## Title : Bikini and Me

**Category :**  [**Inspiration Stories with Moral Lessons**](http://yourstoryclub.com/short-stories-social-moral/short-story-with-moral-lesson-bikini-and-me/)

**Story:** “So, you sell only bikinis?” a young teenaged customer asked me in an excited tone.

I smiled back warmly at her nodding my head. The girl seemed overjoyed and amazed looking at all the contents that filled every corner of my little shop.

“You ask for any kind and it is there. Different shapes, sizes, colours, patterns and prints. I offer customized designs too,” I said showing one brilliant piece of my work.

Tiger prints, beaded, multicoloured, backless, halter neck, strapless, printed and abstract prints. I got the craziest of ideas. I knew the choice of the girls who came in this area. In a place like Goa which attracted many foreigners and young bubbling girls, I started this as a small shop under a thatched roof beside this Kempu beach.

Seeing one girl spending more than 15 minutes in my shop her other friends followed. My happiness knew no bounds when they purchased in dozens. The same story repeated each day. I met new girls, spoke to them, took ideas from them and customized funky bikinis just the way they wanted.

I always roll into my past seeing the gleaming eyes of these girls.

I used to accompany my father when he went fishing. Afternoon school kept me occupied until I found time to play with girls I grew up with. The only sport known to us was swimming and diving into the cool blue sea that always seemed to welcome us. My mother decked me up in those beautiful swimming costumes that she stitched only for me. Those bits and pieces of cloth that she had named as my swimming costume are now the so called ‘bikini’.

Things were not the same always. Sitting by the beach I used to admire the girls who still went swimming without me. I sat on the warm sand at dusk noticing my friends who had grown up just like me. They played in the pool, enjoyed teasing other guys wearing the sarong or flaunting their sexy body with that beautiful piece of cloth which once used to be our swimming costume.

I was enveloped with fear then thinking I could never be one among them. My parents tried their best but I never found my confidence back. Negative energy seemed to have enveloped me. With time, the scars healed.

I just sat in one corner helping my mother with her stitching sessions each day. This fascination took over me and turned into public attraction in a short while.  My thoughts had a new dimension.

After years I can say I am contented.

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**The article read** – Sherin is a Breast Cancer survivor from the past 40 years who has dedicated her life to brighten up the lives of young women.

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I threw the last bit of the dry peanut skin, dusted the paper, folded it carefully and putting it in my pocket I headed towards the shop that had a big board **“BIKINIS ONLY”**written in bold over it.

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1. **Title :** [**Tape It**](http://yourstoryclub.com/short-stories-social-moral/short-story-with-moral-lesson-tape-it/)

**Category: Inspiration Stories with Moral Lessons**

**Story:** Eggs, bacon, bagels, and croissants, her favourite meal of the day sat right in front of her alluring her to have more, some more, a bigger portion, probably just this one day. Her hand reached out for the last croissant; “STOP” said her mind, “PLEASE” begged the nineteen year old heart. She could feel the tires around her waist, weighing her down, emotionally and physically. She pulled her arm back, eyeing the lush croissant, which would have been hers, only if she had not decided to follow her dream, a dream so far fetched, which seemed nearly impossible.

But there she was, she wanted it, and wanted it bad, a fantasy of a teenager to fit into the beautiful peacock green bikini. A trip had been planned, to the city of beaches, by her huge group of friends, and the trip included her. She used to sit dejected listening to her slim friends discuss about the kind of clothes they have purchased, and how short each of their skirts were, and how beautiful they looked. She wanted to be among them discussing her size, and see their expression change from surprise to admiration; and so she decided.

Up and down, back and forth, her life jolted by vigorous gym sessions, her scale; her worst nightmare smiled at her happily, as it moved away from the bigger numbers, bit by bit, slow but steady. She was overjoyed, she felt it, from within, as she stood in front of the mirror, analysing her reflection, measuring her inches. Click opened her wardrobe, and proudly hung the bikini, but it wasn’t time. She removed it admiringly, stroked the fabric, and visualized herself on the shore of a beach, flaunting her curves, bikini clad.

Her thoughts were interrupted by the knock at her bedroom door. She heard her mother scream out for her, it was time for supper, and back she was with her bowl of assorted vegetables and her best entertainer, the television. She zapped, ate, zapped, reaching for the last lettuce leaf in her bowl, only realising her stomach craved for something extra. It frustrated her that she could feast on her favourite fried chicken, mashed potatoes, Oreo biscuits or additional helpings of Hazelnut Choco spread. She had been through this a dozen times, but this time it was different, she wanted to be someone else, someone popular, and someone that made heads turn. She had to compromise, and so she did, with a little reluctance once in a while, but a whole new chapter of determination. She wanted to be the topic of harmless gossip among the ones in school; she wanted to be out dating on Saturdays, partying on Sundays, shopping in skimpy outfits, which she had dreaded to wear till now.

Weeks passed, her patience started to die away, she once in a while treated herself with an ice cream, the fat was stubborn and refused to melt fast, but the time did. No matter how less she ate, she still looked awfully plump, which annoyed her and she was ready to call it quits. She sat on her fluffy bed and wept an entire evening, ignoring her dinner. Her tears dried up, leaving her cheeks cold, she lay down on her bed staring at the ceiling, letting random thoughts pass by her mind.

She hadn’t realised but her bedroom was hot and stuffy, she leapt out of her bed to open the windows. The wind blew into her round pale face. She stared outside her window, and watched a mother treading along the footpath along with her son. The boy would have easily been older than twelve, the woman looked very familiar; maybe she was someone from her apartment. She watched closely as the son held on to his mother’s saree and plodded along with her. His head bent, in an awkward gait, made him look a bit abnormal. She closely watched them enter the apartment; they stopped to talk to another mother, who also had a teenage son but a much normal looking one. Standing near the window on the ground floor and only a few meters away from them, she could overhear their conversations, though she had to strain her ears a little. The usual small talk, recipe exchange, and the latest saree in fashion, bored her and as she stepped away from the window, she heard one of the lady say something about a special school.

She immediately turned towards them and observed the mother of the abnormal, waiting for her to react, in a furious way, or probably a wretched expression. On the contrary, her face blossomed and she began raving about her son’s painting skills, and his ability to play the guitar even without learning.

The middle aged woman added, “My child is special, and every child is god’s gift. It doesn’t matter what’s on the outside, inner self is what matters.”

Standing in her bedroom, through the window she gazed at the boy playing with a Rubik’s cube, his tongue curving as per each turn of the cube and his eyes fixed on the colourful object. She ran to her closet and saw the beautiful looking bikini sitting inside. She took one last look at it and stuffed it inside the top shelf. She looked at herself in the mirror and, her flesh noticeably bulging out from her denim, and her belly sagging down. She met her eyes’ reflection and said the words aloud, “I am a beautiful person.”

She smiled at herself and looked around her bedroom, her space where she became what she was; where ideas, thoughts, desires and hopes were given birth to, and where she found her true self.

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1. **Title : Heal**

**Category: Inspiration Stories with Moral Lessons**

**Story:** I stood on the balcony, staring blankly at the crashing waves. The coffee in my hand had grown cold. I ran my fingers on my face, pushing back my wind whipped hair and brushing away my tears at the same time. My cheeks were dry. The salty breeze had dried up the salty tears. I placed the coffee cup on the floor and turned away slightly to avoid the strong winds. And that was when I saw him.

He was silhouetted against the pink sky, tall, alone, dark and frozen. He stood there on that rock, looking straight, staring into the ocean just like I had been staring a few minutes ago.  The sky grew orange, then deep rust. The ball of fire slowly sank into the black waters. He stood there a little longer till darkness set in and slowly, head bowed low, stepped off the rock and walked away from the dark sands. My gaze followed him until he vanished behind a clump of bushes. I shut the balcony door and went back into the empty room.

I was healing. Or atleast, I was supposed to be healing. It was peaceful now, being away from the sympathy and shared tears. My grief was mine and mine alone. I missed Adi every minute of the day, but atleast I didn’t have people telling me, telling **me**, what a wonderful person he was and what a shock it was to have lost him like that. Like I didn’t know.  Like I didn’t feel. These few weeks in this small seaside town was exactly what I needed. An escape from everyone who knew me. Who knew us. They were well wishers who wanted to share my sorrow, but their good intentions were slowly driving me towards insanity. I needed to get away.

I went down for dinner. The couple who owned this homestay were in the living room. They looked up from their moment of togetherness and smiled at me. The lady got up and called out to the maid to serve me my dinner. I was a writer, on a break to write a book. That is what they thought. And that was what justified my odd behavior.

The next morning I walked on the sand barefoot as the eastern sky grew light. I picked up shells  and then threw them back on the beach. I dug my toes into the cool sand as I walked, breathing in the fresh morning air. I went up to the rock where I saw him last night. I could not shake away that picture from last evening. That was the first time I had seen him in these two weeks, but I instinctively felt some sort of bonding with him. I sat on the rock, staring into the  sea until it became too warm to stay outside.

I read ,wrote,  swam and took small walks in the shady gardens for the rest of the day, just as I had been doing for the past two weeks. I had not healed yet, but the isolation and the sea had soothed me.  I forced myself not to think of Adi, his smile, his hug. His love.  Those terrible days in the hospital after his accident. I also shouldn’t have survived , but I did. Why?. I suddenly missed him terribly. And I almost burst into tears again.

That evening , I walked out to the balcony with my cup of coffee.  Twilight was my favorite part of the day. And as the sky changed colours and the clouds blushed, my eyes scanned the sands and stopped again on that rock. He was there again, standing straight, alert, staring at the waves. Waiting.

One more week passed like this. Every evening I wanted to walk up to the beach and go closer to him, but something stopped me. I didn’t want to intrude into whatever it was that brought him there every evening. So I just stood there on my balcony with a cup of neglected coffee, watching him dissolve into the darkness every evening.

It was my last day by the sea. I walked past the packed bags on the floor that evening and went downstairs. I smiled a small smile at the new guests who were sipping tea in the living room and walked outside. It was drizzling. I didn’t bother to pick up an umbrella. I stepped into the wind laden spray of raindrops and my feet took me across the damp sands. Towards him. I stood there, still, silent, behind him. He sensed me, but he did not turn. The waves came and went. He stared and waited. The rain grew fiercer, but both of us did not move.

‘Scott’, a voice called from behind. I turned. A woman was approaching us, flustered and wet. She saw me standing there, behind him. With a curiously glance at me, she instinctively shared her umbrella over my head. I smiled at her and then looked at him again. He hadn’t turned or moved an inch. Her eyes saw the question in my eyes and she shook her head sadly.

‘ I work in that house, ma’ she said, pointing to a house on the shore, beyond the bushes.

‘ It has been a year. They were playing in the beach one evening  when she ran into the sea chasing a ball. She was just five years old, such a pretty child. Maggie. We couldn’t even find her body’.

Tears filled the woman’s eyes.

‘ Her parents were so angry with him that they just abandoned him here and left to their city. He now lives with the old couple in that house. They are a lonely couple, they treat him like their own son now.  But he hasn’t forgotten. He comes here every evening and waits for his little playmate to return from the ocean. Maybe he thinks she will be back someday or maybe he knows and feels guilty that he couldn’t save her’. She shook her head sadly.

I looked at him, standing on that rock, soaked in the rain, but still unflinching in his wait. A tear rolled down my cheek. For the first time in months, it was not a tear for Adi.

‘Scott, va’, the woman said and grabbed his collar, almost dragging him. He turned. Our eyes met. ‘ Forget , Scott.’ I whispered. ‘ Heal. They are not coming back. Your Maggie. Or my Adi.’  I bent down to touch him. He moved closer and looked at me, eyes limpid pools of sadness. And as though he understood what I had said, he let out a short bark and wagged his tail.

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1. **Title :** [**On the Edge of the Cliff**](http://yourstoryclub.com/short-stories-social-moral/short-story-remorse-on-edge-of-cliff/)

**Category : Inspiration Stories with Moral Lessons**

**Story:** He stood at the edge of the cliff. All he needed was a push. A mental push.

The water below looked blue. Crystal clear.

He mentally calculated the distance to the rocks below. If he would have been in his swanky office complex now, he would probably have been standing on the balcony of the third floor.

The only difference was that this was not his office and there was no balcony here.

He reminded himself that he had quit his job sometime ago. He had a menial job slogging on his workstation for some client whose only reasons of hiring people in India were that labor and real estate were cheap. He was paid, but not much. He used his brains while working, but not much. In a nutshell, his life was like most of the white collared, educated, salaried labor class that this country specializes in producing. No, his work life was not the problem. The problem was something else. Something more profound. Something whose roots lay deeper. His life appeared pointless. His money appeared worthless. His clothes, his shoes, his watch and all his material belongings seemed pathetic. His life was not so bad a couple of months ago.

The commute to his office was mostly uneventful. He had to endure the typical sights and sounds of the torture chamber called the “public transport in India” every morning. Every neatly ironed shirt got hopelessly crumpled within the first ten minutes of the journey. Weird smelling hair oils on random heads chocked his nostrils everyday. And the shoes. He had the habit of polishing his shoes everyday till he had started working. The commute to office changed all that.

On normal days, the number of feet that may have left their mark on his shoes could be somewhere around ten. On some days, it went up to twenty. Hopelessly, he had given up polishing before he left for his work resorting to using the services of the poor boy near his office who worked in a makeshift arrangement where he not only mended shoes but also polished and shone them. He was a person he met daily. He had dirty hair and probably two sets of tattered clothes which he wore on alternate days. His lips were dry and his finger nails were dirty. He looked no different than any rag-picker that anyone from outside India loves to take a photograph of and show it to his wife back home. He had big brown eyes though. Those eyes were beautiful.

Their initial interaction remained strictly business related. The boy polished his shoes and he paid him. Not a word was exchanged for the first couple of months. Gradually, their meetings got informal. It took some time but smiles were followed by occasional chit-chat. The duration of their interaction still remained limited to those five minutes per day only partly because of the fact that he had a habit of reaching his workplace right before his shift was about to start.

Two weeks ago, for the first time, the boy had a request to make. By then, their occasional chit-chat had turned into crisp conversations with more meaningful sharing of information. At the outset, his request seemed strange. This conversation was different. It had money involved.

The boy had requested him to lend him some money.

He had promised to return it though. “Why do you need the money?” had had asked the boy.

The boy had not replied but he had probably seen a tear drop at the edge of his eye waiting to gain in volume and roll down his cheek. The boy had wiped his eyes with his dirty hands before that could happen.

“I think I have to go see the doctor.”, the boy had said.

“I have been coughing a lot of late. There is a lot of blood. I am scared.”, the boy had said crying.

He had stood there unmoved. He was not sure he believed the story. A lot of similar stories from a lot of urchins he had met on the roads had an almost similar, albeit slightly tweaked, theme. “Bulls\*\*t”, he had thought to himself.

“I shiver at night too. I have no one in this world who I can call my own. I am lonely. And scared. Please help me sir. I have no money.”, the boy had continued.

“Yeah right! As if this was the first time I am hearing something of this sort from someone of your social standing.”, he had thought to himself.

“Let me see what I can do for you. Don’t worry. Everything’s going to be fine. I am there for you. I will take you to the doctor tomorrow.”, he had told the boy softly caressing his hair.

His words had seemed to calm the boy. He thought he had taken care of the matter.

He had it all figured out. He would not break the boy’s heart right away by showing that he did not believe in his story but there was no way that he was falling into his trap and letting him get away with what he considered blatant extortion.  From the next day onwards, he had started using the second entrance to his office, the one on the other side of the building.

He had started a practice of packing his neatly polished pair of shoes in a plastic bag and carrying them while his commute to work, which he suffered wearing a pair of sandals and then changing into his shoes before he entered his workplace. He avoided the first gate even at the end of his shift, even though he was pretty sure that the boy would not be there then, just to be sure that the boy could never see him again. He thought that he had done pretty well in his attempts at avoiding the boy.

Today had been a different day than all the previous days though. He was just about to enter his office building through the second gate in a slight hurry since he had to change into his shoes before entering the office and he was running out of time. It was then that he saw the crowd near the first gate. It seemed odd. There appeared to be some police-men and what looked like an ambulance from the pre – independence era. He walked towards the crowd partly out of curiosity and partly because he felt a gentle force pulling him towards the scene.

What he saw, froze the world around him. There was the boy on the ground, covered in blood. There was blood all over his tattered shirt, around his lips and on his chin. There were open wounds in his body. Blood had oozed out of them and had coagulated. He appeared skinnier than when he had last seen him two weeks ago. He looked pale and dead. He walked away, as if in a trance.

He quit his job that afternoon and jumped from the edge of the cliff that evening.

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1. **Title :** [Handbrakes](http://yourstoryclub.com/short-stories-family/short-story-with-moral-lesson-handbrakes/)

**Category : Inspiration Stories with Moral Lessons**

**Story :** It was raining cats and dogs – in December! As if the chill in Delhi wasn’t enough, the rain gods had decided to make it soggy as well. I couldn’t see very well, my glasses covered in furious drops of rain. It was times like this when I felt my wife Anu was right….

My shoes made a squelching, protesting sound every time I took a step forward; I would have walked much faster if not for the slippery road. The cab had stopped a little ahead, with blinkers on.

I knew all the customary steps in hiring a cab – first look nonchalant, confident and well versed with the locality, then haughtily declare the name of the place you wanted to go to, and finally ask how much the cab driver would charge. I had also learnt from my travails, the key to successful bargaining  was to appear ready to walk away from the cab if the amount was not what you had in mind. Delhi cabs were not meter-friendly, and despite the legislation, this suited both the cabbies and the passengers.

But that night I did not look the cool, unruffled daily commuter. Being wet, cold and late took care of that. I reached the cab, pulled the door open and sat into the seat – dripping wet. After removing my hazed glasses, I realized that the cab driver was eating his paratha.  “Oh… sorry, I thought you stopped for me.”

The cab driver just smiled – his mouth was full, and it took a little while for him to answer. “It’s ok Saab, I am free now. Where do you want to go?” I sighed and shivered at the same time. This guy seemed better than most I meet on my daily commute between office and home.  But that didn’t mean I was going to give in to the exorbitant fare he would definitely charge, for a ride to the suburbs on a cold, rainy day. In my head, I had already played back and forth the dialogue that would precede an agreeable charge.

“How much will you charge?” I was sure my ‘office voice’ would let him know I was a no-nonsense commuter. And sure enough, the cab driver was curt in his answer. “I charge by the meter, Saab. You can check the ‘zero’.”

This was unexpected and I didn’t know whether to be relieved or be suspicious. It was a known fact that meters were rigged, but it was also true that I really didn’t have much of a choice today. “Ok then, let’s go. And take the ring road – that’s faster.” I was sure that doubts if any, about my knowledge of Delhi roads would be put aside after that comment.

The roads were overflowing with traffic. Traffic lights chose to shut down instead of braving the sudden outburst from the skies, resulting in the clutch-brake routine, characteristic of rush hour traffic. Usually, I use the drive to catch up on my telephone calls for the day. But that day I was exhausted and distracted; exhausted because I had too much on my plate, and distracted because I was bored. Maybe Anu was right about this too.

Anu had this uncanny ability to get to the root of any problem – not a very comfortable situation when you are not ready to face that problem head on. Don’t get me wrong – I was not running away from problems, I was just waiting for the right moment to tackle them. But Anu, my wife of over a decade, thought differently; she wanted to get right down to the micro analysis of ‘how to solve the issue’. I sighed again – that day would have us going through the micro analysis again.

The cab was warm and clean, and smelled of incense. The guy obviously loved his cab – you could see it the way he drove. I couldn’t even feel gears being changed, and in a city road, that’s a sign of a good driver. “So, Saab, you work here? I think I have seen you here before.”

There were colorful little bangles tied up together hanging from the rear-view mirror. Blue, red, green and yellow – the streetlight reflected off the bangles and threw bright spots of light onto the roof of the car, like a kaleidoscope. I didn’t realize I was smiling till I saw my face in the rear-view mirror. “Yes. I work here. Those are your daughter’s bangles?”

The cab driver laughed, his eyes crinkling at their corners as his laugh spread to his eyes. “No, no, Saab. My granddaughter’s….. I am not very young. I have a son your age!” Now it was my turn to laugh and I sank a little further into the seat, the faint smell of incense almost comforting in its familiarity. I must have dozed off in between, because we reached the gate of my apartment home much faster than I expected.

The cab driver switched on the light so that I could scrutinize the numbers in the meter. “Saab, I stay near here, and I drive down to the city every day for my taxi service. If you travel every day, maybe I can drop you and pick you up. It will take me only fifteen minutes to reach here from home. You can call me on my mobile when you have to be picked up….” I had to admit, it was a surprisingly simple solution to my daily commute; and this guy seemed honest. He was holding out a scrap of paper in which he had written down his number. “Ok. I leave at around nine in the morning.”

The rain had stopped, and so had the squelching in my shoes. I had reached the front door, and before ringing the bell, I could hear my son Shiv squealing the way he does when he plays with Anu. He would turn three years in a few weeks, and his baby talk was vanishing – I would miss that!  I rang the bell, and the squeals grew louder. I was glad to be home.

It was like so many other nights when I reached home. Anu started her psychoanalysis again… this time it was the rain – just like I expected. I wanted to play with my son, but Anu seemed to be in the mood to use her high octave voice again that night. She was right of course, but I didn’t think there was need to over react just because of the rains.

“I really don’t understand why you will not use the car.” She was trying hard to hold Shiv back while I dried my hair. “Why do you have to get drenched in the rain, or travel by a cab every day? Why did you buy the car in the first place? And why the hell do I have to drive us everywhere even when I have a screaming baby in the back of the car?”

