



**A BIRDWATCHER
AND
OTHER STORIES**

ABU SIDDIK

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A Birdwatcher

"Hey, old man! What are you poking about in this part of the forest?" lambasted the oval faced, bulbous nosed, blood-red eyed, little bulging man from behind. He looked exactly like a butcher.

The old man did not care. He was all alone and wistfully watching the myriad birds, flicking, flapping, twirling, whirling on the boughs of the trees. The sun had almost died. The forest looked orangey.

The short man howled again. Mr. Dhir looked back and benignly asked, "Who are you, my brother?"

"Who are you and what are you smelling in the forest at this dying hour?" thumping the bed of fallen leaves with a dry twig he blared.

"It's none of your trade, I suppose," casually Mr. Dhir riposted and he glowed. "Wow! Heavens! The parrots perched in columns and the branches hung heavy to the ground. Pigeons, doves, herons, shaliks, mynas, flycatchers, kingfishers, cuckoos, peacocks, langurs – what a feast to the eye! Ah! My goodness!"

"I ask who you are and what the devil are you doing?" the dwarf man impatiently scowled abhorring the old man's presence.

Mr. Dhir slowly studied the pigmy man from head to toe. He was bald, teeth yellowish, thick lipped.

"Why are so fiery? You are not kind to an old man! What sort of fellow are you? You look like a thief. What do you want to steal from a poor birdwatcher? Take this binocular, take it. It is a gift on my sixty ninth birthday from one of my friends who has a shop in the town," harangued Mr. Dhir and with an air of