

The Story by Syed Kazim Ali Kazmi

"It was once a dazzling city. The crowded streets bustled with people. There were all sorts of men and women..."

I stopped here. Not a single word more... despite my intense urge... all the thoughts dashed away in the emptiness around.

This had been happening with me for quite a long time. I take my pen and papers and in order to write something, but the same happens with me, time and time again, I couldn't manage to write more than two or three shadowy lines.

"People go through phases, this might be an unfertile phase too, and it will pass!"

I tried to calm myself with this thought, and left my pen and paper aside. Then I took a cigarette from the pack and looked around to find something to light it. I lit it, took a deep mouthful of smoke and released it out. I had just moved here and did not know much about the neighborhood, though some of the faces were more familiar than the others, maybe because, I saw them here everyday. Whenever I came back from the work, I usually found him sitting on the stairs, having a pencil in his mouth. He always chewed his pencil from the opposite end. I encountered him too often. This child with the rosy cheeks, who just wiped his nose carelessly with the back of his hand, is often found here. Other than this I didn't know anything about the neighborhood.

The cigarette hasn't cleared anything in my mind; I tried hard to get the focus again on the piece of writing I had left unfinished. No; to be honest I hadn't even begun.

First, I tried to sound accomplishing to myself. Later, I thought it to be unprofessional of me to state what I haven't done already. I should not tell lies you know. I am a writer and I should be honest. My way of life teaches me to be honest. When I was young I was injected with an acute need to be honest. I was confused then, and I still am befuddled about honesty. I never found any reason for being true. I mean what difference it would make? Why I couldn't be utterly dishonest? It is like what they say in English "to call a spade, a spade. If a spade is a spade there is no need to call it a spade. If not, what is the point of saying it at all? I think forceful propagation of being honest is to inflict guilt, and as a result they can be manipulated. You can never underestimate the power of guilt.

I suddenly remembered that my boss hasn't paid me. Perhaps he is afraid that I might go somewhere else. I liked to think that his guilt would clear my way to be a husband for his daughter. I could then compensate my suffering through her broad pelvis. I'd imagine myself leaning over her and she panted when I stroked and loved her.

"Oh No! Not now!"

I hated my stomach for I felt hungry, now I remember I haven't taken anything solid since morning. I must have something to eat and then I can rethink about the creativity. As I tried to work out my food options the electricity went out. The fan stopped and it increased my agitation.

"There it goes again, the electricity!"

"Shit! Now what! Huh"

"How will I see the current affairs program on TV where decent looking politicians come face to face and abuse each other vigorously?"

"Damn it man! Damn it!"

I stuffed my stomach to the brim. I began to ponder over the paragraphs that I intently wished and was about to write. I tried to find some affection from the past, as inspiration, to ignite the fire. There were several candy-like moments; perhaps some wet kisses would do the job for me. But none of it seemed to work. In another hope to find something rousing I turned towards the things that I have been keeping in my cupboard for such a long time. I rose from the chair and opened the closet; there they were lying in front of me. Two ribbons, a discolored pin, a cap of pen, a key, and some used tissue-papers.

"Oh dear! I remember her as she just left this room I can still smell the scent here."

The things reminded me of her.

It is the curse of such things. With time such things cease to exist. They adopt the whole self of the individual to which they once belonged. I could masturbate by just looking...imagination did the rest. I stroked myself and soon after it was over.

Afterwards I started to write again.

"... That city had an alley where, it was said, there are artists who can create such wonders that people were often stunned by their mastery and craftsmanship, now over four thousand years have passed and nothing but their creations stood against time ..."

I thought I was going somewhere. In an effort to retain my thoughts I pressed my pulsating forehead with my little fingers but the idea had slipped.

"What was I thinking?"

Was it her rosy birthmark under her supple breasts? Or one of her slippers that I had lost? The slipper served many a masturbating session.

No! It was some city, with craftsmen and artisans. I was thinking about some creations and their longevity, the continuous knock of the hammer, the devotion, which deformed the hands of the beholders.

"I spoke loudly in a lame effort to join the loose ends."

I was lost somewhere between her shoe and ribbons.

And suddenly another idea struck me.

"O yes! This should work".

"Nobody could know," I exclaimed and left hurriedly.

I picked up my bag and notebook. Carefully locked the door and went down by the stairs.

In my excitement I could only remember a glimpse of the same child under the stairs. Poor thing was confused. His hands were on his knees and he was bowed oddly, I clearly heard someone on his back under the murky staircase. They halted for a moment; I looked at his face and said to myself,

"Leave it; he is not the only one".

I have to finish a story and the library is about to close.

Syed Kazim Ali Kazmi teaches English language to diverse young students at a university. His research interests are in Postcolonial literature, globalization, cultures, diaspora literature, and narratives. He is an amateur painter and also writes short stories and poems.

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