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It was in the citadel of Feroz Shah Kotla that I met my first Sufi.

Pir Sadr-ud-Din had weasel eyes and a beard as tangled as a myna's nest. The mystic sat me down on a carpet, offered me tea, and told me about the djinns.

He said that when the world was new and Allah had created mankind from clay, he also made another race, like us in all things, but fashioned from fire. The djinns were spirits, invisible to the naked eye; to see them you had to fast and pray. For forty-one days, Sadr-ud-Din had sat without eating, half naked in the foothills of the Himalayas; later, he had spent forty-one days up to his neck in the river Jumna.

One night, asleep in a graveyard, he was visited by the King of the Djinns.

'He was black, as tall as a tree, and he had one eye in the centre of his forehead,' said the Pir. 'The djinn offered me anything I wanted, but every time I refused.'

'Could you show me a djinn?' I asked.

'Certainly,' replied the Pir. 'But you would run away'.

William Dalrymple, *City of Djinns, A Year in Delhi*.