

***Because No one is Listening,
I can Speak Of Things
As They Are***

Prayas Abhinav

PRAYAS ABHINAV

Sometimes through narrow slits and gaps, potentialities are demonstrated.

HOJA ASLI

That day the wind was very still. It felt like somebody was about to die. But who? When? Why? The mystery was confounding.

PRAYAS ABHINAV

If a narrative can be escaped, it does not exist at all.

HOJA ASLI

Fear was in the air, people stayed cooped up indoors.

PRAYAS ABHINAV

Actors ask for a script when they do not have one.

HOJA ASLI

And the fear was justified. Death was really in the air. It was time for hope to die. Hope for what? Hope to end the estrangement that set us apart. The estrangement that made us behave like strangers who have no warmth in our hearts.

PRAYAS ABHINAV

By default, we feel like giving. To take, feels like a violation in itself.

HOJA ASLI

The death of hope was the breakage of the last link we had. Link to the poetry of the smell of home. You know, God is just a concept that we made up because we are really troubled. I am troubled by the lingering flavour of my mother's favourite recipe. The lingering flavour of the fear in the air when my father was in the room. But now its all gone. It is too late to remember. I somehow find solace in talking about ghosts. Ghosts, gods, memories - all come from the same place.

PRAYAS ABHINAV

We do not really stand a chance.

HOJA ASLI

When I open my eyes, I see a world
in which we have nothing to talk
about anymore. It is done. Cut and
dry. In the hurry to be complete,
we cut everything short, we did not
want to leave anything hanging. We
have a lump of blood in our
throats.

3 ABSTRACTION

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PRAYAS ABHINAV

We can live only if we agree to
die.

HOJA ASLI

Take a fistful of air. Let it go.
What do you feel? We fail to
remember anything. Death is the
only thing that works. Have you
ever died? In death we can
experience the perfect homecoming.
But that is wrong? We are supposed
to live, live forever in fact.

PRAYAS ABHINAV

What do we remember? Do we remember
conceptually intense narratives, or
do we remember narratives that we
cannot fully understand but we are
still fond of?

HOJA ASLI

But what if we can do both? I was
lying there by the side of the
road. I had consumed poison. And it
was working. I was nearly gone and
I lie there in the sand for a long
time. I awoke with a jolt. I had
something running in my head - I
didn't want to die, not then and
not in that way.

4 LOVE

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PRAYAS ABHINAV

There is no reward at the end.
there is no bonus for behaving.

HOJA ASLI

When things are so dry, when there
are no margins to play anymore,
there is no other choice. Either
die a little bit or think very hard
about where you came from. Fall in
love and walk away. Pine. Be in
pain. And then remember that this
(MORE)

HOJA ASLI (cont'd)

is only an exercise. Do not wallow. Use it as an excuse to go back home. See if your mother will open the door.

PRAYAS ABHINAV

You cannot give nothing to get nothing.

HOJA ASLI

She was my fall-back. I had exhausted all other options. Nothing ever worked. And because she was my fall-back, I really fell, without fear and without hope. If the object of desire is right there in front of you, avoid it. Desire is never meant to be realised. How could you get so lucky? I didn't know this then, I indulged myself with my fall-back. I over-invested in what I knew to be a losing bet. I was dying, I did not have enough breath left in my lungs. She was many things but she was not a tank of oxygen.

PRAYAS ABHINAV

In the future, people live forever but they have to die and be reborn periodically.

HOJA ASLI

When I tried again, I only swam around the periphery. I did not find anything. She was not from this world. She had found a way out. She was not even concerned with attempting to return. I was quite taken. She seemed to be clean. Clean of all the stinks. You know the stinks - exhaustion, exasperation, desperation.

PRAYAS ABHINAV

We will all become better actors.

HOJA ASLI

This time, I did not lead. I followed. You know one of the reasons that defines my existence is that unlike Prayas, I do not need to feel intelligent. I do not like to hear my own voice. I am alright with just telling my story. My story gives me something to do.

PRAYAS ABHINAV

We can't take anybody's word for it.

HOJA ASLI

I was following her, we were both walking. She was walking a hundred feet in front of me. I was intent on following her. She knew I was following her. And then she sat down in the middle of the road. When I caught up with her, she said she just wanted to lead me astray. The smell to home, that had deep-seated in her nose, was personal. It was not OK for me to follow her trail. Her mother will only let her in, anyway. There was no room for hanger-ons.

PRAYAS ABHINAV

Silence is can be as thick and uncomfortable as speech.

HOJA ASLI

And then I had to claw my way back to being in touch with my own potential. I sat on a bench for many days. I let the remnant of all the trails wear out. I returned to unmarked territory. But I had no idea of who I was anymore. The wound had healed. There was not even any soreness anymore.

PRAYAS ABHINAV

The imaginary guest introduces the unknown stranger to the scene.

