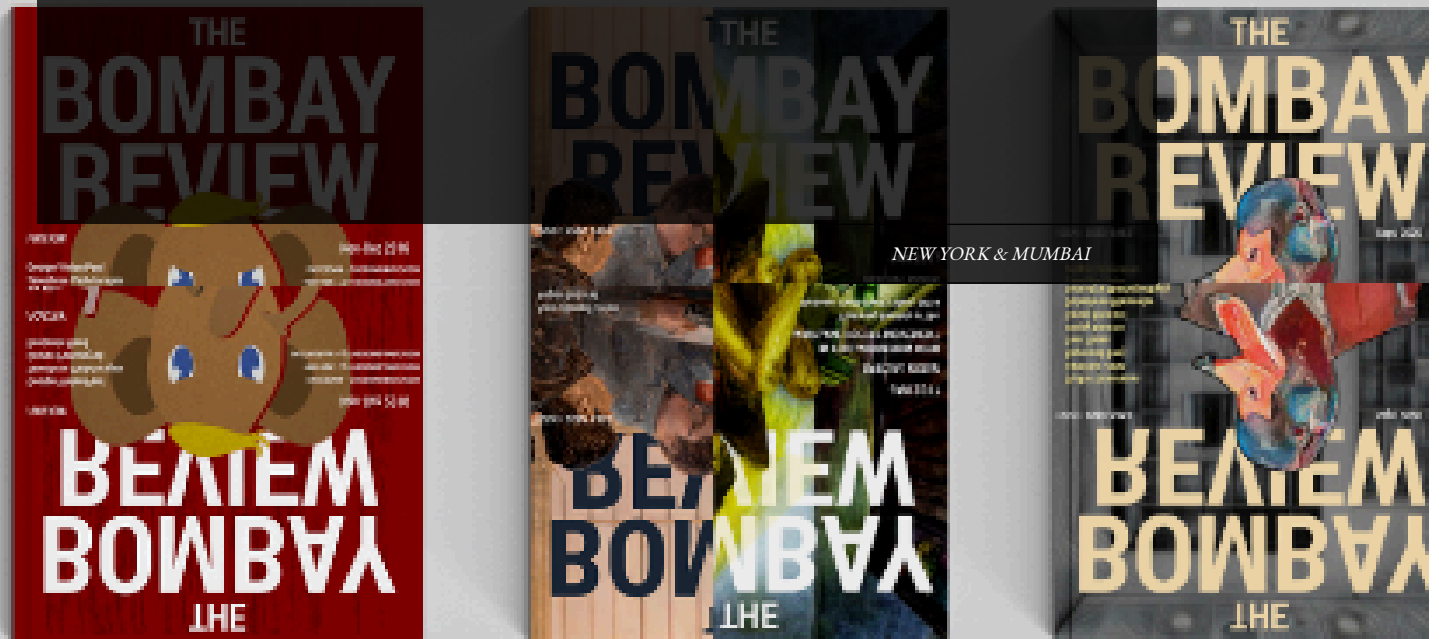
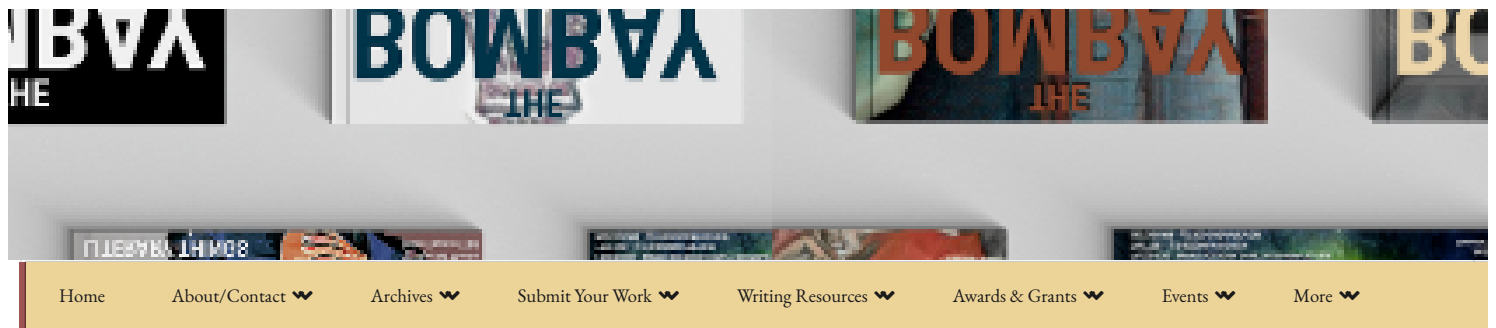




