



**TRANSLATION**

**From Urdu Story**

**THE VISION IN-BETWEEN**

**QURRATUL-AIN-HYDER**

Translated by

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Tarabai's eyes twinkled like stars and she looked around in astonishment and stared at things around. Infact, Tarabai's eyes had something magnetic about them. She was a child-widow, from a village in Gorakhpur afflicted with famine and for a few months she had been working in the house of Begum Almas Khursheed Alam.

Four months back, Almas Begum got married. Her Mangalorain maid-servant returned to her native place, so her aunt, Begum Osmani rang up to the employment exchange and from then Tarabai came into "Gul-Nastaran" on the 10th floor of the sky-scraper at Kambala Hill. Almas Begum found her, a worthy and capable maid-servant. She was not talkative but kept herself busy doing the work and stared at her Master and Misterss with fear.

Tarabai served the bed-tea in their Bedroom. She used to iron the clothes and polish the shoes of her sahib out of great love and also fetch water for his shave. While dusting and sweeping she touched and looked at the things in amazement, which her sahib had brought from Paris. His violin was kept over the wardrobe. The first time, when Tarabai was sweeping the bedroom, she caressed the violin for a long time.

Saheb was favourite with the society especially with the people of the opposite sex. But after marriage Begum Saheb imposed many restrictions on him. When he went to office, she rang him up several times. Begum Saheb was informed whenever he went out in the evening with some work. At times, when the couple went out in the evenings to ease their mind or to rejoice, even then, Begum Saheb kept a strict watch at them.

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Saheb accepted all her restrictions happily because Begum Saheb was very rich and he got the job because of his wealthy father-in-law. Saheb was a very poor man before marriage. He went to France to study Engineering course on Scholarship. When he returned, he didn't get the job and was worried for it. Only then, Begum Saheb's people noosed him.

Tarabai heard from the brick-layer, the cook, the porter and other servants of the flats, the peculiar tales of the people belonging to the high society.

Khursheed Alam was a very good Violinist. But ever since his marriage, he didn't touch the violin because Almas Begum had a hatred towards this instrument. Khursheed Alam was grateful to his wife as this marriage brought a great change in his life.

It happened just a year and a half before. Almas lived with her famous businessman father in a well-decorated and luxurious home at Malabar hill. She was a social worker. She never thought of her marriage as she was quite aged. When she met Khursheed Alam in a party, her experienced Aunt, Begum Osmani could smell the possibilities and wanted to know his whereabouts. She came to know that the gentleman is from Uttar Pradesh. He has returned from Europe and hunting for a job. She also got the news that he was not ready for the marriage because he was involved with her girl in French and was waiting for her return. Begum Osmani was prompt in her expedition. Almas's father gave Khursheed Alam a job in his firm and paid him a salary of fifteen hundred rupees per month. Her mother invited him to their house and thus they kept on meeting each other.

One year has passed but Khursheed Alam never proposed Almas. At last Begum Osmani decided to speak to him frankly. But, he received a telegram, stating that his father was seriously ill. He was on leave to visit his native place.

Almas was dejected at his long absence. One evening she went to the Tajmahal Hotel along with her friends to attend a German Pianist Concert. A girl with beautiful eyes was distributing the concert programme. A lady, who was Almas's friend introduced her to that beautiful girl, Miss. Peeroja Jehangir Dastoor.

Almas looked at her minutely and found that the girl was beautiful." I haven't seen you ever before in any concert", said Almas.

"After seven years, I came from Paris, just last week", replied Peeroja.

Now, the distinguished guests were moving towards the sea-lounge with the German Pianist. Tea was being served in the hall.

"Please come and sit here", said Peeroja with a smile, to Almas and both of them occupied their chairs.



“You look as expert in” Western music”, asked Almas, in a bit, rough tone.  
“Yes I’d been to pairs for higher education in piano” replied Peeroja.

A bell of alarm rang in the mind of Almas. She threw a look at the clear, blue surface of the sea and all at once in the polite and friendly manner said “how interesting; even we have a piano”. “Do come and entertain us on any day”.

“Oh, sure:” replied Peeroja happily.

“What’s your programme on Saturday?” “I am arranging a hen-party. My friends would be glad to meet you”.

“I’d love to come .Thank you;”

“Where do you live, Peeroja?” asked Almas.

Peeroja gave her the address of the Tardeo Street.

Almas took a sigh of relief and felt relaxed as Tardeo was a lane , where poor and needy Parsees live.

On Saturday, Peeroja went to Almas’s house, where the hen-party was at its height. In one corner of the room, a piano was kept as a “Show Piece”. Girls were enjoying “Jamaica Farewell,” on the radiogramme. Almas, silently moved towards the balcony and stood there. When the music was over, she came in and said to Peeroja.

“We are tasteless people.” We are listening to the records when an expert pianist is among us;” “please come; .... get up” .....

Peeroja got up with a smile and sat on the piano stool.

“What would you like to hear?” “I know only classical music.”

“Oh; why not pop?” the girls shouted.

“O.k.; let’s hear an Indian film song.”

“I don’t know film songs, but – I remember one Ghazal

Peeroja’s fingers danced on the string and the room was filled with a melodious tune.

“Please do sing to the accompaniment of the music.” shouted the girls.

