



I must tell you about the birds.  
The paper birds made by my boy in three colours.  
Half a dozen of them hung asymmetrically  
through a circular cardboard disc,  
cut out of a box,  
something or the other had come home in.

A beak is made by bunching out a triangle,  
and wings, perpetually spread, by twisting out two more.  
The black crayon with which he has given them identity  
makes me bite my lower lip.  
Their eyes stand out, kohl-lined as it were.  
I've seen him give them a mere nudge  
as if he felt the weight of all that hanging.

I could picture them perched on that tree  
at the cemetery facing the sea  
with all its roots jutting out from the ground  
and branches heaving upwards, as if in supplication.  
Like a young girl lifting the hem of her skirt  
and waiting for the onrush of waves. Her face already ruffled.  
Remember? You had said their leaves were miniature feathers  
on a birdling learning to open its wings.  
You then pulled me down to that mossy patch underneath.

Was that before you showed me  
how the poor who can't afford marble  
beautify graves of their dead with pictures  
stuck on cardboard, hedged within gilt frames

that imitate cornice work on prettier tombs with winged things? I  
remember thinking that they would hold on  
until it rained.

When the gap between words became too much  
you started comparing our feet,  
and topped it with some tale  
about so many severed human feet  
that had washed over at some beach in the west,  
some place so distant that you would  
mouth these names twice to get their shapes right.  
I have forgotten anyhow.

On certain nights, when bird chatter would swell  
and slowly claim the house, a two fingered branch  
would feel up the window's limbs  
and leave some flattened paper floating limp on strings  
my boy had there patiently hung.



**Priya** has a complicated relationship with the academia. She likes collecting random information which may have no real value in the scheme of things and has, what might seem like, an odd fascination for ruins, anachronisms or things which are out of place. She fancies her aimless ambling in the city of Bangalore where she lives and her shameless interest in other people's lives make her a closet commentator on life. While not lost in such fancies, she is supposed to be writing her first book.



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