



## THE WINDOW OF THE PRISON

By

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One artist was arrested in the charges of delivering lectures publicly and writing articles in support of those people who had proclaimed revolt against the state.

The artist was arrested without much hypes and publicity when he was lying far away from the city to enjoy a few days by the sea-side. But he was not alone. His girlfriend also accompanied him whose beautiful face could be traced in many of the portraits and sculptures of the renowned artists.

A lonely house was there by the sea-side. It seemed as if a huge bird furling close its big wings and was thinking whether to fly away or not. The artist was sitting with his girlfriend in the first floor of that house. A thin candle was the only source of light there. There were electric lights as there should have been. There were vapour lights at a pre-planned and at regular intervals by the sea-side whose spectrum mystified the sea-beach. The hotels lying at certain intervals by the sea-side were also adequately decorated with lights. On that night, the sky was surprisingly silent. There was no absolute hegemony of either the moon or the stars in the sky. The sky was overcast with clouds. There were some signs of flashes of light at times. But there was no sound of thunder.

The artist was lying in wait for a downpour or at least a shower. He put out all the electric lights of the house. Instead he lit a narrow and thin candlestick. The paragon of beauty was lying on a bed ; - the one and only friend of the artist. She was lying entirely without a trace of a piece of cloth on her body. Having used two pillows to increase the height, she placed her milky white shoulders on it and she was lying in half- sleeping posture which resembled the graceful legendary Queen Cleopatra. Two surprising butterflies seemed to perch on her nipples of the breasts. One of her hands was placed low. Another hand of hers was kept at the back of her head. As such the grayish hair of the armpits lying close to her shoulders was visible. Such tuft of hair is habitually kept hidden by women. Men are attracted to them as they kept hidden. It was not that the artist was busy in sketching out the half-slept lady. The artist was looking at the nude lady by means of the light of the candle. He was focusing on her spread out white legs where the lines of the pillar and tomb that cast a shadow. A cat of black and white texture was sitting quietly at a corner of the house. The dull light of the candlestick made the cat look like a mummy. There was a small table lying close to the wall



by which the artist was sitting. A swollen bellied bottle of Vodka, a half eaten apple and white wine in a red glass was lying on that table.

Looking at the nude and silent woman

And the mummy of a cat.

The fat bellied bottle of Vodka lying on the table and

Watching the fraction of the apple

The artist is preparing

To enter into cave of his own heart in the mysterious candle light.

Immediately, the creaking sound of shoes could be heard on the stairs. The sound was not coming out of the single pair of shoes, but of many pairs together. It was like the sound of some people on the drill. Many people were coming upstairs. Who were they after all?

The door of the room was kept ajar. Knocking sound could be heard twice. Knock, knock. The door was flung open even before the artist could say 'come in'. Two to four tall persons entered with their army uniforms on. The women in half-sleeping posture covered her nude body with a shawl immediately. Before the artist could say anything, the officer commanded him- you will have to accompany us.....

-Do you have arrest warrant with you?- the artist enquired.

-Of course, I have....Let's go now. Please hurry up.

The artist smiled looking once at the face of his girlfriend, thereafter he went away with the officer and his attendants. The black police van started carrying him. Suddenly the cat started weeping.

## TWO

A conspiracy hatched against a state is a serious offence. Therefore, a prolonged court procedure is carried out. The artist was kept confined in a faintly lit room for many days. Even the artist could not remember the duration of his confinement exactly. But the hair on head gradually turned grey. He never grew beard on his face. Of late he looked like a crazy worshipper with his beard and moustache on. The artist would have to go to the court. He would again come back to his cell. The hearing would sometimes last for a prolonged period. Many witnesses provide evidences against the artist standing within the witness box. Many of such persons were unknown to the artist. The judge would sit on a heightened seat. The artist would think him to be a lonely lighthouse. The artist assumed that the judge would feel helpless on a heightened seat when the witnesses provide evidences one by one, when the



public prosecutor and the artist's lawyer would engage themselves in verbal battles quite dramatically. Mainly he experienced a mental fatigue. The judge would look at the eyes of a dead fish. The artist could not feel which way he would look at. Once during a hearing day, the artist found him dozing which remained unnoticed by others. He felt very compassionate for the judge. Oh God, the man did not sleep peacefully at night for a long time. He would remain obsessed with many thoughts. He would think about the court cases also. This particular case was too complex to solve. There were so many arguments and counter-arguments. What kind of judgement can be given! The judge would have to think whether he would give death sentence, lifelong imprisonment or allow the person to get away scot-free till late night hours. As such his sleep would remain disturbed.