THE BOMBAY REVIEW

South Asia's Biggest Literary Magazine | Estd. 2014





Iranian Edition (Vol II) | Fiction by Ezzat Goushegir | Issue 40 (2021)

ELIZABETH

Elizabeth entered Maral's house, alone. Without Tom.

The party was on in full swing. Twenty ebullient college students were dancing and drinking away their boredom. The living room could easily have held more partiers, and there was a lot of room for the variety of drinks and foods—pizza as well as Persian, Arabic and Mexican food.

“Elizabeth, you made it!” said Maral. “Good to see you. So, where is your boyfriend?”

“My boyfriend?” asked Elizabeth, blushing.

“Yeah. Tom!”

“Oh... Tom is just a friend. A good friend.”

Elizabeth anticipated that everyone would ask her the same question. It didn't matter to her. Tom was her soulmate. A man of substance. A student of modern philosophy.

Fouad had been watching Elizabeth since she entered the house, captivated by her straight, long blonde hair, soft pink lips, round breasts filling a thin bra as seen through her white blouse. He had been plotting all day to approach her at Maral's party and possibly get her drunk to become at ease with him. His wife and children had traveled to another

state for two months for summer vacation, and now Fouad was alone. A few strands of grey hair had crept into his coarse black hair, which he himself had trimmed before coming to the party.

Elizabeth looked around and felt a little uneasy... a little strange..., her pale white face flushed. Maral was her high school friend. An Iranian immigrant girl with long dark hair, twinkling expressive eyes, and enormous talent in languages, history and women studies. Elizabeth also knew Peggy and had seen Fouad here and there several times. Their short meetings were limited to ordinary greetings and clichéd conversations. The other faces were new to her. She may have seen them on campus, though. Elizabeth's primary interests were poetry, books, and solitude, musing about the essence of things surrounding her. And, her occasional conversation with Tom over a cup of coffee.

Fouad had mischievously monitored Elizabeth since her arrival. He didn't want to think about his age, a forty-two-year-old man among the cheerful guests in their twenties. He didn't want his Arabness to make him feel a hundred times stranger and more outlandish. Self-consciously, he drank a few sips of Scotch.

At the bar, he poured some Scotch in another glass with some ice and walked towards Elizabeth.

"Elizabeth, how nice to see you again," said Fouad. "Maral told me you would be here tonight."

Fouad offered the glass to Elizabeth: "Scotch with ice?"

Elizabeth blushed and was embarrassed by the offer, but it was a party after all. Fouad quickly recognized her timidity and bashful smile.

"Uh, sure... I'm sorry, I forgot your name..."

"Oh... I'm Fouad. I teach in the Department of English Language and Literature. I see you sometimes at the department's poetry events."

Elizabeth took the glass.

Fouad, who was writing his doctoral dissertation on *The Canterbury Tales* gleefully began to talk about Chaucer. As usual, he couldn't contain his enthusiasm which he assumed others shared as well. He soon turned the conversation to the Black Plague and delicately to the subject of Theater of the Absurd, Samuel Beckett and the problem of human communication in the new world. For a second, however, Fouad paused, looked at Elizabeth and her glass, before continuing to talk about the essence of isolation, anxiety and alienation.

