

# **Night of the Scorpion**

**by Nissim Ezekiel**

**P.G. Semester 3**

**CC – 13**

**Unit V**

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Nissim Ezekiel's "Night of the Scorpion" masterfully encapsulates a rural Indian experience, blending superstition with a profound sense of maternal love. The poem's narrative, set during a monsoon night, centers on a scorpion sting suffered by the poet's mother.

The poem opens with a vivid depiction of the scorpion's frantic escape from the rain, seeking refuge in the family's mud-walled house. The villagers' reaction is a flurry of frantic activity, their arrival described with a sense of chaotic urgency. They buzz around like "swarms of flies," chanting the scorpion's name, hoping to paralyze it with their incantations. Their collective belief in superstition is evident in their attempts to find and kill the creature, believing that with each movement of the scorpion, the poison spreads in the mother's body.

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Ezekiel's tone shifts from observational to reflective as he recounts his father's rational, though ultimately futile, attempts to alleviate his mother's pain. A skeptic and a rationalist, the father applies various herbal remedies and even pours kerosene on the affected toe, a stark contrast to the villagers' ritualistic chants. This juxtaposition highlights the clash between traditional beliefs and modern skepticism.

The poem's emotional core lies in the mother's stoic endurance of pain. Despite the intense agony, her concern remains focused on her children. Her ultimate declaration, "Thank God the scorpion picked on me / And spared my children," reveals a selfless, unconditional love that transcends the immediate suffering. This moment transforms the poem from a simple narrative of a scorpion sting into a poignant exploration of maternal sacrifice.

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Ezekiel's use of simple, direct language and vivid imagery effectively conveys the atmosphere of the night and the emotional turmoil of the family. The poem's strength lies in its ability to capture the essence of a specific cultural context, while simultaneously exploring universal themes of fear, faith, and the enduring power of maternal love. "Night of the Scorpion" remains a powerful testament to the resilience of the human spirit and the enduring strength of familial bonds.