



1964

Rani

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The dog Rani dragged herself to the cool spot under the pomegranate tree.

She lay there in the dark. The family slept in their line of beds with electric fans buzzing; later there would be a cool breeze.

The noises of the night fell into a pattern. Trucks going by. Music from the cinema hall. A child. A cat. A flute. She grew thirsty again but her back hurt so much she couldn't lift her head, let alone lurch all the way to the verandah to her dish.

In health she had been a happy dog. After a puppyhood of chewing up good shoes, she had taken to training with zest. Jumping over a stick held high, retrieving thrown things, "going" and "coming" and "sitting" at command, chasing when told to, and, the best, carrying a folded newspaper from the gate to the porch. She had had two litters of pure Alsatian puppies before Jacko came.

That Jacko.

Everyone made a fuss over him and liked having him perched on a shoulder. What was he, anyway? Just an ordinary small monkey who insinuated himself into their affections. He was a little old man with fingers and his worried look. Rani hated the way the girls played with him; he even had a cot in the row of beds. They brushed him and coddled him until he started biting; he would try to bite them in the neck and became such a menace they kept him tied. He would break loose and the children would scream with terror. One night when loose he jumped on Rani and sank his teeth deep into her back. That was when the pain started. The doctor could not diagnose the illness; all he had said that day was that Rani would have to be put to sleep; there was no help at all.

That vicious Jacko. At the memory, Rani's mind smouldered.

How thirsty she was. She must lift her head and raise herself--Oh, the agony with every movement. If she sidled it hurt less. When she stopped to rest she heard a rustle in the grass and pricked up her ears. Yes, it was the chain being dragged. She knew what to expect--that leap onto her back and those teeth into the vertebrae.

This time--

Jacko's teeth gleamed in the darkness. He was planning his surprise. Motionless, Rani tensed, waiting. She turned at the right instant and lunged at the creature in mid-air. Her back hurt terribly but she managed to keep her teeth closed on Jacko's thin neck. She let them grate and the monkey went limp. A spring of blood was moisture to the hot tongue. The pain--oh, the pain. Again the rage. With her teeth and claws she tore the soft body into strips, into tatters. Tore and tore. She took the mop of skin and bone and shook it, snarling. The pain came in a convulsion and she lay down exhausted. Much later she made her slow way to her dish of water and her mat.

What an outcry in the morning! A wild beast had entered the grounds and slaughtered their little pet. They came to pat Rani, glad that she had not been attacked. Poor Jacko. Some of the children said they were glad he would not be there to bite them anymore.

Now there was only Rani to love. Gentle Rani who could not be cured. Who had never hurt anyone, not even a cat.

Helmi Diol

An Observation on Day and Night

A great golden fly walks the world on the equator.
On the other side of the earth
A black spider creeps slowly after him.
Around and around they go--
Separated only by morning and twilight.

Larry Fahrner