“Oh, I can’t sing. My urdu pronunciation is horrible”.

“Please remind us of the words, we’ll sing to the Accompaniment of the music”.

“O.k.: this is how it begins with the words ...” replied Peeroja.

“You are in my front,

Tell me where you are,

How could I see you,

There’s the vision in between:”

Some of the girls sang along with her.



Within two weeks Almas became very close and friendly to Peeroja. She got the job of a piano teacher in a convent college. She also got tuition, where she had to teach piano to a ten-year-old American girl. Her father was a widower. Just a few days back he lost his wife and to overcome the grief or for a change, he came to India along with his children and was staying at the “Sun-n-Sand Hotel”.

One day, when Peeroja and Almas were walking in the garden of their house, Almas questioned her, “where did you learn the ghazal, you sang the other day?”

“Oh; that, I learnt in Paris”

“Paris; how interesting; who did you learn it from?”

“From my fiancé.”

“What’s the name of that gentleman?”

“Khursheed Alam,” she answered.

After a few moments, Almas said to her, “what a coincidence, Peeroja dear, also my fiancé’s name is Khursheed Alam, he plays violin, he too returned from Paris and now-a-days he is in his native place to attend his ailing father”.

A fierceful flash of lightening was seen on the sky but no one saw that it fell straight on Peeroja Dastoor. Softly, she said “O.K. Almas; Good bye”.

She walked briskly towards the gate. She came on the road and saw a bus coming and when it stopped, she got into it.

Exactly three days after this incidence, Almas received a letter from Khursheed Alam, addressed to her father, in which he wrote about his father’s illness and requested him to extend the leave. Almas wrote in reply:

“You can stay there for as many days as you wish. Dad, don’t consider you as a stranger. You are like one of our family members.”

“Yesterday, I had been to “Sun-n-Sand Hotel” for a swim. There I met a beautiful Parsi lady. Miss Peeroja Dastoor, who is a pianist and came from Paris along with her American boyfriend. Both have been staying at “Sun-n-Sand Hotel”. You have met her in Paris, haven’t you?”

Friendly Yours,  
Almas

On an evening, Khursheed Alam stopped the taxi in front of a dilapidated building in Tardeo Street. An old Parsi lady wearing a red saree and scarf on her head came out of the building.





“Is Miss. Dastoor here ? ”

“Peeroja ? “ replied the old Parsi lady.

“She went to Juhu- “Sun-n-Sand?”

“What? Did she shift to Sun-n-Sand?” That deaf lady nodded her head in assurance.

“With... with whom?” Khursheed Alam stammered.

The old lady went into the building and came out with a visiting card and handed it over to Khursheed Alam. An American name was written on the card.

The day when Khursheed Alam and Almas got engaged, it rained heavily. Her father’s friend, Dr. Siddiqui, who was recently transferred to Bombay, was standing in the balcony. Just then, the phone rang. One of the servants came to Almas and said, “There’s a call for Khursheed Saheb “.

Almas ran to receive the phone. On other side, a nurse from local hospital was inquiring in trembling voice, “Is Mr. Alam there? “

“Let me know, what you want from him” asked Almas in a harsh voice. “Miss. Peeroja Dastoor has been lying sick in our hospital for a month. Her condition is very serious today and she wants to see him.” “Mr. Alam isn’t here,” said Almas and laid down the receiver.

Two hours later the phone rang again.

“A Call for you, Dr. Siddiqui,” someone shouted from the gallery. “You are immediately wanted in the hospital.” Dr. Siddiqui ran towards the telephone and received it. Then he went to Almas and said, “ I am sorry; I have to rush to the hospital.”

Tarabai’s eyes beamed at the things of her Saheb’s house in curiosity and astonishment. She stared at her Saheb in amazement.

Early in the morning, Dr. Siddiqui, the Eye-specialist came to Khrusheed Alam’s house. When Tarabai entered into the verandah with tea-tray in her hands, he was surprised to see her there and inquired,

“You; Tarabai, are you working here?”

“Yes, Doctor Saheb,” Tarabai answered shyly.

“Can you see things distinctly, now?”

“Yes, Doctor Saheb, I can.”



“Good.” Then he turned to Khursheed Alam and said, “This girl become blind at the age of ten. But she was lucky that her blindness was temporary. Do you remember Almas; on your engagement night, I had to rush to the hospital because, a lady Peeroja Dastoor was on a death bed. It’s all a few days before her death; she donated her eyes to the eye-bank. That’s why, the moment she died, they called me to take out her eyes. Some days later, Tarabai’s uncle brought her to me. A Doctor had told him that if a new cornea was replaced in her eyes, she could get her sight back. I took out the eyes of Dastoor from the eye-bank and grafted the cornea in her eyes.

**“Look; her eyes are twinkling like stars.”**

Dr. Siddiqui relaxed on the sofa and lighted a cigarette but Almas Begum’s face turned frightful. Khursheed Alam stood up and with stuttering footsteps like blind people, searching something by feeling with the hands went into his room. Looking at her saheb’s condition, Tarabai could not restrain herself and ran into the room after Khursheed Alam. ‘Saheb’ turned to her and stared at her, as if he had gone mad. Tarabai could not understand anything and was flummoxed to see her Saheb’s behaviour. She went into the kitchen and started scrubbing the utensils.

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