरी हिफाजत के लिए
माँ परेशान न होती
चार साल के छोटू को
मेरे साथ बार-बार न भेजती
काश मै भी लड़का होती

लेकिन फिर मै सोचती हूँ
की आखिर मै लड़का क्यूँ होती
क्या लड़की होना गुनाह है?
नहीं है
गुनहगार है वो सोच जिसने
समझा है औरत को सिर्फ एक सामान
इस गुनहगार को अब सूली पर चढ़ाना है
इसलिए अब मै नहीं कहती की

काश मैं लड़का होती
मैं लड़की हूँ और काश
मैं लड़की ही बनूँ ...



आयुष शुक्ला संकुल नवप्रवर्तन केंद्र में बी. ए ऑनर्स (मानविकी और सामाजिक विज्ञान)
में द्वितीय वर्ष के छात्र हैं।

Dilwaalon Ki Delhi

————— Arijit Roy —————

"Hey Arijit! You are from Delhi right ? So what do you like in Delhi ? What is Delhi ?" I look at her and wonder, why the hell did I say I was from Delhi. I look at her face again, I know she is determined, so I start searching for answers. It's ok, it's ok, I got this, I tell myself as I go back to my class 3 G.K. textbooks and recall some names like The Lotus Temple, Jantar Mantar, Qutub Minar. I tell all these pompous names in all my pompous fashion, saying to myself "Wow Arijit ! You have a good memory"

She looks at me , still wondering and says "Oh that's great , but What is Delhi ?" Now I am a proud Delhite , I accept the challenge. "So have you been to Chandni Chowk , Jama Masjid , GK2 , I give her all my romantic answers for Delhi. She listens carefully, she nods her head, but still isn't quite satisfied. "But Arijit What is Delhi?" Now I go back to my class 8th history lessons, I tell her that Delhi has been ruled by the Mughals, the British, so it's a hybrid of culture "I hope you understand that right?" My pride about my memory increases. Thankfully I had studied History, to impress that girl in my class with whom I am no longer in touch today. She says "Exactly, but then does Delhi even have a culture of it's own ?" Now that hurt. I look at her again, she knows she has a point. I wonder does Delhi really have a culture of it's own. I sigh. How can I explain a city that works day and night to breathe life, but all it achieves is death? How can I cover up for a city where thousands take to the streets, but the streets are always unclean? How can I explain my city which makes the most Raksha bandhan sales , but is the rape capital of the world? Yes we have scars, we are flawed we have cried and those tears haven't dried yet. Nope, not yet. Yes there's been rain, I know there's mud sticking on our shoes, but come with me I'll show you the rainbow. It's time we realised that we are much more than the sand, slipping away like time so she is right and she is wrong. Yes Delhi is weak , but Delhi is strong.

It's been a long time, we've embraced this city, it's pace, it's passion, but it's time we fall in love again. There's this something special in getting a selfie at the India Gate or travelling in the metro if it's not Rajiv Chowk or shopping with your girlfriend at Sarojini or even having a quiet time with yourself at the Lotus Temple and the list goes on and on. But "What is Delhi?" Honestly, I don't know, yes it's been 19 years, 19 good years, but I still don't know. It's a feeling maybe or passion, or a child who runs unbound with great freedom on the map of the world, who stumbles, who falls, who cries, who smiles, who picks himself/herself up and dares to fly again. Delhi is a little happiness, tons of energy, some clouds, a little rain but yes there's light at the end of the tunnel. I hope this answers it and I know this will not. But yes, Delhi is contagious. She will come to you. Oh! trust me she will and when she does, just embrace her. She is flawed but trust me she is very beautiful.



*Arijit Roy is a student of B.A. (Hons) English, Second Year
at Sri Venkateswara College.*

मैं:स्वयं की एक खोज

अनीश चंद्र प्रकाश

कभी-कभी मैं सोचता हूँ
मैं कौन हूँ?
और, जब मैं सोचता हूँ
तब 'मैं' होता हूँ
वरना कोई और होता है
तो, वह जो कोई और है
उसकी ही तलाश मेरी तलाश है
इसलिए मैं कभी-कभार सोच लेता हूँ
वह हमेशा उपस्थित होता है
मैं कभी-कभार
इसलिए मेरा सोचना कभी-कभार है
एक मयान में एक ही तलवार होंगी न
इसलिए जब मैं आता हूँ
वह कहीं दूर चला जाता है
जबकि मैं उसे ही ढूँढ रहा होता हूँ।



अनीश चंद्र प्रकाश संकुल नवप्रवर्तन केंद्र में बी.ए ऑनर्स
(मानविकी और सामाजिक विज्ञान)
में द्वितीय वर्ष के छात्र हैं।

The Hidden Truth

————— *Shrutika Jha* —————

Looks can be deceptive
What is visible might not be true
There may be hidden feelings
Some might not feel what we think they do.

Who are we to judge?
Who are we to comment?
It's better to keep our mouths shut.
Than to later lament.

We can't see all,
We don't know everything
There are hidden truths
There are links within links.

Human nature is to criticise,
Human nature is to blame
We love to prove ourselves right
We love to put others to shame.

