

The Rise of Hoja Asli

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The Key

The sky was thick with clouds. Colour was distorted in the grey light, the blue seemed to be green and the green seemed to be yellow. With the shift in colours, perspective was tilted. Nothing could be recognised perfectly anymore. People went about their business as mere bodies and they wore their faces only when someone managed to recognise them correctly. The world was a nameless, shapeless mass. There was neither any fixed idea of beauty nor any fixed address of personhood.

The shift of colour disfigured vision in unforeseen ways. Today we might think that colour and form are perceived as separate layers of the world but this is only because we have not experienced the fragmentation of that time, and we witness what seems to be a unity in form and colour.

In that world, fog was seen as a state of matter that could absorb other entities into itself. On the day that this story starts, there was fog all over. It covered the empty spaces and hovered above the bridges and the empty houses. It hung - still and motionless alongside the canopies of the dry trees.

The trees had dried in the season of carnage. Contrary to what the historians narrate, the season of carnage was not just stifling and bloody, but it was also intensely hot. Heat was generated in the moments of the unfolding of the carnage. The heat was such that the trees dried up. This heat was generated from the friction produced by the encounter of the violence and the silence. The frictional heat was immense. The event of the drying of the trees did not contain it, the surplus heat just leaked into the air, as it knew not what else to do.

This heat wave hit S as she was walking over the Pickaxe Bridge. From her fingers the key slipped off and fell into the water. She leaned over the side of the bridge and saw it falling into the water with a splash. This effectively locked her out from her house. She did not like being locked-out and she did not like to accidents. Accidents were exceptional and out of the way events which made her want to turn time back. But then that was impossible. Even if she could magically figure out how to do that, it would get complex. Would turning time back rewind time back just for her or would it take back the whole world to which she belonged? Was she an individual or was she a member of a landscape?

She walked round and round on the streets till she tired. It was night time then and all the shops were closed. Her feet as they tapped on the pavement made an erratic sound, she was not sure how fast or how slow she wanted to walk. She was going nowhere and she knew it.

She was walking around her block of apartments. She was wearing slippers, an old faded dress and an impatient will. She passed a garbage dump on her way. It stank. But she could hear a baby crying. She went and picked up the baby, and cleaned its body. It was a baby girl. As soon as the baby snuggled in comfortably in her arms, it growled at her. It was a human baby but it growled like she was a cub. Or maybe it was just pent up anger. How can so much anger accrue in such a short time?

The events which led to the infant retaining such potent anger can never be revealed. But in an encoded way, I can lead you to discover what happened on your own.

I will lead you to this moment of discovery in a dramatised way.

A boat was cruising in the canal. Which canal? The canal made from the ice melting from the himalayan passes. The ice melted

because of the heat of the infant's anger. So ferocious, so radiant was the anger that heat waves spread in the atmosphere as if the Sun itself had died and before dying had decided to expel a last desperate load of heat into the universe.

A man and a dog stood atop the boat that floated on the angry water. The man had a crude bomb in his hand. They passed a church and he hurled it. The church burst into flames and the dog barked passionately.

The church that had gone up in flames was the Church of High-resolution Prediction. Over the course of the last few centuries, this church had become the most important authority on the future. Everything was known before it happened. Prior-knowledge of everything existed. Manic depression ruled the roost. The minds of people had become grey and senile because they were underemployed and perpetually exhibiting a false form of surprise. There was nothing to look forward to and there was nothing to look back at. Circumstance had become a source of constant bad news because the delusion of free will had disappeared.

A boy stood pissing into the canal. The canal overflowed and the boy drowned in his own urine.

A massive funeral was planned for performing the last rites of the boy. Only one person besides the pall-bearers turned up for the ritual. This person did not even know the boy, he just came because his heart was filled with infinite grief and he offered condolence to the world every chance he got. These condolences were not empty but they were not sentimental either. If consciousness is singular, then the death of any conscious being is the death of everything. All deaths need to be mourned, all births need to be celebrated. There is no way for us to discriminate and demarcate. But if consciousness is not singular then we have mul-

tiple problems, one of which is our social situation being a nest for aliens from around the galaxy co-inhabiting together. Obviously the second option is not viable.