“Anu, can we not discuss this today? I really need to spend some time with Shiv. Ok?” And that triggered Anu to grumble her way into the kitchen and reheat dinner. She was sulking, and this had become a regular discussion topic for many days now. She had her reasons, and I knew them too. We’d had our share of bad experiences with drivers; we had gone to parties where she was exhausted because she drove us to the party and back; heck – she’s even had to drive to the hospital in high fever – with me sitting next to her in the passenger seat.

I can drive; and I have a drivers’ license. I used to be quite comfortable driving in notorious Delhi traffic till a couple of years ago, but the accident changed all that.

Anu was in her last trimester and we were expecting the baby soon. One moment we were laughing, and the next moment she was screaming. I jammed the brakes as hard as I could, but I could not stop the car from ramming into the stationery truck on the road. I turned to look at Anu, and she nodded. No one got hurt, except my confidence; that was the last time I held the steering wheel in my hands.

That was over three years ago, the car got repaired, all the dents got smoothed out. But the dents in my mind remained. We experimented with various drivers, with car pools, but somehow, nothing seemed to work. That’s when I started taking cabs….

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The cab reached promptly at ten the next day. His name was Manoj. He didn’t know his exact age, but his drivers’ license said he was 62. He had two sons and three grandkids, and all of them stayed together. His wife packed his parathas for him every day, and he would never eat from the roadside dhabas. I always found the cab freshly cleaned, and smelling of incense. Manoj would offer me his paratha every day in the morning and I would politely refuse every time.

On my son’s birthday, the day was a little brighter than usual. I had called up Manoj earlier so that I was home well in time for a little family dinner at a restaurant. I knew Anu would fret a little, but I hoped she would drive us to the restaurant – after all, Shiv had now stopped crying when he was in the back seat.

Manoj held out a little packet wrapped in newspaper for me when we reached my apartment that day. “Happy birthday to baba, Saab. It’s nothing, just a few chocolates…..” I knew my jaw dropped; and I thanked him with a stiff handshake. As I ran towards the lift, I realized I had never even offered him a cup of tea.

Within a few weeks, Manoj and I had exchanged views on everything from politics and movies, to children and retirement. One day, he was a little upset about his sons not helping him pay off the loan taken for the taxi. I was aggressive in my disdain for his sons; I was already thinking about what I would do if Manoj’s taxi was confiscated by the bank. I had started sitting in the front seat with him, and our daily discussions were something I looked forward to every day.

“You know so much about cars, Saab. You have a car?” Somehow, that didn’t come out like a question, but a statement. “No.” I must have sounded curt, because we didn’t speak for some time.

“Yes. I have a car, but I don’t drive it; my wife drives it. She needs it much more than I do. She has to take Shiv to the doctor, she does all the shopping. So I don’t use it.” I don’t know what made me defend my owning a car I didn’t drive. I expected him to ask more questions, but he caught me off-guard with his next question.

“Let me guess, Saab. You have a grey color car, no?” He was smiling his crinkly-eyed smile again. I didn’t have to say anything. The answer was written all over my face. I didn’t ask him how he drew his conclusion, and he didn’t explain. But we laughed, and the air was cleared of the weight that my car had brought in – we were friends again.

The next time Manoj brought up the topic of driving was when we were having tea and samosas. His wife had not been keeping well, and so he had stopped carrying parathas. The tea was my idea, as I suspected he had not eaten anything for lunch. “You know, the first time I held the steering wheel of my taxi, I was in love. I cannot imagine doing any other job – driving is like listening to an old Rafi song….. The mind thinks a million thoughts, but one does not worry…”

I laughed at his comparison. “You really love driving, don’t you? I knew it from my first ride in your taxi.” Manoj did not pick up the bill when it came, but gave me slight nod in appreciation when I picked it up. We walked out quietly, like two friends who did not need words to connect with each other. Once we reached the gleaming black taxi, Manoj held the key out to me. “Saab, if you are not ashamed of driving my taxi today, could you drive till we reach your locality? I will take the wheel after the highway.”

I stood for a few seconds without reacting. Manoj still kept holding the key out to me. Images of Anu screaming still loomed in front of me. But the images seemed blurred now, and I took the key from Manoj. He promptly sank into the passenger seat, and put on his seat belt. I followed his lead, sat in front of the steering wheel, snapped the seat belt on, and waited a while. The little bangles were shimmering in the orange light of the setting April sun. I imagined her little arms and her little squeals of laughter – just like Shiv’s when he played with me.

I realized I was holding the key tightly, because my palm started hurting with the metal digging into it. Manoj was quiet, and did not ask me to hurry. I looked at him, and he was pale. “Are you scared I am going to bang your car?” I smirked, almost glad to have sensed a crack in his trust, glad to know he had flaws too.

He smiled back, a pained smile, but not entirely free of mirth. “Saab, better you than the bank, no? You know more about cars than anyone I know, and you could drive it with your eyes shut. And see? My hands are on the handbrake, so don’t worry. Let’s go now”. The steering wheel was cold and solid. I put my foot on the clutch, the brake and the accelerator, to measure the distance. Manoj had his right hand firmly on the handbrake, ready to use it, just in case. The rear-view mirror looked back at me with a face that showed no fear – my face.

Driving Manoj’s taxi was indeed like listening to music. The sounds of the engine reverberated to match my pulse, and I remembered how much I missed driving. I looked at Manoj only after I covered a few kilometers – maybe I was anxious he would decide to take back the wheel, or maybe I didn’t want to know what was going through his mind right then – sympathy, pity, curiosity or happiness.

Manoj finally spoke in a low voice. “See Saab, you don’t need my services any more. You should buy another car if your wife needs the grey one.” I turned to look at him, and I realized that the eyes that crinkled up in laughter did not look young any longer. In spite of his smile, he still looked pale. I also noticed that he was not holding on to the handbrakes now.

I was nearing home now, and I was reluctant to give up the wheel, but Manoj was insistent. We reached home, and Manoj got off the taxi with me. I walked to him, wondering whether a hug would be adequate to express my feelings. He took my hand with both his wrinkled hands. “Saab, this is for you. It has been lucky for me, and I am sure it will help you too. And give my blessings to Shiv baba. He must be a handsome boy.”

I opened my palm to see the little colored bangles that he treasured. “Manoj…… thank you. And yes…… driving is just like Rafi’s songs…” I finally hugged him, not venturing any more words, as my voice threatened to give away my emotions.

“And don’t forget to pick me up tomorrow morning,” I called out as I walked towards my apartment. “We have to try out that other tea shop – this one was had really bad samosas.” His chuckle was infectious, and I was smiling even as Anu opened the door to let me in.

The call on my mobile came when I was in the shower the next morning. I was singing in the shower, and Anu was baffled because she couldn’t imagine why. She had taken the call, and she banged on the bathroom door. “Someone called Manoj….. says he wants to talk right now. You want to take it?”

“Hello, Saab? I am Manoj’s son. Amma told me he picks you up every morning, so I just thought I’d let you know… He died last night. We took him to the hospital, but he didn’t make it….. They said it was his heart.”

After the call, I know I was in the shower for a long time because Anu got worried. “Is it your job? Well, its ok….. You were working too hard anyway. We will sort it out…. Is it your health?” Anu was holding my face with both her palms, and trying to read my eyes; no micro analysis this time. I smiled, and took her hands in mine.

“Anu, can you get ready in ten minutes? We need to go someplace. Let’s leave Shiv with your mother….. It’s not a place we can take kids.” Anu was looking even more bewildered than before. But something in my eyes must have told her the answers would come soon. She turned to go to the bedroom to get ready. “Anu, it’s a funeral of someone close.”

As I saw Anu’s eyes widen, I shook my head. “No, you don’t know him…. I’ll tell you later. I am going to the car with Shiv. You change and come down.”

She was already out of the room when I remembered something. I opened the drawer, and took the little colored bangles and lifted it to the sunlight. The little bangles looked just like Manoj’s twinkling eyes. I also picked up a piece of twine to hang up the bangles on the rear-view mirror of my grey car.

Before heading out the front door, I remembered something else. “By the way, Anu, you don’t need to wear flats. I am driving today.”

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1. **Title :** [Love Note after Twelve Years](http://yourstoryclub.com/short-stories-love/love-note-after-twelve-years/)

**Category : Love and Romance**

**Story :** Life had changed for me. I never realized it. Moonlight walk changed into late night strategy workshops. Candlelight dinner turned into business meetings. Sweet and short phone calls from her transformed into long hour teleconferences. Gifts were no more priority now — there should be some tangible return whatever we invest, after all. Spending even 5 dollars on the bouquet for the Valentine’s Day seemed meaningless — you would lose at least half an hour searching for a parking space in the downtown.

Overall there was no respite from the hectic office and the future planning. Whenever she, in a very mild attempt, tried to express her feelings, I had pre-defined answer, “these all are for us only, darling” and she used to be quiet for another month or so.

Recently I had to go to Holland on a business trip for a week. I was working on an important assignment. I didn’t have even five minutes to talk to my parents who traveled more than fifteen hundred miles just to meet us. I called her to inform that I had to leave that evening. It was not new to her. It happened many times, and every time, in evening, I found her standing at the door, smiling, with my suitcase packed with all the necessary stuffs.

I checked in to Crown Inn in Eindhoven. It was 3 PM. I wanted to rehearse my presentation before I meet the senior management. I was sure that she would have kept the file. In past, she never missed what I needed, never ever. But I could not control my anger. I opened my leather cased Samsonite and file was not there!!! I took out or rather threw cloths one by one on the cozy floor of Crown Inn.

“Here it is” phewwww… what a relief.” I sighed. I knew she never missed even my minute taste and never ending petty demands. And for this important file, I had specifically reminded her.

I opened the file. There was a pink envelop, something similar to what we used to exchange, long time ago, before our marriage. Those days, loves were not made on the Internet. It had been more than twelve years.

I opened the envelope. It had our family photo, with her and our two little ones. We all were smiling. There was a pink greeting card with a red heart printed on it. Inside the card, it read, “Miss you my dear Teddy Bear.”

When I was returning, at the Schiphol airport, after many years I purchased something for her… just for her… a pair of diamond earrings. I was missing her badly, as never before.

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1. **Title :** [One in a million : REWIND](http://yourstoryclub.com/short-stories-love/valentines-day-special-one-in-a-million-rewind/)

**Category : Love and Romance**

**Story : From FEB 24 2010 17:46 – the REST OF MY LIFE** There I was, lost forever, trapped and without a choice, holding my head in one hand and the ring on the other. Crying my heart out but I could not produce a sound. All hopes were lost. The tears in my face were covered by the rain drops. I was the one who always told her that I never wanted anyone to see me cry. But then now I wish she would open her eyes at least to see me cry and tell me not to cry.

**FEB 24 2010 17:45** I felt empty. I dint have words to express myself for what I had done. She was the only one I had in my life and now I was alone. Alone once again. Yes I had told her that loneliness was something that I loved but now I felt that she could have been there with me to share the loneliness. Even my ego, my pride my aim, my achievements had left me alone. Now I know what being lonely meant. The fair face was because she was having leukemia, blood cancer. She was not able to come but still did just because I had asked her to. She had become thin not because of her gym but because she was not well. It was weak not thin. The thud while on the call was because she had fainted. And I failed to notice that. Despite all that she had come just to make me happy and what did I do? Hurt her, irritate her, and kill her.

**FEB 24 2010 15:30** she was there, still as a rock. Alone in her home, in her bed. There was a sudden rush that fell as a heavy thud in my heart. And all the voices came rushing to me. She was gone, for good. A deadly cancer had taken her away from me. Her mom had told me it was cancer. But it was all over before it even started. Cursing myself I took out my chain which was a gift from her and placed it on her beautiful hands. Then with a hollow punch of pain I went near her ear and said “I am really sorry Sam…” and I left the place with welled up eyes and a heavy heart.

**FEB 23 2010 09:44** “That’s it I cannot take any more of your ignorance. This is no longer a relationship. It’s always about you and you just seem to be interested about yourself. It’s as if you never wanted me here. And it’s me who is always pushing things and taking initiatives to keep this relationship healthy. That’s it, I quit, FOR GOOD!!” were her last words. I tried to explain how it all was just a game. But she refused to accept it. She must hate me. Well even I was not crazy about myself at that point. I ran behind her and explain all about it but it dint seem to go anywhere.” I woke up with a start it was all a dream. I had to apologize to her. Be with her again. So after all that wait I started for her house. To apologize in person. But the Ego restrained me. So I stayed.

**FEB 22 2010 15:31** it had been more than a week since I had spoken to Sam. And I was starting to feel really guilty. It was not my fault but that’s not the point at all. It was a huge fight but now it’s all getting on to my head. I was stupid and I should have apologized to her but I did not. It was her mistake as well. The ego dint let me move forward with the apology. I was an achiever up till then, that dint let me put my foot down. But at the end no matter whose mistake it is the distance between US increases. I dint know what would make it better. And I was torn between my feelings and my ego. Damn the ego!!

**FEB 14 2010** it was the day of roses, Valentine’s Day. I went to meet her. You know, SAM. The one and only, my beloved. I loved her so much but I felt something was wrong. I just knew it. I wanted to surprise her. I just got 100 odd candles and arranged it on the 1st floor of my house, in a small room which had lot of shelves. The candles were everywhere. And I had chosen a song called, expressions by Helen Jane so that it would be romantic. And then she came, her face was glowing more than it usually did, fair than usual she had become thin, since she was going to gym. I said “I am not going to compare you with the moon because moon has scars etc is an old line, in one line if I have to describe you I would say you are the most beautiful girl in this planet, in one WORD if I had to say it would be “PURE””. She smiled at me. She said “thanks a lot, this is the best thing anyone has ever done for me, you are the best.” saying this she held my hand and gave me a silver chain. It was so good and I hugged her and looked into her eyes. but I saw that she was not happy.

So I asked her me: You still like him dont you.

her: please its valentine’s day and after this beautiful thing why are you at it again?

Me: if you thought it was beautiful then you wouldn’t be so dull. If you don’t like me just say so.

Her: oh come on, you know I loved it please don’t be angry. That anger doesn’t go well with your face,

me: okay m sorry too. By the way I have got us tickets for tomorrow. Morning movie then afternoon rain tree then at night a really nice play.

Her: m sorry ad I can’t make it. I have to go to vishal’s house remember? I told you la his cousin is getting married. I got to go to Trivandrum.

me: Go day after tomorrow Na, please stay for tomorrow I made all the arrangements. Her: sorry da cant. I skipped today cos I know I have the best guy in the world.

Me: please please tomorrow please.

Her: sorry da pleaase understand.

Me: so you like vishal more than me? Fine!!

Her: oh come on you know that’s not true

me: then stay and prove it

her: stop it, now

me: why should I? You don’t like me anymore.

AFTER A WHILE OF SIMILAR FIGHTS her: That’s it I cannot take any more of your ignorance. This is no longer a relationship. It’s always about you and you just seem to be interested about yourself. It’s as if you never wanted me here. And it’s me who is always pushing things and taking initiatives to keep this relationship healthy. That’s it, I quit, FOR GOOD!

Me: Fine I am not dying for you, one day you ll die for me and then you ll know.

**FEB 9 2010 10:00** I called her up in the morning she dint pick up the call. I tried many times I could not reach her. I started getting worried. And got paranoid so kept trying she dint pick up the call. Later at three in the noon she called me, and apologized for not answering the call I yelled at her but then I heard a thud as if she fell down and got worried. I was not able to reach her for some hours and then she called me again. She said that she fell down from the swing and her mobile was not working properly and she had given it for repair.

**FEB 7 2010 00:00** she called me at twelve, and said “HAPPY 5 YEAR anniversary honey” I said thanks a lot and we spoke about our relationship till two or three o clock. But I sensed her coughing a lot and also sounding really weak. I dint want to upset her so I dint ask her about it. We kept talking and I said ok I am going to sleep I have got a match in morning. I am sorry SAM. Gunnite! She sounded sad when she said bye, but I dint say anything. And we met in the evening I was only boasting to her about my match entirely and I dint even ask her how she was and all that.

**FEB 7 2005 16:00** it was after tuition that she came near me. We used to go home together pushing the cycle. In the 4 years we had become really best friends and I felt that we had gone a tad more than that. But I dint say anything. While walking she said, “sri I need to tell you something, rather talk to you about it” saying this she pulled my hand. Sure she thought it was romantic but my cycle fell down. She said, “There is something I have been feeling lately. And I don’t know what it is. I mean I think I have crossed the limits by my heart and become too close to you” I started smiling and saying something but she interrupted “no let me finish please. I think about you all the time and always for everything, you are the one guy I speak to this much apart from my dad. And I don’t know what to name this relationship but it’s not restricted to friendship. Love seems too awkward considering we are too young. I am sorry I don’t know how to express myself. I just feel,” I kept my finger on her lips and said, “yes, I love you too Sam”. Tears were filled in her eyes she was so happy and jumping with joy. This got me since I was not so attractive. She looked like an angel just even more beautiful.

**JAN 12 2004 11:45** I had a bad fever and also I had my exams. I don’t pray to god. Not that I don’t believe in him, it’s just that, he is there, let him be there. But she called me up and said “how are you feeling.” I said I was fine but was worried about fever and the exam. She said “don’t worry I have prayed to 4 gods, I pray only to 3 gods daily but since yesterday I dint pray for myself, that is for me to get a good guy, you know with all the looks I asked for, I have that one pending so I used it for you today… You will clear the exam easily” I dint know I would say this but I did “Sam, I don’t believe in god, But I believe in you when you pray for me, Thanks a lot. You will get the best guy in this world. i promise!!”

\_\_END\_\_

1. Title : [The Pursuit of Love](http://yourstoryclub.com/short-stories-love/love-short-story-pursuit-of-love/)

**Category : Love and Romance**

**Story :** I have loved her for thirteen months and 5 days; it’s just that she doesn’t know about it.

She works at the corner bakery where they sell those awesome cupcakes or so I am told, but I can’t be sure of that even though I have purchased hundreds of them. The mere sight of her sends all my senses on a strike leaving me with a thunderous pounding of the heart that resonates loudly in my eardrums. I am sure we have a past connection but the thought that she will never know gnaws at my heart making me ill at ease.

But today, I feel that something important is going to happen and all these thoughts buzzing around in my head is making me dizzy.

But that could also be because I hadn’t had anything to eat or drink – Or maybe because I haven’t slept in the last forty eight hours. It has been raining heavily since then and the torment of the falling drops on the window pane is like a whip lashing for me as I sit by the window, delirious, hoping to catch a glimpse of her. It has been forty eight hours since the rain started, it’s the heaviest in ten years I heard the chap say on the weather channel and it’s likely to continue.

And these hours have been the toughest – not being able to see my love –

But wait – what is this that I see? A light – a faint one inside the bakery – It must be her; it has to be her…

I stumble down the staircase, run through the alley, crossing the road; all wet by the rain but kept warm by the love burning inside me. I know what you are thinking – that it’s such a cliché. But for some clichés are the closest to truth.

I reach the door of the bakery; I can hardly see anything inside through the glass. I hesitate not sure what is it that I can do, the rain is soaking me through though I know my love cannot be washed away and she will know, yes she will know.

And then the doors open and there she is – my love – she looks at me– then smiles and says in that melodious voice of hers,

“sorry, we are closed”

I wait for the words to come from her mouth, even mine, but there’s none – I smile in return, hiding my anguish, and I walk away slowly back in the rain.

At the steps of the building, I pause – self ridicule makes me halt for a mere second, and I turn to look back in the direction of my love and watch her walk away, the umbrella barely doing a good job, her white dress now sticking to her legs and her hair clings around her waist instead of my hands, and she half walks and half skips to a waiting car. The door opens as she approaches it and a man gets out, runs towards her, hugs her and then kisses her. I hear her laugh, a playful laugh and that laugh urges me to run towards her and scream out loud,

*“Not him, me. I who have loved you secretly for months… not him, it’s me”*

But I remain rooted to the spot and with an ever burdening heart watch her drive away and I return to my room to bide my time till another day.

\_\_END\_\_

1. Title : [THE HONEYMOON TRYST](http://yourstoryclub.com/short-stories-love/honeymoon-romance-story-the-honeymoon-tryst/)

**Category : Love and Romance**

**Story :** The envelope read: “To MY DEAR wife and my life partner.”

(The stress was on the words written in bold).

Pritish entered the room expecting an excited Leona but instead he saw her walk past him expressionlessly. She was wearing a navy blue night gown with lace work done on the sleeves with a deep neck line, only to reveal the rise of her beautiful bosoms. It had thin straps to hold on to her body and was perfect enough to make her look sexy even at this hour of the night. Her hair was let loose in a careless manner and with tired eyes she sat on the bed. Pritish found her too inviting even at this hour of the day but he chose to control his urges.

There was complete silence for seconds.

“I am not too comfortable with this idea of a honeymoon trip so soon,” Leona said worriedly.

“I love to travel and explore new places. Maldives is an amazing place to be but……,” she said stopping abruptly.

“….. but…. but what Leona? You still can’t get over Nikhil?” Pritish asked in a stern voice.

Leona looked quizzically at him. She so much wanted to tell him that she had got over Nikhil long back and from the time she had agreed to date him she had not thought of Nikhil even once..

There was silence again.

“Give it a chance dear,” Pritish said in a mellowed tone and went to sleep.

Little had he known that merely accompanying his cousin for consultation would help him find a confident, witty and a beautiful companion like Leona.

Leona pondered over this whole night. She thought, “Nikhil is a closed chapter now and I cannot dare to reopen those pages. Pritish has given me enough time when we were dating. I need time to know him too.”

She wasn’t sure if it was going to work out between them but there was a ray of hope.

Marrying an architect like Pritish Gujral, with a completely different background had been a tough choice for her. At 32 he had already taken over the reins of the Gujral Foundation in Gurgaon. The man who was always on the covers of the industrial news and also managed to make it on Page 3 had actually agreed to marry a young Psychiatrist like Leona Gupta. It was strange but true.

Dating had been easy for Leona. They spoke like friends, behaved normally but on their first night after marriage, thoughts of honeymoon made her feel jittery. Pritish, on the other hand was relaxed and poised.