A person might appear something
And be something else
We admire pearls
But who looks inside the shells?

Pearls are beautiful to look at,
But do you know how they are made?
They are formed out of irritation,

They are formed when dust is overlaid.

We admire diamonds,
But who likes coal?
We worship snakes,
Who goes inside their hole?

Nobody is perfect,
No one is sans fault
No one is what they seem to be,
Everyone has a secret vault.

She might appear confident
And seem to consider herself above all.
Yet she might want to be loved
She might want affection after all.

She might appear to be haughty,
She might seem to be a brat.
But she might be soft on the inside
Did you ever consider that?

We are quick to judge
We think we are always right
This tampers with our judgment
This narrows our sight.

Just because she appears over confident
It doesn't mean she is!
For all you know, inside she might be broken
But that's a fact we miss.

She could be the lowest on self esteem
And just be putting on a brave face

She might appear focused
And actually be in a daze.

But do we ever bother to try?
Do we bother to really know her?
No, too busy making judgments
We have no time to understand her.

And by the time we realise our mistake,
She will have gone too far
We will lose the opportunity to know her
Coz she will have ventured afar.

Fed up of our uncaring attitude,
She will withdraw herself from us
Upset that we never bothered
She will up and leave without a fuss.



*Shrutika Jha is a student of B.Sc. Biomedical Sciences, Second Year
at Acharya Narendra Dev College.*

Peace

— *N K Vinutha* —

I was there,
But nobody noticed.
I had my presence
in every nook and cranny,
But, none bothered.
I whispered in the eerie silences,
Sung my sweet lullaby in the lives of many, but was hushed and kept
mum.
I didn't give up.
Eavesdropping now and then, I persevered. However, there were no ears
to listen.
Why?
You took me as a desire that's unending,
a thirst that's unquenchable,
a fantasy, a utopia...
I shrieked out loud when you became violent, shutting the door of your
conscience,
Shrivelling your heart which was forced to match the dumb logics of your
mind,
When you acted worse than the beasts...
I still breathed.
Why?
Because I believe in the good
that you possess,
I clasp you with unbound compassion,
With all my might, I gather myself
each time I am broke,

I hold you tighter, embrace you with all that I have when you tear me
apart.

Only to make you realise that you are human enough. You do have a
heart that loves and cares
for many others like you,
I gasp with pain
each day with the hope that you'll think
beyond yourself.

Peace as I am called,
A nightmare for those who take pleasure in hatred, revenge and anger,
A willo'thewisp for those who just imagine,
But
A reality for those who bring me alive in their thoughts, words and
deeds!



*N K Vinutha is a student of M.A. English, Final Year
at the Department of English, North Campus.*

Chats: The Speeder and the Policeman

————— *Shrey Ahuja* —————

"Sir," the policeman said as he stopped the speeding car and reached its window, "Where are you going?"

"Home," the man replied.

"And where is that?" the policeman continued.

"Wherever it might be," the man responded.

"Sir, I'm going to have to ask you get out of your car and give me your license and registration." The policeman said, irate at the man's response.

The man, calm and nonchalant stepped out of the car and handed the documents to the policeman and stepped aside and shut the car door.

The policeman let out a sigh, regretful at stopping this particular over-speeding car at one in the morning. "Sir, your home address is about two hundred kilometres from here," the policeman exclaimed in anger.

"I know," the man went on, as though oblivious to the police man's ire and fatigue.

"Then what the hell are you doing here?" the policeman said, finally snapping at the attitude of the man.

"Finding home," the man replied in his usual casualness.

"You keep on with that attitude and I'll lock you up for the night." the policeman continued, frustrated and annoyed at the perceived casualness and general waywardness of the man.

"Nothing will happen to the car right?" the man responded, turning a bit more serious.

"Yeah, wait, what?" the policeman shocked at the man's query. "I'm this close to locking you up with homicidal maniacs and psychopaths, and that's all you can think about? Whether your car will be okay or not?"

"Yeah. It's my father's," the man responded, his casualness fading away for his serious demeanour.

The policeman stopped checking the documents and stared at the man. He was unpleasantly shocked at the man's indifference in his voice and his blank expression while saying it.

"Man, you're crazy," the policeman stated. "I've locked up paedophiles, guys who did hit and run, a few homicidal maniacs too, but they don't hold anything when compared to you," he continued filled with equal parts of amazement and bafflement at this extremely bizarre incident in his life.

"What, why?" the man responded in light humor, surprised at the acquisition.

"Seriously. I catch you speeding at one in the night, you're all damn chill about it. Then I tell you I'll lock you up and you're concerned about your car rather than yourself," the policeman spoke in a fast but high pitched voice. "What's up with that," the policeman ended his tirade against the man's attitude and the man, smiling, burst out laughing,

"What? What?" the policeman responded, his hands thrown in the air, curious at the man's laughter, but also not very pleased at the same time.

"Well," the man continued laughing, even more loudly than before, now breaking the silence that shrouded the area. "Well, I've never seen a police officer say words like chill or what's up or even act like that," the man continued, throwing his hands in the air like the police officer, and eventually falling on his car's hood.