The verdict of the judge was, however, clear in this case. Having received the witnesses of three hundred eleven odd persons, the judge pointed the artist as the chief conspirator against the state. The conspirator was awarded lifelong imprisonment.

The artist heard the verdict of the judge with an expression-less face. Normally before the announcement of the verdict, the judges would ask the convict- Have you anything to say? We have known the general replies of the convict since long.

But the present judge was slightly different. Having announced the verdict, he asked the artist- Do you have anything from me to ask for?

The artist said smilingly- You have already announced the verdict, Sir. Is there any justification of such question now?

--But still... you still need to survive for a long period of time. Literally speaking, lifelong imprisonment implies imprisonment for the whole life till death. But the matter is not so in reality. You will be imprisoned for fourteen years only. This is our law.

-if someone dies before fourteen years then....

-Yes, that will be a separate issue. Therefore I was saying that a period of fourteen years is long period of time in a man's life. It is also very difficult to survive in a jail for so long. I know you in a special way. I somewhat know about your class as an artist. In fact I have a few water colour portraits at my home drawn by you. My wife is a fan of your art works.

-It turns out to be so-the artist laughed again. His laugh was a little curved.

-Means? I could not understand-the judge asked him.

The artist said with a smile- I have observed from my experience that the wives of the successful big bureaucrats, ministers, judges are the connoisseurs of art, readers of literary texts. This has come to be really true in your case also. Perhaps the arrow of words pinched the judge. But the person he had recently given judgement against was at lying on the edge of



a gorge. What more is left for him to get hurt? So the judge tried to digest the critical remark and change the topic of discussion.

He said- Please tell me if you have anything to ask for.

-Shall I have to ask for anything?

-Speak out. Hurry up.

-See, I am an artist. I'll have no peace of mind if I can't draw portraits daily. I can't even have a sound sleep if I can't draw anything. So.....

-Speak out now.

-If you permit me to do....

-What permission?

-I want you to ensure regular supply of colours, paintbrushes, easel so that I can draw the portrait. If I can't draw portraits then I'll become oblivious of my situation. The term of fourteen years will also pass with ease.

-Such a prayer of yours is hereby granted. I shall send necessary directions to the jailor of the jail where you will be kept. All the necessary art-tools will be provided to you within the jail. You'll be able to draw portraits regularly.

Coming out of the court, the artist saw that there was a large gathering of people there. Especially the people related to the print and electronic media were trying their best to come near him. They were arguing with the policemen present there. One microphone came near the face of the artist. The question was put- What is your reaction to find that a great artist like you have been sentenced to lifelong imprisonment? The artist replied- I am thinking about painting portraits in a different format....

### THREE

Normally the convicts are kept together in a prison. But this is for those convicts whose cases have not been resolved by the court. But this is perhaps not the same with those imprisoned whose cases have not been resolved. On certain occasions they are kept in separate 'cells'. The person sentenced to lifelong imprisonment was kept in one of such separate 'cell'. It was lonely and full of pitch darkness. Having pushed him into it, the guard went away. There was a big sound. The artist felt that he had suddenly turned blind. Everything was dark in front of his eyes. He stood there like a fool. High up in the walls of the cell on two sides, there were two ventilators. It was afternoon. It was not exactly afternoon also. The sunset was imminent. Some grayish and sorrowful lines of light were creeping inside through the ventilators. The artist was gradually becoming used to darkness. Even through the thin lines of faint light, he





could feel that the lonely and quiet cell was not very big. It was not big in length. In breadth also it was short. To be exact, two persons could not sleep together. They would be irritated when they would push each other while moving about. Would he have to live in such a cell for fourteen years? It would have been better to die than to live in such a condition. He would not be able to see the sky according his wishes. The scenic beauty of nature which inspired him many times to paint pictures, would not be visible before his eyes. Only the four walls of the geometric sizes would be lying before him. Today was the first day of imprisonment. But he felt as if the walls would come near him and they would crush him to death. Suddenly he shouted out of fear. The own screaming voice of the artist echoed back strongly to his ears in the lonely and quiet cell. Having felt some pain, the artist pulled his hair, he pulled his own beard.