Elizabeth sipped her drink nervously while listening to Fouad's words. In fact, she swallowed her scotch without enjoying it.

The sound of ice cubes clicking against the glass interrupted Fouad's words. He chuckled and stretched his hand to take the empty glass which also made Elizabeth laugh, thinking how fast she'd downed her drink. Fouad's point of view in explaining the essence of the alienation and tension that humans go through living in an estranged world and their endless striving to find meaning had become inexplicably attractive to her. She relaxed a bit.

"I am going to refill the glass." Fouad said and walked to the bar.

Elizabeth said nothing. She looked around. Now, she could hear the music, interspersed with occasional loud laughter. She noticed shining eyes in the streaks of candles and lampshades, arms holding arms and bodies entangled.

"What a different night!" she whispered.

Fouad returned with another full glass.

“I want to get you drunk tonight!” he said, handing another glass of Scotch to Elizabeth. Elizabeth took it. She was feeling a little warm.

“Am I really getting drunk?” she asked herself.

Unlike most other students, she didn't usually go to cocktail parties to experience nights of fun. Typically, she would attend more private parties accompanied by Tom and a few others, and she usually had no more than two glasses of red wine. She often did not even finish the second glass.

Maral's living room was bursting with people. The liquor was strong. She drank it quickly. She felt that she was completely conscious and alert, and nothing had changed in her, except that her anxiety and embarrassment had diminished. She felt alive, cheerful, and flourishing, happy that she had gone out for the night. Her mood had changed and her daily routine was completely forgotten. The sound of the music aroused passion, desire, and jollity in her. Now she focused on the melodies, the arrangement of the words spoken by the guests, which resembled a pearl necklace, and discovered each word's new shape, sound and meaning. The music approached its ecstatic climax, when Peggy and John, Melissa and Peter started dancing. A gentle dance with a repetitive rhythm. A kind of shaking of the arms and legs like soft aerobic movements.

Fouad thought that as Elizabeth was now more at ease with him, he could excite her curiosity in her by sharing some of his family stories, ethnicity, and philosophy of life.

“I have two sons,” he said quickly and abruptly. “Did you know that?”

“No!” Elizabeth said, her eyes were fixed on the dancers, as her whole mind revolved around the lyrics and music.

“I miss my older son so badly!”

“How so?” asked Elizabeth. “Doesn't your son live with you?”

“He does! But at the moment, he's traveling with my wife and younger son to Rhode Island to visit my wife's family. For summer vacation.”

“Oh...”

“My mother had always said that parents are slaves to their oldest child. And the children are enslaved by their parents... Now I know why she said that!”

“How come?” Elizabeth was puzzled. “A child is a child. Parents shouldn't discriminate among them!”

Fouad paused for a moment. And exactly at the same time, Arabic music was played at a fast pace. Hani, a Palestinian student, raised the volume of the music, held his girlfriend Becky's hand, and, with a passionate turn, drew her to the dance floor. The rhythm of Hani's feet on the thin carpet of the room, the vibrating muscles of his thighs and arms, hot forehead, hair drenched in sweat, electrifying black eyes, long eyebrows, and wet lips, suddenly stopped Elizabeth in her tracks, enchanted, seduced, and mesmerized by his fiery movements.

Elizabeth's body warmed up, palms covered with sweat. She thought: “It's a pure erotic scene!”

Saturated with desire, she imagined herself slipping into this strange man's arms, brown and sweaty, as he spun Elizabeth around and they turned like a merry-go-round until they fell, kissing, touching and embracing wildly... bare skins... white and brown, entangled like two snakes... and it didn't matter if Tom saw her naked on the thin carpet, in the arms of this strange man, reaching the peak of an unimaginable journey.

"Elizabeth?"

"Tom?"

No, it wasn't Tom calling her. She heard her own voice. An inner voice. A dialogue that was not heard.

"Tom... you only kissed my lips once. Cold. very cold. Then it was all over. We just stayed friends. What attracts you? What's your sexual orientation? You never explained to me what you are... a celibate? Anything else? You never go to bed with anyone."