This person turned up to perform the last rites of a boy he did not know, a boy who expressed his anger so transparently that he himself got engulfed in it.

The canal eventually subsided. But it retained the scent of urine forever after. This scent was so strong that all the fish living in the canal died. The canal became a burial ground. When people went sailing in their boats, spending their leisurely weekends casting out their nets and lines for fish in the canal, they came back empty handed. No one caught any fish. Because all the fish was dead.

The boy's brother did come to the rescue though. He knew that his dead brother's urine was very acidic. He was the mirror opposite of his brother in every way. Even his urine was basic and not acidic at all. He came and urinated into the canal too and the effect of his brother's urine on the chemical properties of the water got nullified. The water was again a life-sustaining resource. Fish thrived again. People got something to do on their weekends again.

This guy had a secret agenda though. Although he was the mirror opposite of his dead brother, they also had a lot of similarities. They had the same relationship with the world. A relationship which was defined through angst. His dead brother attacked, but he entrapped. He wanted people to go out fishing in the supposedly neutral water, he wanted them to wade their hands and feet in the water and be immersed in the plastic beauty of the scene. And then he would suddenly seize control. The popular idea of neutrality is a cloak. Behind the cloak lurks a toxin which can affect the active area of the human mind in a fatal way. The toxin that neutrality hides kills desire. Neutrality is a machine. A ma-

chine can flip either way if a pattern for making a choice does not exist. This randomness reflects the tossing of a coin. The absence of culture and the cultivation of the neutral is a sure-shot way to diffuse sentient beings and render them as simple-minded dolls.

A two-lane bridge arched over the canal and on both the ends of the bridge stood a tower which cast a shadow onto the water. When neutrality unhinged the minds of people, they jumped into the water in troves. Splashing about excitedly, it seemed like they were celebrating their own undoing. Inside each witness, a critic can hide and puncture innocence with the lust for truth. With all the people wading in the water, the pressure that the water exerted on the sides increased dramatically. The sides came loose and the brick towers fell into the water. People clung on to the debris from the bridge as if they were lifebuoys. As their intellects were already diffused, they did not sense any catastrophe in the event and perceived it as a playful happening, engineered for their entertainment.

Axe

This town had a windmill and a stock market. It pretty much had nothing else. The stock broker was like a head priest. And the hit-man was like a farmer. The crop had to be tended, some plants deserved to live and some had to go. The crop had to be tended because growth was a surplus and only on being tended by a farmer it became something that could be celebrated.

One day, the farmer received a letter (with currency notes stapled to it) to tend to the broker. During the monsoon, the broker had invested the money entrusted to him more zealously than

needed. So now in the winter the situation was that there was more money in the system than ever. No one knew what to do with the money. It was so much money that neither could it be spent nor could it be invested or employed in some other way.

Now the investors were asking the farmer to tend to the broker. Tending regulated the growth and that is exactly what was needed to make the surplus into something accountable. The farmer was assigned the murder of the broker.

The first thing for the farmer to do was pick a weapon of his choice. The weapon of choice in this case was an axe. Axe is a very traditional weapon but for a farmer it is also the most appropriate weapon. In the context of regulating a surplus, it was also a weapon with teeth. Appendages could be chopped off. Entire areas of outgrowth could be dealt with firmly and inactive limbs could be turned into blobs of dead flesh.

So after the farmer had selected a weapon of his choice, the time had come for the encounter between the farmer and the broker. The encounter was planned spontaneously. The farmer was moving about the market, and he saw the broker in his peripheral vision. He hurled the axe at that point of witnessing and the axe hit its mark. Because it was a weapon chosen specifically to settle scores with the broker, it found its victim. The broker lay on the ground with the axe embedded in his chest, dead. The wound bled foamy bubbles and not blood. The bubbles rose up in the air and at a specific height, caught the sunlight. With the sunlight shining through, a smudged rainbow was produced by the bubble. And then the bubble burst.

