

Mani G. Iyer

My Father's Snuff Box

He's perched on his armchair beside the window,
his *lungi*-covered legs and bare feet up on a shaky stool.
Propped up by ragged pillows, he holds court
for his neighborhood friends. I too tune in, though
pretending to memorize *The Charge of the Light Brigade*.

He booms, "Our leader, Mrs. Gandhi did right for the country",
snakes his right arm towards the cracked sill where he seeks
the steel box shaped like a miniature tome—
his name engraved on the spine—
pinches enough snuff between right forefinger and thumb,
sniffs some up his right nostril, attends to his left,
and claps away the rest over the floor.
The rare smile creases his face and he splashes
back into the flow of his colorful talk
that perfumes the room and his nodding audience.

Come nightfall, his visitors take leave of him,
and he goes back to his grim self.
I wish he would ask me for my English textbook,
listen to his son's perfection of the Tennyson poem,
and reach for his snuff box.

Mani G. Iyer was born and raised in Bombay, India and currently lives near Boston. He is deafblind due to Usher Syndrome, a rare, progressive genetic disorder. He was a software engineer for 30 years before turning to poetry when he went blind. His poems have appeared in *Sonic Boom*, *Lily Poetry Review*, *Soul-Lit*, *Off the Coast* and *The Helikon Poetry Journal* (translated to Hebrew). His debut chapbook, *I Am the Dancing*, was published by Yavanika Press in the fall of 2019.