

The Boar

(An Adaptation from *The Bear* written by Anton Chekov)

One wouldn't know that it was morning with the sun rising high, for it was dark as the midnight in the house. Priyangika was becoming or had already become a creature of the dark. The curtains were drawn and the heavy drapes blocked out the sun as well as the warmth. The house was beginning to smell musty and damp. She sat on her usual spot in front of their wedding photo staring at it reliving the day. This seemed to be the only activity she was capable of doing at the moment.

Lal looks at his young mistress, and he is worrying himself to an early grave. Well maybe not early, but he is going to die before his time because of the constant worrying. He had known Priya nona, as he called her since she was a very young girl. He had been the man servant of her

father as well. When she married Nalaka mahattaya, Lal came to work for him.

"Nona, this is not good. I can't watch and do nothing while you destroy your life." He said and walked towards the window to open the drapes. But he stopped as Priya gave him a deadly stare.

"The cook has gone to the market to buy vegetables; the gardener has visited the flower exhibition to bring some new flower plants. Life goes on outside this room. Only you are locked inside this coffin of a house." He sighed.

"I don't care what happens out there. I have promised myself, that I would never see the light of the day and I would be in mourning clothes all my life." Her tone was resolute.

"But, Nona, the dead is gone. Those who live have to live. You should not live as if you are dead." Priya was slightly surprised by these words of wisdom from her servant. But she did not change the look of determination on her face.

Lal began again despite the

seemingly uninteresting contour of *Priya*.

“Nona, your mother brought another proposal. This gentleman is even more handsome than the previous one. Please, at least look at the photos. At least, go out and play with the dogs in the garden as you used to do.”

“You should not talk with me about marriage proposals again. And the dogs, oh, how *Nalaka* loved Rocky! How he loved to play with Rocky! Go and feed him some extra portion of meat. Oh how he loved him!” she repeated.

Lal nodded his head. It was like talking to a brick wall. The young mistress was not ready to change her ways yet.

Priya and *Lal* both jumped as they heard the doorbell which went off with such vigour and urgency. *Priya's* face clouded with a frown.

“Didn't you tell the gate keeper that I don't want to meet anyone. Go at once and get rid of whoever it is!” she almost screamed. “I don't care who or what they want.”

Lal has never seen her this angry. He was worried

“She is going crazy.” He told himself. He exited to deal with the trespasser at the door.

“Thank god!” said *Priya* as the persistent doorbell stopped ringing at last. She eased her exhausted body on the easy chair in front of the photo once again.

“You should be ashamed of yourself *Nalaka*. You were unfaithful to me. I loved you so much and you made a mockery of my love. Well you at least had the decency to keep that hidden from me.” Even though she knew that *Nalaka* had other affairs, and a weakness for gambling, she had no idea of the extent of the issue until he passed away. She was just going through the messages in his mobile when she came upon the endless amorous exchanges with other women which made her suddenly break down with a sense of humiliation.

“*Nona!*” a shout came from the doorway and a moment later, the sweating, panting servant appeared, to her surprise accompanied by a man. The man was tall and dark with

disheveled hair. He had a scar on his face which gave him a look of aggression.

“What did I tell you? You old idiot,” *Priya* was not in a mood to spare the old servant.

“Even after I clearly said, I don't want to see anyone, you brought this ...this ...this person into the house.” She turned her face away from the men.

“Please leave, I'm not in the mood to meet anyone today or ever again for that matter.” She said with a quiver in her voice. Anger had already exhausted her.

“Well, too bad lady, because I am very much in the mood to meet you and this man had tried to stop me from coming inside, but look at him, he would have to bring an army of soldiers with him to stop me.” The stranger said sarcastically.

He came into the room and whistled softly.

“You have a very nice place, miss. Very nice indeed.” He said appreciatively.

His voice sounded quite rough as if he smoked a lot and the stench!

“God! He stinks.” She thought scrunching up her nose.

The man smelled of stale alcohol and sweat.

“What a brute, smells like a boar!” she thought to herself as she turned around.

“I'm in mourning. Can't you see? Please I'm not ready to deal with whatever you

have in mind. Tell *Lal* whatever you have to say and please leave.” She said avoiding the man's eyes.

“I'm sorry *Nalaka* is gone. I would have liked very much more to talk to *Nalaka* himself because it was with him I did business. But now he has gone, so I need to talk to you, not your servant. I'm a money lender. I lent your late husband three hundred thousand rupees and with the

interest he owes me four hundred fifty thousand rupees in total. It is overdue by several months and I can't wait any more. I need the money immediately." He said gritting his teeth.

The woman, no matter how young-looking and pretty she was, was making him angrier by the minute. "Not in the mood! You get in the damned mood, you woman!" he thought to himself angrily.

"I've been trying to collect the money people owe me, but none of them would give. None of them were 'in the mood' to give back my money." He continued without noticing the woman in mourning going paler and paler.

"I slept in my car, I haven't eaten anything since last morning. I'm not in the mood either. Lady, to tell you the truth, I'm going to lose in mortgage if I don't pay up by tomorrow." The man tightened his hands into fists to prevent himself from grabbing something at arm's length and throwing it across the room.

