



For All Times to Come

Vasanthi Vasudev

My grandfather's grandpa bought a piece of land,
Just above the foothills,
On the curly ghat road.
He passed it on to his son and then,
To his son, and his...it went down the line, thus.
Now it is solely mine.

My ancestor who bought the land, I don't know him;
Not even his name or where he came from.
But I love the land and know its every nook,
Every pot and plant,
Is etched in memory.



I love the ancient banyan that towers in the middle
With bundles of undergrowth spreading their 'wings.'

I love the wonderful sights all around;
The bellowing winds, the billowing clouds,
Misty mountains – emerald garlands!

The triangular piece -a proud medallion-
Fortune's favoured entitlement,
Decorated my lazing afternoons
When I spent many a weekend visit
Glued to hammock under the banyan!

All was fine, until one hazy morning,
When huge chunks of mountain mass
Sliding downwards, in great hurry, ate up my land.

No banyan tree, no anything.
Everything vanished into thin air!

"How can this happen?
How can anyone take it away?
It is rightfully mine!"

I sulked and screamed,
Raved and ranted.

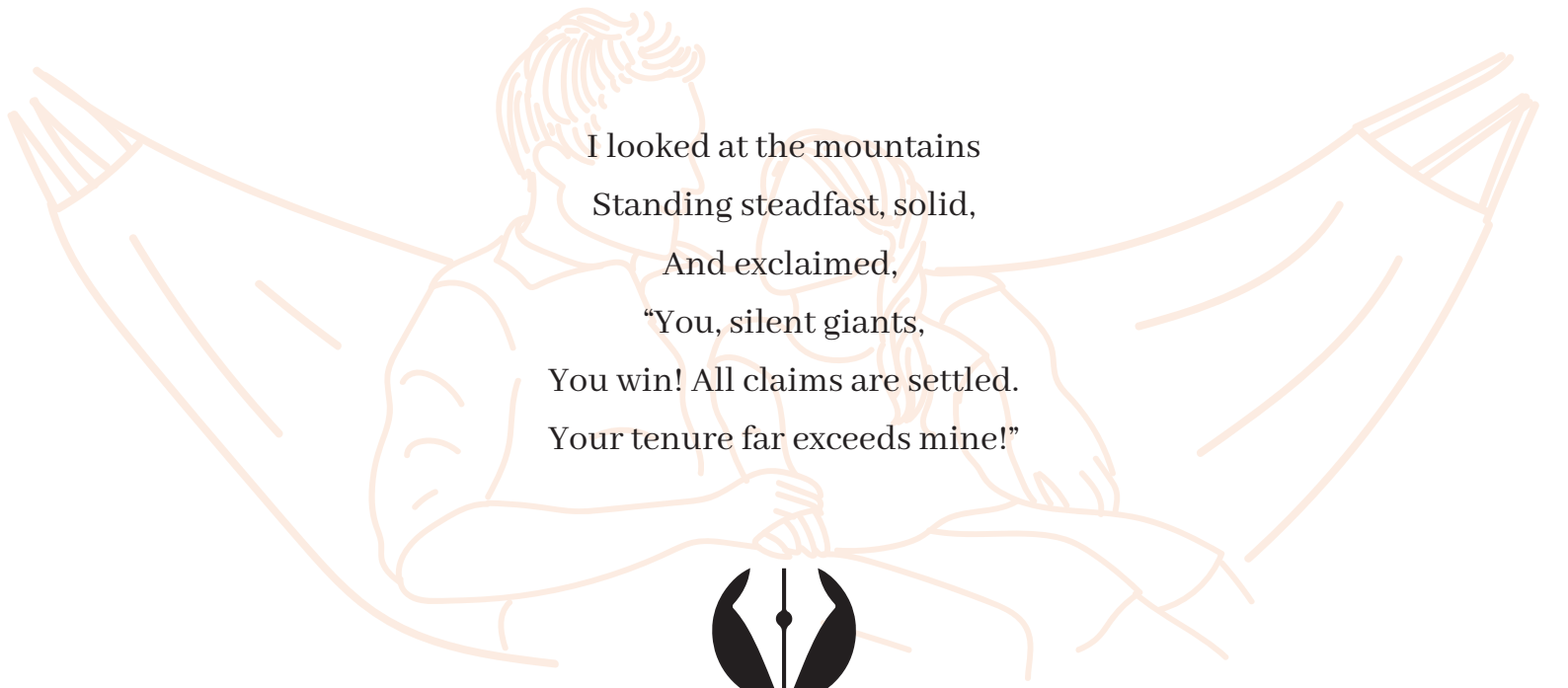
For days on,
I wept and cursed
And drowned myself
Deep in anguish and pity
Of the unfairness of it all.

When one night,
Weeks after the tragedy,
My young daughter,
A girl of mere six, asked:
“Dad, where is your dad?
Where is your dad’s dad and his dad?
And where is the grand dad who bought the land?
Will you too, one day, be gone?”

I hit hard, the bedrock of logic.
Brilliant questions indeed!
Yes! They are all gone!
So, would, I, one day!
Like visitors to foreign lands
Exiting when permits seal!
Whole, sole and soul!

My body is not mine,
My life neither!
Everything is on loan
For a tenured time.
Yes; only until the date is due!

True! The land too was not mine
I had held it on lease
And time had run out!
I took a deep breath
In plentiful gratitude for the lease.



I looked at the mountains
Standing steadfast, solid,
And exclaimed,
“You, silent giants,
You win! All claims are settled.
Your tenure far exceeds mine!”



verses
BY VASANTHI