It was 4 A.M; Leona was still awake. She waited for Pritish to wake up. He was getting ready when he saw his beauty walk up to him. “I just wish I could hold her tight in my arms right now,” Pritish thought.

“Pritish…………… I……. I…. will give it a try.”

There was an abrupt pause.

She smiled faintly and said, “Let’s hurry; we need to pack for the evening flight.”

They reached Malé International Airport by morning. Pritish had booked a small motor boat that took them to Paradise Island in Maldives.

“It looks exquisitely amazing Pritish,” Leona chirped out loudly.

One island only for us! Isn’t it spooky?

Breaking into a crooked smile he said, “That serves the purpose.”

Pritish was a guy who was disciplined yet cool, challenging yet generous, modest and mostly fun loving. Pritish was opiated by his work yet he made sure he arranged this trip. He wanted to make Leona feel comfortable with him in every way.

Maldives was just meant for them. Cool blue water, exotic tropical flowers around, a private villa, a private bar, sapphire lagoons, breathtakingly picturesque surroundings and a beautiful couple like Pritish and Leona. The sparks were missing though.

Pritish wanted to take Leona for some outdoor water sport as she loved it. Snorkeling could be the best of the choices made in Maldives.

Leona had a child like excitement to go dive in wearing the black outfit, long black fins and mask set ready. She looked superbly sexy in that outfit which revealed her curves and her entire figure which Pritish had seen for the first time. She looked like a modern mermaid.

Pritish was a handsome man with closely cropped, light brown hair, bushy eyebrows and strong sharp features usually sporting a calm smile. He was 5’9’’ and Leona came exactly till his shoulder.

Leona caught Pritish staring at him and asked mockingly, “I am sure I am not the first girl you have seen in a swim suit like this. This must be so common for you based on your popularity and extensive travel schedule overseas.”

“I do have seen but not someone so close to me, not someone who is mine already,” saying this he moved close to her.

His reply stunned her. For once she loved what he said.

If Pritish were given a chance he would quit Snorkeling and make love to her. She could feel his breath close to her face. A sudden surge of deep desire swept inside her but she was too stubborn to accept it.

Awkwardly she moved away from him and went for Snorkeling. She felt like a sea animal inside. They went exploring the coral reefs and the wonderful aquatic life.

A sumptuous meal and an exhausting day made them lazy. Leona lay on the hammock wearing a white linen halter top that had been tied in a single knot at the back of her neck and a blue abstract printed straight cut skirt that reached till her knee. Her small silver studded earrings were shining and that delicate silver anklet that adorned her soft feet looked perfect when teamed up with a beaded multicolored necklace. Her long slender legs were revealed slightly from one side to Pritish. He was staring at her as he stood at the entrance of the Villa having an official conversation. For a doctor, Leona was too conscious about looks and knew how to dress perfectly according to situations.

Pritish looked desirable with his six packs revealed underneath the white unbuttoned kurta. Leona thought that his grey shorts looked comfortable and his hair was just fit to be entangled in her delicate fingers. The tanned look on his face due to the day’s activity made him look breathtakingly hot.

He kept ruffling his hair each time he went out of control during the conversation looking at her. Once the conversation was done, he walked towards her and tried to engage in a conversation. She didn’t speak much.

She stood up, came close to him and planted a soft kiss on his cheek and said, “Thanks for taking me snorkeling. I loved it.”

Pritish stood still. The impact of that kiss remained. No other woman had made him feel so aroused or wanted. The sticky gloss was still there .He wished he never were to remove that from his cheek. Feeling embarrassed he wiped it. The kiss was the ice breaker.

They went out to take a look at the sunset by the beach. Pritish offered her a glass of wine while he sat with a beer can. The situation was perfect. The crimson sky with slightly cool breeze, typical of the tropical evening climate made them ease out a bit.

Pritish had already started feeling his passion bubbling inside. They sat close by and enjoyed the silence with a few conversations about the next day’s plan.

Leona’s legs were folded and she sat in a reclined posture resting her body weight on one hand. She didn’t realize that Pritish was so close to her until she could feel his warm breath on her ears. He was already moving his finger slowly at each sensitive point, tracing his path from the pinna, to the nape of her neck down her arms. She quivered with excitement inside. The touch had already started affecting her. She made a low moan and removed his hand. Instead, he pulled her close wrapping her by one arm and let her weight fall on him completely. She was enveloped in his arms and didn’t dare to look up. There was immense anxiousness inside her. She felt a slight discomfort but it vanished with the magic that Pritish was creating. He made her feel excited and nervous every second he touched her. He could feel her breath harder with her chest pounding. Her stomach was twisting inside . She gave out a small shriek with a shiver and looked lustfully at him. His fingers raced across her lips only to get them parted for a moist kiss. It had been their first passionate kiss.He let her hair loose that was tied in a careless knot. The perfume of her shampooed hair was intoxicating him. His fingers moved to the back of her neck where he released the knot that held her top. It came off in a jiffy.

They were ready to strike the last chord of intimacy when Leona whispered in his ears, “Not here Pritish.”

Pritish stopped suddenly with a shocking expression that changed into a smile soon and looked at her ebony coloured eyes which had the answer that only he could understand…..

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1. **Title :** [**The wounds of the winter**](http://yourstoryclub.com/short-stories-love/love-short-story-wounds-of-the-winter/)

**Category : Love and Romance**

**Story :** The park was now getting empty in early evening, even before the clock showed seven. The winter had already come to our city. The days were now getting shorter. The evenings were preponed and the mornings postponed. The trees had started shedding leaves and the green city was turning out to be naked. When were the spring coming & the flora & fauna going to have new lease of life?

The twinkling stars in the sky were getting dimmer, so was the lonely moon among them. Like me … missed in solitude even in a typical crowd inside this park. This way, the moon had an intimacy with me.

The concrete bench was slowly getting chiller and chiller. The nearby light posts which had been standing like the watchmen were now appearing hazier& hazier. The droplets of evening dew were falling from the sky. It’s early December. The winter had started shuddering this city with the continuous fall in the temperature.

Perhaps I was the last man to leave the park. No….somebody else might also be there……Nirlipta! Eight years back, she once knitted a sleeveless sweater for me and after wearing that I felt excited: When winter comes, will the spring be far behind?

Alas….the spring never came thereafter. The trees were not decorated with new leaves and buds. The birds forgot the art of singing. As………. Nirlipta departed from my life.

In every winter I wear the same sleeveless sweater gifted by Nirlipta and feel her in me. May be she will have forgotten the art of knitting sweaters. Even otherwise, she won’t be knitting sweaters any more for anybody.

-“Just wait two more months…..I will certainly marry you in the coming spring.” Who was promising whom? I moved ahead following the utterances. Few yards away, a boy was apparently sleeping on the lap of a girl, waiting for the spring to come. Ignoring….. the cold wave and the drizzling dew drops.

When winter comes, will the spring be far behind?

But the girl started weeping-“Who knows………? …..anything may happen in these two months. I may have to leave this city before the spring comes.”

The boy was speechless. Apparently, helpless also. Did this windy winter understand his helplessness?

-“Ok, we’ll go now. The night is growing older. “The young man stood up expecting his girlfriend to follow.

-“But I am yet to hear the final verdict from you.” The girl was expecting a firm reply from her boyfriend.

-“Please, darling…when winter comes, will the spring be far behind?”

-“Hopeless! Nobody waits for the spring to come. Who knows….you may meet the summer just after this winter. You may have to repent at that time. In love, who cares whether it is winter or summer? Do the seasons make any difference to the people in love?”

-“What are you doing? Why are you taking off my sweater?”

Despite the resistance from the boy, I took off the sweater from his body and warned him-“Young man, winter never comes in love and nobody has to wait for the spring. In love, there is only one season, i.e. spring.”

-“But my sweater…?” The poor boy was still unable to understand my words. He was making his best efforts to snatch his sweater from me.

I pushed him back and started running away. The young man was shouting behind, “Watchman..! Watchman! Here’s a thief!  Thief!!”

-“What happened, Sir? Where is the thief? Why did you take off your sweater? It’s too cold today. Don’t you feel the chill?” The watchman rushed towards me.

Oh…alright. I had my sweater in my hand. My whole body was sweating profusely. The heartbeats have been faster.  But where are the paramours? And the young man’s wait for the spring?

-“It’s already nine’o clock, Sir. Let’s go. I have to close the gate now.”

What…if I disobey the watchman’s instructions? He would sense a mad in me and kicked me out from the park.

Nirlipta! After you depart from my life, I get wounded in every winter and lose the patience to wait for the spring. Winter comes and goes every year. But after the months of winter, the spring never comes. Rather the summer comes soon after.

Ahh…! The sweet spring disappeared with your departure!!

\_END\_

1. **Title :** [Cycle of Life](http://yourstoryclub.com/short-stories-family/cycle-of-life/)

## Category : Family Stories

**Story :** That day, old man was leaving us, forever!!!

I heard my mother calling relatives and friends, one-by-one, on phone and telling the news in sobbing voice, “They will take out ventilator today at around 3 PM. You may come to see him before that.”

A week before that day, when he was taken to hospital, my father was helping grandpa to lie on back seat of our car. I could not forget grandpa’s last unanswered reply when I, while trying to control my tears, asked my mother whether he would be all right. Grandpa called me by weak gesture and softly caressed my hair as he generally used to do. But, very soon, his hand slipped away from my head, holding left part of his chest to unsuccessfully stop the rising pain. He was struggling to breathe normally. He was the same man who once almost ran to market in heavy rain to buy inhaler for me, when I lost the one in school and was little breathless because of asthma I had. But when it came to him that day I could not do much but just cried. My mother embraced me saying grandpa would come back soon.

A night before that day, at hospital’s reception my mother was consoling my distressed looking father to accept the destiny, “it has to happen one day.” I did not understand what it meant but simply closed my eyes and prayed God to let my grandpa be well soon. My grandpa once told me that prayers from children are pure and they surely reach God. But it did not happen, perhaps.

That day, we reached hospital at 1 PM. We went inside. Security at reception did not stop me that day. I was following my mother trying to meet her pace, climbing stairs, to ICU where grandpa was admitted. A nurse guided us to a room. After a long week gap I saw my grandpa — my best friend. Grandpa was sleeping peacefully on hospital bed. There were many small TV and radio alike boxes with tiny lights. Few boxes were making “beep-beep” sound in rhythm. I knew that the sound was fading heart beats of my best friend — my grandpa. Then I saw my father, with red and swollen eyes, sitting closure to grandpa’s bed. My mother could not control herself. She started sobbing loudly kneeling at my father shoulder. My father gently stood up and took my crying mother out of the room.

I was left alone with the most adorable man of my life. I went closure to him, where my father was sitting just few seconds back. I watched the face of my dear grandpa. There was no pain — it was calm and composed. Even with few plastic tubes in his nose and mouth and a white foggy gas mask on it, I found his face quite charming and graceful. I started caressing grandpa’s hair. I wished that he utter my name… just once… It was the same mouth that told me so many stories, every day, until I slept. I was waiting for his eyes to be opened… to see me last time… but he continued sleeping… these were the old eyes that never got tired enjoying watching my toys, my drawing, my homework, my mark sheets… Then I looked at his hand. It was same hand that used to caress my hair. I held his palm in my both hand. I tried measuring my palm with his. Nothing had changed. His palm was still larger than mine. I touched his index finger… I held it last time… holding it always assured me safe feeling in busy markets and crowded places…

I took out my inhaler from my pocket and kept it on a nearby table where already many medicines were kept scattered. I remembered once my grandpa told me that the inhaler was my life saviour… I murmured in grandpa’s ear, “Don’t worry Grandpa, you would get well soon. I kept here inhaler to save you.”…

“It’s a boy” exhilarated voice of my father brought me back in my present. Today, after eighteen years later, on the same floor of the same hospital I found my father rushing towards a nurse who was carrying a just born baby. “What are you doing there… come… look at him… he resembles ‘ditto’ your grandpa”, almost shouted my father in excessive excitement, carefully holding the baby in his arms.

But I saw my grandpa in my father more than in my just born son. A new cycle of life has started… to repeat itself once again.

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1. **Title :** [The Sparrows](http://yourstoryclub.com/short-stories-family/family-short-story-sparrows/)

## Category : Family Stories

**Story :** Let me introduce myself. We are House Sparrows closely related to the Lark family. Some of our close cousins from the Lark family are the Ashley Brown Sparrow Lark and the Black Crowned Sparrow Lark. I do believe I’m flaunting my connections with the Lark family, though it really is something to be proud of, for us humble House Sparrows!

Don’t be deluded by the name Lark. Yes, those of the original Larks are beautiful singers, like my second cousin the Sky Lark. They even had an ode penned to celebrate the beauty of their song, by Percy Bysshe Shelly the poet.

We live scattered all over the length and breadth of the world. I for one, live in the Indian Sub continent, the South of India to be exact; loving the Indian summer heat, the cool monsoons and breezy Junes.

We are an eco friendly lot and try our best to live in peace and friendship with other birds, insects, animals and the human beings around us.

We live in a flock beneath the shade of an expansive banyan tree that stretches its bountiful branches wide around the huge tree trunk. The tree is a haven with its perpetual shade and the breeze from the thousands of its glossy leathery leaves fanning and rustling in the early morning air. I love the feel of its elliptically shaped velvety leaves and brush my feathers upon it.

“I love your dark cool shade, Banyan” I said to him one day, to which he replied amicably,

“Do you now know why I spread my arms so wide Sparrow? So I could embrace all you creatures!”

At this I snuggled close into one of his swaying slim aerial prop roots, as I have watched children, snuggle into their mother’s sari pallu for comfort and refuge.

“There were times, Sparrow, in the days gone by” (he seemed inclined to reminisce) “when traders with their ware stopped to rest and make or finalize transactions here at the sheltered base of my trunk!”

“Really?” said I, swinging upon the aerial root, my soft feather rustling in the breeze the movement made. Other Sparrows joined me and we felt like flying trapeze performers as we swung faster and faster around Banyan’s trunk.

“Did they come often, Banyan?”

“Oh, yes, Sparrow! Almost every day! And at times many times in a day, too! Yes, yes, swing away, you flouncing Sparrows! You’re cooling the air around me!”

“Yes, they were called ‘banias’ or traders and how some of them argued and quarrelled! Oh there was so much noise and activity about me! Anyway, thanks to the banias, I have been called Banyan ever since! Hailing from the fig family basically, I might have been called Figgy if it hadn’t been for the banias! Ha!Ha!”

He laughed away quite overcome by his own humour.

“Figgy,Figgy!” I chanted happily enjoying the joke as much as the swing.

At this point he suddenly said,

“I do have a Fig name, Sparrow! But one which makes me a little ashamed!”

I was quite surprised at this declaration by my friend Banyan. “I’m called ‘Strangler Fig’ by some! Yes, I remember now, but I don’t like being referred to by that name, Sparrow!”

“Oh no, Banyan, did you strangle someone! How terrible! But it’s a treacherous name!”

“Nothing sinister about it, Sparrow. I remember my seed was dropped into the crevice of a stately Neem by a Mynah, after he had eaten his fill of a red juicy banyan fruit. There I germinated and grew and soon my roots growing downwards clawed into the Neem’s trunk and subdued my host. As a thriving youngster my roots grew quickly until the Neem now stays within my heart and all you can see is me! Do you think I have done a terrible thing, Sparrow?” he asked dolefully, all the elation of a while ago having vanished.

For an instant I was at a loss for words. I almost stopped swinging and said softly,  
“Is he really in there?”

I hopped close to the Banyan’s trunk and peered in. The Neem smiled feebly at me through the thick woody curtains of Banyan.

“He has given food and shelter for thousands of birds,” said the Neem, our silent listener.

“And a multitude of insects nest in him! Tell him that. Tell him we are all a part of the ecological balance! I’m fine in here though a bit sapped, but very happy to be a part of his benevolence. It feels good to live in his heart!”

“Wow”, said I, and loved the Neem’s docile spirit.

The Banyan seemed to shed dewy tears of maybe remorse or relief and joy at the hidden Neem’s tender words, I really couldn’t tell.

I thought to myself that I will set about taking a census of the residents of Banyan straight away. Even as I flew to start my new assignment as a censor, a swarm of fig wasps whizzed past to feed upon Banyan’s clusters of red figs. They half hummed and half buzzed a mid- summer tune.

I heard the chirping of the tiny white Babblers who had made their nest among the dark leaves. They hopped from branch to branch as though they had a game going among themselves.

I heard the black Crows caw at the far end. They were the biggest of the birds residing in Banyan and commanded everyone fear and respect, stuttering with their black coats like advocates and lawyers from the court house at the far end of the village.

I hopped from branch to branch discovering the residents of the interiors of the beautiful lush Banyan. My first stop was the nest of a White Cheeked Barbet, where the mother Barbet sat upon her eggs and simply said, “Hi!” then dozed off again upon her warm eggs.

Heart Spotted Woodpecker, a duty bound worker went knock, knock, knocking upon a thick branch where he suspected a small band of termites had gnawed in. He had rid Banyan of a few such silent deadly invaders lately, but his work was never done, he said to himself with a sigh. He nodded to me cordially and continued pecking.

A few Orange Headed Thrushes flew in at the moment, and settled upon the branches of the Banyan, ruffling their yellow feathers after the long flight. The sunlight filtering through the leaves in soft strands lit their feathers to a beautiful fiery glow. They fluttered amidst the branches like orange-yellow flames of fire! They gobbled the caterpillars, weevils and stray termites hungrily and so, the fig wasps, a little away, feeding on the red fruits kept a wary eye on them.

The raucous green Parrots stopped their chattering and sat still in their clutches as I hopped by. They squawked their greeting and offered me dry berries and fruits that was their dinner. Their lemon green feathers were a wild contrast to the darkened foliage of Banyan. I had no idea Banyan had such an array of brightly coloured residents!

A White Bellied Treepie who sat musing on a lower branch seemed very lonely. He was a beautiful graceful bird, in startling white, black and brown. His tail was a long flow of black and white, cascading elegantly behind him. He waited for the return of his mate, gone in search of food to a nearby forest. He bowed, then with the droop of his wings called to his mate. His nest was a platform of twigs made ready for egg laying. He gave me a dreamy smile and seemed to be engrossed in the Yellow Browed Bulbul’s soulful singing that drifted from a thickly covered branch of the Banyan.  
Of the passerine family, the Bulbul’s song enraptured all the residents of Banyan. I have often been lulled to sleep by his melancholic tunes.

Quite a flock of us Sparrows resided in Banyan. We had the most number of nests here, among the branches or in the holes and niches that dotted Banyan’s thick woody trunk.

Some of my cousins had moved to the eaves of houses nearby, for want of privacy and space. For surely, in a tree that housed almost so many varieties of birds ,not to mention the Mynas that were our frequent visitors, and the insects which constituted a partial part of Banyan’s residents, we were a hardly a quiet, secluded household!

A swarm of Lemon Butterflies fluttered around the tree trunk like little shreds of sunshine. They flew in between the leafy boughs and rested upon the tender red leaves of Banyan. Soon a small swarm of Peacock Pansy Butterflies in a startling green blue flew between the aerial roots, alighting upon them in colourful rows.

“Hello, my friends” said Banyan as his long ropey roots swayed in the evening breeze.

“Hello, Banyan” they all chanted in unison though it was a feeble chant. They were never inclined to much chatter since they busied themselves with powdering their soft gossamer wings to look delicate and dainty.

“How exquisite you all look!” said Banyan, always generous with his compliments especially when well- deserved.

The birds and insects paused to watch each time the gorgeous Butterflies fluttered by, as though they were pretty ballet dancers in their shimmering brightly coloured wings.

Since Banyan stood by the banks of a river there were lengthy patches of thick grass and reeds growing along the banks. Tiny flowers on weeds grew in profusion. The Butterflies had their fill of nectar from these flowers. Sometimes they hovered over the pink water lilies in the river or rested delicately as though on tip toes upon the flat round lotus leaves that floated on the green water. It really was a beautiful sight as they admired their reflections on the fat dew drops that rolled like blobs of diamonds on the velvety leaves.

Our days were thus spent with finding a mate, mating, nest building, breeding, feeding – surviving in all the tranquil that swathed the Banyan and its whereabouts.

One day I dived down, as we all do, with partly closed wings and rose up in a glide. Our flights are undulated, accompanied by a long low whistle. At the tip of the rise I voiced a sharp chip note. All the sparrows around me arose with me and the air was aflutter with hundreds of tiny sparrow wings. We all flew away in different directions.

About ten to fifteen of us rested upon the taut telephone and electric wires that spanned the miles like fine black silk thread. We were like notes on a music sheet – sometimes in a continuous sequence, and at times accommodating uneven gaps of blue sky, between us. Hurrying passers- by paused or stopped to watch us in sheer admiration. Children waved to us and for most part we flew away in fear though we knew no harm was meant.

While we had sat gossiping upon the wires, a Black Crowned sparrow lark, that we had named Blackie, gave us some news of his well being. He had moved in with his mate, Tikku to a house in the village to nest upon its rafters.

The first few days when Blackie and Tikku had flown into the house in search of a place to nest, their chipping and flutter had caused Grandmother and the Mother of the house to call their daughter Meena and say excitedly,

“Look, look, Meena, those sparrows seem to be searching for a place to nest! Don’t talk loudly, lest you frighten them off!”

Soon Blackie and Tikku flew in with twigs, feathers and strange little scraps to build their nest and Grandmother said happily, her joy overflowing her toothless smile,  
“They are nesting on the rafters! That’s a good omen, indeed!”

Blackie and Tikku hearing this thought it was an auspicious beginning as well, and twitted,  
“That’s good!”

“How nice!” said Mother, “But I hope they don’t mess up the floor!”

