

Ashwin Vijayan

Visitor

It should be the sea,
I tell myself.

The long arms and the rivulet fingers of the sea
pick rubbles and stones from every crevice of the desolate
land.

We walk along the shore.
The breeze reminds us of something bitter like salt,
sharp like a broken-kite thread.

We find ourselves unable to untangle
the knots we wove into each other's lives.
There's an urgency in the distant bird call
as we search for each other in some words.

We walk the length of the beach
and back
the sand and the sea melting in our mouths.

Atlas

Within the cramped confines of the boys' dorm
he stands, perched precariously on the edge
of the green-painted iron cot.
The titans who tossed the ball
for his high swing to unhinge the wall fan
have deserted him with an angry instruction
from the beloved warden: "tell him to hold it up
till I come." She doesn't come
and he stands there, leaning on the cold walls,
carrying the weight of this crumbling world.

In the beginning

Under the Handstand Statue Man,
a mongrel dog keeps his watch.
Somewhere in the distance the day
breaks, the noise is unbearable.

At five, mother locks the door,
father waits for her at the gate
and they head to the station
where they melt into the crowd.

In the dispelling darkness wakes
the plastic man: after the siren,
after the alarms and after the father's rage,
he stirs. No longer at ease.

Time wears on.

Sun beats down and tar pours on to the street
smouldering, near the mushrooming boutiques
where the mannequins keep their vigil.
The man at the counter, asleep.

The bus, its stomach full
with all the children eaten for breakfast,
belches, breaks and the driver shouts
as the plastic man crosses the road.

Sun in his eyes and sand in his sandals, he sits on the
deserted expanse of the beach

where tired time wears on.

The plastic man walks, the plastic man
bleeds dewy tears from the gathered clouds.
He sings, he listens,
and the world passes by in a hush of rain and slush.

The flux boards of a forgotten election saves the corner
shop
where he settles down for a cup of tea.
Snippets of tea-talk sticks to his teeth
as he sips the too-sweet-tea.

been four and a half months since it rained like this

we'll all suffer. see, they promised to set it
all right. see. all they do is make it worse. see.

He sees nothing in the rain. He hears
nothing but the rain and he thinks
nothing but about himself.

He wanders and time wears on

to the evening. He is dry and thirsty
like there was no rain that fell.

Cool air and murmur spills on to the streets
from the corner pub
where the yellow light suits his complexion.

The plastic man settles on to the plastic chair
in the plastic corner of this world.

Time wears on and drinks a pint or two.



Aswin Vijayan is currently completing an MA in Poetry from Seamus Heaney Centre at Queens University, Belfast. His poems have been published in Coldnoon, The Brown Critique, and The Sunflower Collective among others. Few of his poems are forthcoming in Issue Six of the Belfast-based literary magazine The Tangerine.

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