

## **To Stay is to Love: Terminal Altitudes**

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To Stay is to Love

### **I Can Return to India, But That Will Cost My Life**

*I can return, my brother, to sounds of the drum,  
Through saffron-hued sunsets, yet why should I come?  
The scent of baked earth turns me homeward to stand,*

*Yet I linger in snow of a grey, distant land.*

*So long have I worked in this harsh, buzzing glow,  
Where sterile white lights on the cold floors bestow  
A Solution Architect's empire of steel,  
While thunderous monsoons of sickness I feel.*

*Never before had I thought of your voice,  
Ringing like brass temple bells in my choice.  
Now at the edge of this precipice steep,  
Where machines softly beep and my tired eyes weep.*

*The hospital corridors smell of despair,  
With sharp fumes of alcohol catching the air.  
By banks of ambitions that rust in the sun,  
The whispering pyres of old days have begun.*

*I can board the silver, loud-roaring machine,  
And chase the warm latitudes, vibrant and green.  
To fold myself back in the spice-scented dust,  
And hear the old dialects born out of trust.*

*Yet why should I come, when the body's dark war,  
Pounds like a heavy fist right at my door?*

*Lethal disease waits like a tiger that hides,  
In the rustling bamboo where the river divides.*

*One flight, one sharp shift in the cabin's cold draft,  
Might shatter the truce on this delicate raft.  
I have grown idle, my engines turned cold,  
No longer chasing the servers of gold.*

*Only the quiet, soft commerce of breath,  
Tasting the sterile, faint shadows of death.  
I shall blow a kiss to your face in the gloom,  
Where sweet sandalwood fills our mother's warm room.*

*I can come—yes, I can come through the sky,  
Hearing the roar of the jets as they fly.  
But not now, not yet, for the timing is wrong,  
I cannot be part of the welcoming song.*

*I will not arrive as a broken, frail thing,  
With the scent of decay in the gifts that I bring.  
Let black, heavy clouds pass above in the blue,  
While rain clatters over the streets that we knew.*

*Let idle hours stretch like the Ganges' brown clay,*

*Slipping through fingers and washing away.*

*I can return, brother, ending this strife,*

*But that single ticket will cost me my life.*

*And so I must pause where the amber lights gleam,*

*A wanderer lost in a feverish dream,*

*Asking the question while city horns hum:*

*I can return, brother—but why should I come?*

### **The Soot of Distant Servers**

*I can return, brother, yet servers loudly hum,*

*Beneath the harsh white lights that leave my senses numb.*

*For years I wove architectures through the midnight zone,*

*A builder of cold data, now chilled to the bone.*

*My flesh begins to fray like old, corrupted code,*

*While smelling of the sterile bleach upon this foreign road.*

*The black dust of the neon nights clings tightly to my hand,*

*While I recall the saffron hues of our bright, distant land.*

*Your voice calls like a temple bell, so warm and so austere,*

*But tigers in my marrow wake and roar for me to hear.*

*I can board the silver wing, to see the golden skies,*

*Where sweet jasmine blossoms bloom and heavy shadows rise.*

*Yet why should I return to where the monsoon drums beat loud,*

*When every mile may hasten me into a blackened shroud?*

### **Brother, Do Not Hurry the Pyre**

*Your letters fall like monsoon rain upon the cracking earth,  
With scents of wet, brown clay that call to places of my birth.  
Beneath the sterile, blinking lights, the prostate's verdict falls,  
A quiet, steady ticking sound that echoes down the halls.  
I can return—the heart still knows the golden, dusty way,  
But idle wings are clipped by rust in shades of sullen grey.  
The Ganges flows in memory, a bright and vibrant blue,  
While pyre-wood smells of sandalwood and waits for something  
new.*

*Let me linger for a season in this quiet, foreign chill,  
Where monitors hum softly and the city streets lie still.  
I shall not come an untimely, a frail and broken thing,  
Where I can hear the raven's cry and feel its sable wing.  
Brother, do not hurry what the silver stars have timed,  
Nor rush the final mountain that this weary soul has climbed.*

### **Idle Wings Over Babylon**

*Once I flew across the globe to chase the golden sun,  
To hear the roar of engines where the deadlines were all spun.  
Now wings are folded tightly in a sacred, milky fog,*