

BETWEEN YOU AND ME: AN ODE TO A RESEARCH SCHOLAR

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You dropped in my consciousness
like an unknown bird, colour of pista shell
from Rajasthan of which I know nothing.
I selected you for your bravery
What an adventure it was!
When you came alone, hiring a taxi from Chennai
to face a different world
and have a big dance with life, alone.
Excited, I selected you.

Three days after:

“I am fighting my divorce case in the court”
said you in diffident tone as if hammered out
Shell-shocked, nevertheless, I took pity on you
“Don’t worry, you have come to a right place, right person,
God has a right cause, while man disposes”
said I breathing fresh life in you.
You looked up at me with a twinkle in eyes
but behind is sensed grief
passing like a thin shadow of black cloud on the verdant field.

I took you to the temples on Sundays.
Standing before images
I prayed for your welfare.
Nothing else for me to gain
You thanked me for all that
making a life of loneliness filled with glee.
I know a life without peace
a life with shattered dreams
a life filled with sorrow with no end in sight
a life without hope or comforting dreams
is a life of heartache and despair.
Not worth living wouldn’t it seem

But you need to know all sorrow riding on the crest of tides will fall
If not now, forever never.

Summer: you left for your state
on a pretext, I gave you freedom
to fight your case along with material collection for research.
Days after, your SMS
buried me in another shock,
“Met with an accident/riding pep plus/escaped death narrowly
but broke the right rib /convalescing at home”

Do you know you added another patch of darkness to your life of loneliness?
One more life of sadness is much too hard to bear.
Do you know I understood so much pain inside
when no one hears your cries of loneliness?
I said, I am with you.
May be, when the tears are gone, you can see life clearly.

Every day I remembered
I consoled, prescribing calcium nourishing diet.

Five months later: you returned battered, but strong in spirit
Senile you looked, my heart moved in emotion,
pity flowed like stream in the silent woods.
I fed you with fruit salad for two months
Nothing to gain for me from you
You bounced back to life that cheered me
but behind the triumph of joy, I sensed a black streak of sorrow.
While I cared for your welfare
you developed unwarranted indulgences (you know)
that gravitated you away from the focused research.
Your performance in the course work was miserable
that disturbed placid water of my impression of you.
When I questioned and even before I discussed,
you challenged banging my table with your tender coconut sized fist
because you thought I was a thorn in your ways.
You became indifferent, unconcerned, and defiant.
Hatred blossomed in your tendons and veins
You submitted a withdrawal letter, wittingly
that quaked my built up illusions.
Life is so unexpected ordinary, full of surprises
that you jumped right into another adventure.
The waves of emotion ran over me
like sesame oil through my hair on a Sunday bath
On your way home for medical test

I visited much frequented temple in my place
I prayed, I performed *archana*¹ for your good health
My god answered in humility.

Thereafter: there was not a day that would pass without a concern for you
I have done so many exceptional things for you
I so vividly remember them in my life
Whether it would be outside or inside
May be I formed an illusion about you even after separation
May be it's true
I am a fool for you
I think about it every day
Will I ever forget?

One day: into my room six months after the event
you walked like a fallen angel sodden with guilt
You wept like a deserted child by her mother
that once again rocked the tectonic plates of my consciousness.
You remember, I asked you, 'Why did you do it?'
All in utter humility and concern for you
You mumbled and fumbled like the one suffering from dyspraxia
You have an answer for your wild action, but your guilt clogged.
The wound created by you is healed by your 'repentance'
but remains as a gnarl on my consciousness.
Nostalgia is a thin moon appearing and disappearing in clouds in the west.
What is the ultimate adventure of all life?
I'd simply answer, "it's the roller coaster (of emotions) called Love?"

Dear, how do I mend my broken heart when trust is breached?
My heart knows only compassion, it won't let go
- Life 's ways are abysmally mysterious
- Relationships are strange and surreal
I'm going on an adventure now like you
Away from the heartache – away from illusion you created
I am letting the light in
This is where my adventure begins
I choose to no longer be the shadow cast by your actions
Instead I've decided to be a candle in my own way.

1. A special, personal, abbreviated puja done by temple priests in which the name, birth star and family lineage of a devotee are recited to invoke individual guidance and blessings.