1977 was a time when telephones were still terrestrial and telephone networks still had manual exchanges in India. There was a huge margin for error. This specific phone operator was prone to mistakes. She once connected a hungry teenager to a solicitous

hooker and was promptly suspended on being pilloried in the media. But she came back. She always came back. She always came back and she always made mistakes. Some mistakes led to controversies and massive blunders and some mistakes led to a genuinely fateful connections. No one ever reported the good news. It did not make sense to do so. We do not want the joy in the system to be regulated. All joy is produced by mistakes.

So this phone operator had never learnt her job. She worked randomly and speedily because all she had to do was anything. There was no bar of quality to meet and there was no pattern to perform.

One morning she produced a situation with a very disruptive potential. She made a cross-connection between Deng and Hem. Deng's husband had just been murdered. And Hem had just murdered somebody who happened to be Deng's husband. He knew that the moment she spoke because they lived in a beautiful and remote hilly community and not many people were murdered there. And also when he killed Deng's husband, Deng was there and her shriek still rang in his ears. When she said hello, he figured it was the same woman and was defensive from the beginning. But then she became an absorptive surface for all of Hem's fear and guilt. She agreed that he did the right thing, that it was the only thing to do.

Deng's husband was a kleptomaniac and he had an insatiable hunger for possessions. Possessions that he did not even use. Possessions that got exhausted just in being desired. He stole Hem's perspective. And with the stolen perspective he wrote many books and became a very well-known writer. He was universally praised for his vision and for his discernment. Hem was not jealous and he did not grudge the thief his prize but but he was upset that he went overboard. Saka, which is what Deng's husband was

called, enshrined his stolen perspective by installing a huge statue of himself in his village. This statue was hollow and people could climb it from the inside. Once they climbed it, they could look out of the eyes of the statue and experience Saka's perspective. And because Saka's perspective was stolen, seeing through the eyes of his statue did not mean anything. Saka believed in his own mythology so much that he forgot that he didn't have anything to offer to begin with and he forgot to even keep up appearances. He did not work on the piece of glass that made the statue's eye.

So when people looked through, they saw no difference. They felt that they were the same as Saka. They started deluding themselves with thoughts of grandeur. But equivalence with Saka was actually true as Saka had stolen his own perspective from Hem. So, the mean level of delusion was running very high. There were more bubbles in the air than there was ever space for.

At this time Hem decided to kill Saka.

After hearing Hem's story, Deng agreed with him. There was no other way to wipe the slate clean. Saka had to be killed. He had become cushioned in too many layers of untruth. He was too close to the edge.

Deng respected him for doing it. It is not easy to kill. And that he could muster enough anger to kill Saka, was in itself a great thing. For Saka was a very sweet man and it was very easy to love him. To remain angry with him for long enough to conspire to kill him was indeed admirable.

So, because of the clumsy telephone operator, Deng got to speak to Hem and could understand his perspective well enough to forgive him.

Fa was a truck-driver. Fa was constantly on the move and drove very fast. He knew the roads very well.

One morning he was driving on his usual route and he crashed into a milkman. All the milk was spilt on the road and the smell of the milk spread into the neighbourhood. The smell was so strong that all the animals in the vicinity were excited and salivated. They were at their jumpiest and wanted to rush and lick the milk off before it dried.

But they could not escape and as the sun rose, and it became hotter, all the milk dried off.

These deprived animals developed a complex because of the intense emotion they had to exhibit and experience. This complex created a trauma within them. They could not eat or drink anything and fell ill. After a few days of starving, they died.

Suddenly all the animals living on a street, where a milkman died because he was hit by a truck, died.

This made news. Many big newspapers picked up this news and people started visiting the street themselves to meet the people and ask them if the story was true. Even after verifying the story, there was suspicion around the story and it remained shrouded in disbelief.

