

A Writer's Ramble

by Javed Hayat

In every writer's room there is a bogeyman born in the closet, growing with every blot on the virgin sheet, feeding on the pain of writing, of solitude, the failure, the rage, the confusion, the helplessness, the fear, the humiliation. The narrower the boundaries of a writer's life, the more the demon grows, inflation without an end. Because the pain is real, and so is the monster.

I look out of the window of my room, offering a view of the metropolis in a nutshell. It's almost as if the city is placed on top of some tower that soars to high heavens and never stops growing - and the higher it is, the more claustrophobic it gets. You walk along turnpikes and skyways on any morning, across the bland city in the blind sunset, golden and ethereal, and watch white domes, dark towers and glass buildings growing along the way, and the followers who built them. On my way to the city park, I see men praying in a fiber glass building, and wonder if God has shown up to the office in a limo today, smelling of Clive Christian No.1 for Men.

There are faces in the streetscapes as you stroll along the sidewalk. Tired bodies walking briskly towards something or someone. All of them just a walk away from being rich, or blowing themselves up. Mechanized to self-destruct better than their peers.

I came across a man standing in the middle of a busy road, taking snaps of the cloudless sky. He wants to verify the existence of something in the heavens. Soon the officials showed up and swept him off the sight for disturbing the peace. It reminds me how we have facilitated our lives with invisible cameras and turned God into a consumer good. People need constant reminders these days in an age where nothing exists beyond the scope of a lens. They also need to shoot each other from time to time.

Every writer wants to be a bird on a ledge, sneaking into people's homes and lives. Because that's where the world's greatest novel is taking place, right now, at this very moment. It's the only way you can end it all, write one story to end all stories. The imitation of life finally at hand in all its glory, perfection achieved.

And then what happens. A friend of mine once asked. Whereto from there.

Then it is back to being an organic matter in deep waters. I told him. Or Genesis. Pick and choose whichever fits you. Either way, it would be a reenactment of a new order.

He gave me that look, and said I wasn't making much sense. I shrugged and decided against wasting my breath. Very few people nowadays remember that it was once the men of arts, the writers and poets, who helped form the inner conscious of a given culture, now it is the men of arms and bombs who have the honors.

I hear him laugh nervously, and watch him going back to feed the birds. As for the rest, all we have is silence, tentative and on the edge, lingering between us.

Later that night, I entered into the quiet of my room, and began typing on the blank screen, with a sneaky feeling of a shadow beginning to stir behind my back.

