**Poetry Submission by Sofiul Azam**

**Sofiul Azam’s BIO:**

Sofiul Azam has three published poetry collections *Impasse* (2003), *In Love with a Gorgon* (2010), *Safe under Water* (2014) and edited *Short Stories of Selim Morshed* (2009). His work has appeared in *Prairie Schooner, Pirene's Fountain, North Dakota Quarterly, The Ibis Head Review, The Ghazal Page, Cholla Needles, Poetry Salzburg Review, Orbis, The Cannon’s Mouth, Postcolonial Text,*and elsewhere. Some poems are anthologized in *Two Thirds North, fourW: New Writing 28****,****Journeys, Caught in the Net* among others. His fourth poetry collection *Persecution* is forthcoming,and he is working on *This Time, Every Time* and *Days in the Forested Hills*. He currently teaches English at World University of Bangladesh, having taught it before at other universities.

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**Poems Submitted:**

**This Is Just to Say**

**The Man with Mood Swings**

**Who the Hell Benefits from Denials?**

**Which Part of You Did I Leave Unloved?**

**What Should I Tell My Wife on Our Tenth Wedding Anniversary?**

**This Is Just to Say**

*with no apology to the spirit of William Carlos Williams*

I’ve trashed everything with much the same obsession

as Farhad had – only to develop into an incorrigible lover

while development means GDP growth across the world.

There is no level of your disgusting I won’t go to;

my self-indulgence would take apart the smears against me.

You might call my love for you undegradable plastic!

I never end, would rather bounce back from extinction.

How can I resist the temptation of your nakedness?

I’ll be talking about it, and don’t expect me to shut

my mouth with a scrim-backed pressure-sensitive duct tape.

Your belly tastes like a plate of steamed red aush rice

and fried heron flowers with a pinch of salt.

I don’t know if your breasts are made of psyllium husks

or if they are simply cheese balls topped with cherries.

And down there is a pink cave I entered like Cassim,

forgetting the words to get out before thieves come.

**The Man with Mood Swings**

My mood swings do what tributaries do to a river. I just want

to move on. I don’t want to be stuck like a pond.

I love my dreams because the hammering world makes me feel

as if I were a wolf without its pack, watching birds still in mid-air.

Many times, especially last night after a fight with my wife,

I felt I had been eating midges and mosquitoes all my life with her.

I just wanted to lick my wounds and move on.

I wanted to make love to all my ex-girlfriends to know

if Heraclitus was worth what he had been, or to my last girlfriend at least.

She might have loved a warm and beautiful goodbye. Last night

I wanted to be her paramour again on a bed to be stained

by our sweat and wrinkled under our weight. Like rain

I wanted to fall on her bone-dry surface again. During my wife’s

stay at her father’s house, every time peeling the onion

to make an omelet for myself, inhaling her body’s perfume,

I felt her muslin being peeled. I wanted to taste her nipples

absentmindedly as I popped pitted black olives into my mouth.

Like the winter sun I wanted to vaporize her sorrows,

lying on her heaving chest – and there’s no place I’d rather be

except here – anticipating the flood of warmth inside her,

to see a moment’s happiness spread out on her face.

With just days to go in this dull summer, I imagined her

to be walking down a beach, flaunting her curves in a string bikini.

I remember how much I loved her postpartum stretch marks!

**Who the Hell Benefits from Denials?**

**I**

I know the depth of the injury I did to you;   
you might need years to recover from it.   
We might have expected a good coincidence

or a bit of what’s known as luck, opposite   
of what had happened. Having said that,   
I know every single minute was a test,

and we failed. Pressure does funny things.   
Yet I never fancied any chance against you   
nor expected to luck out without you,

for a supersized ego shrinks in denials   
like a balloon at a needle’s slightest touch.   
Who knows I won’t be a dark horse this time,

not in anyone’s radar, no favorite tag,   
opposite of what’s always been the case so far?  
One upside to all this is that the harshest

words or unpredictability can’t put me off   
though I know desires bred in captivity   
rarely survive in the wild as rock pigeons

take wing at the stink of a small Indian civet   
prowling out on their corrugated tin roof.   
Sometimes in this summer of suspicions,

I feel like being cool about everything else  
as the white of water caltrops and chestnuts   
growing profusely in freshwater wetlands.

But when you see tall towers falling in flames,

staying calm rather ignites the embers

you thought would always remain unignited.