One of the children who heard of the story was only four years old. The child heard the story from his elder brother and was very taken aback. He was at the same time excited and afraid. He thought that as children are very similar to animals, if another milkman has an accident with a truck and if the milk is spilt on the road and the smell of the spilt milk reaches the noses of the children in the vicinity, then they would also die. He was afraid because he did not know what lay after death and he was excited because he did not know what lay after death.

This fear-struck child fell sick because of the constant stress he experienced. Because he fell sick, he did not feel like eating and drinking much. He became weak because he did not eat and

drink well. Because he was weak, he became easily prone to infections and allergies. He picked up an allergy that did not allow him to think straight. Everything that he attempted to think about got deviated into some other line of thought. He became jaded. He got so jaded that he became disinterested in his own fears. Now, on reading the story about the dead animals, he did not feel anything.

Lens

Lenses are particles of glass bonded together to form a surface. These surfaces offer a portal of experience that can only be imagined without it. When you look through a lens, you see somethings and you don't see somethings. What you don't see becomes the invisible. The invisible becomes the content of dreams.

An ostrich pulls its head out of the sand. This ostrich is in the middle of a desert in Africa. This is Somalia. A mini-war is playing out. The reason is something small. Somebody spent too much money on a toothbrush. The legions have their loyalty under a cloud. Should they protect a mistake or should they go against their own.

They decide to abandon hierarchy. They go for each other. The base-line is very low. Anything goes. In this brutal environment, this ostrich does what it does best. It buries its head into the ground. Above ground all hell has broken loose but below the ground it is as serene as the inside of the ostrich's body. A few inches under the ground makes all the difference. It is not like ear plugs, it is like being in a soundproof room.

And in the silence, the ostrich's mind conjures images of a parallel sequence of events. The conjured images narrate an entirely different sequence of events. The ostrich was in a different world, playing a different visual, providing an avenue for escape. The parallel narrative was as engrossing and encoded as a dream. It offered a deeply woven landscape that was seen in a specific light that rendered it magical. The degree of immersion was such that the ostrich did not need to prioritise either the parallel narrative or the muted one. And this situation lingered for many years. It lingered for so long that the count of measuring the intervals was lost and a dullness arose. This dullness was outside the reach of measurable time. This dullness was not just a passing blip on the horizon of the ostrich's mind, it was the pervading state. In this dullness, all curiosity about the state of the world outside it disappeared.

Around the ostrich, people were dying but that did not change the rhythm of the bird. Much like flight is to birds that can fly, being absent is being to ostriches. They disappear any way they can and the way this ostrich did it was by tuning into her dullness and coming up only for air.

She still needed to come up for air.

So there was a risk of the events of the world pushing through her dullness. But this risk did not play out. In a swift stroke similar to a diver hurtling his head up and down quickly, the ostrich came up for air and went down again. The experience of violence was a blur and all that got registered was noise. This noise did not have any seed of content. Noise is empty in a way and the emptiness betrays itself. It offers the delusion of closure. And in this delusion lives the possibility for the ostrich. The ostrich sways to its own internal rhythm and remain oblivious to the war.

At the spot where the ostrich is, if you dug a hole through the centre of the Earth and emerged at the other end, you would reach a highway. A highway that was next to a sea. We do not know anything further.

A car stops there.

A creature gets out of the car. The creature looks like a mix of an overgrown snail and an overgrown trumpet. It had green eyes and red tentacles. The tentacles were constantly twitching. The creature stands in the middle of the road and started playing music. The sound was produced by its trumpet shaped nose and its sea-shell shaped ears. As the creature played music, water gushed out of the faucet-like mouth of the creature. The gushing out was not like a fountain but like a tap. Looking at this creature in mid-performance, you would question the location of the mid-road tap and feel perplexed. But it was not architecture, it was not construction, it was a life form.

This life form and the music that it emanated along with the fluid generated from the surplus music-seeds expressed through a flow of water stood in the middle of the road for a while.

