

# DOGRA MAGRA

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O Fetus, O Fetus,  
Why do you squirm?  
Does knowing your mother's heart,  
frighten you so?

...Bong...ngggggggg...ngggggggggggggggggggggg...

I woke up, bleary-eyed, to a sound like the humming of bees, as these deep, resonant reverberations continued to echo through my ear canals.

As I listened intently... I realized that it had to be midnight. Somewhere nearby, a clock was striking the time... With that thought, I began to drift back to sleep. The bee-like reverberations gradually faded away, until all was silent once more.

Abruptly, I opened my eyes.

A single bare bulb, covered in pale dust, dangled from the high white ceiling. On the side of the warmly glowing glass orb sat a large fly, as motionless as if it were dead. I myself lay directly below the bulb, stretched out on my back on the cold, hard, concrete floor.

How strange.

My body was stiff and unmoving, but I wrenched open my eyelids and looked around, rotating my eyeballs in every direction.

I was in a small rectangular room, about six square meters in size, surrounded by walls of dark grey concrete.

Tall, vertical windows of frosted glass, covered by one layer of black iron bars and a second layer of wire mesh, occupied three of the walls, giving the room a strong, secure feeling.

At the foot of the one wall without windows was a sturdy iron bed, its head pointed towards the entrance. Clean white bedding was neatly spread out on top. It appeared as though no one had slept in it.

How very strange.

I lifted my head slightly to look down at my body.

I was dressed in a stiff, new, two-layer cotton kimono, stark white in color. A short gauze sash was tied high across my chest. The four plump limbs protruding from the garment, however, were completely covered in dirt and grime.

How very strange indeed!

I raised a trembling hand and felt my face. My nose was sharp and pointy, my eyes were sunken, and my head of hair was a wild, unkempt mess. A thick, shaggy beard covered my chin and neck.

I jumped up in shock.

I reached up again and touched my face, then looked around nervously.

...Who was this? I certainly knew of no such man...

My heart began to beat rapidly, like a furiously tolling bell. My breathing grew rough, until I was gasping and panting as if about to die. Then, suddenly, the panic subsided, and all was quiet once more.

...Could something so strange truly be possible?

...Had I forgotten myself completely?

No matter how much I wracked my brains, I could not recall who or what I was. The only memory I had was of the clock chime I had just heard—a memory of its *Bong... nggg... ngggggggg...*

Despite this, I was certain of one thing: That outside the room was the quiet darkness of a forest, a silence that would continue on and on, to the ends of the earth.

...This was no dream... This was definitely no dream...

I leapt up and ran to the window to peer at the glass, hoping that seeing myself would summon some sort of memory. But there was nothing. Only my wild-haired shadow stared back at me, like a mischievous demon, from its frosted panes.

I spun around and dashed to the room's entrance, by the head of the bed. I brought my face to the brass doorknob, which contained

only a keyhole opening. But the doorknob did not reflect my face. It merely shimmered with a dim, yellowish light.

I searched under the bed and rummaged through the bedding. I even untied the sash of my kimono and turned it inside out, but to no avail. I could find no trace of my name or initials.

I stood there, dumbfounded. I was a stranger to myself, an unknown person in an unknown world.

As I pondered this, I began to feel as though I were plummeting straight down some endless void, my kimono sash still dragging behind me. A shiver welled up from the depths of my being, and I cried out in horror, forgetting myself completely.

It was an unexpectedly high-pitched, metallic scream... Before it could evoke any memories, however, it was absorbed by the surrounding concrete walls, and vanished.

I cried out again... But again, it was in vain. My voice echoed and swirled violently, then faded away, leaving the four walls, three windows, and single door more solemn and silent than ever.

I tried to cry out a third time... But before my voice could become a scream, it retreated into the depths of my throat. The terror of the silence that followed grew with each attempt to scream.

My teeth began to chatter loudly. My knees began to shake uncontrollably. Yet still I could not remember who I was... It was suffocating.

Before I knew it, I was struggling for breath. Struck dumb by fear, unable to scream for help and unable to escape, I stood stock-still in the center of the room, gasping for air.

...Was this a prison? Was this a mental hospital?

The more I thought, the louder my breathing grew. It echoed around the surrounding walls like a gust of cold wind in the middle of the night.

Eventually, I began to lose consciousness. My vision grew dark and hazy. Lying flat on my back, drenched in cold sweat, rigid as a

board, I began to close my eyes in resignation... Then, I suddenly snapped upright, as if pivoted by a mechanical force. I opened my eyes wide, and stared at the concrete wall opposite the bed.

I had heard a strange voice coming from the other side.

It certainly sounded like a young woman's voice. But the voice was so hoarse, I could hardly believe it was from a real human, and only a sad, painful echo came through the concrete.

"...Brother. Brother. Brother, Brother, Brother, Brother, Brother... Please... let me hear your voice once more... Please... just one more time..."

I shrank back in shock. I couldn't help but look behind me again, though I knew there was no one else in the room... Then I returned to staring at where the woman's voice had come through the wall, scrutinizing it as if to burn a hole through the concrete.

