
I Met a Gentle Maid Named Democracy

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She tapped three times at my door,
Each time she tapped, I shouted—
“Who is there?”
Each time she paused,
But dare not reply.
I saw her through my side window;
I did not open my door,
I would rather let her go.

I recoiled with some horror,
when I saw her again per chance,
smiling wanly at me
as I slid the potatoes into
a bag at the grocery store.
She wore a colorful blue skirt
And a red blouse aglow
With fifty stars in a corner.
She extended her hand in greeting;
My heart froze for a minute,
And then I smiled rather nervously,
Though I forgot to shake her hand,
Or rather, chose not to.

A poet and novelist, Nishi Chawla is an Adjunct Professor of English at the University of Maryland University College. She also teaches English part time at the University of Maryland, College Park.

“My name is Democracy.”
I tried to ignore her and moved on.
“I free the hearts of everyone—
You may need me sometime.”
I turned around and stared at her.
“Excuse me?” I shot back at her.
“I work for those in power,”
She spoke quietly after me.
“And so?” I spoke rather defiantly.
“I live by the good graces of rich folks,”
She smiled with a charm that I now noticed.
“I must work for you now. I need to save you,”
She said with an insistence that rubbed on me.
“I will think about it,” I said as I walked out.

I returned home in deep thought,
I was aghast to see my front door open,
I could not believe my eyes as I went inside—
I saw her quietly sipping wine
on the floor, beside my sofa turned
upside down and everything else in ruins beside.
“Everyone needs me. Why won’t you?”
She said with a crooked smile.