"What did you say?" asked Fouad.

"I didn't say anything!"

"Oh!"

"This man... is he Lebanese, like you?"

"Hani? Oh, no... he is Palestinian. And I'm not Lebanese!"

"Oh."

As Fouad tried to get closer to Elizabeth, she slipped away like a fish. Fouad's eyes were wild. He stared at her face, gazing into her eyes, nose, lips, cheekbones... teeth.

"Is this a form of communication in the Middle East?" Elizabeth thought. Feeling shockingly disgusted, she stepped back further.

Fouad pulled back, too. "You know, Elizabeth! I am an emotional man."

"Sorry. I couldn't hear you!" Elizabeth said in an irritated tone.

"Oh, sorry... I said I'm an emotional man! I grew up with my mother and sisters."

"Right."

"My father had three other wives and a flock of children!"

"Four women?"

"Yeah. My father couldn't recognize me among all his other little children."

Hani's dance was over. Everyone cheered, whistled, gyrating to the rhythm of the next song. As the whistles faded, Hani sat down on a stool and wiped the sweat from his face with his white-and-black Palestinian linen scarf. Becky jumped into his arms and kissed his lips. They both went to the kitchen. Elizabeth could no longer see Hani from the living room.

This time Fouad, with his understanding of the feminist perspective, tried to arouse Elizabeth's curiosity to the strange world of nomadic Arab women. He thought all female students were interested in the mysterious and exotic life of Middle Eastern women who lived far beyond their own sheltered lives. Elizabeth, however, was staring at the kitchen door, hoping to see a glimpse of Hani.

In the kitchen, half dark, with candles lit, Maral handed a few bottles of beer to Hani and Becky, as from time to time, like Virginia Woolf's Mrs. Dalloway, she nodded to her other guests. All around the room, eyes sparkled with joy. Satisfied, she then sipped her white wine.

Elizabeth looked at Fouad. A look which confused him. "Was it in appreciation for his sharing memories or was it something else?" he wondered.

"You know, my father didn't know me at all," said Fouad. "On my sixteenth birthday, for the first time, I dared to approach him while he was playing cards with his friends. I shouted: 'Father!' The game paused. I said: 'I am independent now!' 'So what?' He said indifferently, without raising his head or looking at me. I said again: 'I am sixteen years old today. I am becoming independent!' He said: 'Well, go... go away' and then continued playing cards."

Astonished, Elizabeth looked at Fouad.

"I ran and ran all the way to our house, to the closet, and cried all day," Fouad continued.

Staring at Fouad's lips, Elizabeth placed the empty glass on the table. Fouad paused.

"What happened next?" asked Elizabeth.

"Then I went about my life. That was my only relationship with my father!"

Something shuddered in Elizabeth's heart. She was touched. Yet, she wondered why she had been standing in this corner of the room all night, listening to Fouad as he talked while drinking, or explained what eggplant and okra were while shoveling Middle Eastern food into her mouth?

"I need to go to the bathroom," she apologized.

Complex feelings swirled in her mind. Hani had captured her attention while she had been with Fouad. And she felt Tom looking at her from the distance.

In the bathroom, she looked at her face in the mirror, as though it were the first time seeing it. She became aware of her radiant blue eyes and the glow sparking from them like a rippling stream of electricity. Why did she never stare into her own eyes? She swallowed her saliva. It tasted of eggplant and okra and some unknown herbs or spices, food that was probably cooked by Fouad or maybe Hani. In her head, four women were eating together in a dusty little house in a desert, with a bunch of little skinny children buzzing around them like bees. Inconsistent, incongruous images she had seen in movies and magazines. Now one of these bees was standing in front of her.

