

What Makes One

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BlueRoseONE^{.com}
S t o r i e s M a t t e r

New Delhi • London

BLUEROSE PUBLISHERS

India | U.K.

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ISBN: 978-93-7825-578-6

Cover design: Aafiya Saifi

Typesetting: Namrata Saini

First Edition: June 2026

*Cramming the same topics
To learn something different
Following a routine
To deviate a current
However, what you don't realise
Is that you got penalized
You're only a part of a stream
Which forces a million dreams
Down the fall.*

Preface

How do we live? How do we decide a state of being? How does one decide whether they are at a commendable position or a reprehensible one? The answer is through contrast. We live in a constant state of comparison. And not just with our surroundings. But especially with strangers. We look at a random person we walk past on the street, and form a deluded perception of that person, and we think either the best or the worst things possible, just by their appearance. Somewhere, in the smartest cell of our brain, we know that this assumption is false and we can't tell anything about this stranger by merely observing whether he was wearing a neatly ironed shirt or one with a crease. But, the thing is, we ignore that one cell, and get influenced by the thousand others whose job is to take that assumption and put it in a column against our own characteristics. This differentiation then becomes the ultimate factor in deciding whether a person feels happy or sad, satisfied or unfulfilled, and the point where we stand.

The only problem is, before getting into this tedious process of giving away the power of how you feel by resting it on someone else's shoulders, let's just take a small pause and rewind. When we looked at this person, who's now become our reason for feeling

either brilliant or extremely shitty, did we look close enough?

This book is a collection of stories and poems that help you observe closely, and get a better, rather real perspective of different people at different stages of their lives. Strangers that we pass every day, who we don't plead worthy enough to make assumptions about.

There are some discourses that may come across as harsh or offensive to some readers. But again, these are my thoughts and how I look at certain things. So, fuck you. Free speech. Having said that, I also don't expect people to completely change their beliefs and follow my motifs blindly. I believe, the one thing that you can possibly take from this book, is the ability to question. The ability to gain the confidence to stand up through every unclear and unagreed proposition, irrespective of its source.

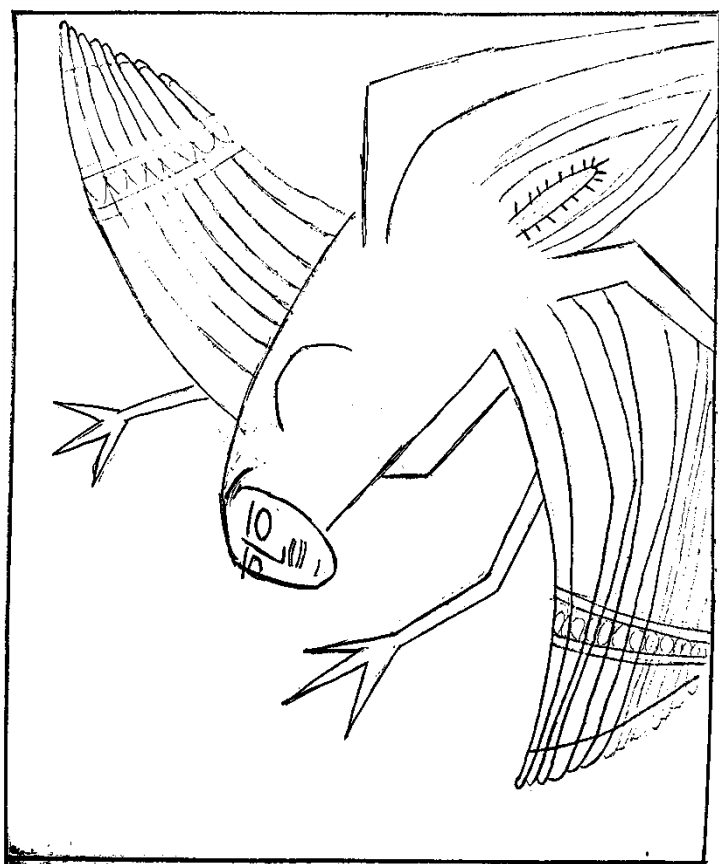
I'm happy to tell you that there is very little in this world that I believe in. There are only a handful of people I admire and look forward to, and very few of them are the people that I love. I love and treasure individuals as I meet them. I abhor and despise the groups they identify with. The more I try to dissect the layers of this so-called culture I'm surrounded with, the more decay I find in it.

Hereby, I gladly inform you that the people whose stories have been mentioned in this book, are surely

and most definitively those, who never associated with the boxed ideologies of this society. Do not consider my point of view to charge as sceptical. Sceptical are those who believe everything will be alright, and in fact have no idea how to put back together the stumbling blocks of their life.

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If I jump off a hill, I might survive genocide

MAN: I usually go to sleep by 10, and I wake up by 4. I like my morning strolls. I like the idea of starting the day as if I'm headed somewhere. Not in the same place as yesterday. 4 am because that way I only see the people I love. Recently, one of my friends was torn down. At first I took it with a smile, with the thought that she was being broken for better, and the animals were trying to make her bigger, give her more space. It was only after a month or two, when I saw a significant time had passed and no bricks had come for her, I realised what the animals had done. I think I'll get into a very rageful argument with any animal I see on the street. Which is another reason why I head out so early. But, just last night, dear reader, I woke up around 2, in a rather alarming state. At first, I didn't feel like reaching out for a cigarette yet. Or water for that matter. I couldn't go back to sleep. I kept thinking about what it was. I had a dream that someone was trying to talk to me. I'm not sure who it was. I really wish it was one of my friends. But they don't really speak. I'm afraid it was an animal. I often find the interpretations of dreams rather tricky. I guess this is the only time I think talking to animals would be

helpful in some way. But then again, if this form of expression was easy, I wouldn't lean towards this piece of paper in the first place. I read this somewhere once, that a nightmare or a twisted dream is your mind telling you something, giving you some information, because you can't accept/process that information in its raw form. But my dreams are very much straightforward. I don't have to decode anything, yet I find it difficult to accept. Is this any better than a distorted vision? I don't feel like going out today with all these questions. My body is driven by strings. And with these thoughts, I'd be lost on the streets, and wouldn't be able to find my way back home. The more I interact with these walls, more questions arise in front of me. I guess I woke up alarmed, because I can't wrap my head around the fact that I'm the one building these walls in front of me. I think I should be around some fabrics. Are you able to understand the importance and impact of the texture? Are you able to smell new fabrics?

READER:

MAN: I kept thinking about the smell of new fabrics. My mother always used to tell me that I should wash the new clothes and then try them on. But I would always wait for her to leave the room and wear a newly bought shirt without washing it. It's the fragrance that always fascinated me. It's especially those things you remember from your childhood, that you were told not to do, but you went on to do them anyway. When do

we stop being kids? Is it good that it is a subconscious decision? I look at myself in the mirror, and as of this moment, I don't see any similarities with the kid I was a decade ago. It's not a question of why, but the fact that I don't remember anything, any particular incident, that led to this size and shape. This brings me to my next question. Is it better to be of this size and shape and have the peace of being a kid, or to be a kid and have these thoughts. I guess this is one of those questions to which one says, "God knows", but I don't mean to leave it up to a superficial entity. For me it's just one of those things I'll never find an answer to. It's 6:30 now. I feel like I can go out now and I would be able to find my way back home. But, animals. So, I decided that I'll go out at night. But as of now, I have to live with the day.

READER:

MAN: It's 9 am. I'm like when the morning light falls in my room. Take out all the dark. I absolutely hate it when someone switches on a bulb or a tubelight in the morning. I have a physical reaction towards it. I almost feel like that light has entered my brain in a slick manner, and now it is scratching my brain from inside. I sat in my room with a lighter and a wooden plank. Not sure what to do with it. I would've let the creative fluids make the next move and my hands would just go with the flow. But this fucking sunlight. It hurts my eyes. It's too bright on my face. My eyes are not used to that kind of exposure. I sat in one corner of the room

but it was almost as if the rays were targeted in that corner. With all the intensity, just concentrated in one corner, it picked me up and threw me in another spot. By 9:35 am, I had already moved my chair thrice. The sun kept following me. I made some tea a while ago. I had forgotten about it halfway through drinking it. It's gotten cold now. I hate throwing away cold tea. And I don't think throwing away or wastage is my concern here. I used to hate tea as a kid. But in the last few years, I've found a liking to it. I hate when it gets cold and loses its essence and purpose.

READER:

MAN: It's 2 pm now. This is almost my favourite time of the day. It is the quietest. The bustle of the morning is too much for me. It's too much activity. Too much rush. Too many people on the streets. The constant honking of cars that goes on straight for 3 hours. I've always had trouble with metal, and the fact that this is way worse than that is enough to make a man throw his head back and forth in a manic motion. Up until a few years ago, I could hear the dawn chorus, which was the only thing I appreciated about a weekday morning, but I don't think I can hear it anymore. Everyone wears the same clothes. And I'm looking at them from a credible height. I think there will come a day, when my eyesight becomes questionably weak, and all these will convert into a more liquid form, a paint like texture, and just go down the sewer, and drain.

But like I said, 2 pm. The streets go quiet and vacant as if there has been an apocalypse and all the animals have disappeared from the face of earth.

During this time, I feel safe to such an extent, that there've been multiple days when I've stood at my door, not fully outside, just at the threshold, and considered going out during this time. I feel like I can step out and not run into anything that demands a reaction from me. Most people feel sleepy during this time of the day. However, I aspire to live through this hour, for it's the most peace I'll attain, as long as I live in this dimension. I want some fond memories from my last day in this dimension.

The evenings have the same routine, but even more abysmal. By the time the sun starts setting, the streets begin to get crowded again. You see how these people were in the morning? And in the morning they are still fresh out of their homes. Now imagine these same people, but drained out of energy, irritated, pinned, lousy, and left on the streets to crawl their way back home. People don't walk with purpose anymore. There's a boy who plays cricket in the lane around this time. I've seen him lose the same ball three times this week. It rolls under parked cars, disappears into drains, gets stuck somewhere it shouldn't. Every time, he looks for it with the same level of hope. I don't know if he ever finds the same ball again, or just replaces it with another one. It's difficult to tell the difference from up here. But yes, as I was saying, 2 pm. Are we

sharing a smile when we speak oh so fondly of this moment?

