

His Voice by Rima Pande

Excerpt 1

“Two years ago, the temporary short circuiting in my head took on a monstrous new mutation. My mind was zapped in one wanton episode, leaving my legs useless. Another event followed within a few weeks, detaching all connections between my mind and body. My mind no longer controls my body, everyone else around me does. And every thought I have had in the past two years has stayed in my head, unable to be uttered. I have tried. Very hard. For nineteen years, I lived with the uncertainty of mini seizures that created havoc in my mind. And for the past two years, I have been helplessly paralysed. Now I am tired. I am ready to move on. There is no fear or panic or regret, just a sense of peace and finality and withdrawal. Every actor has an exit cue. The show goes on, but actors who have no role to play cannot sit on the stage forever. They get in the way of life.”

Excerpt 2

“Being the youngest among your siblings, cousins, and friends is glorious only in the misty eyes of grown-ups. In reality, it usually means going along with a lot of things without an opportunity to express an opinion – playing whatever games the other kids are playing, often getting knocked around the most, working the hardest and focusing the most to win the guli-danda championship, never being strong enough to beat the older kids at kabaddi. In my case, it also meant being dressed up as Sita during the weeklong Ramlila performance at the annual Chhinj Mela. Girls were allowed to enjoy the mela, but acting on stage was frowned upon; boys performed all female roles. This was mortifying, and it seemed to me like the whole village was pointing at me and having a good laugh at my expense when I staggered onto the stage as Sita, tripping over my sari, trying desperately to look feminine while maintaining my young masculinity at the same time. But of course, no one asked me how I felt about it.”