

Last Passengers

The last train is gone. Putting our heads down between our knees, we shall spend the night here under these burning lights. With the tired, bloodshot eyes of those who bear corpses to the burning *ghat*, we shall be strangely sober in our forgetfulness. Like animals under the famous statues, everyone here is silent and grave.

Who are the people who caught the last train? Probably our cousins, relatives and half-brothers. They must be sleeping now on reserved bunks or changing into pajamas. Always punctual, they never miss a train. Great bargainers, they can buy anything they want.

But we spend our nights on the platform missing trains regularly. The cold wind like a vulture's claws cuts into us. A couple of mole-crickets—vendors and salesmen—busy themselves with profits and coin counting, but inwardly they cry. Out in the city the people at home observe their sacred midnight obligations in bed.

Near the station there is a bridge and under it, breathing coldly, a sleepless river. I, too, feel dark water in my heart. If only we could get a pot of hot tea now.

We get it. It is reboiled brown water. It tastes like urine—maybe ox blood.

Translated by the author