READER:

MAN: It must be late now. I didn't check the time, but the room feels different. Nights don't arrive all at once. They settle in layers. First the light leaves, then the sounds thin out, and then, even the silence changes. The street has gone back to how it was in the afternoon. Almost empty. But not in the same manner. Afternoon silence feels open. Night silence feels occupied.

I stood at the door again a while ago. A little while longer this time. My hand was on the handle. I don't know what I was waiting for. Some sort of sign or calling, maybe. A sign that nothing would happen if I stepped out.

Tell me something. Do you think a place remembers what happened in it? And I don't mean in a poetic way. I mean physically. Like the fingerprints and smoke on the walls. Or a scratch on the wooden floor. Perhaps, a crack in the tile. Because sometimes, late at night, I feel like this room knows more about me than I do. The walls. The chair. Even that cold cup of tea from the morning. They've all been here the entire day. They are the watchers. They are more alive and attentive than I am.

I thought about the house again. The one the animals took. I keep calling it my friend. I don't know if that's accurate. I never lived in it. I never even went inside. I

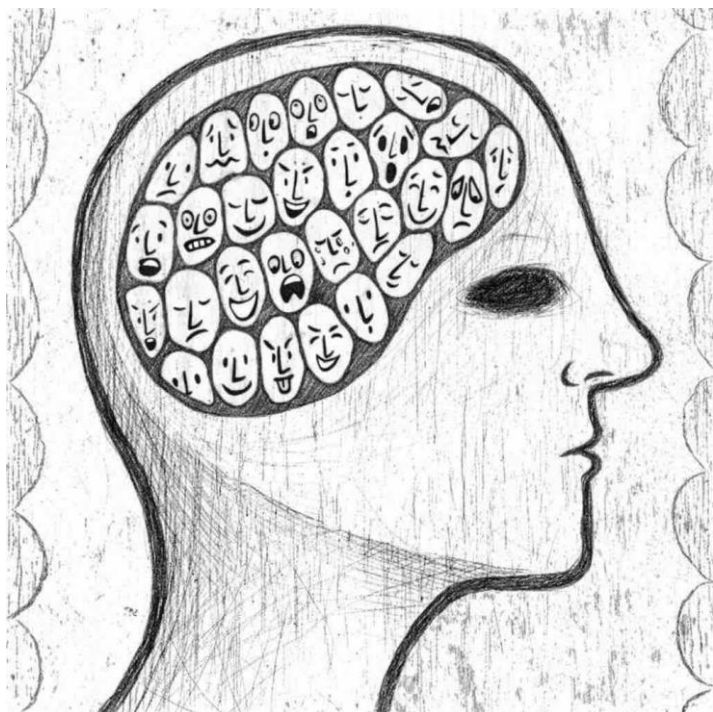
just saw it every day during my walks at 4 in the morning. Before anyone else was out. It's very concerning and frightening to me how it was always there, and then one day, it wasn't. Just like that. Vanished. I think that's what stayed with me. Not the sound. Not the breaking. Just the fact that something can exist for so long and then just stop. Without even mine, and most importantly her knowing.

The truth is, I haven't gone for my morning walk since that day. It's strange that I keep telling myself that I stay inside because of the animals. But I've come to the horrifying realisation, that even if they weren't there, if the clock started at 2 and never went past 3, I still wouldn't step out. Because out there, things change. They disappear. They get replaced and no one even notices. But in here, in this house, within these four walls and behind these bars, everything stays exactly where I left it. Even if I don't understand it, and even if it doesn't make sense, it stays. I think that's why I talk like this. Out loud. To you. To this page. Because as long as I'm speaking, something is still here. Right? Someone maybe. Aren't you?

READER:

MAN: It's almost 2 am. I think I'll try to sleep. If I hear something, if they come back, I'll probably wake up. If you're still here, wake me up.

Don't let me dream.



Understanding the Difference

I used to wonder how every memory is retrieved from a sensory organ. Things they must've seen a few weeks ago, flashes in a dream. Or a song they once listened to years ago, brings back memories of their childhood. But it's almost strange how I was watching Maguire's spiderman the other day, and I thought I had a memory rushing towards me in the sense of smell. Maybe it was the smell of flavoured milk or some cereal my parents forced on me as a kid.

Anyway, I wanted to talk to you about something rather important. Something called, *herd*. I believe this is the biggest problem of mankind. Moving in fucking crowds. Completely dismissing the possibility, the slightest possibility of exploring the individual mind. The human mind. What should it be used for? Does every mind think differently? Is every mind unique? The answer is, NO. The mind is basically divided into two categories. The unique/creative mind. And the *average mind*. The *average mind* is as good as a useless mind. It doesn't have any repulsive thoughts. It has a tendency to believe in things that don't exist. It makes you hallucinate. It decreases your aptitude skills and in a very slick manner, it takes away from you the instinct to raise questions. "The job is not paying well", "the work here is ridiculous, futile", "I've not been able to

consummate my marriage irrespective of the fact that we've got intimate thrice now, in the last 2 years." But still, somehow, this is not what bothers the *average mind*. What bothers it, is astrology. This fucker's whole life is turned upside down, and his primary concern is how his favourite planet is not in it's place and has moved a few inches.

Many of them also believe that it has something to do with god. But I'm not gonna dive into that now. That's a whole different chapter. Let's discuss people themselves, before getting into superstitions they believe in.

People. And especially people that I see. People around me. People, around whom I try not to be. People who decide, what you'll study, where you'll live, who you'll marry, and exactly how unhappy you'll pretend not to be about it. But it's not as bad as it sounds. You can do whatever you want, and follow your dreams (as you call it), as long as your dreams come with a salary slip, health insurance, and marriage potential. Are these not the basic requirements needed for sustenance? Sure they are. But should you only do the bare minimum? Are you just here to sustain? The *average mind* can sustain a person as well. But is that what you are? Average? No. I say fuck that shit. I say you put both your hands on your boss' shoulder and force him down today (like the way he's been doing to you). Get fuckin' creative. Start reading. Start listening. Pay attention to things around you.

Man, you guys are ignorant. Just the other day I was travelling from one city to another. I was in my seat, waiting for the plane to take off. And the flight attendants were giving the safety instructions, needed to be followed in case of an emergency. Now, personally, I've made my peace with death. Death is not something that scares me. If you tell me that I'm gonna die tomorrow, I think I'd be okay and not make a fuss about it. But still, I was there in my seat, listening to the instructions very carefully. Because, if something happens, and I wish something does, then why the fuck would I leave the chance to jump off a plane and sky dive. Or land in the middle of an ocean and keep floating at the same spot to see whether the life support gets me first or the baby sharks, that are by the way chewing off the breasts of this wonderful lady who was sitting next to me on the plane. Anyway, the point I was trying to make is that, as far as I could see, no one else on that plane was paying any attention to what those people were saying. And I know exactly why they had that sort of an attitude. That's because the *average human mind* deprives you of the fact that something extraordinary could happen to you.

EXTRAORDINARILY BAD, IN THIS CASE.

You believe that such a disastrous thing can't happen to you. Why? Because that is an irregular event. The kind of event whose chances of happening is in point percentage. So how could it possibly happen to you? You are average. Nope. Can't happen to you. The only

planes that crash are private jets. Because of course, people in private jets are important people. Why are they important? Because they fall in the second category. They have what we call, *a unique mind*.



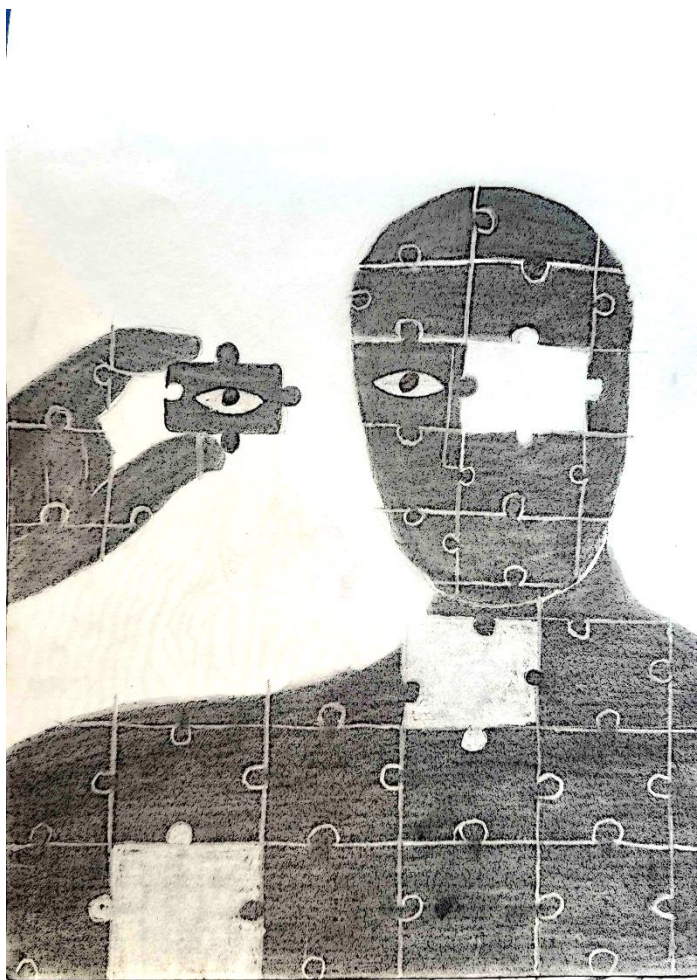
It's Okay to Not Pick a Colour

Dogs or cats? Mountains or beaches? Tea or coffee? And what about colour? I read a lot of psychological arguments on how a colour could define a person. How your favourite colour says a lot about you. It's an important question, which is usually thrown upon us when we aren't ready for it, when we are kids. We are in pre-school or kindergarten, and someone asks, "What is your favourite colour?" I remember being asked the same question. And I remember my answer was blue. And maybe that does say a few things about me. But just like I said 'blue' back then, I have also, at some point in life, said red, or black, and if I was asked the same question today, I'd say white. So there are a lot of things that can be said and predicted about me. But are all of them true? Are any of them true? I think we are so twisted and wired and confused inside our own minds about the idea of ourselves, that leaving behaviour of things on a colour of choice seems unfair. It's only when I know someone closely, I know what kind of a person they are, only then I understand how ridiculous it is to say that I can figure out something about someone by knowing their favourite colour. I can't, and that's the point. The person who asked you about your favourite colour, did not give a fuck about who you are. They did not ask you that question to