He was behaving in an unnatural way out of pain and fear. Feeling everything as useless, he covered his face with the palms of his hands and cried. He could remember the guerilla warriors. Those were the persons who hid themselves for days together in forests and hills leaving their families and relatives. They had dreams in their eyes. They had countless dreams. They dreamt of saving the country from an autocratic ruler. Their dream was to ensure the fact that every person could get enough to eat and to wear, to ensure their survival with dignity. The artist could find similarities with their dreams. As such he spoke in favour of the guerilla warriors in open meetings or at public places. He wrote articles in their favour in different newspapers. So the he became an eye-sore to the ruling class. He was imprisoned under their rules. He was bound to live within the jail for fourteen long years. Can anyone survive while staying away from one's society, family, friends, lover and books? Perhaps he would die much ahead of the completion of fourteen years.

The artist could not sleep for the whole night lying on a torn mat on the stone floor. He was repeatedly thinking that there should have been a window to allow the light, air and the cry of life. Would the jail authorities pay heed to his words? Would they make provision for a window breaking the wall of the prison cell? That was impossible. There would be anarchy within the jail if the jail authorizes would become so compassionate to the criminals, they criminals would express their endless desires one by one.

What could be done then?

There was a need of a window in that cell. Otherwise an artist would not be able to be confined there for long. He might have to choose the option of suicide. Therefore.....

Therefore he spent a sleepless night. Thinking in this way, the artist chalked out a plan.

He

Would paint a window



On the wall of the cell.

#### **FOUR**

He did exactly as he had thought. An artist possessed colours, paintbrushes and other painting tools. The artist was permitted by the judge to keep all the necessary art tools with him even during his imprisonment. In the early morning, when the early sunlight had not even spread out to its fullest form, when the darkness was not still over, the artist got on with the task of painting a big window on one of the stone walls of the cell. He could not get sufficient light. He did not also have a source of light that he could light it as per his necessity. There was no scope of doing so. But the artist did not get discouraged at this. The source of light lay within himself. He had endless light of imagination. With that ray of light he could see everything clearly. The artist did not have any difficulty to draw a window on a stone wall.

A window, a window

On the lifeless stone wall

With the unending light of imagination

The artist drew out a window.

The dawn had already set in with fullness. Putting his face on his self-drawn window, the artist saw the outer world. It was very nice to look outside from a great height. It was really high. The cell in which the artist was kept was there on the top floor of the jail. The artist had no idea how high the cell was. But It must be four-storied. Or it might be even more. It might have five or even six storied building. It was because the street below, the houses of people and even people there looked smaller in size. The artist felt good to think that the window would help him to survive his imprisoned life. Through this window –

He would see- the sky

The floating clouds

The birds in the air

The power of the sun

The disappointment of the clouds

The smartness of the road

The efficiency of the moving cars



The hare, the children

And look at the maidens

With love-laden eyes.

## FIVE

The captives of the jail were entitled to get tea in an earthen pot and a dampened piece of biscuit. There was of the opening of the door of the prison cell. The staff of the jail entered with tea and a biscuit. Having entered, his eyes were struck with the puzzle of light. At first, he closed his eyes. Having controlled himself after a while, he found that light was coming inside through the window. What a surprise it was! Where did the window come from? Was it an illusion for him? No, why should it be an illusion? It was clearly a window. And the sufficient amount of light was coming through it.

-Where did the window come from?-the employee asked.

- I drew the window-the artist said with a smile.

-You drew it, did you? Do you know how big a crime you have committed? There should be no window in the cells of the captives who had been sentenced to lifelong imprisonment.

-I drew it-the artist announced it again.

-For so long..do you know for how long? I have been working in the jail for 28 years. I have never witnessed such a strange incident in my career. I am going to report the matter to the jailor right now.

The staff forgot to deliver the tea and a biscuit to the artist. Those items lay on his hands as they were. He rushed to report the matter to the jailor. Having received such an amazing news, the jailor somehow reached the cell of the prisoner in a jiffy. His eyes were also struck to see the most unexpected bright light from outside. At first, he could not believe himself. When he saw that a window was really lying there, then the wave of anger was thrust upon the artist.

Having burst with extreme anger, the jailor said- What have you done?

-I have drawn only a window- the artist replied quietly.

-That I can see-the jailor told with a squeezed mouth- but the window has been painted on the wall. How can so much light come into the room then?



