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## Grim Fate

**Himan Heidari**

“I may find the elixir of life in that poor suburb where people live in the alleys, there, in that particular district,” thia thoughts came to him as he was sitting on the ledge of a window overlooking a bustling city with its skyscrapers holding onto the clouds. White smoke lifted up from his cigarette wiping out all those memories which were once dear to him. There were five of them walking around, making sounds and waiting for him to give them apple to eat but the man was lost in his thought and forgot why he had called them over in the first place. One of them purred in pain and impatiently rubbed himself against the wall, but the man paid no attention. The sound intensified and the city grew darker and darker as the man was mooning over the time he had lost his chance to get that elixir.

Finally, he plucked up some courage and stepped out of the wrecked gloomy room accompanied by his five cats. He loved Leon more than others because he was quieter and his droopy eyelids reminded the man of his current state. He kept calculating in his mind the location of the district he wanted to go while the cats were submissively following his track so as not to lose him. He wandered in the streets, amid the dark narrow alleys where poor people lived in roofless boxes fixed to the walls so rich people could throw their leftovers from the top of their houses into their boxes. The scene was not new to the man. His eyes were on the front red half-ajar gate upon which different distorted shapes were carved. Before going in, he looked back and shouted “good boys, follow me,” it was his only way of expressing his affection and love toward his cats. As the cats didn’t have any other people to take care of them, they simply reacted to what he said to them. Had he wanted them to fight a dog or even paint a wall, they would have humbly obeyed, but, there, in that alley, they too lost their sense of obedience. Leon was running after a rotten apple a small girl tossed into an old man’s box. The other four were also preoccupied either with the puddles gathered in the center of the alley or the litters piled up beside the boxes.

The man growled, shook his head at the sign of their disobedience and went into the house with a feeling of foreboding. “Is anybody there?” he called out hesitantly as he entered the house but it was to no avail. He stood still, looked around and found the house quite empty, suddenly a sweet sound kept him on his toe. It was the sound of a girl singing and laughing on the top of her melodious voice. The man followed the sound curiously, went up the stairs and found it more audible. He perked up his ears and realized that every time the girl sang, a chorus followed her and added variety to her mellifluous voice. He was now close enough to see them clearly. They were a group of red-hair young girls jumping up and down around a big tub where the girl, stripped naked, was bathing and singing and reveling in her being. One of the girls was arranging her hair, another one pouring hot water into the tub and the rest were dancing around her as if they were performing a sort of ritual.

“Shoo away Leon, go play with others, it’s not a good time now” the man warned Leon as he looked back and saw him having a rotten apple in his mouth. Leon mewed at him. The sound was loud enough to agitate the girls. The man had no other choices but reveal himself. Then, he showed himself to the girls, stood still and fixated his look at the girl bathing in the tub as if he had found the elixir he had been looking for. The girl’s servants covered her body as fast as they managed to and in the blink of an eye, the girl splashed some drops of water on the man. He was happy he had gone into the right place and then breathed a sigh of relief to reward his right decision. He looked up at the roof and saw it bigger and longer as he used to be and then checked the ground where the stones looked like huge rocks spreading in open fields. Several giants, gathered around a tall shiny wall, were moving in dismay in front of him. Fear and panic overtook the man and he began to think what had happened to him and then resolved to go back. He took his first step back, raised his head up and noticed a big black cat standing and watching him in a threatening way. He took off from there quickly and entered a hole where the giant cat couldn’t get hold of him, then he made out his way through the dark tunnels into the same alley where he had entered the house. He saw a group of black moving objects huddling in a corner. Out of fear, he wagged his whiskers up and down and tried to take a different direction. He was confused, things were bigger than they normally used to be, his eyesight deteriorated and his sense of hearing heightened to a point he could hear all the puffs and pants coming out of the cat’s mouths as they were hunting him voraciously. He took refuge in one of those boxes into which an old man resting his soul. On seeing him, the old man jumped up greedily to catch him and eat him as if it was a long time since someone had thrown food into his box. He got trapped between the cats and the old hungry man but the cats were quicker than hell. They snatched him and tore their master into hundred pieces while Leon, still munching on his rotten apple in the house.

**Bio:**

Himan Heidari is a Kurdish- Iranian scholar. He holds M.A of English Literature at the University of Shiraz. He has published a series of short stories, essays, and poetry in both online and local magazines.