understand you any better. You are asked that question to pick a side. To stay in a lane. To make you understand that you'll only score when the sun is painted yellow, the sky is painted blue, and the grass is painted green. Imagine if a child was let free to decide what colour he wants to paint a river, or a sun, or a house. If he was told that he sees birds in the sky everyday, and hence he should use his own thoughts and creativity to draw a bird. Rather than being taught that all a bird is two lines drawn with a black crayon. The BLOCKAGE. The creative flux, when needed to be induced, when needed to sprint in an open ground, is made to stand in a corridor. In a hall, with only one colour for the walls, the roof and the floor. The idea of adjusting someone to stay between the lines of black and white, is rooted in that person since childhood. And it is your own teachers that lift you up, only to put you back down in that box. But, does that mean that the children will turn out to be madmen? Probably. But does it also mean that they'll be men with free will? Yes they will.

Having creative freedom does not certainly have to be something you should be proud of, or bloat about. It's something that should come with every job, irrespective of whatever field or stream. Something every person should have. And that is when we'll stop looking at it as a skill, but more like something that puts you at a greater risk and insecurity.

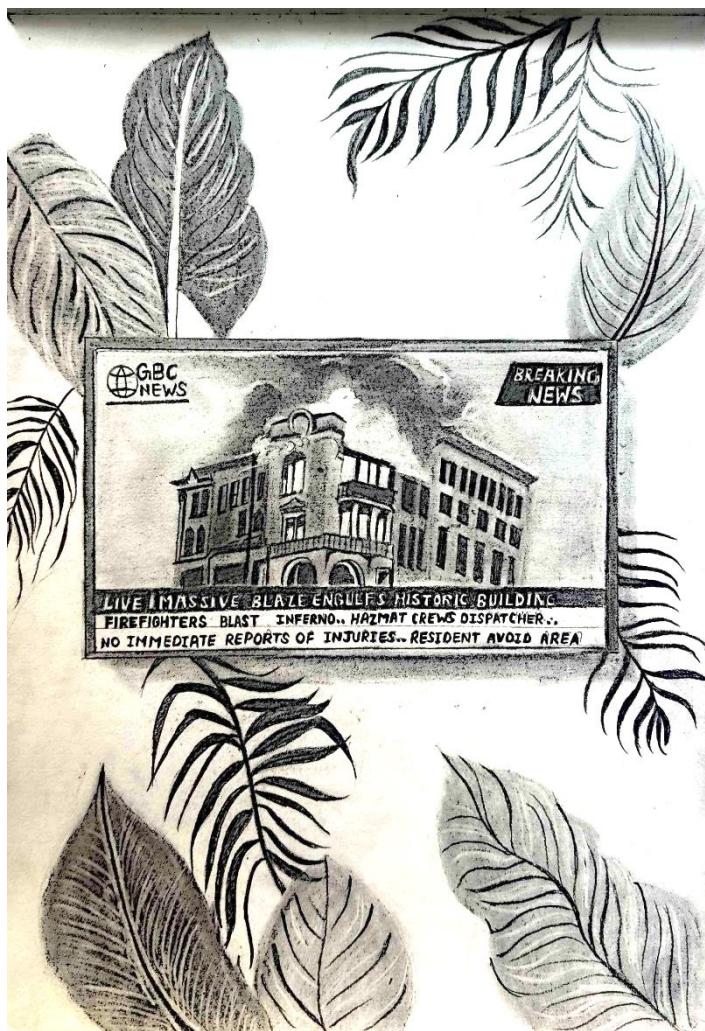
I remember this one time I was at my dad's office for some event that was going on. That room was full of all these corporate giants, and people who've really reached great heights. And then one of them comes up to me and asks me, "What do you do son? You don't look like someone who deals in the corporate world". To him I replied, "No sir I certainly don't belong here. I'm here with my father. Currently I'm between jobs and I write". He heard that, and even though I could see his face being full of disappointment and just his eyebrows telling me how this wasn't the answer he was hoping for, he placed his right hand on my shoulder, and with a warm smile he said to me, "That is great, son. I'm very proud of the fact how you've decided to get out of this chain and do something different and build a legacy of your own. I mean, it's much better than us, just dragging our feet everyday through the same corridors". I smiled back at him, but with the same look on my face that he gave me earlier. You'd think that would've made me feel better about myself, but all I could think of is how both of us are maybe almost equally miserable. He admires my free will and passion, that I have put in the pursuit of my dreams. I want the stability and wealth he has achieved by killing those same dreams. We are both fascinated by each other's belongings, not acknowledging what we possess already. But I guess that's all of life. We don't want everything. We only want what we don't have, and that makes us incapable of enjoying the things we already have.



Happy Thoughts

All I have are happy thoughts
All of them are cravings
All I dream of are big dreams
All of them, too big for me
Where am I getting these from
Will I ever achieve
Is this the price of having happy thoughts
That they'll never be perceived
I bloat about happy thoughts
But live with the burden of fulfilling them
They keep piling to an extent
Where I don't feel happy about them anymore
We talk about dreams
We talk about ambitions
Why not talk about its complications
Why not tell the kids
To not make a list
That won't be cross checked for years
Isn't it better to keep them in mind
And eventually forget
Rather than having a sheet of paper
Heavier than a hill
Hang upon your shoulders.
'Cause all you can do
Is hope

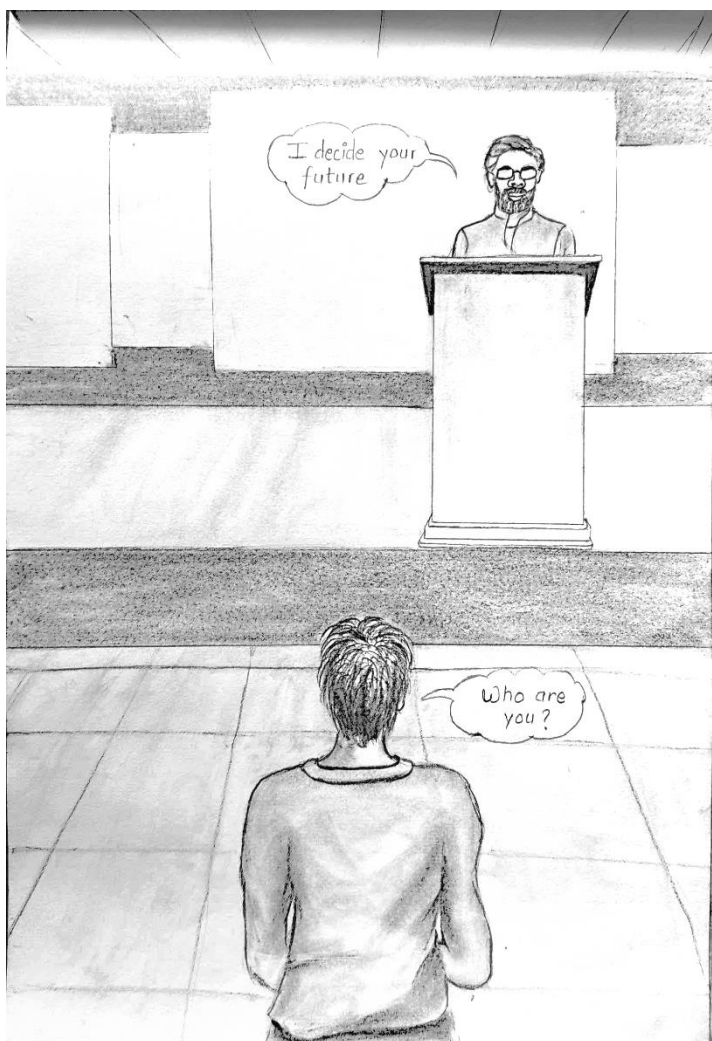
To grow with them
Rather than growing them out
Today I have a dream
And I hold it close
But at night I remember
This is not the dream
I held before.



So Soon?

The problem, especially in a society like ours, is that we very easily fell into non-conscious influences, most of which we don't realise were nonsensical. And we don't realise that throughout our lives. That is why we are so screwed, because we are following ideologies that were forced upon us as a kid, and whenever a problem arises, we lean towards the support of those ideologies which we are not even sure of. We're not sure if they are right or wrong. We're not even sure if they are real, or are they non-existent. We, as kids were stuffed with such strong beliefs (that weren't ours), that we lost our ability to question anything. And when a kid is deprived of their ability to question, that becomes a huge block in the learning phase.

When you read or watch
The endless discussions and squabble
And the prophecy and its uncertainty,
Devoid of better plans and programs
Leading to the hasty decisions
And you often wonder with closed eyes
If the lores and legends were true
If there really is a light
That's supposed to guide
Us to the shore.



The Specter of Authority

Should I trust the government
Will it be a healthy gesture
Has trusting the authority
Ever been beneficial
Is it better to hand over power
To someone else
Someone you don't even know
Someone who sounds swell
Those who promise
A brave new world
Have they looked
At the condition of the state
Have they looked at my city
Have they seen where I live
The promises made from thousand miles away
Also take a thousand years to land
But we place our trust in those promises
And die holding a fistful of sand
The citizens of a country
Who plant seeds of hate
Gives rise to leaders
Who reap the the harvest written in your fate
And then we blame the leaders
Of a country that dreads
The need to sacrifice

A single piece of bread
But still we protest
Go on streets
With banners and candles
And temporary beliefs.