"Man, I tell you. You're crazy," the policeman said, tired at trying to figure out the man's unusual behaviour.

"No, no," the man continued, controlling his laughter to give a more coherent and audible response. "No," finally ending his laughter, "how often do you look at a police officer use words like chill and act like a normal person. I mean, you all act so tough all the time that we forget you're just like us. I mean, we get so muddled in the stereotypes, we forget to look at the people underneath."

The policeman stood surprised by what he had just heard. He understood why the man laughed and realised that the man was as smart as he was crazy.

"Yeah, that's because not a lot of people over speed at one in the morning."
"True," the man nodded. "Or you know, cross paths with me," the man laughed.

"Yeah," the policeman joined the man in his laughter.

The laughter soon subsided into the silence and both the men rested on the hood of the car and the policeman closed the documents and handed them over to the man.

"So, what brings you here, oh great wise wizard man of two hundred kilometres away," the policeman asked, waving his arms in the air, trying to make mystical hand signs.

The man chuckled a bit. "You never thought you'd see a police man do that, did you?" the policeman continued and the man burst out laughing again. The policeman joined him as well.

"You here to meet some extended family or something," the policeman asked.

"No, no. Just passing by. Just exploring," the man replied.

"To where," the policeman asked,

"I don't know, I just took the car out of the garage for a drive and next thing you know, I get back home, pack a bag and head out."

"All of a sudden? Just like that?" the policeman enquired.

"Just like that," the man responded. "The car had been in the garage ever since it came back from servicing a couple weeks ago and I just took her out for a spin. And while driving, I realised I needed to unburden myself," the man continues, "of all earthly and mundane affairs," he spoke, imitating a wizard in speech and action.

Both of them chuckled a bit.

"Unburden yourself? You sound like you're carrying a lot of burden on those weak arms," the policeman said, patting the man's bicep.

"I was," the man's tone was now serious. "My family died when I was what, seven. Ever since then, I've been living with my extended joint family. So, all my other relatives looked after me," the man continued. "But they always had this feeling in their heart. They would feel bad for me and somewhere, I felt they always treated me differently. And I always felt grateful and so, in my head, I started to become what I think they would

appreciate. And I started becoming this boy who restrained himself from so much because of small things only he could see and burdened himself with this particular way to live and behave that he forgot who he truly was. Beneath all those self-imposed restrictions," the man ended, taking a deep breath.

"You know they would have loved it had you been yourself," the policeman said.

"Yeah, I know. I always thought that I could be one way in front of them but always know who I was in my head and it would be all right. But that just doesn't work out."

"Yeah. You can't wear one face to the world and another to yourself without eventually becoming confused as to which one is actually true," the policeman added on.

"And that's the issue, isn't it? We all think that if we know who we are and are secure about it, we can change ourselves according to people's needs without it affecting who we really are," the man spoke with pain and passion in his voice regarding the human condition. "It just doesn't work."

"It can't work," the policeman added. "The human brain and heart, even though used for deception are not made for it. They falter when they know they're doing something wrong," the policeman equally passionate and irate about the human condition.

"That actually makes so much sense. You can't fool yourself into believing what you don't believe in. I mean, that's why heroes and villains go so far. Because in their heart of hearts, they are doing what they truly believe in. Unhindered, unrestrained by anything," the man continued.

"Because when you believe, you aren't scared by things that scare you. You work hard to overcome adversities and succeed," the policeman added further.

"Because only a strong immovable belief forms the willpower to never give up," the man said, even faster, stimulated by the conversation they were having.

"I've never talked like that without having two beers in me," the policeman exclaimed even faster and both men chuckled a bit.

"Seems like a scene out of a Woody Allen movie," the man said once he finished his laughter. "Two strangers meet and out of nowhere start talking about life and the human condition and the problems we all face."

The policeman checked. "Yeah. Rightly said. Had it been longer, we could have called it a scene from My Dinner With Andre."

"Yeah, but in My Dinner With Andre, the two know each other. We're more Allen characters. Strangers who are mysteriously empathise with each other even though they've known each other only a short time."

"You sure can talk for about one thirty in the night," the policeman said.

"It's a gift," the man said with a slight hint of narcissism."

"Aaaaahhhh," the policeman yawned, tired after this brief but enlightening experience. "I'd love to continue, but I'm tired and no matter how much I don't want to, I need to finish with my duty here." The policeman said as he got of the hood of the man's car and raised his arm for a handshake.

"Yeah," the man responded, jumping off the hood with his documents in hand and grabbed the policeman's hand.

The policeman walked away and the man looked at his documents. "Wait, aren't you going to give me a ticket?" the man screamed."

"Nah. I have a feeling you'll be back here."

The man nodded his head as the policeman entered his car and started it and drive away, his hand out to wave good bye and he soon drove towards the moon. The man too then entered his car and revved his engine and took off as well, a smile on his face, driving towards the moon as well, but taking a different path.



Shrey Ahuja is a student of B.Tech. Computer Science, Seventh Semester at Acharya Narendra Dev College.