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15 More Minutes

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15 More Minutes

By: Sauharda Bikram Sedhain

I have never hugged my father
Except that one time of weakness
When an eleven-year-old boy
Was sentenced to prison.
But in my father's vocabulary
It was a "boarding school".
The day of reckoning was here
My hands trembled with absolute fear.
Because deep down I knew
15 more minutes and they will be gone.

She held my shaky hands while my father
Parked the '98 Corolla against the rocky
Base of the hill, beside the iron gates.
"Ask the warden for the landline,
So that you can call me once a month,"
She said as she suppressed her pearly tears.
Two red suitcases and a black school-bag,
Necessary for my survival,
Were as mortified as I were,
As the pearls slipped from the edge of her eyes
And smashed onto the rocky concrete.
But I wished and prayed for a glass jar
To collect those pearls from her cheeks.
I would keep it beside my freshly sanitized pillow
If the warden did not let me use the phone.
Now he walked towards the warden's office
Carrying my suitcases like *Hanuman*
Carried the enormous mountain.
I was certain now; 10 more minutes and they will be gone.

"We will take good care of your child"
Said the pointy nosed warden
Grinning with sinister eyes.
My father shook his hands
Making a pact with the Devil himself.
And as the Corolla's engine purred
With anguish of missing this 11-year-old boy.
My moment of weakness overcame me
As my trembling hands rushed towards
My father's hips, holding his leather belts tightly, more tightly
Because deep down I knew
5 more minutes and they will be gone.