

## Bottles too Many

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Reading the lovely words about him out loud may remind you of his harsh tongue. Giving tribute to his life may bring back images of him, passed out on the sofa. Lying there so disgusting while you slaved through 60 hours of work a week. When he snatched the notes from your bag, the green bills that paid for your school.

As they lowered the coffin, your head would spin and flashes of your childhood would graze your memory. Those years before life went south. When he used to take you to the park and put you to bed with a kiss. The kiss that transformed into an angry sea of curses as time passed.

Most told you that he had suffered a loss and he was allowed to grieve. Hadn't you? Hadn't you too seen your mother leave? That day, you lost both your parents. One to freedom and another to the bottle.

No one cried during the funeral. Any kind words people had for your father were from a decade ago. Any positive impact he had were trampled by his recent selfishness. You sat there, tapping your foot, waiting for the pendulum to move faster. You had a graduation to attend tomorrow. It was time to open a new chapter. Away from this era of toil and hardships and closure.

The gravel was replaced and flattened. Everyone could go back to their lives. You could move on to a better one.

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# The Biography

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Her dungarees were a faded blue, and her mother insisted that she stopped wearing them every other day. She had a chubby face and a skip in her walk. After kindergarden, her mother used to pick her up from the bus stop and they walked back home together, chattering away in delight. The hardest part of this toddler's life was scrubbing her back. She used to paint, sitting on a short stool at the wobbly console, holding her colours like she was Frida Kahlo.

Her idea of fun was- and her brother found it beyond ridiculous- to list the numbers on the calculator. She could never resist chocolate and even when her mother said no, her father sneaked in the contraband. Her brother's car games were more interesting than the Barbie she decapitated. They joined forces to create masterpieces out of legos.

She used to sit at her father's internet café and watch the customers milling about with purpose. She wondered where she would be when she becomes an adult. The books she read were too big for her age but she wanted to be a chemist; she could handle it. "No, not the pharmacist", she retorted. "The scientist!"

Some weekends were at her mother's hometown, colouring with her cousins and visiting parks by the sea. She had too many cousins, a perk when they played hide and seek or chased each other. Other weekends were at her father's place, listening to her grandma's stories in urdu and marvelling at the height at which the tea was being poured. And then there were those special dinners at that dingy italian restaurant. They laughed away hours there, watching the city lull to sleep through the french windows. This followed the cold coffee that her sister refused to end the night without.

Birthdays started with hot chocolate. These excited mornings when she ran to the sofa to see the tokens of love her family gave her. Birthdays were filled with eclairs and special treatments. They didn't have much but it was more than enough.

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She was positive, her happiness was infectious. Her excitement made her look like a geek but there were no parameters for cool back then. Not that she cared. She still remembers that night she was sad and her mother sat next to her. She put her head on her mother's lap and slept in the comforts of the sweet melody from the stereo.

She swears the skies used to look bluer back then. She can't paint anymore; her factory settings are to blindly hate on every creative work she pulls up. She secretly wishes she could lie on her mother's lap again and let that melody evaporate her worries. Back then, hugging needed no reason, it was an expression of their bond; not anymore. These days, they don't have to count before they buy things but surprisingly, they used to be richer before. She has a hard time adjusting to this fast, cold life. She wonders if they still have the stereo. There are no more birthday tokens so she may as well settle for an antique music system and the stained polaroids in her head.

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## The Prequel

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He stares at the soft blue light overhead, feeling anything but so. The pain in his head is as purple as a bruise, gnawing at his tattered soul. His heart unravels warm and unordinary feelings. Its cold exterior is left to thaw, the icy blue hue leaving for a richer one. Like the sea hitting the shore, he imagines the vibrance of the water enter him. He drowns in shades of agony and emotion. They settle in his unwilling pit of resistance as his efforts prove futile.

It is hours past midnight; the sky a ribbon of spilled maroon. As his numb fingers tremble up to his neck, a stick of grey shiver finds a facile way to reach the limitless and vast azure.

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# Creepers

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It wrapped, up and higher, over skin and soul. Climbing over my stained roads, they absorbed into my heartbeat. I had no say over it. The death of a relative, a scary job interview, hopeless nights of loneliness; they crept up, whispering bittersweet lessons. Enlocked into my memories forever. Even years later, some experiences cling onto me tighter than before.

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# Mind Bender

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Dark half-moons painted misery under her eyes. Her tired eyes looked around the room, searching for a place to hide. In the dim corner, she slouched in a chair, a pale face peaking out under her limp hair. A face so sickly white, so drained of life that it looked close to collapsing.

The greys of her depression muscled up in her brain, pushing the happy spirits to the mud pit and muting them with ropes. They took over the playground, breaking every swing they found and spreading sullen ideas. As much as she tried, she couldn't hide it. Her face was a mirror of the turmoil inside her.

But the shame she bore donated to the wrecking bullies in her head. It counted up all the disgust that family, neighbours, friends threw towards her. Any concern shown to her was taken by the bullies and shaped into a surly monster. She felt unwanted, unworthy and this belief grew strong and stronger. And now it was too late, regretfully late to save herself from the turmoil in her mind.

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