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POETRY

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## ANN SUSAN ALEYAS

**Untitled**

When my petticoat tore and my father had no money to replace it,  
 my mother stitched it up with the end of a yellow thread.  
 When the boys around the corner ogled at us and hooted,  
 Sheila and Padma giggled, stealing half-glances.  
 I trotted along but I saw the yellow thread hanging low.  
 The boys didn't see it.  
 My mother says that when Kuchela went to see Krishna, his fortune changed.  
 Maybe someday father will go meet an old friend  
 And someday I will flaunt my yellow golden thread.  
 The shopkeeper gives me one candy free when I buy five.  
 But yesterday, he gave me two free.  
 Maybe tomorrow he will give me three.

On Monday, the Maths teacher was absent.  
 So, Usha Miss gave us a free class.  
 I drew a charcoal house and a crow on its roof.  
 Preeti said that Maths Miss has cancaar; her hair is falling.  
 I went to the girls' toilet for Number One.  
 I saw a girl in pretty pink knickers.  
 I did not pee  
 Lest she sees my faded brown ones.  
 Today the shopkeeper said he will give me all free.  
 I just have to play Statue with him.

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**A Friend's Passing**

This time around they have replaced those old red cups-  
 Which carried faithfully  
 the indelible stains of several lips on rims-  
 Meagre *chais* and stubborn patches of discolouration.  
 Disposable cups have come in,  
 moving on, in and away.  
 The train moves,  
 Wheels rolling heavily on, breasts heaving  
 Calling loss and longing,  
 And he sits.  
 Waiting.

His friend passed away, in the quiet of the  
 Night, unperturbed in sleep.

The land phone rang in the morning.  
The voice across was oddly familiar,  
Like the faint whiff of a passer-by on the road,  
Only to be forgotten and left soon after.  
She uttered her name, her father's.  
It seems she remembered to look for his old phone diary,  
Finding numbers scribbled on meticulously.  
Her voice shaking, taking long pauses.  
Some phones were no longer available,  
some people too, she added.  
He was the last on the list.

Surely he remembers this dear friend,  
Their friendship from college days.  
Was he the one with the brown mole on the face  
Or the one with the good hair?  
Surely, it doesn't matter anymore.  
Memory bends and lends sometimes, he told himself.  
Humans too.

Who would come to his funeral?  
He looks outside the window:  
Men in cycles pass by,  
Carrying bags heavily balanced on the sides.  
He takes his notebook hurriedly,  
Pulls the Reynolds out of the pocket  
And writes  
"To whoever finds this,  
Upon the event of my untimely death, remember to call..."  
And pauses.  
The boy interrupts, scratching his head,  
"Saar, some tip?"

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### **An Uncommon Kiss**

The wind across our faces  
And the little kiss that slithered in.  
The softness of your lower lip,  
And the taste of tobacco in your breath.  
We talked of matters inconsequential,  
And we often laughed.  
But sometimes,  
just sometimes we ceased  
for a half forgotten peck or an uncommon kiss.  
You whispered "I could've been yours",  
the coldness of the metal pressed by my temples.

At some strange hour of the night,  
we grew silent and he fell asleep.



**BIO-NOTE**

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Ann Susan Aleyas is currently working as Assistant Professor in St. Stephen's College. She also pursuing her doctoral studies in Jamia Millia Islamia University. While Ms. Susan scribbles occasionally, this is her maiden attempt at publishing some of her poems.

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