She looked at her watch. It was one fifty in the morning. How the night had swept past in rapturous moments. It was as if, like Ulysses, Elizabeth had gone to a land of wonders, a journey into a world of dance and music and passion and laughter and eggplant and okra and raucous sounds. And she had flirted with Hani, a stranger, made love with him on a thin carpet, and had reached a climax she had never experienced. At the ecstatic moment of her climax, another man gently dropped grapes into her mouth with the rhythm of harp strings. And now, a woman in a man's harem, like in the movies, so like the propaganda about Middle Eastern men, a man with maniacal eyes enters carrying a dagger in

one hand, while with another hand squeezes the woman's throat! Exactly like in the movies where with a severe blow, a woman's head is cut off. Decapitation in one strike!

"You, stupid, naïve, white racist girl!! Why do you think like white colonialists who treated their slaves horribly? Portraying them with horrific images?" Elizabeth thought to herself.

When she opened the bathroom door, Hani was standing there. Elizabeth was flustered, not knowing quite what to say. Quickly, she overcame her embarrassment as her body was warm and her mood tumultuous. She felt an enchanting drunkenness that she desired to last forever. Becky's hand was in Hani's. Hani looked at Elizabeth pleasantly and said: "We didn't want to leave the party without saying goodbye to you!"

Becky stroked Hani's arm and said, smiling, "Bye, Libby! It's good to meet you!" Elizabeth wondered in her mind, "Only my close friends and siblings call me Libby."

"Goodbye, Elizabeth." Hani said as he kissed Elizabeth on her cheeks.

"Goodnight!" said Elizabeth. She added nothing else.

Elizabeth thought, "What captivating eyes! Pitch black, like an unknown night!"

She followed their shadows until they disappeared. As they left, Becky turned her head and stared into Elizabeth's eyes. Elizabeth did not know how to interpret her gaze. She looked at her watch and suddenly came to her senses. Anxiously, in a Cinderella-like manner, she searched through her purse as Fouad joined her.

"It's late, I need to call for a taxi."

"I'll take you home!" Fouad said quickly.

"Thank you. But..."

"Your house is not very far from here!"

Elizabeth wondered how he knew her home address. It was late, she had lost track of time, and with her fear of darkness, midnight predators and taxi drivers.

Fouad opened the car door for her. Elizabeth got in and sat down. The car smelled of pine wood car freshener, from a sponge deodorant dangling from the mirror. Fouad started the engine.

"Can you watch for red lights, please?" said Fouad.

"Why?" Perplexed, Elizabeth laughed.

"Oh, as you see I'm drunk. I don't want to miss the red lights."

"Sure!"

"You know, once I was driving drunk, the police stopped my car and asked for my ID card. I said, 'My card is not with me!' 'I have to see who you are,' he said. 'It's obvious! جميل شكلي و القدي! أنا ديك من الهندي، جميل شكلي و القدي! Ana Dicka menal Arabiah. Jamilol shaklo val ghaddi!'"

Fouad started laughing out loud. Elizabeth understood the meaning of neither his nor his laughter. But she looked at him gently and laughed out.

“Maral once read me a rhyming poem in Arabic that her older sister had to memorize for her Arabic class in high school. The poem began: ‘Ana Dicka Men Al-Hindi’. It means I am a rooster from India!”

He cracked up. “Yeah, I’m a ‘cock.’ A ‘rooster’ but not from India!”

Whenever Elizabeth heard the word poetry, she would suddenly become curious, filled with freshness and vitality. It was as if every word, rhythm, image, tone, and idea brought her to a new world of creation, to a new language of poetry and poetic expression. Aspired to write poems in the style of Sylvia Plath and toss the world differently, she wanted to write and live like Sylvia Plath. Despite trying to become completely Sylvia Plath, she remained different, thanks to her in one major way: she lacked her courage.

“You know, poetry to me is purity,” Fouad’s voice changed. “Like a dewdrop on a morning flower!”

“What do you mean?” Asked Elizabeth.

“Poetry teaches us how to see... how to live... and... embraces our vulnerabilities!”

“Sure!”

“You know, I’m uncomfortable with some of my American colleagues’ superficial social interactions.”