The undefined span of time for which the life-form stood there was a whole era for the microbes that were born, lived and thrived in the water stream. These microbes performed very limited functions. The functions they performed were just enough for them to be considered life-forms. One of these functions was to vibrate at a constant rate in a rhythm. This vibration produced music. This music clashed with the music played by the creature.

The microbes and the creature started contesting for supremacy - will the microbe's music be heard or the creature's. The microbes tried very hard to disrupt the creature's state of production. They flew here and there, tried to break the shape of the water's fall. But for the microbes, the column of water was the world

and they couldn't step out of it. Their competitive relationship with the creature was like an out-of-the-world conflict. It required a resolute belief on the part of the microbes to believe in the creature at all.

This belief had taken on dimensions of a faith-based system but because the creature could be sensed clearly enough the belief extended itself to have the microbes believe that they were living in mythological times.

This whole scene was rigged with so much emotion! It felt like being in the throes of a music concert, experiencing the climax of theatrical production and meeting your father after a very long time, all at the same time.

Some children emerged out of nowhere and started contributing to the music. They wanted to sing, they wanted to dance and they wanted to add to the ambience in a meaningful way. They had models of the world in their hand. They started smashing these models down on the ground. These models were made of glass and the sound of glass crashing on the ground added to the music. The children were enjoying that and they started thinking of themselves as proto-musicians with sensibility enough to make piecemeal contributions to meta-realities and still be able to keep track.

A lady appears. She was beautiful in the sense that she was perfectly symmetrical and with a pleasant, harmless face. Some might even say that her face reflected the grace of royalty, the grace of the knowledge of horizons, of living in a frame. Smashing this bubble of a reality held sacred, a monstrous head rose up from her torso. This head brought with it an extremely cruel sensibility. The head started eating the children making music by toying with models of the world. The children saw the lady's body and the monstrous head as a part of the same unit. They

were super frightened because they saw the lady as a kind of shape-shifting monster. She was just the victim of an outgrowth, there was nothing that she could do. When the platitude of beauty is referenced, the polar mirror of monstrosity also emerges. There is nothing singular in the world, everything is in couples. See-saw, yin-yang, plus-minus.

The monstrous head is gobbling one child at a time. From this consumption, blood is dripping down on the ground. This dripping blood is forming puddles which are caking up to form lenses. These bloody lenses offer tinted perspectives of the world that offer their own scope of meaning. These lenses gather around them auras of fear and inhibition that frighten everyone from looking through them. This fear and inhibition makes these lenses powerful objects that are attractive and repulsive at the same time.

A dog comes and looks through this lens and sees a dog-circus.

On seeing the dog-circus, the dog starts wagging its tail. The dog-circus has dog-like spirits do all kinds of acrobatics and tricks that seem to mimic what humans used to perform as a circus. Trapeze-artists and clowns and giants and dwarfs performing in all earnestness. This dog-circus could only be seen through the lens.

It starts raining. The stream of falling water disappears into the rain. The microbes die and the music stops. The creature swims away. The monster-headed lady swims away. The children have already been consumed.

The sun sets.

The dog tries to shake off the rain water falling down on it. The rain and the dog continuously trying to shake off the rain forms a looped sequence. This looped sequence conveys an eerie image. Into this eeriness you can imagine all kinds of shadow-play. Into this eeriness all the memories of music disappear and leave noth-

ing back. When you access the history of this moment, you only see an eeriness that has an appetite for all the evil in the world. You do not see what is in the heart of this darkness, you do not see the blur of the circus in the shadows and in the black-on-black.

The umbrella

When I think, I think about the person who changed the operating principles of thought itself. This was an individual who was able to do this by ceaselessly posting identical copies of himself everywhere. This posting of copies was so ceaseless that communicating with him was not possible anymore. It was almost impossible to figure out whether a given body was him or a copy. Because once a copy spawned, it went on developing in a direction determined only by the series of experiences that it had. Over a period of time perfectly valid copies, identical with the source became individuals with nothing more than a similarity to each other. These individuals referred to each other with a different name, remembered each other as different people but still there was a shadow of doubt in their heads. They were afraid that they didn't really exist, that their individuality was nothing more than a self-delusional fantasy.

