Shades

by Jamal H. Iqbal

It was the *sodabottle* glasses that scared Entro the most. Stubbled with scratches, taped with residual angst and piercing his soul with contempt he'd seen only on the National Geographic Focus Antarctica series - as Seals readied to mangle for Alpha bragging rights.

Providing support roles were the *cat eyes*, lenses still dilated from blue-grey rings they'd hidden under, the night before. Still with some hint of softness for Entro. Still unwilling to take a stand.

But the cruelest of them all were the *anti glare*. Cold, scratchproof and glaring through the rimless plastic. Unblinking they stared lifeless at Entro; although he could've sworn they'd once bled too. The salt had run dry and the red filigree spiderwebs under the white film were indicative of what had traversed behind those viscera, in the three hours prior to the cornering.

The cornering of Entro, they'd proudly print — on font sizes fluctuating from 4 to 24 — seeking to cut through the Twenty Twenty world that they refused to accept Entro's would never become. But that would come later. For now, Entro waited.

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In one swift moment *sodabottle* wrapped around his ears, tugging at the fine sinew clamping his eardrums tight as twin boa constrictors, only colder. He would have let out an “ouch” if the sunlight hadn't hit him first. Warm for a microsecond then narrowed to a point of excruciating agony burning through his coronas as it convexed through *sodabottle*'s twin Rorschachs'. Entro tried closing his eyelids only to run into *cat eyes*. With a lithe leap she'd slid down *sodabottle*'s bridge and up his pupils. Through clamped ears he heard the sound of his thumping blood merge with the pulsing slow grate of his delicate eyelids scraping against *cat eyes* causing him such ginger agony that the sadist in him greedily slow grinned. Part petrified, part intrigued by the sight of his own blood becoming scarlet vapor — each drop letting out a “hiss” evaporating as quickly

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as it slipped out — hitting the light laser that *sodabottle* was focusing over his iris.

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Ever since he was a teenager, reading pulp fiction snuck out from his uncle's trashpile, Entro had fancied his life as one of a cartel cleaner in a Mexican standoff. In fact it was for this reason he'd shortened his name from the chaste Bengali Entrendu Orgho to Entro, officially releasing the legal notice needed in the East Bengal English Gazette announcing so. Ironically, as he now faced what would be his first and last such standoff (Mexican or otherwise), Entro knew he wouldn't be the one blinking first. Now that he had no eyelids left.

All he did have, at this moment was a quarter of an eye each, leisurely being cauterized with such precision it wouldn't be long before the light burnt through his trigeminal nerve cluster straight to his brain's cerebral cortex, vaporizing even that beginning of the thought of victory celebrations he'd started to visualize through his grin.

The last image his eyes relayed was his own, reflected and distorted on the rimless surface of *anti glare*, who looked on at him, and blinked.