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My Reflection's Confessions

Sangeetha Alwar

I gaze at my reflection,
Wondering, “What do I see?”
Am I supposed to see myself?
Or all that I can be?

I see the real me,
Trapped inside this facade –
Hiding in plain sight;
Just waiting to be unleashed.

I relive my father’s anger
And my mother’s disappointment,
Cursing the day of my birth :
“Why, Oh why did it have to be a girl!”

I see the empty classroom
Where my teacher touched me in ways forbidden,
I let him be, He was my teacher,
How could he be wrong?

I can still taste my salty tears
When I was dragged out of college,
“A girl is not supposed to study so much”

My father's words still ringing in my ears.

This broken mirror like my shattered dreams of freedom,

The day I was "married – off" to a stranger,

Leaving, I see my parents heave a sigh of relief,

As if they had gotten rid of a pest.

I again experience the shock I felt

On discovering a whole new family,

That hated me as much as my last one,

My scarred body, a testament to their disappointment.

Here, again, I see the fiery eyes of my husband,

Following my every movement, His hands

Itching to beat me – a slave for his demonic pleasure;

Turning a deaf ear to my pleas for mercy.

Staring into the blank eyes of my reflection,

I see Rejection, Dejection,

Abuse, Transgression,

Crime, Cruelty, Injustice,

Suppression and Inferiority.

And the one question that haunts me,

Does everyone see it too?

I now recognise these same eyes,
Passing me on the street,
Sitting next to me on the train,
Even staring at me from the billboards.

I now realise, This mirror is my salvation,
And everyday I will return,
To ponder upon my reflection.