

## *Honeymoon (an excerpt)*

BY RASl

Moments later, she appears, wading softly through the ghostly light, all curves and glimmering skin and that pretty piled up hair, the heroine eyes, a quintessential mole piercing the side of her chin. She pours a whiskey with ice and joins us in our silent witnessing. The forest girl hands me the joint, and I decline, 'I quit.' The joint is passed to the girl with the hair. She says, 'so you don't live here.' There is a texture to her voice; in the mess of laughter and social breeze, I hadn't noticed the weight of it, the slight Arabic accent. 'I don't... neither of us do. We both live in the forest,' I say, gesturing to the forest girl.

'You live in a forest both of you?'

'Not the same forest, but in the forest,'

'Delhi is hectic then...'

'It's chill in a pool party. On a full moon night.'

'It's an ominous one, they've been saying...' the forest girl trails off to the moon.

'Should we howl then? Owwww,' the girl's howl is husky, low. Her body has come close to mine. It nudges me lightly, elbow, and shoulder, and hip.

So close, I am taken by her scent. Lemon and mint and some smoky, sexy body with the sharp, subtle hints characteristic of chemical perfume, it emanates from the jungle of her hair. It reminds me of sex, raw nights, drink, smoke, the city. Was it the arsenal of some lover from my past? I can't remember. I begin to feel immobilized by it, her scent, by her. I wonder if my paralysis is apparent, I wonder if it's as despicable as that of the girl with the fried hair. I attempt some yogic tension release, feeling out my body parts to make sure they're still with me, collecting my energies and letting them out through my pores, the miniscule muscles of the face, the fingers.

Underwater, our fingers touch. We both let it happen, touch like wires, a little electric buzz on contact. She moves first, from touch to entwine, to hook, to knot. Her hand small, two rings spread across, the hard ball of a gem against the hard of her knuckle. When she asks me something, I come up blank. Her smile is slight, she leans away to return the joint, and my hand travels over her skin, delicious and slippery and taut. The tiny creases at her waist when she twists away

from me, the flare of her, my fingers weave through the strings at her hip. She shivers against me. The forest girl appears not to notice, or not to care, as we both hold our breath, on contact.

The forest girl extinguishes her joint and slides into the water. She comes up wet, black hair a cloak around her shoulders, twiggy frame rising horizontal and buoyant. She floats away, and the girl and I are left alone together. Shielded by the wall of the bar, in our private conclave, we kiss. Half liquid half air, the surface of her stomach ripples, her inhale exhale against the flat of my hands.

There are too many things I will know about her later. That she is too young for me, that in the end she will irritate me, that the story is too familiar to me, tired and old, the story of youth, the fever of it, exhausting and incessant, infinitely dissatisfied. That she wants everything she sees, that she will move razor sharp to cut in, glittering, bewitching, that she romanticizes and then discards, that her carelessness is a fault, that she feels bad the moment after, existentially bad, that her guilt resolves into a shallow glaze.

Lips and teeth and breath clinking, her body quick pulsed and beating, sweat beading over her skin, her throat, the base of her skull in my fingers, fragile and small, the elastic knot in a bunch, begging for freedom, the indent of it an arrow down her chest, her breasts, her nipples, swelled and taut. Obscured and skewed, through the liquid prism, my fingers find her thighs, soft, the sea skin cover taut over her saturated lips. I dip down into the lukewarm womb and she feeds me, engorged and aflame, I move my fingers gently, and fill her. Her thighs shift and rub, her grip in my hair, my ears. I climb her body consuming, her belly, the rise of her tits, the hard edge of her clavicle. With my fingers, I touch and fill her, touch and fill her, touch and fill her.

Her hunger is artful, disarming, she gives me power by putting it in my hands, though we both know she's holding it all. This girl who arrived without swimwear to a pool party, hunted and dodging, chased across town for a fuck she gives me, this girl who rounded the corner to get it, I hold her up till she's ready to let go.