

RUNNER-UP

Words Heal the Mind:
A Poetry Writing Competition

Stay at home

by Mohar Khan

For an unseen foe's sabotage
We distrust each other
We become inanimate, as lifeless as the
objects around us
Like steps on the staircase
The lift button, the bus railing, a coin
in the pocket.

Today our world is like a jail to us
In the jailed room, I listlessly turn the
pages of a book
And fall sleep without realising
Pots and pans in the kitchen remain unruly
Irregular bath times,
Work suspension period is uncertain
The body is in need of a deep restful sleep
In sleep, the poet calls me, crying —

Come away to Dreamland,
Would you take me across seas in a blue boat?
To a new island I have never been
Sitting on the island's tip, the night is young
While gazing at the full moon, I am writing
a poem.
Suddenly, a distinct voice yells
Don't go out, stay at home.
Time isn't favourable
An unseen foe is around
They are tempting you.



I wake up with the hesitation, swaying
between belief and disbelief
Not knowing what is real, and what is unreal
As the countless days drag on
The unseen foe turns into a fellow worker,
tempting me
It calls me into a fifty-two seat public bus
It also calls me from a city train,
I reply in negative
I said, I'll stay at home.
It calls me from the park swings
When I peep through the window.
I said, no, I'll stay at home.

On a silent day, now desolate Mustafa Cafe,
A gang of otters were freely enjoying the
rain — How?
I was tempted, with a phone call — come out
and see them play
I told, no, I'll stay at home.

From across my home, fresh air calls me
From the green trees' branches, a bird also calls me
Controlling myself, I told them, no.
I'll stay at home.

Sometimes the unseen foe presses the door bell
It calls me pretending to be a gas delivery man,
A volunteer or social worker

Maintaining my physical distance, I tell them, no
I'll stay at home.