"...Brother, Brother, Brother, Brother, Brother... You are in the room next door, are you not, my brother? It's me. It's your fiancée, your future wife... It's me, it's me. Please... please let me hear your voice again... Let me hear your voice... your voice... your voice... Brother, Brother, Brother, Brother... Brother..."

I widened my eyes enough to feel the strain in my eyelids. My mouth opened in surprise. I took two or three long steps forward, as if being pulled towards her voice, then pressed down on my lower abdomen with both hands, and continued to stare intently at the concrete wall.

It was a cry of terrible purity, a cry that would leave any listener's heart hanging in a void. It was an unbearable, intolerable, desperate cry, one that froze me to my core... I did not know when it had begun calling to me... and I did not know for how many centuries, how many millenia, that voice of deep sorrow would continue to call. But it was calling to me (me?) from the other side of a concrete wall, in the middle of the night.

"Brother... Brother, Brother, Brother. Why... Why will you not

answer me? It's me, it's me, it's me it's me it's me! Have you forgotten me? It's me. It's *me!* Your fiancée... Have you forgotten me?... I died by your hands, the night before our wedding... I died by your hands, in the middle of the night, the night before we were to be married... But now I have come back to life... I have returned from the grave to be here. I am no ghost... Brother, Brother Brother, Brother... Why will you not answer me?... Have you forgotten what happened then?"

I staggered backwards unsteadily, and stared in the direction of the voice with eyes as wide as saucers.

"What strange words," I thought.

...The girl on the other side of the wall knew me. According to her, she was was my fiancée... and on the night before our wedding, I killed her with my own hands... Moreover, she had come back to life. Locked up in the room on the other side of the wall, she had apparently been calling out to me, day and night, crying out bizarre things, struggling desperately to awaken my memories of the past.

...Was she a madman?

...Was she sane?

No, no. She had to be a madman, a madman... Such idiocy... Such unthinkable things... Hahaha...

I laughed without thinking, but my facial muscles went rigid, and the laughter froze on my face... Then, an even more sorrowful voice came through the concrete wall. I could not laugh even if I wanted to... It was sincere... pitiful... and brimming with conviction, as if its owner were certain that she knew my identity.

"...Brother, Brother, Brother. Why... Why will you not answer me? I am suffering so... Just one word... Just one word... Answer me..."

"..."

"...Just one word... Just one word... All you have to do... is answer me. Then the doctors at this hospital will know... They will

know I am not insane. And then... the director will know that you understand my voice... and we will be able to leave this hospital together... Brother, Brother, Brother, Brother... Why... Why won't you answer me?"

"..."

"...Do you not understand my suffering? Day after day... Night after night... my voice calls out to you... Does it not reach your ears? Ahh... Brother, Brother, Brother, Brother... It's too much, too much, too much... Ah... Ah... My voice... Already..."

As she spoke, a new sound could be heard from the other side of the wall. Whether it was from a palm or a fist I do not know, but it was the rhythmic knocking of a soft, fleshy hand hitting the concrete. It was the sound of a weak woman pounding with determination, heedless of if skin and flesh were torn apart. As I continued staring at the wall, jaw tightly clenched, I imagined blood splattering and clinging to the opposite side.

"...Brother, Brother, Brother, Brother... It's me, the sister who died at your hands. It's me, the sister who came back to life. It's me, your poor sister, who has no one left but you. Here, I have no one at all... Has my brother forgotten me?"

"It is no different for you, Brother. For we are both here—the only two people in this world, you and I. We were locked up apart from each other in this hospital, because others thought we were insane."

"..."

"If you were to answer... what I say would all come true. If you were to remember me... they would realize... that you and I are not insane... Just one word... just one... If you were to answer... with *Moyoko*... if you were to call me by my name, then... Ah... Brother, Brother, Brother, Brother... Ah... I can speak no more... my eyes... my eyes are growing dim..."

I instinctively jumped onto the bed, and clung to the patch of



concrete from which her voice seemed to have come. I wanted to answer immediately... to help the girl in her suffering... to confirm my own identity as soon as I could. But I swallowed, and stopped myself.

Slowly, I climbed down from the bed. Then I backed away to the opposite window to distance myself from her voice, all the while still staring at that point on the wall.

...I could not answer. No... I had to not answer.

I was a man who had no idea whether or not she was my wife. Despite hearing her heartfelt cries of agony, I could not even recall her face. I was a mysterious mental patient, and the *Bong... nggg... ngggggg* of the clock from earlier was my only real memory of the past.

How, then, could I possibly answer as her husband? Even if answering her led to my freedom, I could not know if I would then learn my true name and identity. I was not even in a position to judge whether she was sane or mentally ill... And that wasn't all.

What if she truly was a mental patient? Then the person she was so desperately calling to could be nothing more than a figment of her imagination. If I answered her carelessly, my response could lead to a serious mistake... Worse, what if she were calling to someone who existed, but was not me? I would be stealing someone else's wife, profaning someone else's lover... I repeatedly swallowed and clenched my fists, as such fears and anxieties assaulted me one after another. Meanwhile, her cries continued to pierce the wall to attack me head-on.