“I do not understand what you mean!”

“You know, I always greet everyone with my Eastern habits, even if no one acknowledges my presence!”

“I still do not know what you’re trying to say!”

“One of my co-workers, a middle-aged man who teaches in the English department, always looks at me as if I don’t exist. I’m invisible to him. When I greet him, he turns his back as if he has not seen me at all! It hurts!”

“Yes, sure...”

“We have been introduced to each other several times. I greet him each time I see him in the Department. And he ignores me. He is a professor like me, so how could he say that he doesn’t know me?”

“I honestly don’t know. It takes all kinds.”

“But don’t you think those who ignore specific people are acting superior to certain groups of people?”

“Sure, I think so...”

“It’s called the characteristics of imperialists!”

“I’m sorry what?”

“The specificity of power... the imperialists’ traits!”

Elizabeth didn't understand the meaning of "imperialism." Suddenly she felt a sense of absolute freedom and liberation, even though her national pride was being crushed. She couldn't find a reason for this sudden change. It was the first time she had been talking to a Middle Eastern man and getting a ride from him. In her small town of one thousand people, until the age of seventeen or eighteen, she had never seen a man with brown eyes or brown hair. In her church everyone had blue eyes and blonde hair. Now she was sitting in the car of a stranger with shiny black eyes and rough dark hair, who stood by her throughout the party and looked at her eagerly.

Elizabeth realized that Fouad's tone turned softer and calmer with an attractive vibration in the utterance of each word.

Fouad talked constantly.

"You know, Elizabeth, I'm an emotional, passionate man. And I always get in trouble because of my feelings." Fouad cleared his throat and swallowed his saliva. "You know, sometimes I cry."

He held Elizabeth's hands and kissed them softly. Elizabeth noticed that Fouad stopped at every red light.

"Is it okay if I touch your hands?" Fouad said softly.

Elizabeth said nothing.

"Won't you get upset if I kiss your hands?"

Elizabeth laughed with a contradictory feeling.

"You already kissed my hand!"

As they approached Elizabeth's house, Fouad turned onto a side street.

"You had to go straight!" Said Elizabeth.

"I wanted to make the journey longer! Is it okay?" Said Fouad.

"No!" Said Elizabeth.

She remembered Hani's striking eyes. Tom's calm staring too. She had bizarrely become curious. Fouad opened a pack of chewing gum and put one in his mouth. He didn't offer one to Elizabeth. Maybe he had forgotten! After a moment of silence, he kissed Elizabeth's fingers again. Elizabeth was cold like a piece of ice.

The car stopped at the door of Elizabeth's house.

"May I come in and have a glass of water?" Asked Fouad.

"Sure... just for a glass of water!" Said Elizabeth.

"Are you throwing me out before I even come inside?" Fouad said with a giggle.

Elizabeth laughed too. She was somewhat annoyed by the meaninglessness of her own laughter and their absurd and naive conversation sitting in the car. She thought that this married man with two children was acting like a fifteen-year-old boy, a Peter Pan holding the door for her as she stepped out of the car. She curiously observed him. She took

her key and opened the door. Fouad entered. He looked around. Elizabeth's living room was small and simple, with a cream-colored sofa, a TV on a brown table, a dining table with two chairs and a small bookshelf.

"We better not speak loudly," said Elizabeth. "I don't want Mary to wake up."

"Who is Mary?"

"My roommate."

Elizabeth went to the kitchen and returned with a glass of water. Fouad was sitting on the sofa looking at the books. She handed him the glass. He took a sip of water.

"Can you please sit next to me?" asked Fouad.

Elizabeth sat down next to him. Fouad started stroking her hair.

"What soft hair!" He breathed into her hair.

"How fragrant! Like spring wildflowers in the wide, green plains."

The curtains were open. Elizabeth got up and closed them, then returned to sit next to him. He touched her face and breathed deeply into her hair. "The smell of chamomile and wildflowers, the smell of spring daffodils."