Then they all took the greatest trouble never to disturb the sparrows. They spoke in low tones as far as possible, and rushed to the door to quiet a vendor when he yelled to announce his wares. Even the grinding and pounding sounded softer these days.

From below Grandmother and Meena watched the rafter eagerly. All was quiet up there. Blackie flew away often to bring tidbits for Tikku. Meena noticed Blackie was quite a handsome bird with starkly contrasting black and white markings on his face. Yellow Browed Bulbuls, Thrushes or Barbets, when flying past never failed to give him a second glance. Tikku, on the other hand was of a subdued sandy brown hue, with her feathers always a glossy fluff. On occasions when she had rested on the floor before flying up to the rafter, Grandmother, with her dwindling eyesight had mistook her for a powder puff! Naturally, she was startled when Tikku flew up!

Meena and Mother left pieces of food each day on a cracked blue porcelain saucer. They left water in a cup that had lost its handle. Blackie and Tikku made it a habit to help themselves of the offered crumbs of food.  
One golden morn when the sun dazzled through the coconut palm fronds, shedding spots of dancing gold light upon the courtyard of the house, tiny chip, chip noises came from above. Meena jumped in glee and shouted to her Mother and Grandmother.

“Amma, amma, paati,paati, the baby birds have hatched! They have hatched! I can hear them, amma!”

Mother was busy getting breakfast and lunch ready in the kitchen and she ran out wiping her sweating face with her sari pallu. Grandmother waddled into the room and looked up and clapped her hands for joy.

“We are very lucky the babies have hatched!”

And she made some weird chipping sounds trying to get the attention of the birds. Mother gazed up, smiled and returned to the kitchen muttering,

“ Times are hard for us! May God send us His bountiful blessings! Don’t stand gazing at the birds Meena, get ready and be off to school. Take your lunch, and run to school or you will be late!”

Meena tore herself away from staring in delight at the nest and grabbing her lunch box said goodbye to her Grandmother and Mother and disappeared from the house.

Blackie was seen bringing in tiny caterpillars, flies and bark beetle larvae to feed the hungry babies. He made short trips to and fro with a grasshopper, millet, corn or sunflower seed in his diminutive beaks. This went on for nearly three weeks and Meena gathered courage to climb up their bamboo ladder to softly peep into the nest on the rafter. Yes, the soft fluffy little baby sparrows were in there. They tweeted all the time and Grandmother was rather annoyed by and by.

Soon the babies began trying to fly, and Meena finished her homework very early each day just to find time to be with her little pets. Tikku and the babies had got quite used to having Meena watching them and soon allowed her to softly stroke their downs that had now grown into brown feathers.

The baby sparrows fell off their nest on and off and Mother or Meena would pick them up gently and place them safely in the nest. The roof being low they did not really hurt themselves and loved being stroked gently by Meena. They did love all the pampering, and at times Meena fed them with tiny grains or kernel even while they were in the nest, and Tikku didn’t mind.

Then one day, much to Meena’s shock and grief, after they had fluttered outside the house for a few days, the baby sparrows flew away never to return. Blackie and Tikku did return to nest in the evenings, though. They hopped from the rafters to the window sill to peck at the grains and peanut kernel left on the porcelain saucer, then ventured close enough to Grandmother even as she sat fanning herself with a palm frond fan. At times they visited the kitchen and pecked rice and curry leaves lying on the floor. Or watched twitting as Meena sat colouring her picture book or finished her homework.

One sullen evening when the sun seemed reluctant to leave turning dejectedly from orange to yellow to cream to a sad pale white, the bamboo gate of their house creaked and swung open. A tall brown man stood there for a few seconds and then unsure of himself walked into the house. He bent at the door and called,

“Amma, amma!”

A gasp was heard from within and Grandmother yelled,

“My son, my son!”

Mother from the kitchen stepped forward to see who the intruder was. Then she turned a beetroot red and vanished into the kitchen. Meena wondering who the stranger was got up to enquire.

The man stared at Meena and smiled.

“Where is your mother? Call your mother, girl! Amma!” he exclaimed when Grandmother was near enough.

Grandmother wept for joy since the man before her was no other than her own son, who had in a drunken frenzy, beaten his wife till she fainted and thinking her dead had fled to a distant city and had not been heard of since.

Meena had been born, and grew up a fatherless child. The Grandmother stopped lamenting her son’s departure after her birth and Mother had busied herself in menial cleaning and cooking in various houses in the vicinity. She had struggled to provide food and shelter for Grandmother and Meena.

When Meena had queried about her Father, Grandmother simply said,  
“He has deserted us. He is gone forever! Don’t talk about him, girl!”

Her Mother maintained a staunch silence, sighed and changed the topic every time, until Meena had stopped asking her anything about him.

So when Father did return, and Meena heard Grandmother address him as ‘son’ she knew. She eyed him suspiciously though Father smiled and tried to talk to her. She moved away and hid behind Grandmother.

Blackie above tweeted to Tikku and they peeped over the rim of their nest and watched the unexpected scenario below.  
There was a honking heard from outside the courtyard. It was an auto. The driver honked impatiently and walked to the threshold of the house with large suitcases.

Father paid the driver who drove away into the crowded streets and walked in with his suitcases. Grandmother was surprised to see the sign of opulence since it was obvious he had done himself well in the city.

So what had happened to Father in the city? He had indeed grown sober once faced with the harsh realities of the city. He had begun by mulling over his disoriented life and the cruelties he had meted his unfortunate wife. He had heard later from one of the villagers seeking work in the city that his wife was indeed alive and had given birth to a girl child. He had wept at the thought of Grandmother and his wife and of course the baby he had not seen.

He resolved to set his life right and began working hard. He avoided the toddy shops like the plague. He saved money, was cheated twelve times, robbed of all his savings many times and was out of work for six months at a stretch when even the little he had saved was used to keep himself alive.

He worked tirelessly unmindful of the bodily fatigue and nights of sleepless labour. He multi- tasked and began saving passionately for his return home. Father struggled thus for seven years. He had decided that when he did choose to return, he would return as a changed man of sound means!

Mother emerged by and by after grandmother ordered her to bring Father his meal. She busied herself with serving him the meagre meal of rasam, rice, brinjal fry and buttermilk, with downcast eyes.

She did dart sharp glances at him on and off to size him up. Yes, he was thinner, but looked healthy and strong. He didn’t smell of toddy anymore. He looked clean in a crisp white cotton shirt that was a little crushed and dusty from travel. He wore a thick silver plated wrist watch. Mother was secretly happy to see this new apparition, and wished she didn’t smell of the kitchen and had worn some jasmines in her hair! But had she known he would return today and thus?

This is the happy ending to the events that Blackie and Tikku witnessed from atop their rafter which they narrated to the Sparrows at Banyan.

When we Sparrows heard of this phenomenal change in the house where Blackie and Tikku nested, naturally we all flew there in flocks to see things for ourselves. When some twelve to fifteen of us Sparrows fluttered in Grandmother looked up in astonishment and said,

“Meena, Meena, see the sparrows! There is quite a flock in here! Come and see, girl!”

Meena was sitting on her Father’s lap when she heard her Grandmother’s excited call. Her Father was reading a story to her and showing her the colourful pictures.

Off she went to see the Sparrows and soon Father and Mother joined them, and oh, what a pretty sight they saw! Soft brown sparrows sat in a long row upon the rafters chipping away and Grandmother said,  
“They are here to bring us more luck! Didn’t I tell you sparrows were a good omen?”

Mother whispered a prayer to God in thanks for the copious fortune that had invaded them with her husband’s return. We Sparrows saw for ourselves the four happy smiling upturned faces which watched us from below with equal interest. Later we flew away after bidding farewell to Blackie and Tikku and retired for a fitful sleep upon the gracious branches of Banyan, after this eventful day.  
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1. **Title :** [A Reunion Much Awaited](http://yourstoryclub.com/short-stories-family/family-short-story-reunion-much-awaited/)

## Category : Family Stories

**Story :** Stopping by the market, she filled her basket with varieties of fruits, vegetables and some necessary groceries for making a delicious dessert. She made sure she did have enough time to cook the menu she had decided. He was to meet her after seven long years. Her excitement was growing every minute, so much so she couldn’t focus on anything.

Her husband observed her from a distance and came closer to help, trying to be supportive. He wasn’t even half as thrilled as his wife, with the arrival of their son. He would have preferred him to stay where he came from; even if they were given the least importance, Neeraj wouldn’t have taken the decision to get married to someone his parents would object.

On an ordinary day, the queue at the cash counter would have tested their patience, but very strangely Neeraj’s mother seemed very calm and composed compared to her spouse who was cursing the poor system of the hypermarket. On their way back home, she spotted a toy shop and insisted that they pick something up from there for their grandchild, for their son’s daughter. He scorned at her suggestion, but reluctantly slowed his vehicle and tried finding a parking space.

The shop was as fantasy oriented and as colourful like a child would love with a massive choice of Barbie dolls and soft toys. The toys were arranged in age order, and also an apparel section ranging from infants to ten year olds. Hema seemed clueless, she walked from one stand to the other in awe, wondering what would be the best toy she could chose for her 2 year old granddaughter.  He saw his wife smiling at herself, wondering what was this unconditional love that a mother has towards their children no matter how they behave, or how they abandon their parents.

He saw his wife stack up her trolley with items that was more than required. Unwilling to hurt her, he placed his credit card on the counter and looked at his wife, who was still randomly looking through the clothing sector, and selecting a baby pink dress which had fancy frills on it and also came along with matching booties, underwear and a hairband. She animatedly gestured at her husband asking if she could pick that up as well. He smiled and acknowledged, signalling his approval. She came running happily toward the cashier who was waiting to close the billing.

They had been informed through mail that Neeraj would be arriving on Saturday midnight, India time, and would be there for lunch at their place on Sunday. Though they wanted to greet them at the airport itself, he asserted that they would prefer to go to a hotel to freshen up, and that was what Demi would prefer too. Demi was their daughter in law, whom they hadn’t met till now. Hema’s husband’s anger and stubbornness had prevented her to even see their picture or even their baby’s. But now, after seven long years, her husband’s thoughts changed, when he realised that his wife was unhappy, depressed and dejected. Her silence spoke a lot, and he decided to change the present for better days to come.

She always was an early riser, but today was different, there was a mystical element to her life, she looked livelier and the glow on her face which was missing all these years was back. Very rhythmically she moved in her kitchen, sorting out her tasks one by one, and very calmly following the necessary procedures. She had selected an array of dishes of Indian cuisine, but made sure that the seasoning and spice was minimal, considering the type of palate Demi was used to.

Hema’s husband was on his regular schedule that morning, completing his two hours of exercise and Yoga, he sat at the table expecting his elaborate breakfast, but was disappointed to know that breakfast included only a cup of tea and two toasted slices of bread with butter and jam. His wife excused herself, since she had a lot to catch up with the extravagant lunch for her son’s arrival and would not be able to involve a sumptuous breakfast as well. He accepted her explanation and binged on the toasts, hoping that their son wouldn’t disappoint his wife.

It was half past one, and there was no news from their son. She patiently waited for their arrival, while her husband tried reaching the hotel where they were staying. At around 2 p.m. the doorbell rang and she rushed to open the main door. On their porch stood their son, with a pale complexioned woman, who had an infant in her arms, that was blissfully sleeping cuddled in her mother’s chest. Hema acted in a reflex, and hugged her son and daughter in law, with tears streaming her eyes, inviting them inside.

It was a rather awkward feeling for Neeraj to be back home after a long pause, and it took more time than expected to break the ice, and initiate a conversation with his father. As they settled themselves on the off white leather couch, Hema busied herself with setting the table for lunch. Demi was awfully quiet and preferred it that way throughout the time she was at their residence. The wide display of food shocked her, but her appetite was low, and ended her meal with only one *roti* with yellow *daal* and a cup of yogurt. This saddened Hema, but she was pleased with the thought that at least she ate Indian food. Neeraj enjoyed his meal, and Nadia, their daughter was in her best mood. Hema’s happiness knew no bounds; she couldn’t distract herself with food, and her only focus was on her son and his family.

Post lunch Hema spent time connecting with Demi and Nadia over some scrumptious dark chocolate cake. But the exchange of words did not be more than a few lines. When Hema handed over the goodies she had bought for Nadia, Demi accepted it gratefully, but didn’t bother to unwrap the gifts or even show it to Neeraj.

They decided to leave by 7 pm, which his mother resisted and requested them to stay back at their residence for the next few days they were in town. But very politely, they refused the offer, and preferred to stay in the hotel. Neeraj’s father was a mute spectator to all that was happening and watched the gloomy expression on his wife’s face, when their son was leaving. Neeraj’s father took him alone to the side and asked if he would be revisiting them again, and hearing a negative response, he was taken aback and hurt. Hema held herself together and tried not to let emotions take a toll on her. They bid bye to their son and his family at half past 7 in the evening, and shut closed the door behind them. With a very heavy heart, Hema descended on the couch and took her last breath.

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1. **Title :** [The Clothes Stand](http://yourstoryclub.com/short-stories-family/the-clothes-stand/)

## Category : Family Stories

**Story :** “Mama we have become *amir”*, said Jayani. She was thrilled that her dad got a steel clothes stand.  
This is a simple tool to dry your clothes on and can be dragged and placed where sun shines the most. It is light weight and can be folded and kept when not in use. She had seen a similar one in one of our more affluent neighbor’s home. Now that the brand new spanking clothes stand stood in front of her right in our back yard, I could visualize her filling up with pride.

The simple act of buying a clothes stand has moved her one ladder rung up in social status. As working parents we both have a huge list of work to be completed each weekend. We shifted to the second floor portion of our home few months ago. When we shifted we got in the most important things that we need on urgent basis, for example the television. But other things for which we were still using a work around or a *jugaad* were automatically pushed down the priority list. So, finally one fine Sunday, my husband cleared this item number two hundred and three from the TODO list.

This was a momentous occasion for my daughter. She has already done her mental comparisons without our help and had concluded that the neighbor being referred here had a more *“alishaan”* place to live as compared to us. Even though I felt we are doing sufficiently well enough to sustain this mad race to survive in National Capital Region, she thought differently. Phew! It is tough to build a brand image in front of kids, it is more easier to calm down an angry client who has just learnt that his work which is already 2 week late will take a month more to deliver along with five hundred known issues. Later on I shared with my full-time executive-MBA IIM graduate husband (post-single-kid), “Getting an IIM MBA degree did not do what clothes stand has done for your image in Jayani’s view.”

1. **Title :** [Tears of Joy](http://yourstoryclub.com/short-stories-family/short-story-of-mothers-love-tears-of-joy/)

## Category : Family Stories

**Story :** I lay in my bedroom staring the motionless fan hanging from the ceiling above. Electricity has gone, but the cool breeze through the windows works better than the fan. Despite that, sweat drops cover my body.

The pain in both legs makes me mad. Two months back a slip in the corridor had gifted me broken bones in both legs.

Amidst the pain, the fingers of my left hand are wrapped around the cell phone. The pain in my heart coupled with the unbearable pain in my legs makes my grip over it even tighter.

I am expecting a call. A call from my son-in-law!

A confirmation call for me to add myself to the group of grandmothers!

The most precious person in my life, my Munni, is admitted in the city hospital for her delivery. My kid is just nineteen years old and is going to be a mother. I know it isn’t news in today’s world. But for me, it is!

An accident had taken away my husband when Munni was seven years old. That time I had thought that my life was over. But it wasn’t. Without much education and a stable employment I had taken pains all these years to raise Munni giving her every comfort a middle-class child would expect. But I couldn’t send her to college, though she was a good student who aspired to study more.

When my pretty daughter turned eighteen, the proposal from this decent, employed guy, my son-law, had come. It changed my Munni’s life and along with it, my life too. She had moved with her husband to the city and I live alone in this cheerless house. Munni, my only cheer, is far away!

My son-in-law had promised to send her to college, but soon she became pregnant. It wasn’t a mistake too! And even now he assures me that he will send her for study, after the child is born. I don’t know. But there is no reason for me to doubt my son-in-law. For my Munni, he is a good and loving husband who takes good care of her and my daughter is happy with him. That automatically makes me glad. And sometimes, her age gives her fears, which she lavishly gives me too. Whenever she shows that generosity, I become weak like a one-armed boxer and the life scares the hell out of me.

These days, I can’t move myself without my old aunt’s help, so taking care of Munni seemed something unthinkable, so she had to plan her delivery in the city itself. They have hired someone to take care of her. As travel has been impossible for both of us, I haven’t seen my daughter in months. Since then our only contact was through cell phone. She calls me umpteen number of times for sharing even her most silly doubts and fears. I understand how much impact a mother can make on her children. My words, loaded with love, strengthen her, give her courage to face things for which a woman is destined.

That’s when I realised how important a cell phone is in my life. I don’t know how I would have managed without the cell phone, which meant no connection with my only daughter, for whom I have lived so far and for whom I am still living.

Once she asked me, ‘Ammi, what if my child is a still born? When I went for check-up, another girl I met there told me her first child was a still born!”

Always I ask her to be positive, to pray and to not think about such matters.

Another time she asked, ‘Ammi, what will you do if I die?’

She, with that question, had taken my good life that very moment. Her fears always make me fragile.

I had become her mother at a younger age than hers. But I hadn’t given much thought about it then. I was just excited about the baby, my baby! Even if I had fears, there was none to support me,  my mother was a harsh one. I was ignorant. Sometimes, ignorance helps. When my date was due, fear had gripped me. But soon, I had become extremely happy seeing my cute baby, my Munni.

But Munni’s question had made me panic. I can’t even imagine losing her. I would rather die with her.

I had cried, had scolded her for asking that.

I don’t know what other mothers think, but I am more concerned about my daughter and her life than the child’s. It may sound selfish, but it is a truth. Childbearing is not a big event as lakhs and lakhs are born each day. But even the most mundane thing becomes the most important news when it comes to our children or close people. That is what it is all about.

But again, I didn’t know how to pacify her. I just had told her nothing like that would happen.

But the fear which found home in my heart from that moment has remained there like an uninvited guest.

“What would I do without her?”

A girl’s best friend is always her mother. But taking our circumstances into consideration, I am unable to be with her, when she needs me the most, to stray away all her fears.

I cry over my helplessness. I know it doesn’t help. But that’s the only thing I am able to do now.

I find my cell phone as one of the most treasured possessions. The thing that makes me alive connecting me with my life, with my breath, which makes me forget all the pain by her sweet voices.

I check the cell phone, nothing new! I don’t want to call and disturb them.

As times passes, fear gains strength. Bad thoughts pass through my mind.

I try to remain calm, but I can’t. I am no saint to win over all my emotions. I am an ordinary lady.

But, as my thoughts wander, I get to know that if I don’t find peace and overcome my fears myself, none can help me do that.

I think about my life. I had gone through many bad times while living the life of a widow without anyone’s support. But I had overcome all those hurdles, had led a model life. I had raised a girl, had given her education as far as I could and had given her in marriage to a good man.

I, who have come all this way, am now afraid of losing my child.

But does worrying help? Will our fears change anything? Will it bring us desired results?

I think. I try to be strong. I try my best to think good thoughts.

With no one around, I close my eyes, I try to bring all nice thoughts, all my successes to my mind. I try to pray, but I am unable to concentrate.

I remind myself that everyone has to face what life brings, good or bad. Everyone has to face down their demons, no matter what.

I clutch the cell phone more tightly. With the positive thoughts in my mind, even that clutch over the phone gives me a feeling that I am overcoming my fears.

The cell phone in my hand vibrates, and then it starts ringing. I know my heart is not just beating, but  it is drumming. I listen holding it to my ear.

“Ammi….!” My son-in-law’s voice.

“Ha….” I realise my voice has choked in my throat.

“God blessed us…it is a baby girl! Both Munni and baby are healthy and fine. Be happy Ammi!”

I wanted to thank god. But no voice came out of me.

“Ammi, you there?”

“Ha  beta, I am hearing, god has shown mercy!”

After a brief talk about Munni and kid, I put the cell phone down.

My little Munni has become a mother, a mother of another girl.

May be, some day she also will go through the tensions which I have undergone, but again, maybe not, at that time girls can be much bolder than the present times.

Tears flow down my face, tears of joy, the same tears I had nineteen years ago, when I saw my Munni’s face for the first time.

The uninvited guest has left my heart. I am sure it has left my daughter’s heart too.

My daughter has me to drive her fears away; for me, I have to do it myself.

\_\_END\_\_

1. Title : [Dream Girl](http://yourstoryclub.com/short-stories-love/psychological-thriller-short-story-dream-girl/)

Category : Suspense and Thriller

**Story :** She cut a piece from my heart and picked it by inserting the tip of the blade of a long knife. Very delicately she straightened the knife to carry the blood sprinkling meat piece in to her mouth. A red stream of blood, emanating from the tip and travelling on the shining sharp steel blade, filled the groove of the five corners star sign marked on the blade just before the wooden handle of the knife. Few blood drops spilled from her lips’ joint at the right side as soon as she started chewing the piece. She smiled as she gulped the meat.

I felt a sharp cut on my chest and found it too heavy to breathe. I opened my eyes. Oh my god… it was dream – a nightmare. After realizing that it was a dream, I became more tensed and restless. Digital watch on the side table showed 5:30 AM, Wednesday, 13th February 2013. I started sweating profusely. It was my thirteenth dream. I had maximum eighteen and half hours to live if this dream would also come true as did my last twelve dreams, which I dreamed on the thirteenth day of every month since I met her on Friday the 13th, January 2012.

I completely forgot her head lying on my chest making difficult for my lungs to restore the normal breathing. My still alive heart was pulsating very fast. I was almost drowning in flood of the fresh sweat on my chest. All the last twelve dreams flashed in the sequence in my mind.