The Disguise of Secular State

My idea of God is different from that of my parents, or my cousins, or my friends. But still, there is no denying the fact that I come from a hindu family. And I respect that. However, I can't stand the thought of someone saying "hindu rashtra". What is "hindu rashtra"? Hindu is a religion. Why is a particular religion being forcefully branded as the identity of a nation? Isn't this a secular state that we live in? Where does that leave other groups? This country is said to be one of the most diverse countries in the world, because of the fact that every other person comes from a different background, tribe, race etc. And how easily, the leaders of this same country promote the idea of one religion, dominating and frankly diminishing others.

A religion is a belief system. A nation is a political entity. When the two begin to overlap in official language, something fundamental changes. The Constitution of India did not emerge from a temple, a mosque, a church, or a gurudwara. It emerged from a conscious decision to create a secular republic. One that protects a belief, rather than endorsing one belief over another. We are part of a nation, whose leaders only care about one community/religion. They construct and initiate schemes just for that one group. They have come to an understanding that if they are

able to please a majority percentage of the population, then they'll get the votes of that majority, and live up to see 20 terms. And I don't completely blame them for this because it's people like us who are least bothered about the other 30% that's suffering and dying of poverty. We were happy to see the inauguration of the ram mandir, but the street vendors, whose houses and carts were destroyed into mulch, who did not get the smallest compensation from the great government (that is now eyeing it's 4th term).

So when these same leaders invoke the idea of hindu nation, the question isn't merely theological. It's structural. What does citizenship mean to that framework? If the identity of the nation is tied to one religion, then what happens to those who do not belong to it? Are they guests? Are they tolerated? Are they conditionally accepted? India's diversity is not decorative. It's fundamental. It's something that was inherited in this country ever since people set foot on this land. India covers a total geographical area of approximately 3.28 million km square, and every 100 kilometers, languages change. So does food, dress, rituals. Even the way we celebrate or grief about a particular thing changes. None of it is uniform. So to picture the nation through a singular religious lens is to flatten centuries of shared history into something narrower, that is dishonest and fake.

And these minority groups/religions that we are talking about, the experiences that they live are not

abstract. They are lived. This rhetoric and bombast of the so called leaders of this country and their idea of “hindu rashtra”, does not just exist in a vacuum. It travels with speeches, to policies, to social media narratives, up to street level hostility. It is framed as cultural pride but all it does is create a hierarchy of belonging. It spreads the poisonous thought that one person is more native than the other.

What troubles me most is not the pride in one’s religion. Pride is natural and obvious and maintaining cultural continuity is valuable. What troubles me is the state aligning itself with one religious identity in a country whose constitution was written to most particularly avoid that alignment. Secularism doesn’t imply anti-hinduism. As a matter of fact it does not anti anything. It just ensures equality. It ensures that the government does not become a catalyst to religious majoritarianism.

The moment we begin to define a nation with one section’s faith, the other sections become negligible. I also understand the problems and riots that come along with the title of a diverse nation, but the strength of this country has always been its discomfort. Its refusal to resolve in a single narrative. But its weakness has also been when we decide to diminish this discomfort because what we don’t realise is that then we are also diminishing certain other sections of this country. A secular framework allows a hindu to create separate temples for each god they believe in, a muslim

to pray five times a day, a christian to attend midnight mass, an atheist to reject all, and so on and so forth without the state being any form of bias witness.

It's time we acknowledge and accept this, and teach our children the same. Let them understand the difference from you and not from what's on the television. I remember this as a kid, where I was sitting in some kind of a social setting and someone asked a kid what he would do if he was given a gun and left in a room full of muslims. And the kid said that he'd kill all of them. And at that moment I thought, "then what is the difference between him and a terrorist?". The answer is simple. That kid still has the chance of someone like you and me walking up to him and explaining to him the difference between right and wrong. Don't let hate be genetic. Instead, let's teach them about the idea of **Nishpaksh Rasthra** and for a change see if that is something that ends up creating a more peaceful state.



I Wish

I wish a lot of things
I wish for them to come true
I wish for brighter colours
Instead of just black and blue

I wish for sunny mornings
I wish for nights with peaceful sleep
I wish the promises we make
Were the promises that we'd keep

I wish for serendipity
I wish for stability
I wish for a fertile ground
And I wish it for my whole vicinity

I wish luck wasn't so selective
I wish hope wasn't that easy to burn
I wish failure was more acceptable
Without the world's harsh turn

I wish empathy was curriculum
I wish curiosity was a skill
I wish kindness wasn't optional
Or dismissed as weak-willed

I wish all had a lens
A lens to look through love
I wish all stood at the same height
With no one below and no one above

I wish we saw each other
Without any contrast
I wish we could demolish the pillars
Of race, religion and caste

I wish for the world
To run at a common ground
For then there'd be no gloves
And we held hands while we walk around

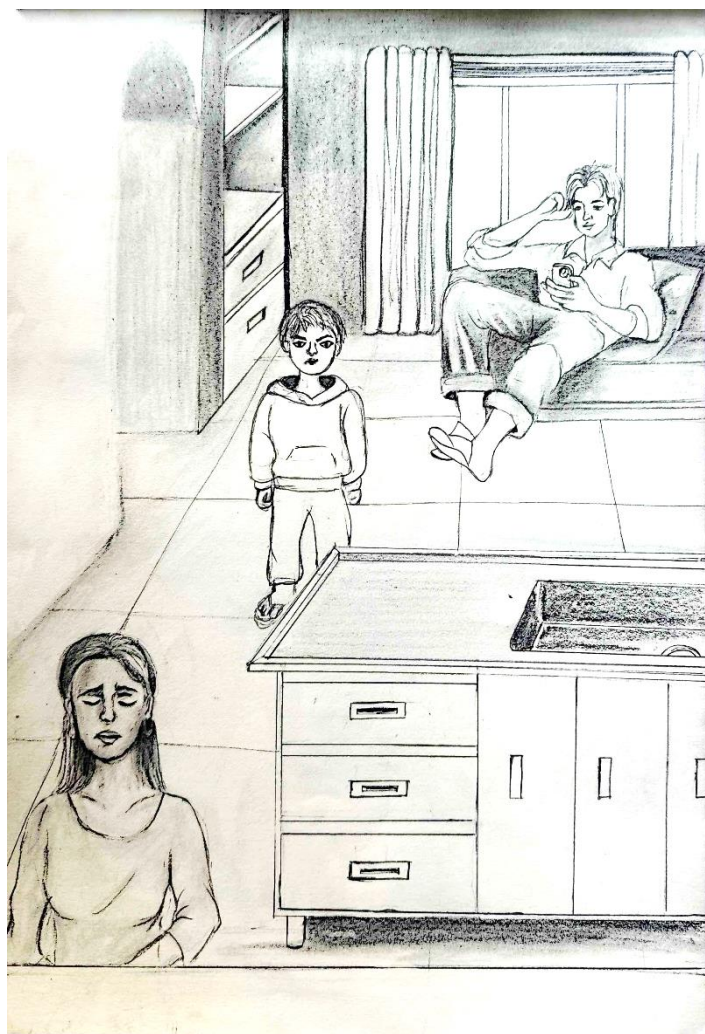
I wish for a society
That does not object or make any fuss
I wish for a society
That gladly approves of us

I wish to see past
Past the curtains of superstitions
I wish for an education system
That teaches how to weave new traditions

I wish we spoke less in verdicts
And more in eloquent tones
I wish valleys were peaceful again
Instead of people throwing stones

I wish we'd all get our three wishes
I wish we'd use one for other people
That's the day we'll get our lenses
And get rid of all the evil

But maybe the world won't change at once
And take time to change its view
But it might become a little endearing
Everytime I wish for you.



Moral Values

Questions asked as an observer from the future, who lurks into the past and finds this one instance vividly so, more than his own memories. Why is it so fresh tho? Because the memories that I have personally, the questions that I have, got their solution in their respective moments at their time. And once done with, you tend to forget these things. However, when the mind is left wandering, unanswered, those are the things it remembers more sharply.

What must've been the circumstances
That got you to this plight
What must've been the circumstances
Under which you initiated a diabolic fight
What must've been the circumstances
That made you so seething
What must've been the circumstances
That your own blood was the one receiving
What must've been the circumstances
Look at you, you aren't even a teenager
What must've been the circumstances
That you emitted such obscene behaviour
What must've been the circumstances
That you scowled at your mother
What must've been the circumstances
That she was mangled by your wuther

What must've been the circumstances
That taught your hand to rise in rage
What must've been the circumstances
That you were blinded at such an innocent age
What must've been the circumstances
Where fear disguised as discipline
What must've been the circumstances
Where love was left astray, and violence was let to
wander in
What must've been the circumstances
In which she learned how to bruise and bend
What must've been the circumstances
That who walked away was not just a parent, but also
a friend
What must've been the circumstances
The day still lingers in my sight
What must've been the circumstances
That taught me, wrong is taught as right

And I don't blame you for that day
You obviously didn't know any other way
You didn't know then, how it began
You still haven't found out as a man
You only know what you had seen
What you thought life has to mean
You are not evil, you are not wrong
You just learned bad things far too young
But one day you'll see it wasn't you
It was the world that trained you to
Because some things are taught before they're known

And some pains aren't yours alone

So go now,
And apologize with nothing but care
For she who cries is your own mother
And she still prays for you, I swear.

Dictionary

English ▾

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impunity

/ɪmˈpiːnɪti/

noun

exemption from punishment or freedom from the injurious consequences of an action.