Fouad quickly embraced Elizabeth and said: "I love you Elizabeth, I really love you! With my whole heart."

Elizabeth laughed and pulled herself away from him.

"You're silly! Don't say that!"

She stood up and turned off one of the two lamps.

"Sit next to me, Elizabeth!" said Fouad with a softer voice.

Elizabeth sat next to him.

"Is it ok with you if..." Fouad asked.

He closed in on Elizabeth and touched her soft skin tenderly. His palms were rough.

"Is it okay that... I am doing this?" He slid his fingers down. Glided them and stopped.

"If there was a problem, I wouldn't allow you from the beginning..."

Elizabeth was helpless in her reactions and words. She was perplexed why she allowed a man who had been standing next to her all night, putting exotic food in her mouth, and pouring hard liquor in her glass, to be touching her body. Was it to satisfy her curiosity or a burning desire for intimacy? Or an illusionary dream for love?

She said to herself, "I am a twenty-four-year-old! How lonely I am! Once, four or five years ago, a young man who I went to a high school prom with clumsily told me 'I love you' but then our relationship ended when he went to Boston University to study chemical engineering."

In Maral's bathroom, staring at her face, she had discovered another Elizabeth for the first time. An Elizabeth with sparkling blue eyes, pinkish red lips with soft, delicate skin. With thin hair, blonde and shiny and soft... why should she be that lonely?

Fouad turned off the other lamp. A faint light shone through the curtains.

Fouad touched Elizabeth's round, firm breasts, then moved his fingers down to her thighs and lingered there... young and strong thighs, formed from living in wide fields, in nature... thighs that became fit on her father's farm, working in corn, soybean and pea fields, thighs that were shaped by running after playful calves and hardworking, robust horses.

Elizabeth remembered that before he had brought the second glass of Scotch to Elizabeth, Fouad had told her: "You are a very sensitive soul. A girl every man desires the most!" Elizabeth had laughed and thought that he would say the same thing to many women.

Fouad moved his fingers between her legs. Elizabeth cried: "No..."

"Why?" asked Fouad.

"I do not want to!"

"Why?"

Elizabeth said nothing.

"You are honest and sincere! A woman of truth," said Fouad. "Your innocence has attracted me."

Fouad's coarse hair, rough hands, and the scent of his cheap cologne brought Elizabeth to strange, complex, and conflicting feelings. It was as if she had lived parts of these features, images, and smells, through reading the exotic stories or watching foreign movies. People and figures who seemed to have passed by her not so long ago when she once travelled to Chicago, and the wild men had ravished her with their savage eyes. It was as if she was forced, like a tortoise, to hide her whole body inside her own shell. When for the first time in her life, in Chicago, she saw real black skin, dark, curly hair, and thick lips, she said to herself: "No, no...I'm not dehumanizing shapes, colors, textures... No..."

"I love you Elizabeth!" said Fouad. "Believe me. It's true. I fell in love with you from the moment I saw you!"

"Drop it! Please. Don't talk," said Elizabeth.

Fouad was in another world.

"I have a question for you," said Elizabeth as she pulled herself away.

"Ask, please."

"If your wife wants to sleep with another man as free and comfortable as you seem to be, what would be your reaction?"

Fouad's fingers remained fixed on her thigh. He paused, startled and surprised.

"Of course! But, I... I don't encourage her to do so!"

There was silence between them.

Elizabeth stared into his eyes in the semi-dark room. Fouad turned his eyes away and took another sip of water. After a moment of silence, he said: "I do not hate my wife. There is nothing left between us! Nothing to connect us. I think... she ..."

Elizabeth was silent.

You know, I've been with many women."

"Why are you telling me this?"

"Nothing. Just saying."

"Ok."

"I was even in a ménage à trois..."

"Sorry?"

"...in a bed with two women."

"So what?"

"Nothing!"

"So?"

"Nothing. I'm confessing! The problem is, when you are a university professor, women throw themselves at you without you expecting them to!"

