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ANITA NAHAL

Diaspora

Constantly, I am asked about my tea
That seems-to-have no clear discernible label
Confusing the Western tea connoisseurs...well, mostly they are coffeeisseurs!
Ya, made up that word. Perhaps, it'll be in Webster's next year, or sometime...

My tea can be in flat or pyramid bags or loose-leafs
Sometimes a mix of many, though Earl Grey and Cardamom take top trophies
 Sometimes brewed in boiling water
 Sometimes in effervescing or misty ice cubes that may shatter
 Sometimes folks have forgotten the stove was on
 Sometimes I may be sprightly or yawn
 Sometimes I run to find a proper kettle, the one that whistles quickly enough
 Sometimes I've forgotten the tea was Indian and call my own bluff.



“Where are you from?” Someone asks
“You mean, originally? Or the places that came up in my DNA test?
I will give you three guesses”
Thinking Arlington, VA might be one of them.

Atonement

It finally rained today...
Crying, washing guilt
Hiding beneath tree roots
And plant stems
Or sneaking behind mailboxes
Just a good drizzle trying to be unassuming

And cell phones were found
Filled with warning sounds of flash floods
With myriad puddles in the road filling up
And temperatures suddenly meandering lower on its haunches...



The alive drizzle just ran around making windmills
And hopscotching like a little child
Like tiny pearls on the loose
Like a bouquet of butterfly weed overflowing with nectar
Or my linen Old Navy stripped grey and white pants out on a not so summery day
Or my suede ballet shoes that kept peeking not afraid to grow sodden
Or my open styled hair thinking we were still indoors
Everything and everyone ensuing in a somersault
Turning, jumping, spinning, swooning, rolling, never completely resting...like the
early drizzle...
And sufficiently quick to mess up the morning traffic
With street lights dripping, moving hesitatingly like a confused marathon...

Yesterday, when the parched earth was thirsty, rain was sleeping.

Sometimes thoughts need not be spoken

And so, I've stopped carrying pens.

Inky and messy they leave "indelible marks
of emojis" I don't necessarily like or want,
and then with pencils I can more easily try
erasing my mistakes. If I wish. If I pray hard enough.

Or rewrite my story, my song, my dance

Or keep the paper plain and simple

Or doodle it funny

Or fill it up with the joys of breathing and

"indelible marks of scars" I want to remember.

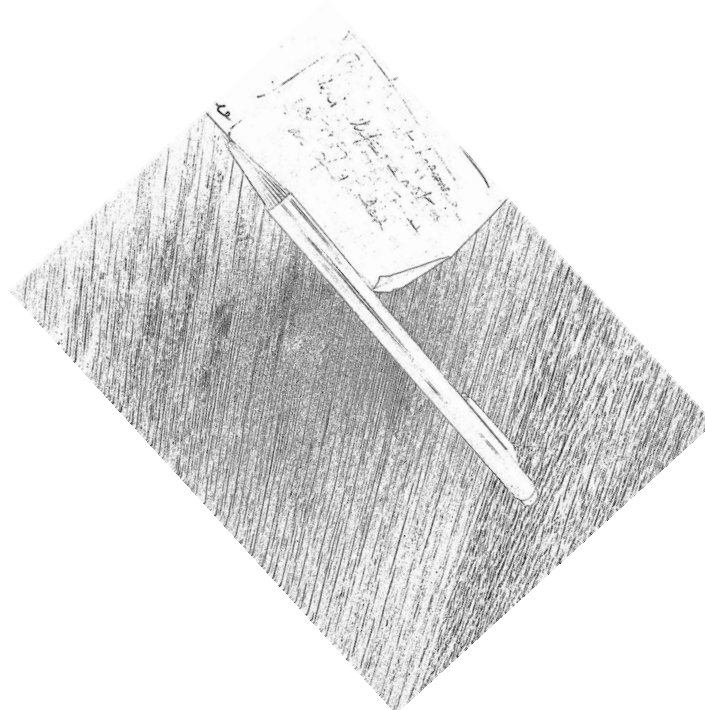
Mind you, pencils too are not always clean...

Shavings have to be brushed away

Erasing has to be blown away

And the pencils keep getting smaller

And then, sometimes, you can see the former print a bit like a forgotten engraving.



BIO-NOTE

Anita Nahal is originally from New Delhi, India and currently resides in the US. She is a poet, flash fictionist and children's books author. Apart from full time writing, Anita is an Adjunct Professor at the Chicago School of Professional Psychology and has previously served in the capacity of Assistant Provost for International Affairs at Howard University, Washington DC, and Associate Professor of History at Sri Venkateswara College, New Delhi. Nahal's interests are Diversity & Inclusion, U.S. History, African American Women's History, South Asian Women's History, International Relations, and Modern India. She has been a Fulbright Scholar-in-Residence, SUNY, Binghamton, NY, a visiting scholar of Gender, University of California, Berkeley, and a National Endowment for the Humanities summer teacher seminar awardee. Nahal's creative work has appeared in *Aberration Labyrinth*, *Better Than Starbucks*, *Confluence*, *Aaduna*, *River Poets Journal*, and *Colere*. Authorspress, New Delhi has just released two books by her, a collection of poems and a collection of flash fictions.

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