Exactly thirteen months back I first met her when I was returning from my mother’s funeral. A mesmerizing beauty, wrapped in a black suit, got down from an old model but neatly maintained car. Her beauty magnetized my full consciousness to be focused on her. I wasn’t a lecher and moreover was just coming out of a funeral, more over, that of my mother, but my eyes disallowed to look somewhere else. She turned to me; and there I was, totally unaware of being caught red handed brazenly staring at a beautiful stranger at the gate of the burial ground. My sight and mind both were caught in the depth of her illusive green eyes. Within no time, I found my body was lifted in the air and sucked through her eyes to a new world. I kept flying, higher and higher. Sun was getting dim and turning in a star as I left the solar system behind. The sky was full of stars – few twinkling, few flaming and few exploding. Soon I saw a green planet. Everything was green there – green sun, green moon, green cloud, green water, green restaurant… and there she was waiting for me on a table, in a cosy restaurant. There were two candles – smaller one was burning the body of the bigger one. Two glasses filled with the champagne were lying beside a vase with a rose bud. I picked the bud and touched her glass gently with the tip of the rosy petal.

She laughed, “… but you just said I had most beautiful eyes”.

Alarm broke my dream. It was first time in my life that the alarm broke my sleep. I didn’t remember dreaming anytime in my past or sleeping so long to allow the buzzing of the alarm. Since my childhood, I had been treated for insomnia and schizophrenia (lack of sleep and inability to distinguish between reality and imagination). I saw the digital watch on the side table.

It read, “5:30 AM, Friday, 13th January 2012”.

Same day in evening, I found her sitting in a cosy restaurant.

I asked, “Would you mind if I join you?”

She smiled with sparkles in her green eyes and said, “You are welcome.”

First time I dreamed and it came true. She became my dream girl – literally. My chronic disease wasn’t so easy to be cured by medicines. However her love was taking over the abnormality, at least once in a month… just one night in a month. Before I realized that I had started waiting for the thirteenth day of every month, she had already entered in my life, as my wife, as my love, as my dream girl.

In my second dream, I saw having sex with her in my living room. That day she moved in my apartment to live with me. That evening, we celebrated Valentine’s Day a day earlier in my living room same as we did in my dream.

Two months later, we registered our marriage in the municipal office.

Registrar, after pronouncing her and me as wife and husband, praised her beauty, “You have the most beautiful eyes and very sexy figure…”

Bang.

I was unable to control my fist breaking his soft nasal bone. Blood was falling from his nose to the white marble floor of the municipal office; and I could see my dream girl surprisingly but interestingly watching the blood. I had already seen this scene vividly six hours ago when I was awaken by the alarm at 5:30 AM, Friday, 13th April 2012.

Autumn was on peak. Maple leaves were covering the pathways. Few were yellow, few brown… I was watching the leaves swinging in the air before it touched my lawn. She came from the behind and rested her head on my shoulder as she gently kissed my neck, below my right ear.

“Do you like the free fall?” she asked, her kissing uncontrollable.

“Yes… I mean…” I couldn’t complete my statement.

Very soon her lips locked mine and we started peeling our clothes one by one like the maple leaves were leaving the tree. By now I had already realized presence of the psychic power in me, and was eagerly waiting for that night to see what would come next as fortune for us.

I was falling through clouds, not like maple leaves but straight getting accelerated by the gravity. I yelled for the help. Slowly her hand came forward, at the back of my head pulling me closer to her face. I saw her green eyes… a deep green lake and immersed in it. She locked my trembling lips by her’s and started feeding me powerful sedative of our love. It was an unparalleled experience. We were flying in the air. Very soon we were floating in the spongy clouds like the maple leaves…

Even this dream came true within ten hours on Friday, 13th July 2012. That day she took me for the parachute jumping.

Last month when the alarm broke my dream at 5:30 AM, Sunday, 13th January 2013, I had smile at my face. It wouldn’t going to be happened, at any cost. All odds were against it.

“I am a normal man with no psychic power…. anyway such power doesn’t exist.” I was already relaxed when she offered me a cup of coffee. “Should I tell her what have been happening with me? Yes I should… she is my wife, my love”, I decided firmly.

I was about to tell her my unusual experiences when the door bell rang. She opened the door to welcome a pale face old man in the snow covered old black overcoat and hat.

He offered a packet to her, “I must go back before it turns too bad. It took me a while to find you Signori… sorry Signora” His Italian accent broke as he looked at her wedding ring. He continued, “You may not know her… but she left a fortune for you, Signora. I settled everything and finally here it is… her entire property in a note from her bank… it is total three hundred grand more than 1 million” and he left us.

I almost fainted when she took out the banker’s cheque which read $1,313,000. I had seen this number in my dream few hours ago.

Next one month we had our second honeymoon in the beautiful Europe.

We returned yesterday. We both were very tired. I was eager to go in the bed as soon as possible, anticipating new gift from my dream but it turned to be nightmare. I realized her presence very near to me. Her head was on my chest.

“Does she own paranormal power? Is she aware of my dreams? Why did I get psychic power only after meeting her? Is she an enchantress or a witch? Why do I see dream only on thirteenth day of the month?”

Another wave of sweat was sprayed by the millions of pores of my skin. Something thicker was flowing on my chest. She opened her eyes and looked at me. Feeling of sharp cut at my chest was getting intense. Her hair pin was cutting through my skin just on top of my heart. A very thin stream of the blood through her right cheek was stopped at the joint of her upper and lower lips. She further raised her face. Few blood drops spilled from her lips’ joint at the right side.

There was a smile on her face that faded very soon when she saw the blood. In a jiffy she ran to the kitchen and brought the first-aid box to dress the wound. When she finished she came closer and planted a kiss on my forehead. I could see my blood stain on her chin. She was looking the most beautiful woman on this earth… my wife, my love, my dream girl. Seeing the realization of my thirteenth dream, I took a sigh of the relief but started feeling guilty of doubting her. There was nothing abnormal in her; it was me who wasn’t normal, and who had developed something strange. I couldn’t control myself and cried while hugging her tightly.

“Honey, my love… my dream girl… I can’t wait for tomorrow. We shall celebrate our second Valentine’s Day today itself. Last Valentine’s Day, you showered your love at me… today I am going to serve my heart to you.”

Her smile widened.

We went to the supermarket to purchase required stuffs for our private celebration. She was busy in buying grocery and other kitchen items while I was looking for a cake recipe book and the needed ingredients. I wanted to surprise her by my love.

“I am the luckiest man on the earth. Since she entered in my life, my life has turned in a dream, a real dream. Everything is so magical, full of enjoyment… that I have nothing more to ask from my life. My dream girl and I… I can do anything for her…”

I was baking a heart shape cake.

I read the next line from the recipe book, “…decorate it with cherries.”

“Oh No!!! I forgot the cherries”

But there was a pack of red cherries on the oven. I grabbed the packet without much thinking, and took out the cherries to decorate the cake. I kept the cake on the dining table. Tens of scented candles were lighting our living room.

“Honey I am ready please join me to cut cake… could you also bring a knife please” I called my dream girl.

And there she was… smiling in a red becoming gown… standing at the opening between the kitchen and the living room. A knife with a long blade was there in her hand. My eyes got fixed on the shining sharp steel blade on which a five corners star sign was marked just before the wooden handle of the knife.

I fainted.

\_\_END\_\_

1. Title : [The Tiger Cat](http://yourstoryclub.com/short-stories-science-fiction/suspense-short-story-the-tiger-cat/)

Category : Suspense and Thriller

**Story :** I looked towards the cage again. I was surprised to see the animal. I had never seen such an animal in my lifetime. I looked at my friend. He was smiling blissfully. He was content.

“How much did you buy it for?” I asked.

“Quite a lot, my friend, quite a lot!” He said.

I was pretty sure that the amount was quite high. Or else he wouldn’t have avoided telling me the amount.

“But why did you buy it? I never knew you had a thing for cats. Or any animals for that matter.” I said.

“First of all, It’s not **exactly** a cat. Second of all, look at it. Have you ever seen such an exquisite animal? Look at the stripes. It’s like a little tiger. A mixture of Cat and the Tiger. But I would like to think it is a tiger.”

I glanced again towards the cage. What I saw bewildered me to no bounds. My friend was right. It wasn’t exactly a cat. I had never seen anything like it. It had yellow and black stripes just like a tiger. If it were not for its size, anybody would have said that it was a tiger. Yet, it’s size was that of a cat. It was sitting down now. And even the body movements and the sitting down posture, it looked or should I say it mimicked the tiger. It was an amazing creature. The cage was about 4 feet in length and 2.5 feet in height. I thought that the cage was a little too small for a creature like that.

“It’s a small tiger.” My friend Ganesh exclaimed. It was evident that he was quite taken by the creature. I was not sure where he got it from.

“Is it a Tiger Cub?” I asked. This thought had occurred to me. I have seen the Tiger cubs. But only on TV. In real life I had never seen one.

“No, no it’s not a tiger cub. It’s a tiger cat.” He laughed.

“A Tiger Cat!” I exclaimed. “Ganesh, where did you buy it from? And whom did you buy it from?” I asked. My tone was curious and excited.

When Ganesh had called me earlier today and said that he wanted me to see something, an animal like this was the last thing on my mind. I could sense the excitement in Ganesh’s voice. My curiosity got the better of me. And of course I had nothing else to do. So, I got to his house as soon as possible.

“A Chinese gentlemen from the Chinatown, he sold me this. Yesterday evening, I had gone there for a dinner party. After the dinner was over, everybody left. I was waiting for a bus to come along. That’s when I saw this beauty opposite to the bus stand. I got intrigued by it. So I went to the store. I asked the Chinese gentleman about this animal. He said it was a rare breed. It was a mixture of Tiger and cat. Believe me, it was looking amazing in that golden cage. Such beautiful movements. Such elegance in an animal. I knew I had to buy it.”

“Are you sure, he said it is a mixture of cat and tiger. I mean, I never have even heard of such a cat. But I could be wrong.” I said.

“It’s a Tiger cat. That’s what the Chinese gentleman told me. It brings good luck. I tried to buy it. But he wouldn’t sell it. I kept rising the price. But he wouldn’t care. He said, It is an important member of his family. But I was adamant. I said, I wouldn’t go without taking the animal.” My friend hesitated for a moment and then continued. “So in the end, he agreed to sell me this magnificent creature. But when I was taking it away, the Chinese gentleman said that, it doesn’t bring good luck to everybody. There is a hard price to it. But what is a hard price for good luck. Right? So I took it.” Ganesh was still grinning. He looked like a man who had just found a treasure of gold.

“Have you let it out yet? I mean, has the cat or the tiger cat come out of the cage?” I enquired.

Ganesh shook his head. His face gave a wince. “That’s just it. It refuses to come out. I opened the cage door. But it doesn’t want to get out.”

“Perhaps, this new surrounding is upsetting him. Perhaps he is missing his old master.” I said.

“Yes. Perhaps.” Ganesh replied.

I had a nagging feeling that something was not right. But I guessed if my friend was happy, who was I to interfere with his life?

I glanced at the cage. I saw the animal. Even it’s face was like a tiger. The more I looked at this amazing creature, the more I got convinced that it was more of a tiger and less of a cat. Only the size of the animal was small. In all other aspects I found the animal to be more tiger and less cat.

“What does it eat?” I asked Ganesh.

“That’s just it. I didn’t ask the Chinese gentleman about his eating habit. So today I got fish from the market. But he is refusing to eat it. He is just turning away his mouth. He is only drinking water for now.”

“But cats eat fish.” I said.

Ganesh nodded and looked at the animal, still smiling he said, “But he doesn’t. I am thinking of giving him chicken. Let’s see whether he likes it or not. But I am sure of one thing though, my luck is changing.”

After some time, we got up. Ganesh said he was going to the market to bring food for his precious animal, while I left for my home.

After two days, I had taken an early leave from my office. And I was very interested in my friend’s new pet. So I went to the National Library. And I checked for cats. Any type or breed of cats. Very soon I came across this breed. The Tiger Cat! I read up the material. It said, Tiger cats are direct breed of the Tiger found in Asia. However, they are mainly cats. They are very very rare to find. Not even 400 of them exist today. And most of them are found in China. I saw the attached photo of the Tiger Cat. I must say what I saw at Ganesh’s house didn’t actually match with the photo. But I was getting confirmed that what I saw was indeed a Tiger Cat.

3 more days had passed. I was busy with my work and I had completely forgotten about Ganesh and his Tiger cat. Suddenly on the sixth day, Ganesh called. He sounded very worried and scared. It was like he was rambling on and on about his tiger cat. He said, he is going crazy with it. He was unable to go outside, because he didn’t want to let this tiger cat out of sight for one moment. And he was hooked on to it. He just couldn’t take his eyes off it. And something terrible was happening to it. I tried to calm him down and asked him what had happened. But he couldn’t say. He said, he couldn’t cal anyone and he thought about me. He had only shown this creature to me and now he wants my help. I asked him to calm down and said that I would come to his house as soon as possible. Within the next hour, I reached his house. When he opened the door, I saw my friend’s face. He looked tired, scared and highly anxious. He was sweating and it was evident he had not eaten for a long time now.

“What happened to you?” I asked.

“Come inside. Quickly. I have to show you something.” He said. He was shivering with fear.

There was a slight noise, something like low growl, coming from the other room. It was in this room where he had placed the cage and the Tiger Cat. Suddenly, I felt a shiver along my spine. He grasped me and took me to the other room. I could sense his sweaty palms cold with fear. I could smell a foul smell coming. But I could not identify where this smell was coming from.

As soon as I entered the room, what I saw sent shivers through my body. I was looking at the cage. But what I saw I could not believe. This could not have been possible. Was I seeing things? I saw a large cat or a middle sized tiger inside the cage. The cage now was completely filled by the animal’s body. It was barely able to move. I could see that It was looking at us. The eyes of this animal was green and it was filled with hatred. I was hypnotized for a moment. I could not shift my gaze. I thought I was paralyzed by fear, by the animal. I will be never be able to forget what I saw that day. My friend came close to me and whispered to my ear. His voice was hoarse. And in the hoarse voice, He whispered in to my ear, “Do you see? Do you see what has happened to my Cat. I can’t understand what happened to him. It was growing daily. I tried to feed him, but he wouldn’t eat. He would only drink water. And every day I watched him grow. I couldn’t go out. I was scared that if I went out, he would escape. And in 5 days he has grown up to this size. I don’t know how much will he grow in the coming days. Help me!!”

He put so much stress on the last two words that he almost screamed in his whisper. I stood my ground like a lamp post. My brain was still trying to put things logically. I knew what had happened was impossible. Yet I was looking at this…creature, which had grown in size in 5 days! It was impossible.

I breathed in deeply and with almost a herculean effort I managed to look away. I quickly managed to stagger out of the room. My friend was holding me. He came out too.

I saw a chair and quickly sat down. I was sweating too now. This was incredible. What was I supposed to do now? I closed my eyes and breathed deeply for some time. When I opened my eyes, I thought of something.

“Do you remember the place from where you had brought this infernal thing?” I asked. There was anger in my voice. And I did not hide it. I had told Ganesh earlier. I had warned him. But he kept insisting on keeping this creature.

“Yes, yes I remember.” Ganesh said. His eyes looked pleading. It was as if he was begging to me to take this problem away. He had suffered enough.

“Well. Let’s go there. And find this Chinese gentleman of yours and ask him to take back his animal.” I said in a little more commanding voice.

“Yes. Yes you are right. Let’s go there. We need to find the man. I can’t keep this thing.” He said.

We quickly got out of the building. Initially he was feeling a little insecure about leaving the creature alone in his apartment. But I had to convince him, that it was the only way. Since I didn’t know where he bought this animal from, he had to come with me. It took us an hour and a half to reach China town. We quickly moved with in the narrow streets and reached the place. Ganesh suddenly stopped. He looked crestfallen. He was standing infront of a shop. But the shutter was pulled down. And it was evident that the shop was closed. He frantically searched for a door or some sort of opening. But it was all in waste. I went to the adjacent shop and asked about this shop. The shop keeper couldn’t help me. He said he didn’t know where the owner had gone or when will the shop be opening. He simply couldn’t tell us anything. Ganesh was looking everywhere. He was asking everyone on the streets. But no one had any idea about the shop.

“Perhaps there is a back entrance. Let’s go in the back to check it out.” He said.

In my mind I knew that this will be hopeless. But I couldn’t refuse. We went across and circled the whole neighbourhood, but there was no door. There was no opening or any entrance. I looked at my friend. He looked around in dismay. He looked so distraught that I felt pity for him.

“Ayushman!” Ganesh looked at me and said, “I have to tell you something!”

I slowly walked to my friend. I had never seen him like this. His face was looking so much older. It was evident that he had not been sleeping properly. In fact, I was quite sure that the last few days, he had not slept at all. He looked quite thinner. As if, within a few days he had lost at least 10 kilos. This new pet of his, was causing him a lot of pain. He looked afraid. He had not eaten too. What had he become?

“What is it?” I said. I talked quite softly.

“Well, the Chinese gentleman, from whom I got this cat.” He stopped. He looked at both sides of the street. He looked reluctant to talk. Yet he was making an effort to say something. He was struggling with himself.

“Tell me the problem.”

“Well…actually he did not sell it to me.” My friend said. He did not look at my eyes.

“What? What are you saying? Did you steal it?” I exclaimed. This statement of his did not come as a shock to me. I was kind of expecting it. I knew that something was bothering my friend. Perhaps this was it.

“I offered the Chinese gentleman a lot of money. But he did not want to sell it. For a moment he went inside the shop. And that is when I ……” He left the sentence unfinished.

“And that is when you stole it?” I asked. I was now holding Ganesh by his shoulders and shook him.

“I did not steal it. I kept all the money I had on his table. I took the cage and quickly got out of the shop. The cage was heavy. As soon I got out, I got a taxi. *I was lucky.*I quickly got in with the cage. The cage fitted in the taxi. So it was easy. And I left.” Ganesh finished.

“But that’s stealing Ganesh. Don’t you understand?” I shouted in anger. I was a little irritated. Anger and frustration had crept into me. Only then I realized that what kind of a predicament my friend is in now. I am only feeling his frustration. I took several deep breaths. Ganesh kept looking at me. His eyes looked ever so innocent. I understood that he only wanted to get out of this weird situation. I had to think for him. It was quite obvious that he was unable to think for himself.  I had a different idea.

“All right. Listen. I think I have a solution. First, lets buy a bigger cage to fit the thing. Right. ….Right.”

Ganesh nodded. At this moment he would agree to anything I say, I thought.

“Ok. “ I continued, “Then tomorrow, we visit this shop again. If it is closed, then we hire some guys from the zoo, to take this thing in to that bigger cage and from your house to somewhere safe for both of you.”

“What if he doesn’t stop growing?” Ganesh had tears in his eyes now. His voice was almost pleading.

“He will stop growing.” I answered in an affirmative loud voice. But I was unsure of it myself. What if Ganesh’s right? No I couldn’t even bear to think on that line. I need to think positively.

By evening, we had got a bigger and a stronger cage. I We took this cage to Ganesh’s Apartment. It was un-assembled. The cage had come with rivets and bolts and had to be assembled by the right people. I asked him to wait until the next morning. He followed everything what I said. ‘What an amazing transformation of a man who was so happy and confident only a week ago.” I thought.

I left his apartment and went home. That night I couldn’t sleep. It would not be wrong to say that even I was a little worried with what I saw. How can any animal grow so large in just a few days. There must be a rational explanation to this. But unfortunately I couldn’t find one. I did not know when I slept that night. But it was a long time later.

When I woke the next morning, the first thought that came to my mind was how was Ganesh? I decided to call him right away and ask him about the situation. The phone couldn’t connect. I got ready very quickly and quickly went to his house.

I came up to his door and knocked for a couple of times. But there was no answer. I thought maybe he was sleeping. So I knocked quite loudly the next time. But again there was no answer from inside. My heart gave a miss. Suddenly a cold and an uneasy feeling crept unto me. ‘Was he alright?’

I had started sweating. I knocked on the door a few more times and again there was no answer. I went to his neighbour’s door. A middle aged looking man with a moustache and light beard opened the door. It was very evident he was sleeping and I had disturbed his sleep.

“Excuse me, I am sorry to disturb you like this so early in the morning. But did you by any chance see or hear my friend Ganesh?” I asked him.

He looked at me. His eyes were slightly open. He was a little confused. But after a second or two, it seems he understood what I said and then he shook his head. I thanked him for his reply and let him proceed with his sleeping. He did now know anything. I looked around. There was no one there. Perhaps Ganesh had gone outside. But then why would he have gone outside? And his door was locked from the inside. He had to be inside. I thumped hard on the door this time. I didn’t care what any one would think. And I was least bothered about the noise. I kept knocking and thumping and in between calling his name. But still there was no answer. The neighbor had opened the door again. There was an irritated look to his face. I quickly explained to him that my friend was in some deep trouble. And that no one was answering his door. The sleep from his eyes vanished. He said he would call the police. Meanwhile, I decided that I wouldn’t wait for that long to wait for the police. Using all my might, I gave a mighty push to the door. It almost broke. But it couldn’t resist the second push. And as soon I entered Ganesh’s room, I saw an old man lying on the floor. My heart beating so hard, I thought it would come out. This was not right. I called loudly Ganesh’s name. But there was no answer. Slowly I moved towards that old man who lying on the floor. It looked as if he was at least 100 years old. His skin was dry and shrunken. The hair was white and gray. I looked at his hands, it was bony. As if only the dry skin was on bone. One of his hands was on his chest. His face was twisted as if he was under a lot of pain. His face looked like a skull covered by very dry skin. There was pain his expressions. I looked at his legs and it was bent in a very awkward way. As if his feet was suffering from severe cramps. The old man was dead. But who was this old man. But where was Ganesh?

Suddenly I thought of the Animal. Where was the beast? I nervously looked around. Was it free? Has it broken free and perhaps Ganesh had run away.

