

A RENDEZVOUS WITH MY WIFE â?? MANI

Description

Immediately after my wife- Mani departed a year ago â?? going down battling the fatal grip of cancer, I was left all alone to live with yet another harassing battle: the torment of sleeplessness, the trauma of staying awake well past midnight. Every night I have to struggle with my fatigued eyes shouting for sleep, but my conflicting thoughts, denying that quick snoring comfort. Hence, to fall asleep at nighttime has become an ordeal for me so I got into a habit of keeping the TV alive and playing, of course, muted: throwing its blue soft shadows around the room. The hum of the air- conditioner and the play of blue shadows on the walls somehow worked together with an effect that would finally drift me into sleep allowing me to wake up afresh, the next day, in a streaming daylight.

One night a week ago, preparing to sleep, an act I very well know that is hard to come by my eyes checked all the doors properly shut; turned to Bruno my pet dog if he was suitably placed cozy for his sleep. Further, adjusting the window drapes half-open â?? a leeway for me to scan the outside world the minute I open my eyes. I settled beneath the bed sheets before I left the TV playing its muted nightly shift. Eyes filled in with dullness, body draped in tiredness, mind bursting with confusion I set about waiting to brace myself to a dreamful slumber.

Suddenly, I notice my cell phone whizzing coming alive with its blue bright light. I pick up the phone, wondering, who is this sadist who would want to disturb me at this time of midnight. But for the blue radiating light filling the screen I find no number or the name of the caller. â??Itâ??s funny, no name, no numberâ?• I keep swinging the phone front and back as if the action would pop up a number or a name on the screen. Staring at the blank screen I bring the phone up to my ear hoping to hear a voice. Pressing it to my ear I say â??helloâ?? murmuringly.

I get a response at once, â??I listen to a thin low tone, a repeating hello, hello, and I uneasily, become alert to a ladyâ??s crooning voiceâ?•.

Unprepared, I felt a ripple of scare rush in me, the grip around the phone became unsteady, an icy shiver ran down my body, a fright caught half-way in my chest, â??I could recognise the voice at once, the lilt, the accent, the intonation, the demanding emphasis in repeating the â??hello, hellosâ??, unmistakably, Itâ??s my wife Maniâ??s voice and callâ?•.

The loud call of hellosâ??, followed by biting looks was the practice with which my wife used to call me when her repeated respectful pitch would fail to get her required attention. The â??hellosâ?? that came out from her has a meaning, â??come on, listen to me â?? fastâ?? and had also a commanding ring to it. To which I quietly obeyed and modestly accepted saying, â??Ok Iâ??m listening, sorry Iâ??m little distractedâ?• This went on to be our rhythm of living together for thirty-four glorious years.

Further, as If Iâ??m given directions to follow, slowly the words floated out of the phone, â??Hello, Iâ??m waiting outside, can you open the door and come outâ?• which I in cold sweat, did follow.

Swiftly, but apprehensively, I unbolt the door open to step out into our spacious corridor. I find it shimmering in silvery shadows spread along the walls and especially on the wheel-chair, standing in one corner, a little more densely, which I see rocking lightly with a breeze brushing it.

Noiselessly, my feet take me near to the parapet wall, two floors above: when I look down, at any time; I can see my whole school compound along with its enclosed playgrounds. I'm very well aware that this was a place intimately preferred by Mani. Surely, if she wanted to select a rendezvous, to meet me, it would be this place close to the parapet wall. I stood silently, waiting what Mani might want to speak after nearly fourteen months of spending time in her heavenly retreat.

As if slashing the moonlit night a sharp candid voice hovered close to my ear, I felt the closeness of the pulse and breathe of Mani. Straight and sweet was her tone, "How are you carrying everything without me?" as exactly as I have expected, she asks her first question, spoken with a fistful of love she picked up from the bundle of togetherness we have grown up with for thirty-four years.

The eeriness that I'm surrounded with has made my mouth sticky and tongue dry; holding the parapet wall to find my balance, I attempted to give out an answer: almost choking inside unable to believe what's happening to me now. Words came out making only hissing sounds "very much, proving once again to Mani how timid I'm as a person.

"I saw Aradhya, two months back, dashing around in the corridors. I happy to find her chubbier, prettier than when I was carrying her around in my wheelchair a year ago?" it's my turn now to notice a choking tone in Mani's inquiry.

Yes, you find Aradhya more excited now, she is old enough to understand and looking forward to her younger sibling "now a boy. Neelima is expecting her baby in July this year. Besides, Aradhya seems to remember you, whenever she hopped into my study; fluttering her innocent eyes asks me with her naïve English accent, "Where did "ammama" go?", sitting in front of your portraits, and she answers for herself with the same wide bright eyes, "she is with God". It's really tough, her innocent words snap rudely inside me to find myself in such a touchy reality.

You know, one day, six months after you left me, Neelima has announced her pregnancy and she was in her fifth-month when she came to join me for your first memorial ceremony.

I asked Neelima one day, still fifteen days to catch her flight back to her husband in the US, "who does care for you during your delivery day?" silently, and both of us looked on blankly at each other tears welling in our eyes. "In one of the most celebrated day for our daughter" on her delivery day; that she would be missing the presence and involvement of the "You" is one deeply stabbing truth, I'm not able to come to terms with. The prospect hurts me every day: Neelima to be taken care by someone else other than You is an unpalatable aspect that depresses me whenever I see a dead end in my options to comfort her.

The hard truth is, "for me living alone has become a terrifying experience squeezing me with pressure to be in pain every minute of the day. There are no boundaries to pain, it can strike me at any time of the day, truly, living alone is heavy emotional baggage and it gains weight with each passing day".

From the silence for the next few moments I could make out, Mani must be in great distress to hear from me such depressive dialogues. She is the one who cared a lot about me and our children.

I felt a bit uneasy at the long pause, silence stretched out, then I heard the ruffling: I became attentive waiting for Mani to speak again, and then came her voice in an appealing flow, "there is some bitterness with which I left all of you, especially, not being able to hold and cuddle the little one of our son Aditya"•

Kaushal is our grandson's name. He arrived four months after you left us. Had you been strong enough, fierce enough to fight back the disease for four more months, we would have been together enjoying the arrival of Kaushal into our lives. The little one has to live with all his innocence, growing, not able to enjoy the warmth of your cuddle and intellectual influence of yours " forever.

When the kid with his deep black glassy eyes beams at me, jumps into my arms, smiling and not erasing his stare focussed on me, as if assuring me, "cheer up grandpa, I'm there for you to enjoy and let you forget some of your past, I'm your solace and I'm your bundle of joy, I'm born for you and I'm the reincarnation of what you have lost"•. Mani, this is how Kaushal's nearness factors today and in the days to come.

Perhaps, she is happy to learn about Kaushal and how I'm gratefully settled to weave a close bonding with our nine-month-old little grandson. A heavy long lull. A few minutes later, I could feel a burst of cool breeze brushing past me; I was momentarily startled believing the nearness of Mani. Touching with her sari hang as she walked through me! A few seconds later, I'm left to face a deep silence and a breezy night. Dazed, I didn't know what I have to do next, but I'm sure that my brief "meeting behind darkness"• with my wife Mani is over.

Category

1. Uncategorized

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Author

eswarnadipalli