"Well, why are you telling me this?"

"Because I love you!"

"Don't talk about 'love' anymore. I do not want you to talk about love at all!"

"Why?"

"Because!"

"Because why?"

"Love is important to me."

"It's important to me, too!"

"But what you say is not love!"

"So, what is it then?"

"If a man loves a woman, she will sense it instinctively through his eyes and gestures."

“You are a complicated person!”

“Maybe...”

“You do not love me?”

“No!”

“Do you like me? Even a little?”

“It’s a different thing!”

“But I love you... very... very much.”

Fouad’s heart started beating. He kissed Elizabeth’s long neck feverishly. Her ears and her lips too. His breathing grew heavier and heavier. The scent of his cologne revolted Elizabeth and changed her mood. The scent took her to a small room with dirty, pale curtains in a deserted land where a woman sold her body to a man for a few dollars. She had seen the same scene in a theater, in the same city, in the theater department – a play by Eugene O’Neill? Anna Christie, perhaps? But why did she remember this scene at this particular moment, especially now?

Elizabeth’s body was getting colder by the minute. And Fouad’s body warmer.

“Touch me!” said Fouad.

Elizabeth was cold. She imagined herself lying on an old, dirty mattress, in the same small room in a poor neighborhood, with the smell of this cheap cologne surrounding her. Agitated and disturbed, she quickly withdrew from Fouad. Fouad closed in on her.

“Why don’t you touch me?” insisted Fouad.

Elizabeth felt deranged. She thought, “How horrible that a man would ask a woman in their first intimacy to satisfy his desires!”

“Enough! Stop it!” Elizabeth shouted.

Fouad was at the last moment, reaching his climax with Elisabeth’s repeating words “Stop it”, “Stop it”, “Stop it”!

Elizabeth quickly pulled away. She was irritated and distressed. Fouad fell on the floor. Elizabeth stood up, arranged her hair, face and clothes, and leaned on the wall.

“I think you were not ready!” said Fouad.

Elizabeth said nothing.

“I did not want it to be like this!” said Fouad.

Elizabeth said nothing.

“Can I drink some more water?”

“You can go to the kitchen and fill your own glass.”

Fouad put on his clothes.

“I really did not want it to end like this!” said Fouad.

Fouad drank some more water. The sound of his swallowing was loud and irritating.

Elizabeth opened the door of her house. The sky was clear and lighter.

“Please don’t hate me, Elizabeth. I’ll do whatever you want me to, just don’t hate me!”

In the garage next door, there was the sound of a car turning on. Fouad looked down silently in shame, then left for home. Elizabeth closed the door. Upstairs, Mary, Elizabeth’s roommate, opened her bedroom and went to the bathroom. Elizabeth leaned against the wall. She was nauseous. Walked slowly on the steps towards the stairs. She wanted to vomit. But Mary was in the bathroom, and the door was closed.

Elizabeth closed her eyes. She pitied herself and Fouad.

Ezzat Goushegir has published six books in Farsi, including four collections of short stories, a collection of two plays, and a book of poetry. Her plays in English have been staged internationally, published, and received awards including “Maryam’s Pregnancy” and “Behind the Curtain”, which won the Richard Maibaum and the Norman Felton awards respectively.

Her first play “Beginning of Bloom” was produced for Iranian National Television in 1976 and she has been writing both in English and Farsi since she immigrated to the U.S. Her plays have been translated into French, Arabic and Mandarin and produced by a variety of theater companies in the U.S., Europe, China and the Philippines. Among her many activities, she was a Fellow Writer in the Iowa City International Writing Program, a Writer-in-Residence at the University of Maryland, a co-director and dramaturge of a reading series at New Federal Theatre in New York. She is also a regular contributor to literary journals, and her writing has appeared in Persian publications around the world. Four volumes of her Memories in Diaspora will be published in 2022.

She currently teaches at DePaul University (SCPS) in Chicago.

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