I slowly walked in to the room where Ganesh had kept the Cage along with the Tiger cat. What I saw amazed me to bounds. The golden cage was still there. And in one of the corner of the golden cage, there was a small cat, almost the size of kitten. It was resting and It was contently licking his paw. I could not believe my eyes. I searched the whole apartment, there was no one else. I knew it but I was reluctant to admit it. I slowly walked towards the old man. The dead old man was my friend Ganesh!

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**18.**Title : [Prestige road](http://yourstoryclub.com/short-stories-suspense-thriller/psychological-thriller-short-story-prestige-road/)

Category : Suspense and Thriller

**Story :** On what should have been an otherwise happy anniversary, ended tragically when a couple identified as Marylynne Andrews (35) and David Smith Andrews (35) were found with their throats slit in their car on Prestige road late last night. Authorities say that the couple were out for dinner for their first anniversary and were driving back home when the incident occurred, making their murders the thirteenth and fourteenth to occur on that road in the last five days. The number of murders are quickly escalating and the police warn the public to avoid that road.

“*Prestige road is very long and has many diversions. Until we get word from the top, we can’t put up streetlights in the area. We are doing all we can to prevent further incidents, but we currently lack the manpower. We advise the public to avoid Prestige road at all costs*,”

Derek King, a police official said.

“*We have a partial description of the murderer according to a few witnesses. We would like to stress on the fact that this description is only based on reports we have received and may not be 100% accurate. We would appreciate it if anyone who knows anything related to the case comes forward.*”

From eyewitness’ statements, a description of the potential murderer has been released.

A criminal analyst says,

“*Due to the strength required to commit the murders, we believe the murder to be a male of considerable height, around or a bit more than six feet. He should be athletically built with dark blonde hair. He could have a limp, but that is still unclear. If anyone sees or hears anything, please call us on 98\*\*\*0000.*”

\* \* \*

She read the article. Once, twice, thrice. Sweat trickled down her back and she jumped every time she heard a sound.  
Checking, again, to see if her doors were locked, she turned off the car light. ‘I knew I shouldn’t have taken this road!’ She thought, ‘stupid, stupid, stupid!’

She was late and needed to be back home soon. But something, some feeling made her take the shortcut through Prestige road. And by some cruel trick of fate, her car tire burst and she was too scared to get out and fix it.

“This is why I need to buy a cellphone!” she punched the steering wheel.

The horn sounded, letting the entire world hear her location. Her blood left her face. She was dead now. Seeing no other option, she waited, and waited.

Almost an hour later, a pair of headlights became visible up the road, and slowly the car made its way towards her. She prayed the car would continue and not stop. Her luck had run out.

The car stopped in front of her and the engine was turned off. Out stepped a man. The first thing she noticed about him was his height. He was tall. Tall, and he looked like someone who worked out. You don’t get those kind of muscles sitting behind a computer screen.

“A *male of considerable height, around or a bit more than six feet.”*

Those words from the newspaper flashed though her mind. The man came up to her side of the window and tapped it. She figured the best thing to do was continue to stare ahead and ignore him.

“Hey, my name is Austin Sam. Do you need help with your car?” His southern accent sent shivers down her spine. She saw his dark blonde hair and her heart stopped cold.

“No thanks,” she managed to squeeze out, “I’m just waiting for someone. My husband.”

He laughed. “Look ma’am, I was just passing by when I saw your flat tire. You need my help. Either I help you or you’ll get caught by that killer… murderer.. or whatever.”

She was adamant, “I’m fine. Really. You can leave now.”

“And leave a poor helpless lady alone to fend for herself? What kind of a monster do you think I am?” he joked. “You can sit inside if you want. Lock your doors. I’m going to change your tire.” With that, he set out to work.

She remained frozen in her seat. She knew he was dangerous. Knew it to her bones. And she was alone with him. And she was terrified.

\* \* \*

The voices had returned. Two voices. Both evil. No matter what, they couldn’t be turned out. Trying to fight them was a losing fight.

“Come on, just do it,” One taunted.

“It’s not like you’ll get caught. The newspaper article doesn’t matter. You won’ get caught. You never got caught.”

“The police won’t find you. You can clear the scene better this time.”

“This is the last time. We promise. One last time and we’ll leave.”

“Just start by making small talk. It’ll take that fool by surprise.”

“Come one, last time. The last time. This time we mean it.”

\* \* \*

“This blue Camry you have. It looks new. You mind if I give it a spin once I fix your car?” He grinned.

“No.”

“No, its not new? Or no, I can’t ride it?” He laughed.

“Both.”

“You’re not much of a talker are you?”

She didn’t reply.

This worked for a while. She was quiet and glued to her seat while he hummed a tune while fixing her car.

“I say, you’re real pretty. Do you mind giving me your number?”

She didn’t reply. But then again, he didn’t expect her to.

She started feeling lightheaded. She was suffocating. She had to get out now. She clutched onto the steering wheel and struggled to keep herself inside the car. But black spots were appearing in front of her eyes and she had no other option. She grabbed the emergency swiss army knife she kept in her dashboard and hid it in her blouse. Unlocking the door, she stepped out of the frying pan and into the fire…

\* \* \*

**New murder on Prestige road; Cops baffled.**

Early this morning, passerby’s noticed a blue Camry stopped by the side of the road. Only on closer inspection did they find the body in the drivers seat with the neck slashed.

There was a flat tire thrown on the side of the road.

The victim has been identified as Austin Sam, a Texan tourist. He has blond hair and was passing…

\_\_End\_\_

19.**Title :** [Survivor](http://yourstoryclub.com/short-stories-unusual-experience/thrilling-unusual-short-story-survivor/)

Category : Suspense and Thriller

**Story :** [Survivor – A Thrilling Unusual Short Story]

It had been more than 4 days. He could not believe the turn of events. A week back, he had a comfortable job working for one of the richest men in the world. Now, he was afraid he would not survive another day.

**A week back:**

The phone rang early morning:

“David, Sophie is flying back to Paris tonight; make sure the plane is ready by 7 PM.”

After a month of leisure at the classy hotel at Victoria Falls, David was glad to have something to do. Even if it meant flying his employer’s spoilt wife back home. He disliked her to the point of avoiding being alone with her. None of the stewardesses had come along on this trip, so he realised he would be truly alone with her on this flight. She was always rude and loud. Hopefully, she will be asleep throughout the trip, he thought.

As he waited for Sophie in the hangar at the airport, David went over the weather charts once more. He was not happy with the clouds forming over Central Africa. But he could fly over most of them, he figured. He did not want to tell Sophie that they could not fly out today. His experience with her over the last couple of years had taught him to keep such thoughts to himself. If she did not get her way, she could make life very difficult for everyone she came in contact with.

After a wait of about thirty minutes, he saw the company car pull up at the entrance of the hangar. He got out of the plane to escort her in. When the car door opened, he noticed that Sophie was conservatively dressed today. She held out her hand and he noticed the nails were painted a garish blue colour. He had never seen nails painted in that colour. He took her hand and escorted her to the plane and seated her. No conversation was exchanged there.

The plane took off without incident. David would have liked to switch to auto-pilot, but the weather made him nervous. After about an hour, when he did not hear from her, he assumed she had fallen asleep. As they approached the clouds over Central Africa, he saw the weather had graduated to a thunderstorm. He pulled the aircraft up, attempting to fly over the clouds, but could not avoid them. As the clouds enveloped the aircraft, he kept it on an incline hoping to break through the clouds in a few seconds.

That’s when the lightning bolt struck the engine.

**Six days back:**

David woke up with a start. The cold forest floor had chilled his body, making him numb. Memories of the night before came back. He again felt the panic, the terror of feeling the plane stall and drop from the sky.

The lightning strike had roasted the controls. Nothing worked. With the plane gliding down in a slow decline, he grabbed the emergency kit and got out of the cabin to warn Sophie. When he saw her, she had the same panic and terror in her eyes that he had. He groped under her seat for her emergency kit and pulled it out. He handed her the orange lifejacket and wore his own. He put on his parachute pack and turned to her. She had not moved. David told her to wear the lifejacket one more time and then repeated it again when she did not respond.

He grabbed her arms and forced them through the opening in the lifejacket. He did the same with the parachute pack and pulled her towards the door. He again noticed the blue fingernails. She kept fighting against him and pulling him back. He pulled harder. He opened the door which let in a blast of cold, wet wind. He felt the plane vibrate. He pulled her closer to the door and told her what he was going to do. He did not know if she heard him over the sound of the wind, but she started screaming which David interpreted as the reaction to his instructions. Without warning, he pushed her out and after a few seconds, he jumped out himself.

He saw her tumbling through the air for a few moments after which the parachute self-deployed and shielded her from his eyes as a white canopy opened up. His own parachute deployed and took him in a different direction. By the time he turned back towards her, he could not see a thing. All he saw were the clouds and the occasional lightning bolt splitting them. Luckily, he landed on the ground in a small clearing in the forest. He landed on his feet and instantly collapsed on his back. He was so exhausted that he fell into a tired sleep right there.

Now he was up and did not know where to start. He found some rainwater caught in the cavity formed by a large leaf which he drank. He tried to remember all the survival tactics that he was taught in flight school. He figured he was in the Central African rainforest and civilisation was a long way off in all directions. He took out the compass in his emergency kit and headed west.

**Five days back:**

David had stumbled through the jungle for the last 24 hours. He was tired and sleepy, but he wouldn’t dare go to sleep during the night. He had found a few berries in the forest which he ate reluctantly. He wanted to conserve the food packets in the emergency kit. That was not a good idea because he fell violently ill spewing all the food he had eaten in the last 24 hours on the ground. After that incident, he could not eat anything the whole day and night.

At daybreak, he stopped under a tree. He spread the parachute canopy on the ground and collapsed on it into a deep sleep.

Someone was poking him. His eyes shot open and he sat up. The first thing he saw was a small dark child. Then he saw there were several other children behind the first one. He tried to stand up, but fell. He heard the children laughing and realised that his hands and feet were tied. That is when he also realised they were not children at all. They were fully grown men.

He remembered reading about a tribe of pygmies that lived deep in the Central African rainforest. They were so secluded that they had never seen a normal human. David tried, but could not remember anything else from that article.

The men picked a thick stick and slid it between his legs and arms and four men carried him through the jungle like a captured animal. By the time, they reached their village, David’s wrists and ankles were rubbed raw against the stick, his arms were ready to pop out of their sockets and he was bleeding. They dumped him on the ground and untied his wrists and feet. David could not even raise his head to see where he was. He passed out into a painful sleep.

**Four days back:**

David woke up to find four pygmy men inspecting him. He stood up quickly, but sat down again as two of them raised a bow with a metal-head arrow pointed at him. The other two men continued inspecting him as if nothing had happened. They raised his arm and checked it. They did the same with his leg. They kept shaking their heads. After about five minutes of poking and prodding, they walked off discussing animatedly and the two armed men also moved away, but kept the arrows pointed at him till they were out of sight.

David looked around and saw that he was placed in the centre of a shaded clearing on the ground. He was surrounded by a thick wall of thorn bushes which looked very formidable. The other side of the wall was probably safe to touch because the men went out from an opening in the wall and pushed it in to close the opening.

After a while, two men stepped into the clearing. One had the usual bow and arrow while the other carried a wooden bowl and a stone slab. The stone slab had strips of meat on it that had recently been roasted on a fire and seasoned with something that smelled like ginger. The bowl contained a clear liquid with large chunks of meat in it. As soon as David saw the food, he realised how hungry he was. He waited for the men to place the food on the ground before him. As soon as they stepped out of the clearing, he grabbed the food. The meat strips were quite chewy, but full of flavour. The soup was also tasty though he would have preferred a little more meat in it.

After devouring the simple meal, he lay down on the ground. He had to figure out a way to escape from these people. Sure, they had fed him and not harmed him yet, but he did not know how long this would continue.

**Today:**

For the last four days, David was as comfortable as possible. He had food thrice a day regularly. He was given his parachute canopy to sleep on and they did not touch him at all. In fact, if it were not for the armed man who came in with the food, he would have thought they are a peaceful tribe. The armed guard actually made sense when David thought about it. He would probably go through the same thing in any country where he arrived without permission. They had probably not seen a white man before and were not sure what he was.

David was not afraid anymore. He had started talking to the man who brought him his food. He started off talking softly with a lot of smiles. Yesterday they had shook hands. He tried to find out the man’s name, but could not get through to him. But the other man smiled back and chattered away in a strange language. David also eagerly looked forward to the food. In fact, he liked the meat a lot. It was soft and chewy and the gingery flavour exploded in his mouth.

There was nothing violent about them. In fact, he saw a few children looking at him through the bushes. He waved at them and the children ran off screaming and laughing. David decided that after a few more days, he would convince them to let him out of the makeshift prison. He would probably live there for a few weeks and then begin a trek back to civilisation. He wondered which direction he would head off to. He will have to figure out which country he was in before he started his journey. But David was not worried; he had plenty of time to think about it.

Just then, his new friend stepped into the clearing with the same bowl and slab of rock. He placed them on the ground in front of David and smiled at him. David smiled back and waved. The man waved back and stepped out of the opening and shut it.

David finished off the meat strips and picked up the bowl. He drank some of the liquid before picking out the meat. The first piece was slender and he turned it around. Startled, he dropped the bowl and the piece of meat and screamed.

The blue fingernail was pointing at him accusingly.

David couldn’t take his eyes off it. He couldn’t stop screaming…

\_\_END\_\_

20.Title : [Monster under the bed](http://yourstoryclub.com/short-stories-unusual-experience/horror-thriller-short-story-monster-under-bed/)

Category : Suspense and Thriller

**Story :** “Mummy!! Mummy!!”

Sudha entered the room, “What is it, honey?”

The child was kneeling on the bed looking at her wide-eyed. She has obviously not slept for long, her big red eyes speaking of a horror that Sudha’s adult mind could never comprehend. She had not slept a wink for the last two days. The child was keeping her up all night. Shifting to a new house coupled with forced insomnia was not a good restraint for her temper.

“There is something under my bed” the child screamed.

Not again, Sudha thought. When she heard the child, she rolled on her bed to wake her husband, but he wasn’t there. He must have gone to the bathroom, she thought. Wearily, she got out of the bed to go to the child’s bedroom.

“There is nothing under the bed, sweetheart, you just had a bad dream.”

“Nooo, I know there is something there.” with the conviction that comes with being a child.

Sudha sighed. This is going to be a long night. I am going to end this tonight, she thought.

“Ok, if I check under the bed and find nothing, will you go back to sleep?” she asked the child.

“Maybe…”

“Ok, let me get the flashlight…” she said.

She walked out of the room and called her husband. There was no answer.

“Mummy!!”

Sudha walked back into the room.

“Daddy went under the bed with the flashlight…”

“What?”

“Daddy went under the bed with the light… it must be lying there.”

Mildly surprised, Sudha bent down to peer under the bed. She can see something shiny under the bed. She reaches out for it and touches it, but it rolls further away. She feels something sticky on the floor. She pulls back her hand and checks it under the lamp on the bedside table. It is something dark and sticky. She looks at the child.

“Did you drop something under the bed?”

“A chocolate…” the child murmured in a guilt-ridden voice.

“Where is Daddy?”

“He is still under the bed…”

Surprised, Sudha bent down again. The flashlight has rolled towards the other end of the bed against the wall. She crawled under the bed and reached it. Before she could turn it on, she felt something or someone grip her hand. She let out a small scream, but the grip only tightened. She shouted and thrashed, but something clutched her throat and her voice was cut off. In another five seconds, her body stopped moving.

The child peered over the edge of the bed and saw the edge of a small dark puddle of liquid. The child smiled.

“Are you still hungry?”

\_\_END\_\_

21. Title : [Marut – A monkey](http://yourstoryclub.com/short-stories-for-kids/kids-short-story-with-pictures-marut-monkey/)

## Category : Kids and Children

**Story :** Have you heard of Marut,the Monkey?No? Not yet? Oh ,then, you can listen to this story and get to know who is Marut, the Monkey .

Marut was a very cute little monkey known in his town for his honesty and generousity. On a very sunny day, Marut left to a near by town to explore it. On reaching this new town, he realised that he has forgot to carry his bag and money with him. However, he continues to wander all streets and parks and it gets dark. Marut looks for food to eat and he finds a fruit stall. He, being a very honest monkey, he decides to tell the fruit vendor about his situation.

[](http://d688i9578ejn6.cloudfront.net/wp-content/uploads/2011/10/share-story-banana.jpg)

**Marut Monkey & Bananas – Kids Short Story with Pictures  
Image:**[**www.cepolina.com**](http://www.cepolina.com/)

Marut stands in front of the stall and he sees a big banana bunch and gets tempted to eat. Being new to the town, the vendor asks Marut, which fruit he likes to eat.

Marut says ‘I like banana, a lot’.

The fruit vendor says ‘Sir, these bananas are the best you will not get such banana anywhere else’.

Marut , being a fruit lover, he says ‘ I can not agree to what you say. I have tasted all types of bananas in my town’.

Fruit vendor gets a little upset and challenges Marut that if he tastes one, he would love to have more.

Marut accepts the challenge and says ‘ I shall taste the banana and then buy from you’ .

The fruit vendor plucks a banana from the bunch and gives it to Marut. Marut takes one bite and gets lost in the taste, he takes bigger bite and more bites. With in a second, he finishes eating the whole banana.

He tells to the vendor, ‘ Sir, this banana was definitely great in taste, are you sure that the other banana is also as great as the one I had now?’

The vendor is very happy to know that the bananas at his shop is best, and feeling happy he offers one more banana and says ‘ Sir, you may have one more banana and tell me is it same or better’.

Marut gets one more banana and he enjoys every bite of the banana. Overwhelmed by Marut’s opinion, he hands over more bananas one after the other. In short time Marut gets to eat all the bananas in the bunch.

On realising the bunch is empty, the fruit vendor says ‘ Sir, you have eaten all my bananas. Please pay me for the bananas that you have eaten. One banana costs Rs 5 and so 50 bananas is going to cost…..???’

Marut replies quickly ‘ Its Rs 250!’.

The fruit vendor is happy that Marut did a quick calculation.

Marut puts a sad face and says ‘ Sir, I want to apologise. I do not have any money with me right now. But I promise that I will pay you before dawn. I came from the neighbouring town and in hurry, forgot to carry money with me’.

The fruit vendor’s face turns red with anger and shouts at Marut ‘ Do you know how difficult it is to get those bananas from a special plantain plant , located at a far village? You had all the bananas and now, making a lame excuse ? I’m not going to spare you’. The fruit vendor looks out for a stick to hit Marut.

[](http://d688i9578ejn6.cloudfront.net/wp-content/uploads/2012/09/cat-brown-on-tree.jpg)

**Kitty Cat and Marut Monkey – Kids Short Story with Pictures  
Photo credit:**[**monosodium**](http://www.morguefile.com/creative/monosodium)**from**[**morguefile.com**](http://www.morguefile.com/)

In a flash Marut fled to escape the beatings from the fruit vendor. He keeps running without a break till he reaches his town. On entering his town, Kitty , a cat recognises Marut and shouts,

‘Hey Marut , where are you running? Why are you in such a hurry and look worried?’

Marut graps for breathe and replies ‘ Hello Kitty, I made a very big mistake. I went to the neighbouring town and had lot of bananas and did not have money to pay the vendor. He was very upset and about to hit me. I need to hurry up and pay him back my dues. See you soon’.

Kitty was shocked to hear, as she knew Marut was always honest and was wondering why this happend?

Marut reaches his home and quickly looks for his purse with money. He runs like a cheetah to the fruit stall and hands over Rs 250 to the fruit vendor. The fruit vendor who thought that Marut would never return, was surprised to see him. He puts up a smiling face and thanks Marut.

Marut grasps for breathe and says’ Sir, Sorry for the foolish act of mine. Thank you very much for feeding me with those delicious bananas. I shall be ever grateful to you.’

[](http://d688i9578ejn6.cloudfront.net/wp-content/uploads/2012/08/apple-bite.jpg)

**Apple and Marut Monkey – Kids Short Story with Pictures**

The fruit vendor gives him couple of apples as token of appreciation for Marut’s honesty.

Marut thanks him and starts walking towards his town. On his way back, he notices a squirrel sitting quitely on a tree branch with a pale face and no energy to move his tail.

Marut asks the squirrel  ‘ Hey what happened? Why are you looking so tired?’

Squirrel replies ‘ I did not get any food since night. I’m very hungry and feeling tired’. On hearing this, he empathises the situation and shares the apples with the squirrel . The squirrel thanks the Marut for his act of generosity and they become great friends .

Marut makes many more friends in the new town and his honesty and generosity becomes the talk of the town.

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22. **Title :** [**THE STICK MAN**](http://yourstoryclub.com/short-stories-for-kids/children-short-story-stick-man/)

## Category : Kids and Children

**Story :** The second grade students at St. Maria’s were excited. It was the last hour of the day and it was their painting hour. They loved the color pencils, crayons, water color and Mr. Edward the painting teacher. But Jason Peter was more than delighted about the magic pencil he had pulled out from little Steve’s bag. He had exchanged the pencil with a look alike pencil. Steve had made the entire class envy all throughout their semester.

The class drew pictures, colored, chatted and laughed during the hour. Mr. Edward introduced the class with a new form of drawing- the stick form.

“Kids let us draw a stick man today” The young teacher drew a stick man on the class board and the students copied the same on their sketch book.The school bell rang loud and the children rushed back home.“Dad looked at what I had drawn today.” Jason showed the sketch book to his father.“Great Job Young Man” Peter complimented the little boy.

Little Jason went cycling, played ball with his pup Brownie and by seven in the evening he was fast asleep.

The bright blue walls of the bedroom were decorated with pictures of characters from Jason’s favourite cartoon series and each and every furniture in the room made it more evident to be a kid’s bedroom.

The room remained dark except for the moonlight coming in through the curtains. The sketchbook lay wide open on the study table . The pages flipped in the gentle wind that blew from the open hall through the door.  The stick man jumped out of the book.

