

*Waiting
in
Blues*
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CHAPTER ONE

“Good afternoon, I am Priyanka Seshadri, East Asian Studies, Delhi”

The girl in light blue kameez and white salwar was hardly thirty years old.

“Hallo, I am C.R. Ramulu from Indian School of Sociology, Chennai”

“Good afternoon, Nasreen, Centre for Folk Culture, Hyderabad”

“Namaste, Aveer Veerkar, Environmental Studies, Pune”

I turned to see the person with a rhythmic name. A tall young man with beards. The intelligent eyes were emitting aspirations. The fellows welcomed the new entrants with applaud.

In the coffee break, Aveer came to me. “Hallo, are you from Calcutta ?”

“Do you know me ?”, I was quite surprised.

He looked at my ID Card, “Professor Gomes told me you are here. We are good friends in Pune”

"Oh, you know Professor Gomes ! How is he ? We often exchange mails ! But he did not reply my last mail !"

"He is fine. Very busy with his studies on Ooralis tribes. He spends considerable time in the Western Ghats"

"He is a nice man and a formidable scholar. We met in a seminar five years back. It's really nice of him, he kept contact"

"He admires you. He is fascinated with your present sphere of studies ! I know you are working on the changing social background of the Indian Bureaucracy"

"It's his affection for me ! My work is nothing mentionable"

"What is your plan this evening ?"

"Nothing as such"

"Can we go to the market ? I need to purchase a few things"

"Why not ! You can place requisition for vehicle to the Administrative Officer. Nominal charge"

"Okay, meet you at six"

I came out of my cottage. The morning view from the Graham's Institute of Research and Development was always inexplicable. I not only saw; I smelled, I drank, I bathe. The large canvas held the crimson strokes of an unknown brush on the eastern sky. I took a deep breath. Other cottages were still in their mid nights.

"Good morning !"

Aveer was in his jogger's outfit. He smiled and said, "Let's start".

I liked his spirit. We slowly jogged through the pines and birches. The sun was already above the eastern hills. I was feeling tired.

"Aveer, let us stop. I am not as young as you are !"

He smiled, "Not young ? You !"

“My post-graduation is over fourteen years back !”

“Impossible !”

“But the truth remains !”, I smiled.

We were walking through a trail covered with lush green pines. Aveer proposed, “Can we have coffee?”

“The pines are yet to open the shop !”

“Why wait for them ! Let us move to the shop just one kilometer down”

“The canteen manager is waiting for you with coffee in the kitchen. Just half a kilometer up !”

The rains for the last three days abruptly brought down the temperature seven degrees below the normal. I got cold and fever. The doctor of the institute suggested three days’ rest. I had no option but to keep myself confined within the cottage. The idle hours hailed anxieties for Edith. Sophia was caring and I was sure that she would take proper care in my absence. However, the reasoning had little effect as usual. I took my cell phone.

“Sophia here !”

“How are you Sophia ?”

“Edie is fine. She is now sleeping. Rex is now fine, he had a little sore on his neck, doctor gave an ointment. The plants in the plant boxes and on your windows are fine, I water them everyday”

“Okay, okay but how are you ?”

“If they are fine, I am also fine to keep them fine”

“Okay dear Sophia. Tell Edith to call me later. Bye, take care”
I disconnected the phone. It was already dark outside. I was trying to get rid of my idleness to go to the switchboard. Suddenly, the doorbell rang.

“Who is that”

"Aveer ! May I come in ?"

"Oh sure ! The door is open. Please come"

I hurriedly switched on the light. Aveer came inside.

"I heard that you had a fever"

"I am still having it"

"Oh ! I am sorry, you are taking rest !" Aveer was about to leave. He looked back, "See you tomorrow"

"I am taking rest for forty-eight hours. It's better to chat with you"

"You could have call me"

"I thought you might be busy with your studies"

Aveer sat on the sofa. He took the copy of 'I am sorry : Indian Bureaucracy at Crossroads' from the centre table. Turned over the pages and said, "Your present domain of study is very interesting. Which period you select to start your discussion ?"

"I need to know the changing demand of the government from the civil servants. I started with a plan but in course of my study, I felt curious to know the ancestors of today's Civil Servants, I mean the King's Officers. This would help me to know their changing role in the changing systems of governance. I feel this has a considerable impact on their social background. So, I started from 313 B.C. the Mauryan period"

"O really ? Very interesting ! You need to study a lot !", Aveer said.

"What is your present subject of study ?"

"Migration of population as a result of climatic changes"

"I feel it's really relevant when the whole world is experiencing a drastic climatic change"

"It's a fearful reality. The impact of rise in the sea level from global warming could be catastrophic for the developing

countries. The sudden influx of population in one area may result in xenophobic demonstrations”

We discussed for another hour. I liked Aveer's clear conception on various socio-economic aspects.

The cloudless sky offered a starry night. Little spots of lights on the distant hills were adding to the glory. I was absorbed, I was sad. The gloomy mind was again a victim of the unavoidable depression. I came inside the cottage. I took my laptop and opened the mailbox. It was not opened for two days. I found seven new mails. Two were from Nadeem. He wrote, “I have not received any reply for two days. Neither had I found you online! Are you well? In the last mail, I sent some queries. You have not yet answered. Waiting”

I felt a little embarrassed. True, I did not answer him. I was hesitant. How to tell him the story? I was never an extrovert. To write about self was not easy for me. I opened the other mail sent by him. He shared his experience after reading ‘The Magic Mountain’ by Thomas Mann. He wrote, “I am overwhelmed to see the encyclopedic survey of the ideas and debates associated with modernity. You will gradually enter a sanatorium of complex philosophical ideas. The novel reaches the ‘Mountain’ of philosophical height with the lines ‘What (Hans) came to understand is that one must go through the deep experience of sickness and death to arrive at a higher sanity and health’. The discussions with and between the characters introduced a wide spectrum of competing ideologies and the novel became a philosophical soiree. You will find the skeptical insights of Nietzsche concerning modern humanity. The novel proceeds towards a mature Castrop, confident by understanding self but the ‘Magic’ led the reader to a cynical end leaving Castrop bereft of real