HOJA ASLI

The wound had become an access to what was happening under my skin. When the wound healed, my access disappeared. I was in a place where I really wanted to be broken into. I invited trouble easily. Every point of friction became an opportunity to discover an opening into myself.

PRAYAS ABHINAV

Once a story starts, it might never end.

HOJA ASLI

This search led me to numerous agents who offered to break in and cause damage. I didn't take up any of them. Until this moment arrived. Now, I know that I can break into myself and destabilise my own world. I am not a person. I am an idea. An idea that wants to know itself.

PRAYAS ABHINAV

So if life is the continuous propagation of narrative, then fun is the break in narrative.

HOJA ASLI

Something else happened then. I stopped needing anybody else in my executing my own destruction and then the eventual construction. I was all by myself. I stopped spelling out my words clearly. Because there was no other listener than my own self, I started thinking I already knew everything I was ever going to say.

PRAYAS ABHINAV

Time is a rather odd thing to measure.

HOJA ASLI

Then one evening I was just sitting around and I was just saying something random to myself. I realised that I was telling a story about myself that I had not heard before. Talking to myself is becoming a source of a lot of new material. I remember things that have never happened to me. The only thing I have not been able to remember is where I kept the map of all these fragments in my mind.

PRAYAS ABHINAV

For example, it does not mean anything to smile.

HOJA ASLI

I even know that the map even exists because it saw such a map in my dream. I always believe my dreams. No one knows where dreams come from. Dreams might just be leaked narratives from other people's heads.

PRAYAS ABHINAV

It is not the designated job of stories to make sense. It is alright if they do not make sense sometimes and fail.

HOJA ASLI

That's why I have to sleep by myself. I cannot share my bed. I do not want to dream your trauma. I find my sleep very precious. I cannot wake up sometimes. I get locked into cycles of sleep. Do I search for closure in my dreams? We can switch roles anytime. I am not ready to play a role where I perform and you just stare at me. I understand that I am your favourite distraction, but I also like to watch out of the window. I will tolerate you for now. In fact, I will tolerate you up until the moment I am not distracted by something else. We are only playing musical chairs with distraction.

PRAYAS ABHINAV

We are complex beings in a complex world and our perspectives cannot reflect the simplicity of narrative clarity.

HOJA ASLI

In retrospect I should never have started speaking. I should have kept quiet and remained hiding behind the my mask. I should have remained indistinct, and indecipherable. Because you only get to speak once. If you speak before that moment has arrived, you just train your listeners to filter you out. So when you actually want to say something, you have already been dismissed.

PRAYAS ABHINAV

Words hide and do not reveal.

HOJA ASLI

I was standing at the window, staring down at people walking by on the road. No one could catch me prying. But I saw someone prying back. Who was she? Why was she interested in me? Did she assume

(MORE)

HOJA ASLI (cont'd)
 that my self-absorption was so
 absolute that I would not notice
 her?

8 AGGRESSION

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PRAYAS ABHINAV
 We are always past our prime or not
 ripe yet.

HOJA ASLI
 She came close and slapped me.
 Everyone has a function in social
 life and my function is to be a
 sponge for the frustration and
 anger around me. Once we daub this
 off, there is a real possibility of
 replacing this anger with a rage.
 Rage not against a person or an
 imagined other. But rage in itself.
 Why? Because we are exposed.
 Exposed as actors who have
 something to say of their own.
 Either we should go back to sleep,
 or have courage to embrace our
 exposure. I flirted with the
 thought that I could disappear. But
 disappearing is as difficult as
 appearing.

PRAYAS ABHINAV
 After we figured this out, we
 decided to talk.

HOJA ASLI
 I build a boat. With this boat, I
 hope to sail in this city's canals
 and find a place to anchor myself
 somewhere along the banks. I am a
 good construction worker. If I want
 to make something, I will come up
 with a method. This ability of
 making things sometimes gets me
 into trouble. When I was a kid, I
 didn't just dream of making a
 tunnel from my school to home but
 actually made it. My teachers kept
 searching for me but I just dropped
 into my hole and went home whenever
 I desired to. I took a nap in my
 bed for some time and then equally
 suddenly reappeared in my school in
 a few hours. I always managed to
 skip my ethics class. Maybe that
 explains why I don't have any.

PRAYAS ABHINAV

The less we understand, the more we imagine. We are moving away from the walled garden of relying on constructed communication to get our point across.

HOJA ASLI

When my head was lost in the clouds, the doctors said that the medicine would help me feel better. But the medicine only made me feel like a vegetable. As a vegetable, I regularly experienced blankness. I did not feel anything. I did not experience anything. I had lapses. I value this ability to get dislodged from time now, now my head is not cloudy anymore. Sometimes I even feel sharp. When I felt blurred, I got a break. I do not get a break anymore. My teeth are biting a piece of stone.

PRAYAS ABHINAV

Because language is a map.

HOJA ASLI

And actually, it should just be a slap.