This fear caught them and wouldn't leave them. This fear made them act in a way that reflected defensiveness. They were unsure of themselves and this lack of confidence meant that they could not make big demands of themselves. They couldn't do anything that amounted to anything. They were stuck with having to live the plain and ordinary life.

They were a bored lot. They were so bored with their lives that if you gave them a choice between watching a bad film and dying, they would die. They just couldn't take it anymore.

Was this all a game plan of the one individual who had planted copies of himself everywhere? Why did this individual do that? What was at stake?

This individual wanted to take over the minds of the people. Colonising the public creative impulse, or the urge to think was important to him. But who was this guy? And where did he come from?

This guy's name was Peela Khargosh. Peela Khargosh was called by this name because he reported recurrent dreams of fluorescent yellow rabbits. This dream could never be analysed and decoded. It remained a cultural enigma, a riddle. Unresolved and unrepentant. It attained a symbolic reference for people.

He was born in the hills in a family of shepherds and he grew up tending his flock of sheep and while he did that he figured that he had ample to do something else by the side. He started making copies of himself at a time when he had nothing else to do and the act quickly got out of hand. If you call a rock a copy, either you are a rock or the rock is you. Both possibilities are plausible. If you are a rock, nothing is lost. If the rock is you, nothing is lost. These copies once rendered were set free and over time they wandered away and seeded an epidemic.

The world knew Peela as the origin, as the person who first volunteered his persona to be made the light fodder of exchanges. The world knew Peela as the focal point of the unsettling force unleashed onto the surface of the world. The act of copying redeemed Peela from his dreams. But not really. He still saw dreams of yellow rabbits. The only difference was that because now that everyone else was dreaming of yellow rabbits too (being

perfect copies of his own self, they were dreaming the same dreams as him), Peela Khargosh did not feel traumatised with memories of this dream anymore. Peela's trauma had been the socialisation of his dream as a bizarre event. Now it subsided.

In a story there can either be a plus or minus, but no equilibrium. Stories do not stand still. The moment stillness envelopes a story, it dies. Peela Khargosh had become known as the source in a world of copies. And reaching the source is always more difficult than reaching a copy. This difficulty is not because of some special location that the source occupies. It is difficult because the source is not interested in being found. There is nothing that the source is interested in receiving. There is only transmission. A cat and mouse game was at play. Anyone who recognised him in others was quickly distracted and set off-course. Peela became so powerful (there was someone thinking of him all the time) that he came to replace the idea of consciousness itself. In the world at that time, the source was known (if only vaguely). Like a partly remembered dream, on the margins of the mind but very much there.

As more and more copies floated around in the system, Peela became very dumbed down. He became opaque to society and became insulated from other presences. From this dumbed down, opaque, insulated self was born a copy that called itself Hoja Asli. Because of these specific characteristics, Hoja developed his magic.

Hoja Asli was a magician.

He had the capacity to make anything real. Whatever he experienced was real. He was the catalyst of experience. And he realised it. The magic was of a kind that did not immediately make itself felt. An onlooker had to map the patterns of everything that was unraveling the present and then take account of what Hoja

perceived, and then perform the mapping again. The percentage of change from the before and after map revealed the degree of magic. Once an experience has become a part of the past, it is directly responsible for the present and once this has happened, it is impossible to even be aware of it. Once the story that we live has changed, that is all we know, we cannot look at it as a outcome of a process.

He set about on a series of adventures. He played all kinds of mind games. Even his dream world sprouted parallel universes in moments of idle fantasy. He did not think of anything unless he wanted the thought to come real. He lived like an automaton. He lived like a wind-up clock, like the fountainhead of ceaseless production. His politics was very simple. He did not have any hangups. He wanted the world to be like he saw it. This was true in a literal as well as a figuratively cyclical way. He saw what he saw, he liked what he saw and what he saw became the only accessible version of the common story we call reality. There was no differentiation between desire, manipulation and revision. These three states being equal for Hoja, he engaged ceaselessly in narrating the world as a story authored by him.