"the impunity enjoyed by military officers implicated in civilian killings"

Beneficiary of Impunity

Example: A Rapist

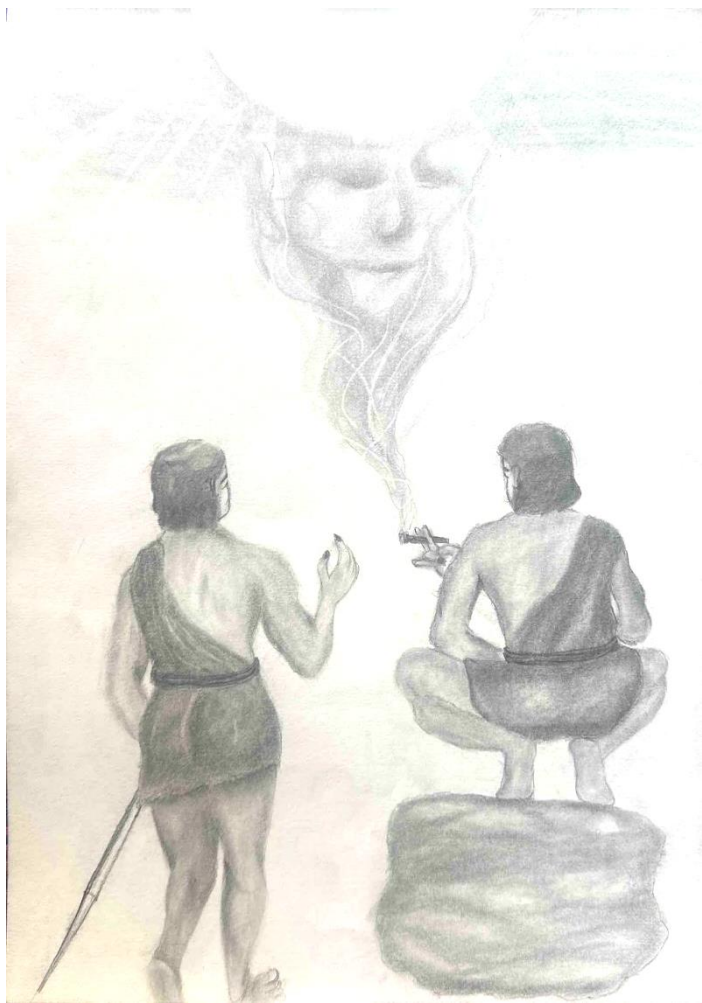
Dear rapist,

How could you think you're wrong? Irrespective of how many people may protest, how many candles they light up, and how many years pass by asking for justice. I promise, you won't even get the smallest scratch. No power on this earth can defeat you or punish you. And why should you be punished? You saw an opportunity and you took it. Like a true patriot. Stop running and look back. No one's chasing. People will only hoot out something when they want to. When they are in the mood to. Otherwise, whatever you say, whatever you do, hardly matters. No one's gonna even know that you exist. In fact, that 9 year old girl you raped, whose father is a farmer, no one's even gonna know that she existed as well.

Wrong requires consequence. Wrong requires a bruise. A dent. A door kicked in at 3 a.m. But look at you. You're fine. You're eating, sleeping, scrolling, adjusting your collar in the mirror. Irrespective of how many people may protest, how many candles they light up like it's some annual festival of selective grief, how many years pass by with "justice" stamped on placards that wash off in the rain, you won't even get

the smallest scratch. Not on your skin. Not on your record. Not on your reputation in the circles that matter to you. You understand something most people don't, that is, outrage has stamina issues. It runs fast, screams loud, then collapses. And you? You just have to outlast it. That's all. No power on this earth can defeat you or punish you because power doesn't fight its own reflection. It recognizes the familiar hunger in your eyes. It understands. And why should you be punished? Seizing the moment. Being bold, and decisive. You just applied the philosophy in a room no one was supposed to look into. Seriously, turn around. Do you see a mob or hear any footsteps? The noise you panic about is temporary. The mob comes out when they want to. When it fits their schedule. When it doesn't interfere with dinner time. When it's trending. Otherwise, whatever you say, whatever you do, hardly matters. That's the secret you've built your safety wall around. That attention is rented, not owned. And you know most people can't afford long term outrage. So you wait, and it works. No one's gonna even know that you exist. You'll dissolve into the background like every other man who learned early that the system bends if you lean on it hard enough. Look how you've already forgotten about that girl. That's the part you're counting on. Her name won't become a chapter in a textbook. Her photograph won't become a mural. Her house won't turn into a landmark. Her father will still wake before sunrise, walk into the fields, and continue to live what's left of his miserable life. The crops will

not grow slower out of sympathy. The market will not offer a discount for grief. Life will continue with the cruelty of normalcy. And that normalcy is your shield. You're not powerful because you're extraordinary, but because you have that camouflage. And there's time for how long a memory lasts. You tell yourself this makes you smart and strategic, not evil. You convince yourself that guilt is optional if no one enforces it. That morality is flexible if consequences are negotiable. You say to yourself, if it was truly unforgivable, wouldn't the world have ended for me? But the world didn't end. It keeps moving. So maybe it wasn't that serious. That's the lie you cradle at night. You walk free not because you're right, but because systems are slow and people are distracted. There's no crowd gathered to learn the truth. It just exists on a shelf with layers of dust over it.



The Idea of God

What does one mean by *the idea of god*? Who is god? Is god a real entity? When did homo sapiens first realise that something like a god exists? When did someone mention the word god (as a supernatural entity), the very first time?

So, 3,000 BCE, and by BCE, I don't mean *before Christ*. No. Fuck that. We're not discussing Christ right now. That's religion. That's a different topic, which by the way most of you don't realise and have got the whole situation confused and tangled up. Let's call it *BDB (Before Dr. Binocs)*. So, as I was saying, 3,000 BDB. One random night after dinner, when the entire cave community knocked out, two people decided to sneak out and have sex. I bet both of them were men. I can't explain why I think that way, but I have my reasons. It's an instinct. So while these two men were at it, a sharp lightning bolt struck a tree out of nowhere. **MAGIC**. That was the first time someone witnessed something like that.

A few days later, because there were no fucking dams, a river floods and wipes out an entire an entire tribe. **MAGIC**. Then, even a few days after that, a particular individual discovers weed. And after 3 fat doobies, when time slowed down in front of him, this big fella notices that the sun rises and disappears everyday, indicating some kind of clockwork. Once again,

MAGIC. Now, with Dr. Binocs not being born yet, these indigenous dumbfucks thought there might be someone or something doing this. Instead of stressing on “something”, they went with “someone”. Now who is this someone? No one knew. But people were scared, that this guy up there, he sends lightning, he floods the river, and he controls all of space and time. **UTTER BATSHIT.**

But here’s my question: why are we still on the same page as the people of 3000 BDB?

Even if I stop for a second, and say that god exists. He’s watching me writing all of this right now and probably thinking to himself, “This oversmart fuck is definitely going to hell. I’m gonna season him with kosher salt and deep fry the dead shit out of him”. {That god of yours sure is one violent entity}.

So even if we believe in something like god, is fear the first emotion we should feel towards him/ her/ they/ them?

Also I think now would be a good time for god to come and reveal his/her/their gender. I can’t even say “maybe god didn’t know there would be so many genders,” because apparently, according to you people, god knows everything. But it’s ok. We’ll give him the benefit of doubt, that maybe he was feeling a bit conscious. But as of today, I think it’s safe for god to come out of the closet.

However, coming back to the point I was trying to make. **FEAR OF GOD**. Should you worship something just because you are scared of it?

Then the second thing people associate with god, are needs. Once people went into psychosis and started believing that there's something called god, and got used to living in fear and terror, they realised that if something can change the way sky and river works, then that something can do a hell lot of magical stuff as well. That's when our ancestors, for the very first time, experienced this itchy sensation which we refer to as *lust*. The lust for everything. Wants. Needs. And not just materialistic. But requests as absurd as-

- "I really like this girl in my economics class. Can you please get her to marry me?"
- "I really want a job although I don't really have a skillset and I just prefer to lie around and smoke up all day."
- "I can pay off my home loan in 8 years, but god, can you make it happen in 2?"

And the funny part? You could actually pay it off in 2 years if you work hard and put in those extra hours but you'll still lack a few things. Confidence and Credibility. You could take yourself into account and proudly say that you made it, but everyone who's gonna come to your success party, is going to get a few drinks and tell you how god helped you achieve it. Which is also something god is against. Alcohol. At

least in the religion that people around me follow. Cigarettes he's okay with. Have you ever met those annoying people, whom you ask if they wanna go out for a few drinks and they say, "Oh I'm sorry I can't. It's Tuesday. I believe in the monkey god and he's against alcohol". SO WHAT THE FUCK HAS THAT GOT TO DO WITH A TUESDAY? Let me tell you what, and you'll love this. Because according to hindu mythology, Tuesday is the day of the monkey god. So now the follow up question is-

WHAT THE FUCK IS THAT SUPPOSED TO MEAN? Again, let me enlighten you. In hindu mythology, every day is associated with a certain god. So if, on a tuesday, you abide by the rules a monkey made, you won't go to hell. Isn't that the sweetest, most loveliest, relieving thing someone has ever told you in the longest time? But then, allow me to understand that if each day is associated with god, and none of the gods promote alcohol.....when exactly is anyone supposed to go out for a drink?