“ What a beautiful stick man I am!” he exclaimed looking at himself. He loved his reflection in the wardrobe mirror.

“ But  I need more stick friends…………” the stick man dreamt greedily.

The naughty stick man opened Jason’s bag and took out his magic pencil. He created more pictures of stick people with it. One by one they all jumped out of the book as to the magic of the pencil.

The stick men  danced and played all through the house. They made faces at each other, fought with each other, played football in the dining room and handball with the  kitchen utensils. They walked on the garden lawns, pulled out the flowers in the bushes and dirtied the floors of the house with mud and dirt. They pulled the laundry clothes out , tore the pages of the library books, broke the flower vases and left no place untouched. The whole place looked like the remains of a battlefield. Jason’s family remained deep asleep amidst the chaos in the weird hours of the night.

“ Oh My………. Look at that.” The early morning discussions in the drawing hall disturbed Jason’s sleep. He walked into the drawing room which looked very untidy and all in the family from the head to the little ones were present there to witness the disordered room.

Jason carefully scrutinized the tiny footprints in his room. All the time he kept thinking whose footprints they were. Brownie was never let out during the night and moreover these footprints looked smaller than the pup’s.

“ Jason the pencil thief … … Jason the pencil thief…..” He looked round to find the source of the little sound. It seemed to come from the study table.

“ Jason the pencil thief….” The stick man in the sketch book looked at him scornfully.

Jason realized he had made a huge mistake in stealing Steve’s pencil and the mess in the house was the price he had to pay for it. The magic pencil was a delight but it solely belonged to its master.

“ I must return the pencil to Steve today..” Jason promised himself.

The stick man in the sketch smiled at him but this time happily.

\_\_END\_\_

23. **Title :** [**Threesome! – Funny Detective Story for Kids**](http://yourstoryclub.com/short-stories-for-kids/short-detective-story-kids-threesome/)

## Category : Kids and Children

**Story :** Vinay  was  seriously looking towards  the  small pebbles on the rough muddy terrain near his feet.

He was cautiously  trying  to make the pebbles into a small crest.

Shweta  was  listening with full concentration what Adi was explaining.

Adi  looked towards  Vinay and asked ” So  you agree for this plan right ?”

Vinay was still looking towards the ground.

Shweta alerted Vinay.

“Vinay  hope you listened to Adi and how to do all this.”

Vinay looked at Adi and Shweta and nodded in agreement.

“So Shweta you will be the first to  get up tomorrow and  be ready with all the  required tools. Take care that no one knows about task.”

“One more thing  no one will be calling the other by names….I have  thought about the  new names or codes  …I will be SM, you be  BM  Vinay and Shweta will be CW”

“Don’t ask me the expansions as  you will tend to  spell the expanded names…I will tell you once the task is over  successfully.”

Vinay agreed in silence.

“Shweta  any questions , clarifications ?”

“One question  Adi…. if we fail in our mission, then are we going to try again ?”

“There is nothing called as failure when Adi plans it.. and moreover  our plan is  accurate and  we will succeed…”

Vinay was  not feeling it comfortable.

Shweta  observed this.

She asked ” Are you fearing for something ?”

Vinay  shot back  “Who cares  for that Vikram…we are going to end his rule….”

“Thats the spirit  Vinay…”  Shweta became happy.

Adi  came back.

“Look guys  since this is going to be a secret  mission,  please ensure  none of your family members know about this  before task is completed.”

All nodded.

“Also  you need to be  very very  accurate in your assigned tasks…. let me  repeat you again the tasks”  
Adi explained them.

“I heard Tambi was also interested to join our team  but  I did not get any request from him  so  for this day we three are the team…”

“Tambi cannot be included… he is misfit for this”, Shweta commented.

It was  may summer and I could hear this conversation happening just below my window where  two 10 year old boys and one 9 year old girl were in serious tasks.

Adi finally told “What ever  imported chocolates we get from Vinay’s brother’s  cupboard  as part of  this mission’s success , we all will be sharing equally and  Vinay  should not have any problem in this…”

Later  I decoded my self  their secret names as  SM superman, BM batman and  CW catwoman.

I am not sure whether  those three musketeers succeeded or not but that evening I  got tasty and smooth  chocolates from my elder son Vikram, big brother of  Vinay.

\_\_END\_\_

24. Title :[**CELINA AND THE PETER FOX**](http://yourstoryclub.com/short-stories-for-kids/short-story-for-kids-with-moral-lesson-peter-fox/)

## Category : Kids and Children

**Story :** Celina was a cute little bird living in the Velachery forest. She was recently born and was one month old. She looked beautiful; her eyes were blue in color and she used to see the birds, plants, creatures, animals, mountains, flowers, rivers and the people with her cute eyes. She wanted to learn about various things around her. She used to fly happily from one branch of the tree and to another branch of the tree singing in her sweet voice. Her mother loved her and she used to fly to distant places to bring food for her little daughter and as Celina was becoming bigger and bigger, her mother felt very happy.

One day, Peter Fox, came by the tree where Celina and her mother were living in the nest built by her mother on one of the tree branches. Peter Fox was a bad boy and he used to catch the birds and eat them.  Many birds in the area knew Peter Fox very well and once Peter Fox entered the forest all birds would start screaming loud and would fly to any branch of a tree nearby to escape from the villain.

Celina, the little bird was not knowing Peter Fox and nobody had told her about Peter Fox also. When Celina was flying from one branch to another, Peter suddenly looked above and saw her. He wanted to eat her deliberately because she was very beautiful. He started making  various plans. Suddenly he saw, Robin Rat coming by the way. Peter called him and told him about his desire to eat Celina – the beautiful young bird.  He convinced Robin Rat that he would  permit him to eat the bird along with him.

[](http://d688i9578ejn6.cloudfront.net/wp-content/uploads/2012/10/brown-fox.jpg)

**Brown Greedy Fox**

Robin Rat was happy. He could climb the tree but Peter Fox could not climb any tree. Robin Rat slowly went to the tree where Celina was sitting there looking at him.  Robin Rat started making friendship with Celina. He told her that Peter Fox was the king of the forest and everybody living in the forest should obey the king, otherwise, the king would punish them. Celina believed him and started flying towards Peter Fox.

Celina was very beautiful and by the time she started flying to Peter Fox, a hunter came by that side and he wanted to hunt her because she was very beautiful. He took his gun and aimed at Celina. Celina landed almost near Peter Fox and Peter Fox was about to catch her with his front leg and by that time the hunter started firing a shot at the bird.

Alas, the shot missed hitting Celina; however, it wounded Peter Fox on his right eye and  Peter Fox could not imagine what caused his right eye burning with fire and he immediately forgot Celina and started running out of the forest as far as he could.

Celina immediately went to her nest and stayed there silently without knowing what had happened there.

Good people are always safe under the hands of God.

\_\_END\_\_

25. **Title :** [**A Hungry and Greedy Fox Preying Zebra**](http://yourstoryclub.com/short-stories-for-kids/hungry-fox-preying-zebra/)

## Category : Kids and Children

**Story :** Kids Short Story – A Hungry Greedy Fox Preying Zebra

Once upon a time there was an old fox. He was so old that it could not prey even small animals and therefore he was becoming weaker and weaker. One day he was wandering nearby lions’ den. Suddenly he smelled fresh blood. He could not believe his luck. However, as usual, his happiness was very short. He saw whole lion family was feasting a zebra which was just hunted by lady of house. Aroma of blood and glimpse of flesh were tempting him enough to dare to go further.

he started inching towards buffet. He had to squeeze his leg when he heard a thundering roar of the lioness. She asked, “Who are you and don’t you love your life anymore?” Fox replied very humbly, “Oh my beautiful queen! You are the bravest among beasts. However this stupid mind of your slave is unable to conceive how you just with yourself prey this powerful zebra.” Lioness hearing her praise became bit quiet and friendly. She told how she preyed zebra from a herd that might still be there at nearby grass field. She also proposed if the fox would like to see live demonstration of the prey; however he might need to block escape route of game because lioness who just had meal might not run fast enough.

Offer was very lucrative. Fox knew that an extra zebra would be of no interest for the beasts’ family and lioness might leave the prey — a whole zebra — just for him. This meant that fox would not worry for food for next one month. He readily agreed to lioness’ proposal.

The game started within less than five minutes. Lioness instructed fox to stand little far from the herd and hide himself behind a bush, aside path from grass field to river. She told fox to jump suddenly in front of escaping zebra so that zebra would slow down due to shock and she could attack at its neck from behind. Strategy was well understood by fox. He hid behind the bush and started waiting for his fortune to come.

[](http://d688i9578ejn6.cloudfront.net/wp-content/uploads/2012/06/lion.jpg)

**Lion: Kids Short Story – A Hungry Greedy Fox Preying Zebra  
Photo credit:**[**hamper**](http://www.morguefile.com/creative/hamper)**from**[**morguefile.com**](http://www.morguefile.com/)

Apt lioness slowly and quietly went other side of the herd. She had to chase a zebra from far end so that by the time zebra would reach near the bush it would be too tired to react against surprise attack by fox. She took a long walk to target a zebra that was bit away from the herd. Very soon chasing started. Zebra was running for its life. Lioness, who just had sumptuous lunch, found herself much slower for this prey. Strategy started turning in to shortcut tactic. She, instead chasing zebra through long way, forced it to go into the middle of herd so that it would slow down. But her move was wrong. She found herself amidst hundreds of fully grown zebras. She could hardly see anything but fast moving black and white strips around her. Unable to think any further she resorted to a loud roar. Thundering sound of her roar injected more fear in the herd. As a result, whole herd stampeded towards the bush with even greater velocity.

The greedy fox was awaiting impatiently behind the bush. Moment he heard steps nearby the bush he attacked the surging herd of zebras. Result was obvious. Within no time he was badly crushed by the herd. His tired mistress could hardly find any trace of his earthly existence.

**26. Title :** [**The Boy**](http://yourstoryclub.com/short-stories-from-college/short-story-on-friendship-the-boy/)

## Category : Friends and Friendships

**Story :** Who was he? He was just one among hundreds at school. There wasn’t anything distinguishing or mighty about him – he was good-looking all right but it was the kind of good looks that stands out at first and then fades into the background after a while; as if it had been there for all eternity. In short, he was an ordinary boy leading an ordinary life. He wasn’t popular among his peers except maybe for his first few days at school which was one month after term began. He knew everyone and everybody knew him and that was that. After all, what was one boy among so many others?

Who was he? He was a quaint black and white photograph. A ready dimpled smile, a pair of deep searching eyes, a mop of messy hair and to complete the picture you needed an easel with a canvas on it near him, a palette in his left hand and a paintbrush in the right. No one knew much about his likes or dislikes and frankly no one bothered to ask. But one thing about which everyone was on the same page was that he was born to paint. He wouldn’t be complete without the – preferably – green streak of paint which his hand leaves in its wake in a futile attempt to get the tumbling mass of dark bangs out of his eyes. It could be 6 a.m. or 6 p.m.; you wouldn’t find him without paint spread randomly on his hands, smudges of colors on his face or dried smears on his sleeves and patches on his jeans. It was an irrevocable part of him. The sagacious aura about him and the contrasting impertinence profound in his ever smiling face vanishes the moment he gets a paint brush in his hands. His countenance radiated magnanimity and unbelievable passion when he painted.

It was a marvel – the indescribable grace with which his hand flew across the canvas, the deft stroke of his hands, true and sure against the stark contrast of white in the backdrop. It was with the utmost confidence that he painted the bold reds and the pale pinks, warm yellows and cool blues, calm greens and vibrant purples… Upon closer inspection you can appreciate the sharp details and the accurate strokes, appropriate shading and expert shadows. Some of his paintings were fairly straight forward- blooming flowers, crashing waves, looming mountains and towering skyscrapers. Some were more allegory – a haze of colors, the meaning of which was oblivious to all except him. They were all beautiful in their own separate ways and the adoring way in which his lips wrapped tenderly around the usually silly names of his masterpieces and the rhapsodical glow in his dark chocolate orbs as he looked at them only added to their charm.

He was neither a fiend nor a best friend to one. He was simply meant to be. With a character that was smooth and warm and capable of easily familiarizing with the personality of his acquaintance. Never was he judgemental  He was a constant friend; Like a diary. You don’t hate him nor do you love him but essentially he is there by your side. What else could be the reason he was never appreciated duly for what he was worth? It was almost like he was meant to be; something naturally there.

Even still, when all of a sudden he barged into the class one boring English period and announced that he would be leaving, it was met by apathetic shrugs which were too mild. On his part, he too seemed indifferent except for the strange emotion shining through the hard pool of placidity in his eyes and the absence of his signature whimsical smile which usually graced his lips. The deadline came and he left with a wave of his hand, a grin in our direction and a slight inclination of his head to acknowledge our lazy goodbyes. But again his façade was undoubtedly marred by that eerie light behind his eyes.

Days flew by with no perceivable change and then the rifle was reported triggering the beginning of a saga of confusion. He became a seat left out in the conference room by a – later, very bewildered- classmate, an extra question paper at every exam, an awaited disgruntled groan when art class was cancelled, a subtle glance at a vacant seat when the teacher spoke about medieval arts, an additional mars bar at every birthday, an irrelevant invitation to every party. It was all inevitable.

That was when we learned the truth of the words: we don’t know what we have until we lose it. Like many unfortunates, it was too late for us; Too late to say sorry for all the times you knocked over his paint, thank you for the paint stained helping hand which seemed to appear magically in front of you when you tripped during gym, a nod of acceptance or perhaps even a reply to every routine good mornings, a heartfelt congratulation as he walks back to his place amidst admiring albeit also lukewarm applause after being announced the winner of a painting contest for the umpteenth time.

Who was he? A pang in the heart when you skip his name during attendance, a tear in the eye when you see your school album, a smirk on the lips when you reminisce about the all jokes you played on the teachers, a confused sweep of the head when you try to seek him out to ask- as was routine – his calculus exam marks, a droop of the shoulder when you realize you won’t be playing soccer with him anymore, a soft feeling in your soul when you see a painting.

A phone call with no answer, that ends in a beep, a message with no reply even at the end of many a week, a mail with no response no matter how long you wait. A foggy picture constantly at the back of your mind.

Who was he? Oh, he was just a boy. The last piece of the puzzle. He was a part of us.

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27. **Title :** [Me and Smita](http://yourstoryclub.com/short-stories-from-college/short-story-for-friends-me-and-smita/)

## Category : Friends and Friendships

**Story :** “ Hi, Heard that you are coming to India in a few days.. It’s been sooo long… Can’t wait to see you again“

I stiffened and logged out of my message inbox in haste. She was the last person I wanted to meet again and for some minutes I considered the idea of cancelling my trip to India altogether. Curiosity got the better of me, however, and I decided to make an urgent inquiry call to India. It would be 3 pm in the afternoon and I could imagine my mother grumbling on being woken up from her midday nap. I took a deep breath and ventured….

“Umm.. Ma, the reason I called you up today … Do you remember an old childhood friend of mine, a girl called Smita ? “

“The one with the curly hair …and the beautiful eyes ?? Of course..”

“Yes ..yes ..the same one.. Have you heard from her lately ?”

“ Ahh..well ..she met me the other day …She was asking about you  …I told her you were coming soon..”

“She..she came home Ma..?” I asked aghast .

“ Actually she works in the same office complex as your brother. They have met each other a few times it seems ..I invited her over for Dinner …poor guy ,he  has been so lonely lately..”

I disconnected and banged the phone down angrily .It was so typical of her to barge into my life all over again ,as if nothing had happened. And throw it in a disarray all over again !!

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My flight from New York to Delhi was a long one . I thanked God that at least I had sufficient time to adjust to the fact that Smita Aggarwal had made an unwelcome entry to my(and unfortunately my brothers’..) life again .Unwillingly I let my mind wander again ,to those childhood memories and school days.. and our favorite playground – the banks of the local river along  which our homes resided .

I don’t of course , remember the exact date or the occasion when I met Smita for the first time ….it was  too long ago .I could recall broken memories of us playing together in the school sand pit in nursery ,of dressing up our dolls together and playing mom to them ..Later as we grew up , doing homework sitting in our house with the brand new coloured TV ,threatening to distract us every few minutes…

Smita lived close to our house and her mother had died when she was only a few months old .Her father was a well respected businessman ,but too busy in his work to care much about his daughter’s well being .In our early school years , Smita was often lonely and  took solace in our house and our friendship .Despite her loneliness ,she wasn’t a quiet ,brooding, sensitive child . She was full of energy and confidence , her mind brimming  mischievous pranks and mostly dragging me, the unwilling but faithful , into them .My world revolved around Smita and I almost hero worshipped her . Any fight with her would see me upset for days .There was hardly anything that we hadn’t shared with each other as friends – from the chocolates  that my Uncle brought from the US  to posters of  Leonardio Di Caprio when Titanic was the rage .

Our favourite place to play was the River .We went there almost everyday ,and made sand castles and cakes on its banks .Smita was reckless ,and often jumped into the water where it was shallow ,dragging me along .But I would be scared of soiling my clothes ..and what would mother say .When we were older we often sat there discussing teachers and classmates ,crushes and whatever we knew of our little world.

So together , we passed our childhood years ,the exciting and somewhat nightmarish teen years and stepped into our college lives ,as close as Siamese twins . I was not a very outgoing person , liked by all my teachers for my dedication and obedient nature and  easily passed  unnoticed by most people . I never craved popularity and was content with my own world – a loving family and most importantly having my best friend Smita at my side .

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My flight had landed inDelhi. The temperature outside was soaring and I was relieved to find the familiar face of my older brother Rahul ,waving his hand furiously to catch my attention .One of his daughters ,lovingly nicknamed Angel ,had come along to pick me up from the airport .

Once inside the car ,I tried to study Rahul closely .His face still bore the traces of the tragedy that had shaken our family almost a year and a half  ago – the sudden death of his wife ,Meenu , in a car accident . He looked older than his 36 years ,the stress of bringing up two young children without their mother as well as dealing with the emotional vacuum that the death had caused had taken a toll on him .From outside he appeared his cheerful  self ,but I could sometimes sense a faraway ,lost look in his eyes and at certain intervals he would suddenly fall silent .

We reached home and I was again given the VIP treatment that my family gave me whenever I visited home after a long time. My mother had prepared all of my favorite dishes for lunch and my Dad had called all our friends and cousins for a family party in my honour  . My other niece , Sanya insisted that her favorite Teddy be kept next to her Booa’s  bed ,so that I wouldn’t feel scared at night in a strange room .I laughed happily while pinching Sanya’s rosy cheeks .Being in India ,almost after four years ,was a nice, giddy feeling…except for the hankering memory of Smita Aggarwal that it awakened .

Tired and jetlagged , I got into bed early hoping to catch some much needed sleep .But as much as I tried ,my mind would wander back to the subject of Smita and how our lives courses had changed since college . It was as if her Facebook message had suddenly unleashed on me a whirlpool of powerful memories ,memories that I had deliberately tried to lock up for the last few years of my life .

Me and Smita had entered our college life together ,with high expectations from our life. We had taken admission in the same college  and same course – Maths Honours ,even though I was interested in literature and wanted to do English Hons .But the subject bored Smita ,and I couldn’t bear the thought of parting from her ,so I convinced myself at the time to take up Maths Hons for her sake .Till many years after our fight ,I did not forgive her for forcing me into this decision (even though admittedly it was in the end my own decision and not hers !!) .

So college life began and within a few weeks itself I sensed that things between me and Smita would never be the same again. Smita was unarguably one of the most popular girls in college ,her good looks charming all the guys and her confidence and spunk attracting attention from all over .From Rocky ,the lead guitarist of our college band to the silly girls of our class ,everyone wanted a bit of Smita …and she loved all the attention .Her horizons had expanded while  I still tugged on to the past glories of our friendship determinedly .We began to spend less time together and she often laughed at me for my unsophisticated dressing sense and my steadfast refusal to wear makeup to college . By 2nd year , we had grown quite apart ,and many times Smita excluded me from her plans of going for movies and discos with her guy friends and shopping trips with the gals .It hurt me a little to be cast aside by her in this ungracious manner ,but on the whole I was actually relieved ,as socializing was not my cup of tea .

We still managed to be somewhat distant friends and occasionally went out together for a coffee or had dinner at my home .In the last year of college ,however ,something happened that  snapped the bond between us altogether . I had fallen for a good looking senior from our college called Akhil and my inexperienced heart harbored rather warm feelings for him .He knew Smita slightly (who didn’t know Smita in college ,after all !! ) and I asked her to introduce me to him ,after confessing my crush to her .Smita was rather amused and willingly agreed to play cupid . Akhil and I were introduced and Akhil ,I believe started taking an interest in me too .

How it finally came about , I never came to know ,but it seemed that Smita decided the role of Cupid was not enough for her .I guess ,she couldn’t bear the fact that her plain jane ,simple minded friend had managed to attract someone after all and the fact that she hadn’t been able to attract him first .She began to secretly meet Akhil frequently and charmed him till he was convinced they were in love .He proposed to her and they started going out while I was still nurturing happy hopes about him in my heart .

After two months of their secret hitching ,I finally came to know the truth from one of our old mutual friends .The knowledge crushed me ,and I couldn’t forgive her for this .I felt like a silly fool ,deceived by the childhood friend whom I had once almost worshipped .

When I confronted her on the topic ,she was immediately on the defensive .She asked me if it was her fault that she was so attractive to guys and I could’t manage to attract even one .She told me she was tired of dragging the burden of our old friendship all the time and needed some space . It was a bitter fight between two friends turned foes ,and I vowed never to speak to her or think about Smita  ever again .I didn’t know what caused me grater pain –the heartbreak over Akhil or shutting Smita out of my life .But I was determined to move on ,and in time the memories of my playmate by the river began to fade away .

I never went to the river again.