**II**

By coincidence, we both loved wildlife.

Around your Granny’s house in the rains,

we saw pond herons and purple swamphens

looking for flying barbs or any other fish

among lush aquatic plants in waterbodies.

And by coincidence again, we both relished

spotted snakeheads sautéed with turmeric

and smashed with dried chilies, onions,

and garlic. On a night as colorful as what

we call the Mediterranean moray – our code

name for raking the burning embers of lust –

you’d let me savor your breasts soft as ripe

jackfruit flakes and your marshy patch

further down below. The commotion on bed

would get so fierce the vase holding fresh

cut flowers quite often tumbled down

from the nightstand. Ah, the moment

I think about the nakedness of our bodies

and the nakedness of our entwined minds

everything seems to be soothing as a balm.

I think I’ll never get done with all that.

Who the hell would kickstart the cleanup

for us? I say, *No one else*. So, is there a point

in breaking my heart smilingly? I am not

requesting you to accept me as a gem

you might have lost by mistake on the way,

rather as one humanly rife with imperfections.

**Which Part of You Did I Leave Unloved?**

*So much time wasted wanting to be remembered*

*Ends with desire to be forgotten,*

– from “The Wash” by Douglas Dunn

No use arguing for what I poured out of me into you,

like ink into an empty fountain pen

so that you could write grief if not happiness.

I wished you had taken the untrodden steps

– veiled in shrubberies – to tell me *I’ve discovered you,*

*and I’ve started having a feeling for you* but you

considered this a too-muchness for a worthless little loser.

I wanted you to know that my love was manifested

in every lie I told to squeeze your love into me.

But one thing is sure: you weren’t gaslighted by me.

Maybe you were unsure that what anyone refers to

as a fact might always be proven true. Maybe I’d gotten

an error message from you. I wasn’t ready for that.

I thought you’d change for the better, not for the worse,

that you’d understand my point made home on time.

I had the luxury of an idea: us forming an island;

now it’s breaking apart and drifting. But I still enjoy

made-up concerns for you: *Please don’t go braless*

*in a skimpy tank top and joggers to deserted places*

*if I must add context to it.* I’m not a body-shamer.

Which part of you did I ever leave unloved?

I just don’t like boll weevils to feed on cotton buds.

I still remember how fiercely I fought the urge

to be settling as a stone on a sea-bed for nothing.

**What Should I Tell My Wife on Our Tenth Wedding Anniversary?**

**I**

In my childhood, as soon as I saw tengara

catfishes with eggs inside, displayed on

the lids of a bamboo-woven wicker basket

in the local fish market, I bought them.

I still remember my father brought home

a long whiskered catfish way taller than me

from a fishing village by the Jamuna. Stop,

why should I be ruining this special day

with such talk? Is it anyhow related to you?

I’m not a diversionist, stupid! The things

we knew would happen are happening   
like the prophesy of sewage water running

after city’s drains are unclogged in the rains.

I did the things I know I shouldn’t have

done when you expected of your honey bee

to suck out nectar from your flower alone,

forgetting all about the nature of pollination

by bees roaming from flower to flower.

The germs of wickedness I might have

inherited from earlier adventures in the flesh:

they played filthy stuff over and over again

in my mind without my knowing of it,

and I cracked the hell of smutty jokes

about the foolishness of loyalty. And things

were utterly changed as if after the effects

of an overnight flood in the village by the river

but sediment remained as a bliss of fertility.

**II**

After the storm cleared, a new day dawned.

And we became transparent like glassware

though others couldn’t see us. They still don’t.

We have removed impurities from our gold.

And now I have what it takes to outgrow

my past, the fears that might have emerged

from their underground holts but the thicket

of my uncertainty about everything else

grows lush in spite of my pruning efforts.

I’m not lying through my teeth for I know

falsity waters no thirsting trees. Yet the harder

the grapevines have to struggle, the better

the wine. How can I deny the unalloyed

happiness that being in love with you

and your body has brought me? So I won’t

body-shame you for your sagging breasts

nor for getting flabby around your waist

and having lots of stretch marks on your body.

Time and your love for kids did all that.

I won’t go for a string of one-night stands.

For the last ten or so years with you, poetry

my other love is going flat out fantastic though   
I don’t care about the politics of numbers.   
Call me any name you know me better by.

Without you, my life would have been   
a sugarcane without sugar. Nowhere is more

homely than being here with you and kids.