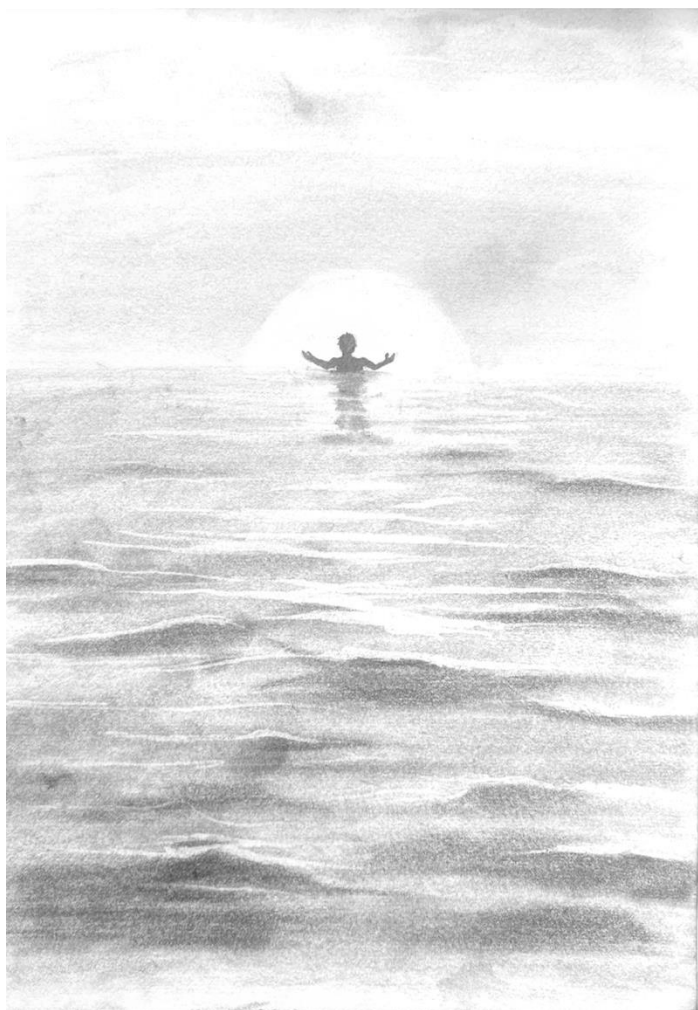
By the way, amidst all of this, I forgot to tell you that I **believe in god**. Wait, keep your wooden bats and metal pipes down for a second and listen to me. I believe in the idea of god, and my idea of god is very much different than the next person (irrespective of the fact whether the next person is a millionaire feminist or a sociopath running around raping and killing people and thinking he's invincible). The idea of god lies in the things we do. I believe that I was meant to eat good

food, work my favourite job, have good sex, and spend my spare time doing what I love. Along with that I want to be kind and loving to the people who love me, and consider me a good friend (maybe even a good person sometimes). Not to look at anyone with a hateful lens. At least not at first sight. So, if there's something called afterlife, and there's heaven and hell, I'm pretty sure I'm going upstairs. But that's not something I need to stress about as of this moment. I'm also sure of the fact that having a chilled beer on a sunny Tuesday afternoon will not be the reason I go to hell.

As long as I have the resources to help the ones in need, the ones going through tough times, I am as blessed as I need to be. And as long as people reciprocate that gesture with a big smile or a warm hug, this is the most heaven I need to see. Giving fifty rupees to a small girl at a traffic signal, and knowing that because of a small gesture this kid can have a meal this afternoon, and she won't have to walk miles in this extreme heat, searching for food, that gives me a peace of mind. Recklessly pouring milk cartons on statues does not give me any peace of mind. Therefore, I believe in god, not in a physical form, but in the warmth of spaces between me and other people.

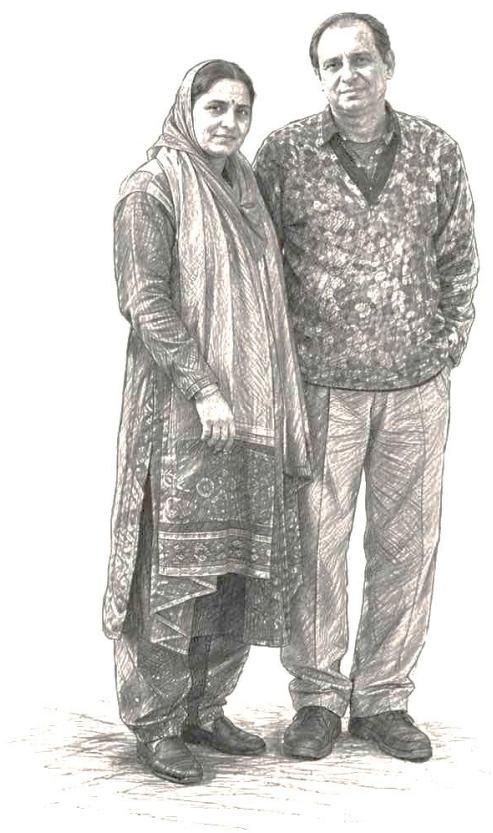
I believe what we really need is spirituality. We've confused the idea of faith and spirituality. Faith requires an external factor, and that's where god comes in. Spirituality, on the other hand, is exploring within.

It's about awareness, growth, and understanding yourself and existence. Buddha said that when he dies, don't make his statues and wax figures. He spent his entire life explaining how to internalize things. Understand the world through mediums of wisdom and knowledge, rather than getting trapped into materialistic structures. But what did people do? They created his statues and figures. FUCKING DUMBFUCKS. It's good to have a belief system that you can hold onto in tough times. But I'd rather rely more on myself in screwed up situations and find a solution, rather than praying to a stone and hoping my problems would go away. So, I think one's idea of god should be associated with spirituality. We better learn about ourselves, before we go out to learn about other things, and especially those whose existence we aren't even sure of.



At the Horizon

What is the cost of free will
It does come at a price
The price of pushing away
And wanting to touch the horizon
Dive in the setting sun
To feel different temperatures at once
As the line that divides
The sky and the sea
Also divides me
And I'll note the time, mother
To tell you all about it later
That I no longer have to
Worry about being black and blue
Since the idea of god
Is based on superstitions
My place of worship
Would be the horizon.



What comes Before and After Grief

PART ONE — Introduction

In the narrow, winding lanes of Krishna Nagar in Lucknow, there lived a man named Sukhi. His house stood quietly among the others. It was a big house, but almost too big now. Sukhi lived there with his wife. Both of them were close to eighty.

The house had two floors, each with two rooms, and a roof that caught the morning sun. Once, it had been full. Sukhi's two sons had lived there with their wives and children. Voices had travelled freely from room to room, doors were rarely shut, and the house had never felt its size. Then came transfers, better jobs, distant cities. One by one, the sons left. What remained was Sukhi, his wife, and a house that started to echo.

Sukhi had a habit of waking up at five every morning. His wife rose with him. Together, they practiced yoga at dawn, surrounded by their plants. In the soft sunlight and clean morning air, they did their pranayama slowly, without hurry, as if the day had not yet begun and there was no reason to rush it.

After that, Sukhi would sit outside on a wooden cot, letting the sun warm his bones. His wife would bring

him tea. Steam would rise from the cup, and Sukhi would hold it quietly, listening to the neighbourhood waking up. In the evenings, they went out for walks, sometimes to buy groceries, sometimes without purpose, just to move their legs and remind themselves they still could.

They had a daughter too, the younger sister of the two sons. During summer vacations, the house briefly remembered its past. The children would come for ten or fifteen days with their kids. Sukhi would take them to the mall, buy them clothes, and sit patiently while they argued over choices. In the evenings, he would walk them to the market and return with bags of hot snacks and freshly made sweets. For a short while, the house felt occupied again, after what was almost an year long wait.

PART TWO – The Weight of Age

By the time Sukhi turned eighty, age had begun placing restrictions on him. The list grew longer every year. He disliked leaving the house. The evening strolls grew lonelier due to Sukhi's stubbornness. He refrained on the idea of completely abandoning the house. He thought of the house as an entity that couldn't be left alone. To put that into order, Sukhi and his wife used to go out for walks on alternate days, but never together.

It wasn't that the neighbourhood was unsafe. The colony was secure, neighbours were familiar, with

whom Sukhi had old and warm relations. Still, whenever someone asked him why he refused to shut the house properly, Sukhi gave the same answer, that he feared a theft, that a locked house left alone invited trouble. In truth, he did not like the idea of abandoning it, even briefly.

Then, when Sukhi was eighty-three, after much insistence, he agreed to visit his son's new home. He and his wife got ready carefully, the way people do when the outing is rare. Sukhi wore a blue shirt. The one his son gave him years ago. Most of his hair was gone now, but whenever he stepped out, he stood before the mirror for a long time, gently combing what little remained. His wife on the other hand wore a green sari, and accompanied it with her finest jewellery.

PART THREE – The Visit

They left the house and took an auto.

The ride was quiet. They did not talk much, but every now and then they looked at each other, and in those looks lived a small contained happiness of casually flirting with every glimpse, complimenting each other's attires.

After a long journey, they reached their son's apartment. Normally, Sukhi never paid an auto driver the first amount quoted. He always bargained, always reduced it by twenty or thirty rupees. however , that day, he paid exactly what was asked. No negotiation.

His son lived in a well-kept society. Stepping out of the auto, Sukhi paused. He looked at the building from bottom to top, taking it in slowly, as he witnessed the grandeur with pride. When his gaze returned to the ground, he saw his son walking toward him.

Something shifted inside Sukhi.

After so long, the thought of placing his hand on his child's head. The certainty that in a few seconds his son would bend down, touch his feet, and Sukhi would offer a blessing. The anticipation made him restless.

He stepped forward. Each step felt larger than usual, driven by urgency rather than balance. But his body did not match his intention. His joints were weak, his legs slower than his mind. His foot did not land fully on the step. It turned slightly.

Sukhi slipped and fell.

Under ordinary circumstances, the fall might not have mattered much. But age had already worn him thin. The impact fractured his hip. In a moment, his movement stopped. He fainted at the stop, but just before his eyes closed, he had a smile on his face, for the last thing he saw was his son running to get hold of him.

PART FOUR – What the House Couldn't Hold

Sukhi was rushed to the hospital.

The news travelled fast and efficiently. His elder son came from Delhi without waiting for explanations. His

daughter, who had been on vacation in Odisha with her husband and children, did not return home first. She changed her plans at the airport and boarded the next flight to Lucknow.

The house in Krishna Nagar, which was apparently large enough to contain decades of family, arguments, festivals, and silence, could not bring everyone together. A hospital room did.

That small room held Sukhi's sons and daughter. It held his grandchildren too. People who had not stood this close to one another in years now shared the same air, the same floor space, and the same quiet anxiety.