Hoja Asli became not just the name of a flux that can twist the world in any direction, but it also became the name of an agent going on a narrative stroll.

Although there was no way to find him, he did not leave any path open, he did not leave any puzzle solvable. He only communicated through the people who had entered into a channeling arrangement with him. And even these people were passive receptacles, they had no way of knowing who he was or where he was. They just heard him and did whatever he wanted them to do.

But Hoja Asli was not a monk. He did not like the isolation that he had to live in and he decided to make friends. Friends always knew him as someone else. They were never able to get past the distance. But they were still companions.

Companionship was valuable for Hoja. He went out of his way to make friends. He thought about the companion that he would like to have and then he saw this thought. Magically this companion became real, without ever knowing that Hoja was their point of origin. She somehow just felt an irrational passion for Hoja, a passion that was equal parts familial and mysterious. There was no plasticity in this companion because no copy was faithful to its image, there was noise embedded in the process of copying that transformed the image into a seed. This seed on being copied followed its own rules of growth to flower into a full person, parts of which new even for Hoja. There was nothing in Hoja's control and there was nothing to defend.

Paper

Logic is a garment. It can be woven in intricate ways, but the most complex weave will still be just a construction. For a companion born out of Hoja's perspective, there was no loss of detail. Things in the foreground and things in the background both got registered and both contributed to the companion's malady. Hoja's companion's name was Yer. He kept running to her like a moth to the fire. The slightest twitch on Yer's face had him worried. Because of the nature of this bond, Yer became responsible for Hoja's liberation.

Hoja was a magician and he could do anything. But this did not mean that he could operate upon himself. He could not manipulate himself and a little bit of manipulation is necessary for magic to work.

Hoja's memory was mortal. As things faded from his memory, things that he had brought into being started disappearing too. Because Hoja's mind was not stable, the world was slipping away. This slipping away was not time bound, some things slipped away into oblivion quickly and some things lingered on for a very long time. Hoja's memories degraded gradually. And this gradated decay led to a gradated world with gradated presences. Some people had a very intensive presence and some people had a very light presence. Some people were there and some already gone. Some people could be felt in the depth of their engagement and some people could only be accessed superficially.

Yer helped Hoja become stable. When Hoja became stable, the decay in his memory stopped. People and things once born remained in existence till their mortal cycle was over. There was no gradated death anymore. Everyone was equally present.

Yer did this by breaking his heart. She shunned the delicacy of the sentiments that Hoja showered on her and allowed herself to be pragmatically decisive about him. She stopped treating him as a fragile, demented moth who could jump into her and die at anytime. Instead she treated him like a magician with a rotting memory.

Hoja was at his most vulnerable with Yer and this treatment had its immediate effect.

When Yer snapped at him, the first thought that Hoja had was to bring another companion into existence. To go beyond Yer. But this he could not do. Because Yer was all he could have ever wanted in a companion and all his dreams were dreams of her. He

could not manipulate himself. So he had to give up. There was nothing to be done. He accepted Yer's treatment gracefully. He became stable in an instant. It did not take him time to achieve stability. He just collapsed and his collapsed form was stable.

Now the world started adjusting itself to this change in him. And this change meant that entities born out of Hoja's mortal memory had no way of being in existence anymore. These entities had to go back to the source and recompile. It was like a massive moment of reset. In this reset, all the fragile entities disappeared. These were the last traces of synthetic mortality left in the world, after this every living entity followed its own life-cycle, Hoja just influenced their coming or going from the world. Their moment of inception and the moment of their consummation. Because magical influence still follows the rules of narrative. In a narrative, inceptions can only take seed. They then take a shape only through the actors acting on instincts which have developed from the seed. From a magical reality, Hoja Asli made peace with living in a narrative reality. In this reality his magic produced the seeds, but the expression of those seeds was produced by the complex intermesh of multiple characters acting under different desires.

