



Dr. Ronny Noor

Steel Arm

Be not free of anxiety for you will
know the same, if you have pained
a single heart,
– Saadi

*The newspaper report of a mother having
been dragged by her hair out of her hovel
in the wee hours by a pack of six goons*

*who savagely forced themselves upon her
by turns as her screams pierced the dark void
and the heavens began to cry, for asserting her
right casting her election ballot defying
their wishes, grabbed the Friday headline.
Shocked, I looked out the window, my mind
racing back to my gallant comrade-in-arms
in the Liberation War of '71, Steel Arm,
who had vowed not to rest his gun till “all
mothers and sisters can breathe free in this land.”*

*A carpenter in his mid-twenties, Hatem Mistry
was better known to us – teenage boys –
Steel Arm for his arm was as steady as they
come and his aim never missed the mark.
A country boy, busy with his nose at the
grindstone to scrape together a living,
independence was farthest from his mind
till a sultry May night when a neighbor's
teenage girl was hustled by soldiers into a
Pak army jeep and he found himself battling
the villains in villages, trenches, and towns.*

*I wouldn't have known of his passing
had the reporter not mentioned the resolute*

mother was his beloved daughter.

*Your spirit still runs in our veins, Steel Arm;
and till your goal is realized, we won't rest.*

Crimes

What is the worst? Nay do not ask –
In pity from the search forbear:
Smile on – nor venture to unmask
Man's heart, and view the Hell that's there.
– Lord Byron

*It's no great surprise when Unknown Citizens
commit crimes.*

*But what about royals and statesmen who resort
to crimes?*

*Men of his stamp did not commit crimes, claimed
Napoleon.*

*Does that absolve the Child of Destiny of his
grave crimes?*

*Intelligent but villainous, he fought sixty battles
For the love of glory, committing inglorious
crimes.*

*Intoxicated by the Orient – lured by Egypt –
Who left his soldiers in the lurch? Deceitful man of
crimes.*

Lübeck, Leipzig, Borodino, Trafalgar, Waterloo.

Soaked in blood, the ground groaned to shake the heavens – Oh, what crimes!

Who looted Moscow? Who ransacked? Amidst the raging fire?

Self-proclaimed emperor, his adult life was wrapped in crimes.

Millions disappeared “like the smoke of his artillery.”

But not a wee flicker of conscience. So consumed with crimes.

Childe Harold asks, “And must they fall? the young, the proud, the brave,

To swell one bloated Chief’s unwholesome reign?” – of flagrant crimes?

Conquest made him what he was, and “conquest must maintain me.”

Alas! His conquests fizzled in Waterloo, as his crimes.

Regrets? He had none. Friends? “No true friends.” “I love nobody.”

He bit the dust without a whiff of remorse for his crimes.

Dr. Ronny Noor

Born in Dhaka, Bangladesh, Dr. Ronny Noor is an award-winning professor, scholar, and writer who lives in Brownsville, Texas, U.S.A. His essays, stories, poems, and book reviews have appeared in anthologies, journals, and newspapers around the world, including *Fresh Studies in Rio Grande Valley History*, *Recent Studies in Rio Grande Valley History*, *World Literature Today*, *The Toronto Review*, *South Asian Review*, *Commonwealth Novel in English*, *Taj Mahal Review*, *World Haiku Review*, *Kokako*, *Kitaab*, *FreeXpresSion*, *The Weekend Independent*, *The Daily Star*, and *Contemporary Literary Review India*. He is also the author of *Snake Dance in Berlin* (a novel), *Slice of Heaven and Other Essays* (a collection), *Where Heaven Spreads Wide & Other Stories* (an anthology), and *My Brother's Blood: Illustrated Haiku on the Bangladesh Liberation War* (a collection).

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