



The Woes of “Anonymous”

— Who Is Always A Woman

AS we neared home, both my friend and I fell into an uneasy silence. The fear that had been haunting us was now just a hundred yards away. Our feet began to drag.

“O.K., see you then,” I tried to sound lighthearted. But on the stairway I hesitated. What would be the best strategy? Should one smile and appear nonchalant? or stride in grimly, like one determined to defy all opposition? What was it going to involve? Parents threatening suicide? Aunts and uncles in conference?

I yanked the scarf from my head and knocked on the door with faltering hand. My sister opened, and gasped.

“What have you *done*? What will they *say*?” I preserved a lofty silence, repressed the desire to make a dash for my room, and proceeded to the dining room. I could hear my parents talking inside.

Enter young woman. All present struck dumb, momentarily. Sudden recovery of speech with redouble volume. Grandmother almost collapses from nervous shock. Is administered glass of water and seeks solance in prayer.

Mother and father together: “What will everyone say? Didn’t you think of us at all? Of how we have brought you

up? How are we to face Aunt J and Uncle K and...”

Grandmother (in low moan): “Oh, what’s the use of talking to her? If she cared for us at all, would she have gone and brought sorrow on our grey heads? Selfish pleasure is all she thinks off...”

Sister (stoutly): “So what, if she wanted to? What’s wrong with it?”

Servant (entering and letting out scream, half-thrilled, half-horrified): “Hai... what has Baby done?”

Grandmother: “Can’t you see? Let her go and meet her grandfather now – let’s see what he has to say.”

Father (in martyred gloom): “Anyway, there’s no use talking now. She didn’t consult us. She wants to do everything on her own. She’s still our daughter – all we can do is wait for time to heal matters...”

Mother: “But can’t something be done? I mean, surely we can try some remedy...”

Grandmother: “You were always a silly girl – What do you expect to do now? It’s IRREVOCABLE.”

Brother (strolling in): “What’s irrevocable?” (eye falling on me) “Oh boy!”

Mother: “Your sister’s gone and cut her hair?”

Her Mothers Words

If you sit in a dark room
no light behind you
no one passing in the street can see
my mother said to me.

I sit in a dark room
a small lamp beside me
how should I write these lines
without a light how should I see?

I asked myself
not knowing that the street
had such a vision of my woman’s soul
as I should scarcely understand.

Now I know
my hands grow cold and
sight spills out of me.

— Meena Alexander

A Resolve

I shall not allure you
with dangling adornments

Nor entice you
with painted face

Nor dazzle you
with natty garments

I shall not please you
with a veneer belying my thoughts.

No, I shall not come to you cloaked
in false beauty

only to disillusion you later.

I shall come bald.

— Janet Russo

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