

The Old Woman

There are all kinds of stories in the world. Some are about me. Actually, one was, or at least I think it was, but it was written by a young man, aquiline from head to toe. When he was in the company of those he knew well but didn't see, he cleaned out his nose with fingers that he washed intermittently so as to retain the smell of coffee and hashish.

The following that the nose said is true:

1. I live in an ancestral house. This week, though, I planned my departure, since yesterday someone mocked me and told me that I was a slow writer. I checked out homes I could not afford to buy on magicbricks.com and left a message on "Flats without Brokers— Delhi Chapter" on Facebook to let people know that I was looking for an apartment.
2. I am short, very short in this nation that has, post '85, started to birth not-less-than-6-feet-I-listen-to-the-blues-on-Saavn-therefore-cannot-be-racist-with-the-exception-of-being-so-towards-Muslims-and-non-vegetarians Brahmin men.
3. I find it a waste of time to go out. In this town, it is still possible to live out your entire life in your house as you listen to your maid talk about her problems, drink strained tea, listen to anxiety-alleviation music, watch a film a day, read a book a day, masturbate in the morning to get your blood pressure up, play with your dog, worry about being cheated out of money, agree that the raid on Kwaliti café was justified: girls and boys should not socialize in a café, and circle a white-chalk circle around the space you call "home" so that you/I can believe that the worst thing that will happen to us on any given day is an uncle washing his laundry out of turn, and not the fact that you/I don't have a voter ID despite trying twice, that meat is banned or that the fucking government is trying to herd us in the now-abandoned slaughterhouses.

The following is false:

1. I earn my own living. I just chew on money a little slower, buy cheaper glasses, don't drink imported whiskey, don't make friends with rich people

who eat organic and wear white, 100% cotton t-shirts and Citizens for Humanity jeans. I feel nothing when the writer tells me that Kharms went down one day to get cigarettes or some such thing and never returned. And part of me looks at him with contempt because yes, I was part of a group labelled by a non-member as “The Third World Mafia,” and for some time after, I walked around with a paisley-printed scarf around my head, having read Fanon who burned in me for some time. Now the words “Kharms” and “European Literature” remind me of the alienation of spirit I experienced at the hands of those who marvelled at Kharms’s absurdist sense of humour and his courage.

2. I am not young, not old. I might have wasted away those years back in the streets of some unspecified city that we both know is Ahmedabad, but that is my story to tell. And a reminder you shouldn’t forget: The creature that one keeps under close observation, due to the possibility of her being featured as a bewildered buffoon in one’s story, sees you too.