-It's true that I have drawn a window. But it is a real window. The window is open and so, there is so much light inside. The artist replied. Stretching his hand towards the jailor, he said- Would you offer me cigarette, Sir? I could not smoke even for once since last night. It will be nice to have a cigarette. Looking at the face of the artist, the jailor developed a kind of compassion. Drawing out a cigarette from the packet which was kept in his pocket, he offered it to the artist. He also lit a cigarette. There came out a nice melody when the lighter was lit. Both lit their respective cigarettes from the same stroke of fire.

Releasing some smoke in the air, the jailor said- What a kind of magic have you started? This is a solitary cell. How can so much light enter here from outside?

The artist said it once more- The window I drew is a real window. Both the parts of the window are open. So there is so much light in the room.

-Again you are speaking nonsense, aren't you? That is simply a painting of a window on the wall. It's a simple drawing only. Can a painted window be real? Just see I am putting my hands on the wall. This is a painted window. But it looks like a real one indeed. You have an expert hand in painting, I must admit it...

-You can take that drawn window to be a real one if you have some imagination.

-Imagination? Do you really mean it ?

-Yes, it is imagination. As imagination is needed to create an art, so the same thing is needed to understand it. The cigarette came to an end due to frequent puffs to it. The artist threw the burnt end of the cigarette in a corner of the cell. The cigarette was put out.

-Leave aside those ideologies. -the jailor said so with a squeezed mouth.-there is no problem with the ordinary prisoners. The problem lies with the intellectuals, litterateurs and the artists like you. Your behaviour is really unpredictable.

-Did I do something illegal?

-You painted a window over there. I wonder how the judge is. I may be charged with the contempt of court if I say so...how could he give such a judgement that you might be allowed to stay inside with your art equipments? Having received those facilities there immediately after your arrival, you have started creating nuisance.

- I have been sentenced to lifelong imprisonment...it means that I need to stay in this small cell for fourteen long years. How shall I be able to pass my time without being able to enjoy the sight outside through a window? How shall I survive?

-It is up to you how you will survive....don't they survive? All the captives, I mean, all the lifers pass away their time in this manner...don't you know that men are slave to their habits? I have seen some captives who don't like to go back home after the end of term of their



imprisonment, they don't like to go back to their own societies. They tell that they have been used to the loneliness and quietness of the jail. What shall we do getting back to human society after such a long period of time? We shall not be able to adjust any more....I have seen such captives with my own eyes.

-Yes, this may happen-the artist said very thoughtfully-therefore I made a window for myself feeling that the same thing may happen to me...

-That's a great thing you have done. Now wipe off the window hurriedly...simply wash it off.

-How can I wash off a window which is a real one?

-You have become crazy once more, I see...please stop this bullshit...you draw whatever you like, draw a mango, a blackberry, a hare, a man, a nude woman, rhombus, triangle, pyramid or any other shape or thing you like. But you can't draw a window.

-Why can't a window be drawn, sir?

-It is because the light from outside will enter the moment it will be drawn. The source of light from outside is prohibited inside the cells of the jail....

-Say what you like, Mr. Jailor. That window can't be washed off. This is because it is a real window.

-Can you prove that it is a real window?

-What kind of proof do you need?

-There is no bar to the window you have drawn. Can you jump outside through that window?

-Would you see if I can?

-Just see.

The artist immediately sat on the window. Poking his head out of it, he once saw what was lying outside. Then he jumped. The jailor rushed to the window. Thrusting his head out, he noticed that the artist was floating in the atmosphere. He was looking just like a bird. Or like an aircraft. Or like a trapeze artist in a circus.

He was floating and floating...our artist was floating in the air.

That act of floating was without any burden. That act was being done without a single word.

That happy moment of floating was directed towards the endless universe.

The artist was laughing. It looked as if white pearls were being dropped from his laughter.



It was like a starflower. The artist was singing a song in a full-throated ease.

It was a song of liberty, a song of disinterestedness, a song of absolute freedom. The artist waved his hand towards the jailor from a distance. It meant- you, too, come with me. You also float with me....

But the jailor would not be able to fly in the sky of freedom like that of the artist. How could he get such a power of imagination? Flying in this manner, the artist was moving far, far away. He then looked like a small point. Tears were rolling down the cheeks of the jailor- having thought of his chained life after a long time, the jailor was weeping.....

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