"OH, God! You have no manners at

all. I'm mourning for my dead husband and you come here and shout for money with no care at all about my feelings. If my late husband owed you money, I'll pay it for him. But I don't have that much of money right now. I'll be getting some money day after tomorrow. Then I'll definitely pay off your debt." *Priya* still would not look at the visitor. Then she suddenly inquired,

"Wait, but why would he have to borrow money from you? he had enough and more." She said in amazement.

At this the man laughed loudly. But that was an ugly cheerless laughter filled with sarcasm.

"That would be another thing you never knew about him, Miss. He had a problem with gambling. He used to come to the casino every day. For your information he lost way more than he won."

He rubbed off sweat from his face with his palm. He remembered how he spent the night in the car the last night and his anger returned at the thought that all the suffering is due to the evasiveness of his debtors.

"And", he paused to emphasize what

was to follow, "I don't need your money day after tomorrow. I need it today." He slammed his hand on the table to coincide with the word 'today'.

"No," Priya glared at the intruder looking straight into his eyes for the first time.

"I don't have money with me right now. I'll be having enough money to give you in two days." She almost



shouted.

"if two days is too late for you, then it's too bad." This time she was as angry as the stranger.

The intruder grabbed hold of the flower vase on the table and was about to crush it when Priya screamed again,

"You came to my house stinking like a wild boar and now you try to behave like one!"

She kept her hands on her hips and stood in front of the man whose mouth was gaping as the result of the unexpected outburst on the part of the lady.

"I've always been faithful to my husband and that rascal of a husband had been cheating me under my very nose. I'd never let another man treat

me like that again." She stomped her feet and started to walk towards the large man.

"Get out of my house, Lal, Get this man out of my house."

As Lal tried to move towards him, he held Lal by the throat and

said, "I'll tear you from limb to limb and feed my dogs." He pushed the old man aside so hard that he fell on the door way and the frightened old man started screaming.

"Help me Madam, he's going to kill me."

Priya was so angry and he screamed pointing her finger, "Leave the old man alone. I'll teach you a lesson, I'll teach you a lesson. You think I'm scared of you? Well, I'm not." She turned abruptly and ran into the house.

The frightened man grew even more frightened in the absence of his mistress. To his surprise, he saw the man smiling to himself.

"She is very pretty indeed. Even more so with anger flushing her creamy complexion." He looked at the old servant.

"You are not going to die, you old fool." At this Lal who was still seated on the floor crawled away on all fours.

At that very moment *Priya* entered the room with the same angry countenance carrying a heavy knife. The man burst out laughing. *Priya* stopped as the resonation belly laughter was the last thing she expected.

He wiped his tears from his eyes and said, "so you are going to chop me into pieces with that knife." He

pointed at the knife held by her slender hand.

"No, that won't work, you can stab me with another knife with a pointed end."

Priya looked at the man with her eyes bulging.

"Yeah? Ok....." she ran back inside with the man's laughter following her all the way to the kitchen. She found a sharp steak knife. "Aha, this is perfect ..." she muttered to herself.

She ran back to the living room to find the man comfortably seated in an arm chair.

"Oh! Good choice." He said. His voice was not angry anymore. Instead it sounded something close to affection!

"Very versatile weapon, a steak knife." He said appreciatively, baffling the lady more and more. It definitely is not the way a man whose imminent death prowls close to him, behaves. The sense of utter confusion by now had replaced her fury.

"Are you going to stab me?" He hid a

giggle with a fake cough and said, "Well, neck is a good place, but you would have to climb up on something to stab me that high. That's too dangerous, what if you lost your balance?"

His stone heart was cracking every minute spent in her presence. *Priya* stood petrified unable to make out the creature inside this muscular and tough looking figure of a man.

He got up and walked towards her and held out this hand, "Hi, I'm *Sriyantha*." And he softly took the knife away from her slender hand and kept it away on a table nearby.

"I'm sorry, I upset you before. But I was really angry with all these people who come crawling when they want money and run away when they have to return it."

He touched *Priya's* face with his fingertips lightly and watched her eyes flutter closed, casting a shadow on her face with her dense eye lashes.

"Your husband was a knight in shining armour from outside and a vile fox inside." He paused and waited for *Priya* to look at him.

"I might be a wild boar from outside,

but an honest and humble man inside."

He smiled when *Priya's* cheeks blushed with embarrassment when she remembered her own crude words at this man some time ago.

"Will you let me prove it to you? He asked slowly touching her fingertips. *Priya's* heart swelled with excitement and anticipation as she gazed into the eyes of the man. There was a glow of sincerity and honesty in them which she has never seen in *Nalaka's* eyes.

Lal stormed into the room followed by the gardener. They were armed with sticks and rakes. The bewildered men stopped abruptly as they saw the couple holding hands in the middle of the living room. *Lal* scratched his head and cleared his throat nervously, breaking the trance of the lovers.

"*Lal*, open the drapes and let some light in. the house is dark and damp." *Priya* said as the gardener left the room smiling to himself.