"Brother, Brother, Brother, Brother, Brother. This is too much, this is too much, this is too much, this is too much, this is too much..."

Those cries... weak, painful, ghost-like cries of pure sorrow...

I pulled at my hair with both hands. Ten long fingernails scratched my head, until my scalp began to bleed.

“...Brother, Brother, Brother. I belong to you. I am yours. Quickly... quickly, take me in your arms, my brother...”

I vigorously rubbed my face with the palms of my hands.

...No, no... you are mistaken. You have misunderstood. I don't know you...

...I was about to shout this back, but I stopped myself. At that moment I could not even assert this fact... I knew absolutely nothing of my own past... I had no basis for denying her words. I knew nothing of my parents, my siblings, or my hometown... I did not even know whether I had been a human or a pig before now.

I balled my hands into fists and tapped behind my ear with my knuckles, but no memories emerged.

Still the girl's voice did not stop. Though out of breath... though almost inaudible, her voice surged with profound emotion.

“Brother... Brother... Please... please save me... Save me... save me... Ahh...”

As if being chased by that voice, I looked around the room once more, at the walls, the windows, the door. I started to run, then stopped.

...I wanted to escape to a place where I couldn't hear anything.

As I thought this, my whole body shivered with goosebumps.

I ran to the entrance door and flung myself at its painted blue boards, which seemed to be of solid rock. I peered into the dark keyhole... I was frightened into numbness by the implacable voice that continued to sound, the screams that were dying away, little by little... I grabbed the bars on the window with both hands and shook them with all my might. I was finally able to twist one corner at the bottom, but anything more seemed impossible with human strength alone.

Disappointed, I returned to the center of the room. Trembling in fear, I again looked around, surveying every corner.

Was I really in the human world? Or had I just arrived in the

afterlife, to suffer a punishment of some kind?

The moment I had regained consciousness, before I could feel relieved, I had been attacked by the hell of self-forgetfulness... I could remember not a single echo of my past... save the sound of a clock...

Then, before I had had time to think, I had been thrust into the living hell of a female stranger, crying out from somewhere unknown... I had been thrust into the hell of a tragic love so profound it seemed unthinkable, whose punishment one could never escape...

I stamped my feet so hard my heels hurt... I sat down heavily... I lay down on my back... Then I got up again, and looked around... in order to distract myself from the almost inaudible sobbing sounds coming from the adjacent room... in order to regain my past as quickly as possible... in order to rescue myself from my torment... in order to give the girl a clear answer...

I do not know for how many minutes, or how many hours, I wandered the room in this way. However, my mind remained empty. I remembered nothing of her, and discovered nothing about myself. I was an empty shell, living within empty memories. I struggled in the darkness, pursued by her shameless screams.

Little by little, the screams from the other side of the wall grew weaker. Eventually they dried to a trickle, then turned into breathless gasps, before finally the surrounding walls returned to the familiar silence of midnight.

At the same time, I was tired. I was tired from the madness, and the constant thinking. I am unsure of if I was standing up or sitting down, as I listened to the steady ticking of a large clock, from what I imagined was the end of a hallway outside my door... but at some point... somehow... I sank back into my initial state of unknowing unconsciousness...

...Then... I heard a sound...

Before I knew it, my body was pressed into a corner of the wall opposite the entrance. I threw out my arms and legs, let my head droop until it hung down to my chest, and stared fixedly at a point on the concrete floor, directly in front of my nose.

Looking around, I noticed that the floor, window, and walls had brightened, and were shining with a pale blue light.

...Choo choo... Choo choo... Choo... Choo choo choo...

It was the quiet chirping of sparrows... or the faraway sound of an electric train. The ceiling light had gone out without me noticing.

...Morning had come...

I thought drowsily to myself, rubbing my eyes with both hands. I must have slept soundly. I had completely forgotten the strange and terrifying events that had occurred in the dark hours of the morning. I stretched my stiff and sore body vigorously and let out a big yawn, but before I could inhale enough air, I abruptly shut my mouth.

Next to the entrance door, a small sliding door attached flush to the floor opened. Through it entered a plain wooden tray, with some white dishes and a silver plate on top.

The moment I saw it, I was struck by something. Unconsciously, the questions that had been on my mind that morning began to swirl once more around in my head. I stood up, rushed to the sliding door on tiptoe, and grabbed the plump red arm placing the tray on the floor... The tray, toast, salad plate, and milk bottle all clattered and rolled onto the floor.

I forced out a question, straining my hoarse voice.

“Please... Please tell me. What is it... What is my name?”

“...”

My counterpart did not move an inch. Their cold, turnip-like arms, protruding from white sleeve cuffs, turned purple beneath my grip.

“What is it... What is my name? I’m not a madman... nothing

like that...”

“Ahhh...!”

A young woman’s scream came from outside the sliding door. The purple arm I had grabbed onto started to struggle weakly.

“Someone... Someone, please come. Patient number seven is... Ahh! Someone, please come...!”

This is a short preview of the content of the full book. If you enjoyed reading it, consider purchasing a complete translation of *Dogra Magra* when it becomes available at [demoncranepress.com](http://demoncranepress.com).



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