

One evening at the lakeside

A holiday can be extremely monotonous if you have nowhere to go. All thanks to my parents and their busy work schedule, I could not go anywhere this time. I was letting out deep sighs as I had to remain confined within the four walls of my room.

It had been raining that day since morning. Towards evening, the rain ceased for a while. I thought I would avail of the opportunity and go to the lakeside. Being at a stone throw distance from my house, my parents did not put up a major resistance and they somehow convinced my opportunity.

At quarter past six we went there, it was already dark. There were not many visitors as it had been raining at regular intervals throughout the day. The street lamps were lit up, only a very few were operational trying their level best to throw some light upon the otherwise dark surrounding. Some of the street lamps had ceased to glow probably because of the continual showers.

My brother and I sat next to each other on a bench overlooking the lake, while our parents went for a walk along the lake. The beauty during night time in the lakeside was mesmerizing. The lake was still with light waves, it had a slight mist as if in the epic tales, the crickets were chittering followed by the winds that swayed the grasses and the silence that occurred the whole area. Anyways we busied ourselves playing a game of pebbles. We challenged each other to see whose pebbles reach the farthest in the water. On realizing that I could easily defeat him in the challenge, my brother made excuses of an aching arm. Anyhow after a while he started gathering pebbles with fresh enthusiasm. It so happened that a certain pebble of mine lost direction and got diverted towards a tree which had a great hollow at its trunk. It was a bare tree and it was almost to the verge of falling down. It gave me a scary feeling so I purposely remove my eyes off it; and concentrated in my pebble game.

Once again the two of us started playing with fresh enthusiasm. At one point of time I noticed the pebbles of my palm were exhausted. Thinking that my brother was around and I extended my palm requesting him to refill it with fresh supply of pebbles. In spite of repeated request when I did not get any response from his side I turned back. To my utter surprise he was nowhere around. I wondered where he could be. Abruptly I had a feeling that I was all alone. I felt that nobody was there. In the park, beside the fountain... anywhere, I can't see anyone.

'Rihan! Papa! Mamma!' no matter how much I shouted their name there was no sign

of them.

I helplessly sat at a nearby bench. Where would they go without informing me? The mist that had surrounded the lake previously was now slowly coming to the shores. Now I checked the time. It was 7:00 at the night. The moon started showing its appearance. Suddenly I felt the presence of someone. Someone who was breathing very hard. Someone who was sitting right beside me.

I turned my eyes very fast and looked at my left side and I saw a lady sitting right beside me. She was dressed in a white saree and her face was hidden with a white shawl. I approached her and asked, 'Aunty have you seen a little boy over here with pebbles in his hand?', on getting no response from her I repeated my question. A little annoyed at her strange silence I removed the covering of her face and left dumb struck. She did not have a human face like ours instead had a hollow of the tree trunk. The face actually was same as that of the real tree. I quickly withdrew myself and was about to move away. The lady took out some pebbles from the wraps of her shawl and extended her hands towards me and said:

'Do you need some pebbles my son?' she said in a cold and gruff voice. What I saw when I looked towards her palm, was a hand, made of mere bones which were devoid of any flesh what so ever. It was a skeleton palm holding few pebbles in it. I lost my consciousness instantly.

When I regain my senses I found myself lying underneath the haunting hollow of the tree trunk with my parents bending over me. My brother asked, 'Where have you vanished suddenly?' I could not answer their question because I knew that none of them would approve of it. They would dismiss my word as a made up story. So I decided not to share my experience with them. I only told them that I must have felt tired and gone off to sleep underneath the hollow of the tree trunk.

Even today I keep wondering was it just a nightmare or was it reality which I witnessed?

~Antareep Sinha