Sukhi remained in the hospital for days. And with each passing day, he seemed to recede further. His body weakened. His breath shortened. His presence thinned. The children who were now all in their fifties, people who had learned to keep themselves composed, broke down beside him. They cried with their faces pressed into his chest, cried the way they had not since childhood, without restraint or dignity.

As his condition worsened, Sukhi's memory began to fail him. He no longer recognised time. Sometimes, not even faces. He grew restless and difficult to care for. In moments of confusion, he would suddenly pull his children close and kiss them. At other times, just as suddenly, he would strike them. No one stopped him. No one protested. What reached them was not pain,

but the warmth of his skin and the undeniable fact that he was still there.

Doctors tried all kinds of possible treatments. Medicines were replaced. Machines gathered around his bed. For days, Sukhi survived on a ventilator, with his breathing no longer fully his own. His wife remained by his side, watching quietly, as she had for most of their life together.

After twenty-one days in the hospital, Sukhi left. He left behind the wife who had woken up with him every morning. He left behind children who had returned too late. The room emptied slowly, leaving silence behind and latching catharsis.

PART FIVE – The House

Everyone gathered.

The house Sukhi had guarded all his life, which he feared might be stolen from, broken into, was left vulnerable. It stood with its doors wide open. People moved in and out freely. Neighbours, relatives, acquaintances. No one stopped anyone. No one thought to.

The crying came in waves. His wife cried without holding back. His daughter cried with her. The two of them folded into each other with loud and uncontained grief. The sons stood mostly at the edges of the rooms. There was no time for them to sit. They were busy

making phone calls and arrangements for rituals. Grief for them was something that had to be postponed.

Sukhi's body layed in the living room, kept in a freezer. Death had drained the colour from his face. He did not look like someone asleep. He looked unmistakably dead. And yet, even then, something of him remained. Maybe an ease, or a presence, the same quiet gravity he had carried throughout his life. The people who usually had to speak out loud and enunciate every word to Sukhi due to his hearing aid, lowered their voices around him without being told to.

The next day, as the rituals required, his sons bathed his body with cotton and holy water. They dressed him in new white coloured clothes. Their hands moved carefully, almost formally, until they didn't. When they touched him, and I mean really touched him, that was the first time they broke. Sitting around their father's lifeless body, they cried like sons again, not men managing a funeral.

After a course of 13 days, all the rituals were performed and all that was left of Sukhi, was a bowl of ashes and a metal ball that was put by surgeons during his hip surgery. Sukhi's wife left the house. She moved in with her elder son in Delhi. The house was emptied. Its rooms were cleared. Its doors shut. Locked fully this time.

Sukhi had always believed it was the house that held everyone together. In the end, it wasn't the house. It

was him. With him gone, everyone went their separate ways.

Once in a while, his wife and children would still return. They unlocked the doors, walked through the rooms, checked the locks, and made sure nothing had been stolen. Then they left again.

The house remains standing, exactly as he left it.



A Dying Man's Prayers

I see kids passing by
As they whisper to each other
Did you see that old man
He makes me wanna throw up
I see women passing by
Looking at me
With eyes of disgust
And I think to myself
Why only them
Maybe the birds
That kept coming to my window this morning
One by one
Sometimes in groups
Nature's most beautiful creation
Coming to see nature's worst
The sunlight that directly hit my face
Only to highlight
The horrible features
To make the nurse
A bit more hesitant
When will I go home
Or any other place
Where I'm not sick
Where my face
Is not as white

As this sheet of paper
Where I can run
And feel every beat
Rather than forgetting
What it was to run
Against the wind
Rather than wondering
What a cool breeze
Felt to my face
Am I still to pray
To a supposed god
For a final release
I hope I forget how to pray
So that I go feeling
Anything but mercy.



Death: A Play

In a dim, cluttered bedroom, with clothes and alcohol bottles scattered all over the floor, a man lies on his bed staring at the ceiling. His face has swollen from crying and sleep deprivation. The air in that room feels very stale. He's about to close his eyes, but just then, he hears a knocking sound on his window. He turns his head and wipes his eyes to get a better look, and sees a woman standing in one corner wearing a black cloak.

I

MAN: You came?

DEATH: Yes.

MAN: Why today?

DEATH: Because today's different. If it wasn't for all the alcohol, you'd notice the difference. You'd notice it's apparition.

MAN: Why now then?

DEATH: Because you've been practicing this night for months.

MAN: So you do see me.

DEATH: No. I'm not her.

The man looks at Death for a few seconds, confused. Then turns his head away.

MAN: Don't do that. Not tonight.

Death opens its cloak and shows the man that instead of smooth skin and features, there is rotted flesh with visible bones, behind the cloth.

DEATH: Do you think this is what she looks like?

MAN: I did at some point. But I get it. You're not her.

DEATH: I am Death.

MAN: No. How? Wait.

He looks down for a few seconds. He takes a pause to process things, then looks back up with anger.

MAN: Why are you dressed as her?

DEATH: You asked me to.

MAN: When?

DEATH: Almost everyday. You didn't see a point in living, you said so yourself. You invited me through her name.

MAN: So this is it? You've come to take me?

DEATH: Yes. But just not yet. Not like this.

MAN: Drunk?

DEATH: No. I've come to take you, but not confused. Not angry. And certainly not begging. You'll leave with understanding.

MAN: Understanding of what exactly? That why she isn't the one who should've been here.

DEATH: Why you mistook hunger for love.

MAN: Don't throw this poetic bullshit in my face.

Death comes closer and sits down on a chair placed next to the man's bed.

DEATH: You're right. Let's start on a lighter note. Tell me about the time you first noticed her. Was she in a small corner?

MAN: In the corridor. She wasn't really doing anything. Not that I remember. She just occupied a lot of space.

DEATH: In what sense?

MAN: Like some people take up certain space without trying. Like in an orbit of her own.

DEATH: And what did you think?

MAN: In the 3 seconds that she walked past me, I was really craving that she looked at me. But she just passed by.

DEATH: And why did you crave that?

MAN: I guess I was having a hard time. I didn't have any friends or so, and then I saw her, and she felt like this amazing, important person. And I thought to myself, that if she sees me, I'm real. I saw an opportunity to get out of this npc state, and I wanted to matter. I wanted to be considered special by

someone. It's like, if I had a choice, who that person would be, it had to be her.

DEATH: So she made you real.

MAN: She made me want to be.

DEATH: That's not...

MAN: It is.

DEATH: Is it?

MAN: It's hope.

DEATH: It's like emptiness looking into a mirror.

Man sits right up in front of death, face to face, and looks straight into his eyes.

MAN: You don't get to analyse this.

DEATH: I do. Because you're going to die for it.

II

DEATH: Did you speak to her?

MAN: Almost. Everytime.

DEATH: So you tried.

MAN: I used to rehearse all the time.

DEATH: What was your opening line?

MAN: Hey!

DEATH: Ambitious.

MAN: It was a longer speech in my head. In my head I would cook up scenarios where she replied with similar interest and intensity, and that we actually went on to talk for hours.

DEATH: That's very ambitious.

MAN: I was all prepared the first time I went to talk to her, in the cafe.

DEATH: But you didn't?

MAN: Just when I was about to get up and walk up to her, her friends came barging in. She smiled. She got up and hugged them. Laughed with all of them

DEATH: Then?

MAN: Then I waited for a blind spot. Every time they stopped laughing, or there'd be just a few seconds of silence, I looked up eagerly and instantly. But just when I did, they laughed again. And all of that went on for 75 minutes.

DEATH: That long huh?

MAN: Then they left.

DEATH: All of them?

MAN: Yes.

DEATH: And her?

Man nods.

III

DEATH: What happened after the cafe?

MAN: I started looking for opportunities, gaps. I noticed where she sat in class. Even though there was no fixed seating arrangement, and everyone sat in a different seat everyday, yet I started to see patterns in where she sat everyday. And then I would just burn everyday, because I didn't get to sit next to her. Except for this one day, when I got to sit on a table, right next to hers, and I just kept staring at her. It occurred to me days later, how she was least bothered by my existence, acting as if no one was even there at my place. Then I started seeing more of her. Instead of blurring out her surroundings, I started to see them closely. I saw her talking to a guy, as they sat in a corner of the park, and as she stroked his arm and laughed right into his face, I realised how all this time, she was also capable of focussing her attention on someone else. I realised how I wasn't that person and she knew this. I saw where she went for parties, and whom she'd hang out with. In events. In seminars. During breaks. Someone's hand around her neck. Someone's hand around her waist. To see a palm, barely touching her spine, felt like a hot cast iron in my throat. But this wasn't enough. One could somehow survive this, I suppose. But then months later, there was this one day, when I got to know that she is capable of seeing me. That she knew of my existence. And that it was a conscious decision to keep me out of that world.

DEATH: Stop.

MAN: My entire attachment has been built around isolation.

IV

MAN: Then one day, she was gone.

DEATH: Yeah?

MAN: Just....poof.

DEATH: How did you know?

MAN: That she was gone?

DEATH: Yes.

MAN: You could tell. One has to be blind, not being able to tell when the light that illuminates the whole room, goes off all of a sudden. The corridors, the desks, the cafeteria. The funny part is, I used to think all the time, why do I have to see this. All of this, it burns so much. Like a fucking dog. Lusting after a rotted piece of bread that I can't have. But even then I felt like this is something which will get better. In a way that maybe when she's not around, I would eventually forget about these last few months, and move on with my life happily. With myself. But...

The man looks around in his room, acknowledging the mess that he's created and has been living in for such a long time.

V

DEATH: When did this room begin?

MAN: A week or two after she left.

DEATH: And how exactly did you find any sort of warmth or peace in it?

MAN: Some comfort. Maybe. I'm not sure. But definitely not warmth.

DEATH: So you do understand the difference.

The man looks down and nods.

DEATH: Did you feel like you preserved her here?

MAN: The idea of her. Very neatly. She didn't grow a day older. But...

DEATH: But you don't want that. You want to see that person grow.

MAN: Hmm.

DEATH: Lie down.

