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## **Ebony Ruler,the Mill Smoke,Heart's Splinter**

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That shriek! How penetrable the siren is!It Pierces my heart.

First shriek!

Two shrieks are yet to come -the second will be louder than the first and the third louder still.

The Siren sounds of textile mill coming one after the other ring their loudest with these shrieks long columns of smoke trailing from high chimneys of these mills the air choke with smoke forming like a dense formless jumble leaving the sky shrouded in a dense haze.

I am sleeping on the roof top of this fourth floor building; here too the air is full of smoke, smoke of the mills surcharging in the air.

Coal smoke! Diesel smoke !petrol smoke.

I am afraid I will get choked .

I wonder how that Gujrati has sunk into deep sleep .Doesn't she get choked ?

This has become normal to her It will become normal to me after a time, after a time it will.

“Harish get up my boy! , Are'nt you going to school ?

oh! It's too early,yet, the mill has produced only one sound .”

This shriek I wish it would stop, the second will be louder and the third loudest of all.

Get up boy ! get up ,then you mess up every day in hurry ,yesterday you forgot to carry some of your books.

How low the walls of this roof top are ?Exchanging of conversation was good but the moment we get up from cots we find in quick side ways look roofs of neighbouring houses .

Now Harish will get up from bed (the wall is clipped smaller to his size) and will catch a sight of my face. I'll feign sleep.

Not that but I find myself naked . Sleeping on forked street .Why do I find myself naked ?.

It is not normal to me . It will become normal to me,after a time ,it will.

When I get up from sleep and throw my head around,I see that Madrasi girl is staring at me,indifferent to my gaze her eyes tape open steadily on me as if I am not me as if i am a clock and she is marking time through me or as if I am an Almanac and she is trying to figure out dates on me. .But why does she remind me of my childhood ebony ruler my dark ,slippery ,circular round and shining bright ruler.

What has become of that ruler?

How it pleased me to mark with that ruler! When I placed fingers around it would slid driving the sharp lines into the paper . Slippery ,dark ,Circular round just like this Madrasi girl .My dark ebony adorable ruler as adorable as that Madrasi girl. How it pleased me to mark with that ruler!

What if she smells that she seems to remind me of my childhood ebony ruler? If only she could imagine how dear that ruler was to me .

What became of that ruler? Why was'nt I reminded of that before-Lovely ebony ruler ruler just like this Madrasi girl. Slippery, shining, dark circular round.

Well,how fair complexioned the kashmiris are !

Silly ! What if he listens?

Poor fellow he is sleeping like a donkey even Israfil's trumpets cannot wake him up.

I have lost my sleep from the day I have been here I haven't slept my own sleep.I haven't slept like a donkey for long now.

What if I open my eyes -then- What then? Nothing certainly ,this time again this ebony ruler will look at me as if I am a clock and she is marking time through me or as if she has to figure out dates on a dirty soothy almanac.I will feel denuded sleeping on a forked street.

Harish get up boy ,you will get late, see the mill is ringing the second bell indicating time.

Second shriek!

The Third will be loudest- the seizure of shriek with a fit of trembling gradually deepens to a complaint of the heart-wave upon wave- should I cough?

More smoke has begun to come up Now it will creep with dusty encumbrances from buses .

Cigerate smoking causes cancer . Doesn't this smoke cause anything.

This smoke , this dust!

Coal smoke, Diesel smoke, Petrol smoke.

The Sky full of smoke !Ah this smoke will smother me –should I cough and force out all smoke- but what should I breath?

Smoke again.

I wonder how Harish has developed the knack to sleep? How that Gujrati woman is in sound sleep ?It has become normal to them, it will become to me too ,after a time it will.

But when will it become normal to me?when will I get used to it?

‘Paper,paper’

To hell with it ! who will get up to get the paper I can fill in spaces even from here .The American Blacks must have carried on with their protests. Some of them must have been shot , some injured by the whites.

But where did I leave that ebony ruler ,firm ,strong compact as the Blacks .

Dark ,slippery ,shining , circular round just like this Madrasi girl,marking scrolling dark lines on immaculate white sheets.

Who sanctified the white colour?

Well!What a fair complexion the kashmiris have!

Smoke sucks at my lungs I’ll be pale,dark as the surface of pan or ceiling of the kitchen plaster of oil-a tiny scrap putrid in grease, worthless,insignificant .

How unlike it is to the ebony ruler , as sky is to earth an invalid to a healthy person.

That ebony ruler, will she still look at me as if watching time on the clock or as if trying to figure out dates on Almanac.

Why is my mind going backwards ?Why are the flashes of my childhood ebony ruler coming to me today?

Again Turkish Saber jet planes must have bombed Siberia . It is said in war when a soldier is shot and faces mutilation, he pleads his companions to shoot him knowing nothing safer than death . If courageous enough he shoots himself.

Why don’t I get chiselled to a small scrap of a huge machine of this mill, how I want to be that tiny scrap, worthless and insignificant putrid in grease,when will it get normal to me I wonder when will I get used to it?

How I long for my own sleep, just one deep sleep.I haven't had such a sleep for long –just one deep sleep.

Thank God! the mill has announced the final bell , a shriek seeming even louder after silence filled the air with dusty smoke .Dusty grey arresting sky.