So, when Yer disappeared, Hoja was crushed. In his travels around the world, he kept searching for fragments of her. Somebody smiled like her, somebody's voice was like her, somebody walked like her. Hoja tried to implant the seed of Yer's persona into an unborn child of unsuspecting parents. The seed was similar to the seed he had brought into being magically many years back. And because of this similarity Hoja expected similar outcomes.

The implantation worked.

But when Yer was born, although she looked the same and was the same in every respect there seemed to be some major shift.

The grown up Yer now had an insurmountable anger, which had devastating effects on her behaviour. This anger was directed only at Hoja. On returning to source, the bundle of cosmic energy that identified as Yer had merged into the common pool and experienced a playful episode. She was angry now because Hoja's implantation had pulled her out of that process and again entrapped her in the cesspool of narrative. A pool with no clear flow. Stagnant.

When the grown up Yer met Hoja Asli for the first time, she tried to kill him with an axe. She repeatedly tried to kill him. It was only because Hoja could at the right time become a fleeting breath of Yer herself, that he was saved. But Yer helped Hoja complete his healing process. Hoja Asli had healed from his unfulfilled companionship. He decided to not intervene and interfere into the dogma of narrative anymore. He decided to become a journalist.

As an archetypal journalist, he was committed only to the reception and documentation of experiences. He rendered himself into the mode of a reader, with no capacity to write or contribute anymore. Because of his backstory, he resigned from the role of content production and committed himself to the guardianship of narrative.

A worm crawls up a hole in the ground and gnaws on a slipper. The slipper wailed loudly and expressed its pain in the loudest and most jarring of tones. Out of the recesses of the slipper's joints and holes, a kind of blood oozed out. Not only did this blood stink, but it also had a sparkle that immediately caught attention.

The stinky slipper blood collected in a pool on the ground and a swarm of flies hovered around it. These flies were short-sighted, from afar they saw the pool of blood as a pool of orange crush

suspended within layers of ice. On approaching the pool of course the flies realised that the pool was of blood. The smell made the realisation easier. The smell of this blood was incriminating and it invited the flies to drown themselves in the pool. The day ended with the flies hovering above the pool in indecision. To give in or not? That was the question they were attempting to resolve.

At night, immersed in darkness, only the smells remained. The scene was immersed in absolute darkness.

On a paper, a pencil is floating in the air is writing a word without a meaning.

This word is a chant that on being read will bring upon an apocalypse. But there is no one there to read the word aloud and it remains unread. The word remains suspended in the aura of the unspoken and remains at the cusp of speech. This cusp did not get crossed and disaster does not strike.

The world did not understand whom to express gratitude towards for this loaded gun that was not fired. Someone must really be happy! Somebody must really like the world to have prevented that word from being read aloud!

In the event of that word not being read aloud, the pencil punctures the sheet and shows a bucket full of eyes. The eyes have trapped within them things seen but not accepted, held ransom to meaning. All the potential words without meaning, all the sentiments that could never find a clear enough language to express themselves.

This bucket full of eyes was not like some relic from a torture chamber which plucked out the eyes of innocent people, but rather it was like a montage of abstraction. Each eye in the bucket was animated and alive as if it were still sitting inside someone's head. Call it animism, a supernatural charm or whatever

else. The bucket sat there, regardless. The eyes were restless, anxious and disturbed on being discovered liked that. By a simple pencil prick.

A tortured dog with its tail on fire jumps into a lake. On hitting the water, the dog howls. It is winter and the water is icy in a sharp way. But the fire goes out and the dog starts swimming to the shore again. Half-burnt, it is much uglier than before.

The icy lake doesn't have ripples ringing through it after the dog manages to escape. Ice maintains a plastic surface throughout. The lake seems set in its serenity as if nothing ever happened.

Ants run around frantically and rest in their tracks as a boulder crashes down on the ground. The boulder raises the dry dust into the air.