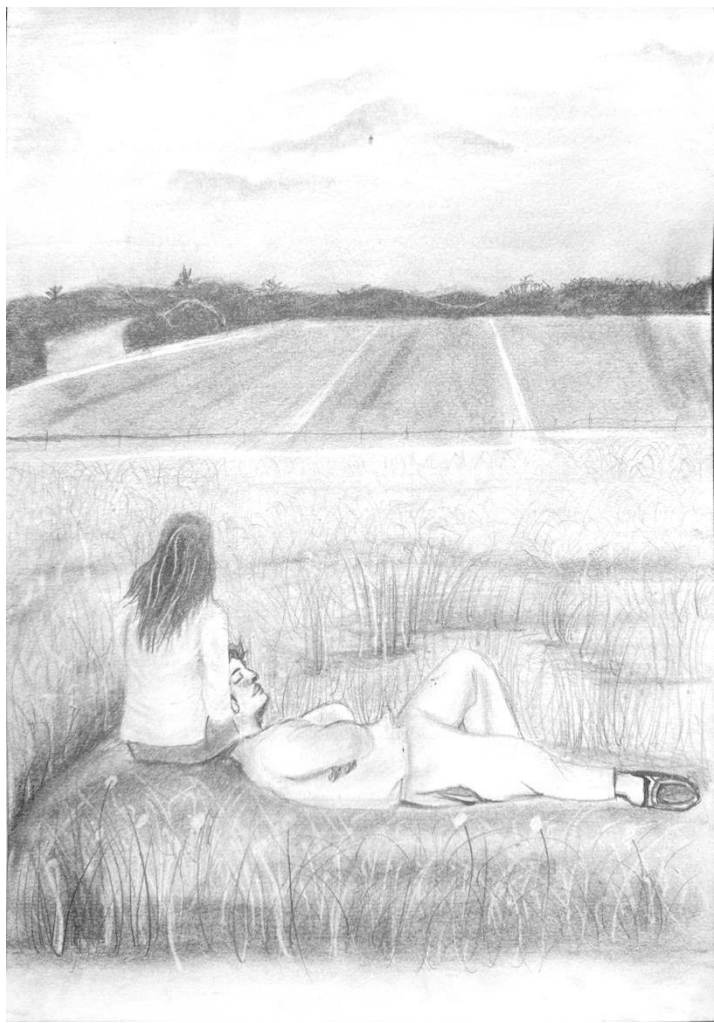
MAN: You knew I wouldn't listen if you hadn't come in disguise.

DEATH: Close your eyes. I've heard your side. I've seen what it's like on ground level. Now listen, how the structure of things looks from above. I need you to understand that the problem is not that she didn't acknowledge you, or that she left. The problem here is misconception. The assumptions you made and locked yourself in. There's a huge difference between actually

knowing someone, nurturing a home with them, and building a prison around yourself, whose bars are built around the idea of them. Only with that understanding do you leave. For a better place.

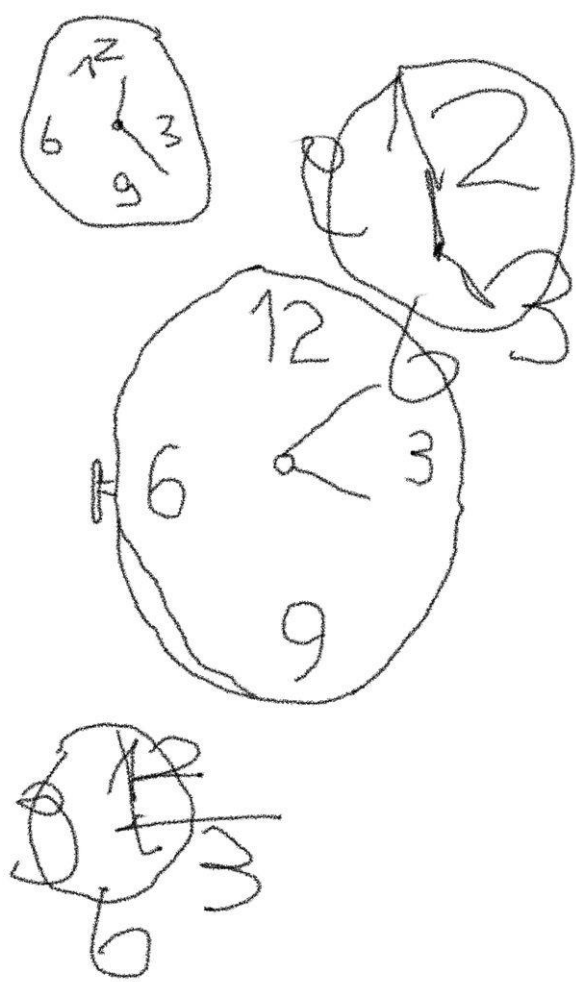
The man goes quiet. Almost as if he's been put to sleep after months. Death places a hand on his head.

DEATH: Come.



After Death

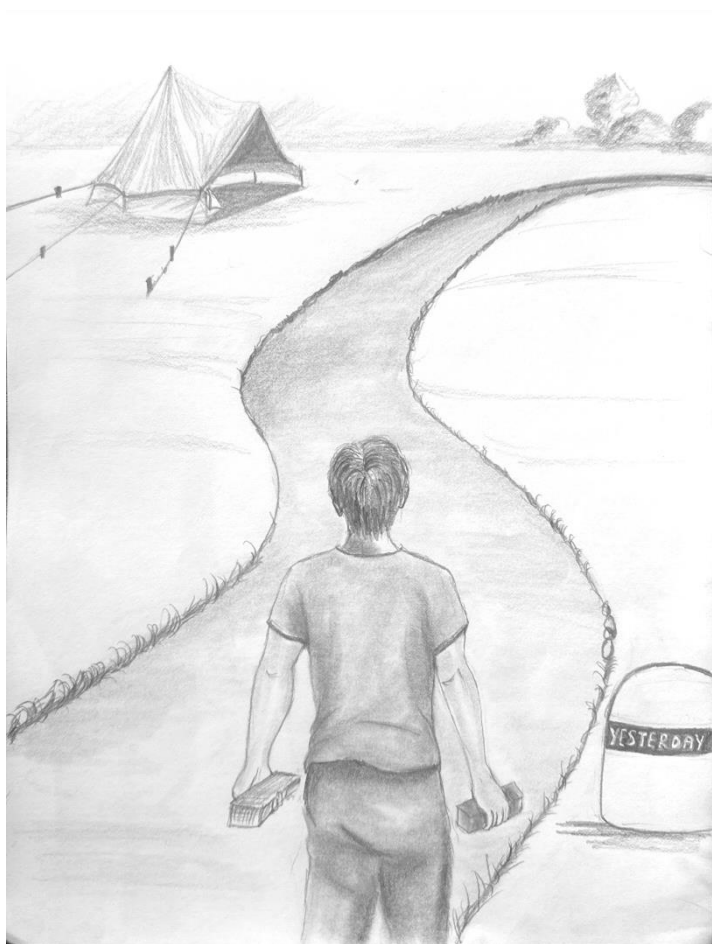
Why are we
Unnecessarily
Racing the sky
Waving goodbyes
To the trees
That stand by
That we often
Leave behind
I think about
Simpler times
With crease on my shirt
With crease on my shoes
Look what we were
And now look at you
House on twelfth floor
Missing the view
Looking for doors
Doors of rescue
Tired of holding
The sign for peace
It's not as white
As it used to be
Why are we still
Racing the sky
Sit in green fields
Let clouds pass by



A Few More Minutes

Sit with me
For a few more minutes
Too see the rays
Pass through leaves
A few more minutes
Till we spot the perfect green
A few more minutes
Till I come up with
A few more jokes
A few more limericks
To get a few more laughs
Out of you
A few more minutes
For you to see
Through my eyes
What every minute means
Sit with me
Till I catch the fragrance
So that I smell like you
A few minutes after
You're gone
Till I figure out the science of how
Your pores feel different
Than any other sense
Than any other touch

A few more minutes
Till the wind moves my way
 To brush my face
 With your hair
The only time I wouldn't care
 About the moving world
 About what time spares
 A few more minutes
 Till I forget
 Where home is
 Till I forget
About materialistic aspects
For in those few minutes
I don't need any money
 I'm as rich
 As I need to be
 A few more minutes
Till I find and rub the lamp
To ask for a few more minutes



A Letter to Yesterday

Dear Yesterday,

I'm glad we got a chance to meet. I still smile at our acquaintance, almost too lost in those thoughts, that I have no sense of the present. I feel like I'm still living in those moments that you brought me. Yet, somehow there are a few other things, disturbing, one might find, that are stuck in my mind from yesterday. How I think of the cigarettes that were burned yesterday, burning alongside the hearts of 14 year olds. The wind that felt like a breeze to me when I got out of my house for twenty minutes, the same winds came in the form of a storm for those whose houses did not have walls and roofs. The same wind that took out the fire that kept warm a family of 5. How I think of the rain, sitting in my car, enjoying watching the streets flooding. What was easy said yesterday, is difficult to be done today. The preparations that felt hearty yesterday, feel surprisingly overwhelming today. I don't regret meeting you, but if only you'd be kinder on today, things would've been easier. We would've appreciated you more, and not worried about going back to yesterday.

Yours sincerely

Backpacker.



Disappointments

I wish we're shorter
The next time we meet
You say we don't fit
And have become obsolete
We tend to hide in a corner
In a room filled with people
In another version of this city,
We laugh with our teeth visible
My mother folds conversations
Like warm laundry
The mirror has started to use
My father's eyes
I can't appreciate the kind of wood
Which doesn't shift texture
For it's not a pure breed
And is filled with lies.
Are you on this train too
Do your hands also shiver
Do you still hesitate
Asking for a little sliver
It was easier before
Running around in empty spaces
I still exist in the same space

But can't seem to locate those places
All that I couldn't get hold of
Can finally fit into my pocket
But does a charge look better blazing
Or when it lives inside a socket
I think we survive by becoming
Smaller than the rooms we enter
But every night the ceiling lowers itself
I think it's time to surrender.