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The days of myIndia visit were passing surprisingly quickly .One morning I woke up with an intuition  that my long dreaded meeting with Smita could not be put off any longer . Sure enough , Smita called on my phone and asked me to meet her for lunch . Her voice sounded strained and I wondered why she wanted  to meet me in the first place at all .I distrusted all her motives for trying to renew our friendship and decided to go for lunch with a cool ,formal manner .

Soon after our fight ,college had ended and I went to London to pursue my Higher studies .I had been living there for the past eight years now and hadn’t heard anything about Smita except the fact that she had got married (to Akhil only I believe ) .They had got divorced last year ,my mother said .I couldn’t care less …

I reached the restaurant for our lunch well in time but Smita was already sitting there .As usual she looked ravishing with her hair colored and straightened ,and wearing a dress that complemented her figure . I nervously sat opposite her and looked into her eyes – as uncertain and hesitating as mine .

We chatted like polite strangers as the waiter came to take our lunch order . Smita did most of the talking and I felt as if she was trying to convince us both that nothing had gone wrong between us and things were still the same . It angered me ,and suddenly in an irritated voice I interrupted  her and asked –

“So Smita ,why exactly did you call me here today ? “

Smita was surprised and her pencil thin eyebrows arched together the way they did when something disturbed her .Faking a cheerful voice ,she managed to say…

“Just like that Rhea ,as I said it’s been ages since we met .I was hoping on your trip here we could catch up …”

“ We havnt done that these last 8 years ..why suddenly now ??” – I demanded .

Smita’s well manicured hands shifted nervously to her lap as she answered somewhat unconvincingly – “It’s not like I havn’t thought about you ,these 8 years ,you know Rhea..It’s just that I didn’t know how or what to do….”

“What is there to do ? I’m happy in my life and presumably you are happy in yours ,so good..” I responded .

“You still havn’t forgiven me for what happened ,have you Rhea ?“ For the first time Smita looked right into my eyes and I illogically  remembered my mother saying on the phone –Your friend,the one with the beautiful eyes…

I took a deep breath to collect my thoughts and answered calmly – “Some things are better unsaid Smita … It doesn’t matter now ,does it ? We have both come a long way in our lives “

“But I guess it does matter somewhere ,don’t you think Rhea ?When I think of all those childhood days ,the time spent with you ,they were like the best days of my life ..We were so happy ,so carefree ..Our friendship was all that mattered to us ….”

I looked at Smita wearily .Why was she raking up all these past memories now ,which were best forgotten ??

“You know Rhea ,I divorced Akhil last year ..”

“I heard Smita ..I’m sorry “ I replied formally ,not sounding sorry at all .

“Akhil ditched me for another girl in his office .It was such a harrowing experience ,to be cheated upon after years of marriage .I had reached the lowest point of my life ,and all my self esteem was shattered .I began to question the people who really cared for me or made a pretense that they did….”

I looked at Smita and wondered ..the confident ,high spirited Smita , who had never known defeat in all her life ,was fighting defeat at the hands of Fate now . I felt a pang of sympathy  which I immediately tried to push away .

“I needed a friend desperately .But my best friend was nowhere around .You had gone too far away for me to reach you Rhea …”Smita continued softly .

“I didn’t go far away Smita ,you pushed me away ..remember…??”

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I silently helped my mother as she fussed around , getting things ready for dinner .She had invited Smita over ,and I could see she was keen to get things moving between my elder brother and Smita . It irritated me and made me feel somewhat protective towards Rahul ,as I still didn’t trust Smita ,for  all her efforts towards a reconciliation.

But I was curious to see the two of them together and especially , Rahul ,who had known Smita as his kid sister’s friend all these years . And I had to admit ,the two did seem rather attached to each other . Rahul , lost the faraway look in his eyes ,and for the first time in my entire visit ,I saw him  joking and looking relaxed like the earlier days . Both of them had faced disappointments in their young life ,and they sought each other’s understanding with a warmth and maturity which was hard to ignore .Smita surprisingly was very attached to the kids  .Angel and Sanya also adored their “auntie “ and showered her with love and kisses.

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After the dinner ,the two girls retired to their rooms for the night .Smita’s visit had reminded me how the kids must be yearning for their mum’s love and  I followed them .

“Booa ..“ Little Sanya said excitedly ..”You must tell us a story ..tell us the story of The PARTY that aunty tells na please …”

“The Party ? I don’t know any such story sweetheart …. ” Which aunty had told her the story ,I wondered .

Angel said responsibly – “Sanya I know the story and I will tell you .Don’t worry Booa ..”

In her best adult voice Angel bagan her story –

“Once upon a time there were two friends ,who lived together by the river .They were best friends ,and always played together and shared their toys and dolls with each other .

One day it was the birthday of one of the two girls called Rani .She was very excited the night before and wondered what gifts she would get from all her friends especially her best friend Sana.But in the morning when she woke up ,her father did not wish her a Happy Birthday !! He had forgotten ..She went to school and expected all her friends to wish her,especially Sana,but Sana too had forgotten it seemed .Rani was very upset that nobody remembered and missed her mother ,who had left her long ago .

Rani went home sad and puzzled ,as she had been telling her friends for days about  her Birthday .She met Sana on her way back from School but decided not to talk to her .Sana told her to come to her house in the evening so they could play Teacher ,but Rani left in a huff .

In the evening Sana came to her house looking for her .She took Rani by the hand to her house .As they entered the house ,she saw the drawing room was all dark .Suddenly a balloon burst and someone said “Surprise !! “.She saw that all her friends were gathered there ,along with her Papa and granny .They had not forgotten ,they were only playing a game with her !!

Rani was so happy ,aunty had decorated the house in streamers and balloons ..and on the table was a big chocolate cake ,her favourite…..”

“It wasn’t chocolate Angel ,you are telling it wrong “Sanya interjected .

“It was pineapple cake I think, Rani’s favourite..”I said gently .

“Booa ,how did you guess,do you know  the story…??!!”

“Slightly..hush Sanya , let Angel continue “ I smiled .

“So Rani was very happy with all the gifts and surprise party and hugged her friend Sana .When the party ended they both went down the river  where they played together and there Sana showed Rani the gift she had got for her . It was a chain with half a heart locket ,with the words “Best friend “inscribed on them .Sana had the other half heart and they both wore their chains together ,promising to remain best friends forever …..”

—END—

**28. Title :** [**7 in a Bus**](http://yourstoryclub.com/short-stories-from-college/friends-short-story-7-in-a-bus/)

Category : Friends and Friendships

**Story :** My friends and I had decided to go for our teacher’s wedding in Ahmedabad. There were 7 of us who had decided to go-6 guys (Alok, Ryan, Karan, Nikhil, Amit and I) and 1 girl (Avanika). Our teacher had arranged for our accommodation in Ahmedabad. We had to arrange our travel. Mumbai to Ahmedabad was a journey of 11hours. We had booked the bus tickets for Ahmedabad. We were all geared up for the trip.

One day before the journey: My friends Alok, Ryan, Karan and I were playing the game of carrom. We were planning our itinerary at the same time. Suddenly Karan came up with the topic that who will be sitting beside Avanika in the bus. Avanika was the only girl coming with us. She was very close to our Teacher –Anita.

Ryan said, “I am her best friend. There is no question about who will be sitting beside her. I am the one”.

But we all knew that Avanika had a soft corner for Karan. Karan was good with the girls. Karan got lots of girls.

Karan said, “Avanika had called me and she wants to sit beside me. It is her wish guys”.

Alok and I we had decided that we will go on a bust during the journey. We were not really curious about Avanika. We were fascinated in getting a high with the bouts of alcohol. Alok told Karan that he wants to have a bet with him.

Alok said “I want Karan to kiss Avanika in the bus. Karan, do you accept this challenge?”

After hearing this Ryan and I got excited and were drawn into the discussion. We all supported Alok. Karan accepted the challenge right away. Karan had good confidence and when it came to girls he was smooth and sly.

**Day of our journey:**

At 7pm everyone except Karan and Avanika had come to the bus stop. We were waiting for Karan and Avanika. After some time both of them arrived.

Alok mustered “I hope you remember the bet Karan”.

Avanika overheard that and asked “What bet?”

Karan replied “Nothing. It is something about drinking”.

The bus arrived and we got into the bus and the last seats were reserved for us. We entered into the bus and called up our teacher through our cell phone. Our teacher –Anita was in Ahmedabad and she was preparing for her wedding. We informed her that we had boarded the bus to Ahmedabad. We removed the bottle of beers and started drinking surreptitiously so that other passengers didn’t notice. We sang songs all night. We all guys were sitting in the back row. Karan and Avanika were sitting one row ahead of us.

At 12:30 midnight Alok whispered to Karan “Come on man do it”.

Karan said “Easy boy. I am waiting for the right moment”.

We were all staring at the couple. Then at 1 AM night Karan held Avanika’s hand and kissed her. Suddenly Alok started clapping. Avanika and Karan were embarrassed and shocked.

“Finally you won the bet Karan” shouted Alok.

Avanika realized this was the bet the guys were talking about. She became very furious and stopped talking to Karan.

**The D-day (Wedding Day):**

We reached Ahmedabad in the morning. We managed to find the hotel that was booked for us. We all settled down in the hotel. Avanika was given a separate room. We were given a single room. The wedding was at 5 PM. We had planned to leave Ahmedabad at night and head back to Mumbai. Before going to the wedding at 2 PM, Alok opened a bottle of whisky. He poured it into 6 glasses. No one had planned to drink but Alok insisted. We drank three glasses each. It was enough to get a high. Alok started jumping in the hotel. Ryan and Karan tried to pacify him and made him calm. Our teacher- Anita’s father knocked the door and asked us to come to the wedding hall. There was a car waiting for us. We were all wasted after the drink. My head was spinning but somehow I pulled myself together and headed to the car. Alok was totally soaked and was trembling. Somehow we made it to the wedding hall. We were seated at the end of the hall. In the hall Alok removed a small quarter bottle of whisky from his *kurta*. We were all wondering how he managed to get that in his *kurta*.

Alok said “I need some water to dilute this stuff”.

Amit and I went to get the water whereas the others stayed with Alok. When we came back we didn’t see Karan and Avanika.

I asked “Hey guys, where is Karan and Avanika ?”.

“They have gone out to talk” Ryan replied.

I said to Alok “I am done man. Not going to drink anymore. Already have a headache.”

Alok poured the drink into the juice glasses which were kept for serving guests. On the other end the marriage was going on. All the *hindu* rituals were going on. The marriage got over after two hours. The next process was the reception as per the agenda. We all had forgotten the gift we had brought for our teacher. We had left back the gift at the hotel. Amit and I thought we will head back to the hotel to get the gift. Amit and I reached the hotel. The bride’s parents had booked the entire hotel and there was no one in the hotel as everyone had gone for wedding. We tried to open our room but somebody had locked the room from inside. We knocked the door but no one answered the door. After some time Karan opened the door.

“Hey Karan, what are you doing here?” I asked.

Then I saw Avanika was in the room too. I felt something strange. Amit went inside and ignored Avanika to get the gift. In the mean time I was standing outside the door. I saw that there was a space in the ceiling. I tried to hold on to it. The whole ceiling came down. There was a loud noise. It was a false ceiling made for decoration. The hotel was a new hotel and I had destroyed its beauty completely by bringing the whole ceiling down. We were staring at each other.

I said “Let’s go guys no one has seen us break the ceiling. Otherwise we have to bear the consequences”.

“Let us pack the luggage and get out of here” Karan yelled.

We packed the entire luggage and went to the wedding hall. We explained the story to the rest of our group. They also got panicked. We gave the gift to our teacher and said that we would be leaving soon since we had booked the tickets.

We left the wedding hall and headed to the bus stand. I was very terrified with what had happened back at the hotel. I shouldn’t have hung on to the ceiling. I wanted to leave the city before someone found out about the ceiling. We got into the bus and I was praying for the bus to start. The bus started to move and I was relieved a bit.

I then asked Karan “What were you doing with Avanika back in the hotel?”

At that time Karan got a phone call from our teacher. The teacher’s father was on the other end.

He smirked and said “So boys did you enjoy the trip?”

\_\_END\_\_

**29. Title :** [**They Drink at Night**](http://yourstoryclub.com/short-stories-friendship/short-story-friends-they-drink-at-night/)

## Category : Friends and Friendships

**Story : T**he silence was eerie. A regular droning of cicadas had a near hypnotic effect. The landscape was flooded with the quicksilver light of the full moon. All shadows were accentuated in such a way that can only be seen in moonlight swathed environs. A silvery streak gleamed a short distance away, denoting the mountain stream that flowed out there.

This was where the animals came down to drink. The land, devoid of vegetation in this stretch, gently sloped downhill towards the stream, across which it swooped up again to form the rows of rolling hills, rising step by step, as if in tires. It was that sort of a night when all senses got heightened to a preternatural level. An occasional rustling in the under growths heralded the passage of some unseen animal, most probably a predator, accounting for the spooky silence that prevailed. Big cats were rarities in this area. But, of course, this was leopard country. Abhijit reached for his glass of vodka and tonic kept on the table to his left and, at the same time, wrapped the shawl closer round his broad shoulders. The nights were chilly.

Virendra came up with a lantern emanating more soot than light. Electricity had made some inroads in some parts of this wilderness but the forest and this bungalow was by-passed till now, due to some obvious reasons. A slow, ponderous beat of drums from afar broke through the reverie of silence. The tribal workers of some far away tea garden were enjoying themselves after an arduous day of hard work. Abhijit waved Virendra’s ineffectual lantern away. He preferred the darkness, the moonlight, his vodka and his solitude. Light encroached upon his privacy.

With the help of the meager light Virendra scanned the table for the supply of provisions and then limped away, the floor-boards creaking under his feet. Virendra Singh Thapa was the caretaker of this forest bungalow. He was an interesting old-timer on superannuation, and was possibly as old as Methuselah himself.

On his way back Virendra stopped suddenly, peered about in a short sighted manner, and came back to Abhijit.

“Sir,” he mumbled in Nepali, a language Abhijit was perfectly at home with, having served as the District Forest Officer for quite some time in these parts. “Sir, please be on your alert. The big cats are out.”

“I know, Virendra *daju*, and I am alert. Now, please take the lantern away. The light is hurting my eyes.  And get me some more fried chicken, will you? That’s a good man.”

Abhijit’s eyes roved towards the loaded gun hanging from a nail in the wall. He was a good shooter with a better night sight than many. But he preferred to shoot with his handycam rather than with a gun. The gun was there mainly to boost his own confidence and to scare off intruders if the need arose.

The offending light was removed forthwith and Abhijit took a thoughtful sip of vodka. Now he had heaps of time on his hands. All his life he had roamed about in forests in different parts of West Bengal till his retirement at the end of a long and lusterless tenure in this part of the Dooars region. He had no family to speak of. Never had any. He had been a self-sufficient confirmed bachelor all through his life. There was no earthly reason of his remaining a bachelor, only that there had never been an occasion to shed his ‘bachelor’ degree. At the back of his mind, he knew, though, that is was a fitting tribute to someone he had been in love with, a thousand years ago. He smiled to himself and shifted in his seat. Then, suddenly, he froze. The gleaming streak of the stream was no longer visible from where he sat, being obscured by a mass of moving black shadows. A faint gurgling and splashing could be heard. Elephants, thought he. They have come down for a drink.

A barely audible creaking announced the arrival of Virendra with a plate heaped up with fried chickens. Midway across the veranda he stopped in his tracks and peered about.

“Elephants, sir,” he whispered, barely audible. “Coming down for a drink. This group always drinks at night.”

“Yes, I’ve seen them,” said Abhijit in a barely audible murmur, for he knew that a whisper carries a much greater distance than a toned down murmur. He just hoped, nay, prayed that Samir does not come barging in at this point of time. He glanced at the luminous dial of his wrist watch. It was barely seven, yet in the forest it seemed to be the dead of night.

Samir was a childhood friend of Abhijit. Both were approximately of the same age and had been to the same school together. They were both ardent sportsmen and played soccer and cricket together in the same local club. Abhijit was a good cricket player and had gone on to play for his school, college and then on to university levels. Samir’s prowess was more to be seen in the football field and he was the club captain at one time. They had been so very inseparable that their friends called them ‘twins’. Some of them had further qualified this nomenclature adding the prefix ‘Siamese’ to the ‘twins’.

Their path had separated only when they entered college. After that, they graduated and Abhijit had joined the Forest Service, while Samir started his own dealership of electronic goods. Samir had married fairly early in life. The couple had suffered from infertility for about five years or so, after which their only son was born. This boy was now in Germany working for a degree in Engineering. Recently, Samir had lost his wife and was now a widower. Abhijit, however, had never married.

It was Abhijit who had made the programme. He had gone to visit some relatives in Kolkata and there he had met his friend after a long lay-off. The reunion was a happy one, though Samir was still depressed at the loss of his wife. Abhijit had suggested that he would make arrangements for the two of them to spend a quiet weekend at this forest bungalow. Samir had readily agreed to this proposal.

Samir was on his way back from town, where he had gone to procure provisions. After a long time he was feeling really relaxed. The forest had its own charm and attracted him in such a way he had never thought possible. All his life he had been a die-hard Kolkattan, or rather Calcatian, as life-long residents of this great metropolis preferred to call themselves. He had seldom travelled far, and the little he had travelled were all on business trips, within India and abroad.

After coming to this place at the insistence of Abhijit, he had felt his tension gradually ebbing away. The hollow feeling following the death of his wife was no longer there, although the ache remained. He was grateful to Abhijit for working this vacation out and longed to do something worthwhile in return. Therefore, when the question of getting goodies from the local market came up, Samir had grabbed the opportunity with both hands.

It had been broad daylight when Samir had set forth on his quest in the Forest Department jeep with only the driver Madan Singh to keep him company.  The two were a study in contrast. While Madan Singh was a burly man, quite tall in stature, with a pair of bushy moustache, Samir was thin built, clean shaven and totally suave and urbane in all respects. Yet they struck an immediate rapport and Madan Singh pointed out to him all exotic flora and fauna they came across on their way.

In town Samir spent very little time in shopping and soon they were on their way back with bags of grocery, chicken and other essential items like a few bottles of life saving beverage. On their way Samir opened a bottle and sampled some of the liquors he had procured, finding it to be absolutely to his satisfaction. The spirit soon lifted Samir’s mood and he began humming the tune of a Hindi film song that had been in vogue in their student days. All was going well till they turned into the road that led straight through the forest. Madan Singh applied the brakes hard and turned off the ignition.

“Madan, what’s wrong?” asked Samir in consternation. Madan put his index finger on his lips making the international sign of total silence. Then he leaned over to whisper in Samir’s ears.

“Elephants, sahib.”

“How do you know?” Samir asked incredulously.

Madan silently pointed to a heap of droppings plumb in the centre of the road. Even Samir’s city-bred eyes could make out that the droppings were fairly recent. He looked at Madan Singh with a questioning look. Wordlessly Madan Singh signed at him to stay put and reached into the back-seat to fetch the big gun he had brought with him. He put up his hand to assure Samir that all was well and this was just a precaution. They then settled down to wait.

Abhijit was really worried now. Samir should have been back at least by sunset. He got up from his armchair and began pacing the veranda. This was a long time habit of his. But he had to desist soon as the floor boards creaked. Suddenly Virendra clutched at the hem of Abhijit’s *kurta.*

“Sir,” whispered he. “They leave now.”

Sure enough, the great black shadow was moving away. Abhijit heaved a sigh of relief.

Within a short time the muffled roar of a jeep’s engine was heard as the vehicle turned and crunched up the moonlit gravel pathway of the bungalow with headlights switched off. Virendra hurried downstairs to retrieve all the provisions that he knew to be loaded in the jeep. Samir stumbled in the dark as he clambered up the wooden stairs to the veranda.

“What took you so long?” said Abhijit. “I’d been worrying my head off!”

“Mahakal! We stopped to pay homage to the overlord of the jungle.”

“You are drunk,” complained Abhijit.

“Huh! No more than you are pal,” quipped Samir. “But I wouldn’t call it a drink. Ugh! In Styrofoam cups too!” Abhijit smiled. The forest was gradually bringing the old Samir out.

Samir plumped down into the vacant armchair on the other side of the low coffee-table. He picked up Abhijit’s empty glass and sniffed.

“What are you having? Ah! Vodka with tonic! Downright civilized, aren’t you?” He called for Virendra and instructed him to bring water, slices of lemon, green chilies and salt.

“Now I’ll show you how vodka should be drunk. But, hey! Can’t we have some music? Something soothing, from the sixties or seventies?”

“Are you mad?” Abhijit exclaimed. “You are in the jungle, pal, in the midst of wild animals! Or have you forgotten? Just sit still and enjoy the music of the moonlit forest.”

The clock in the hall downstairs gently chimed ten. The distant drum-beats had ceased for quite some time now. The two cronies were by now deep into the reminiscence of their youthful days.

“It was hilarious, wasn’t it?” Samir said. “I can still see it in my mind. There you were, stranded near the tramline close to the Shyambazar Tram Depot, with your slippers stuck to the molten asphalt and the tram clanging on for dear life right behind you! Oh God!” Samir started laughing his head off and Abhijit joined him.

“And the time when you vaulted over the railing in the Maidan to escape the mounted police’s baton to land in the wide drain…” Abhijit was rolling in laughter now.

“Ah! Football! I really miss the game,” Samir said.

“Yes. It was your first love. I still remember the two goals you scored in a span of three minutes against Mitali Sangha to give us the trophy.”

“Yes, felt great! But you are wrong. It was not my first love, but my second.”

“How come?” asked Abhijit.

“My first love was your sister, Ronjabati,” declared Samir with a twinkle in his elderly eyes.

“Oh! I know that! The way you put up flashy gallery show in the football field with an eye towards our veranda spoke volumes of your emotions.”

“Where is she now, Ronja?”

“They are settled in Shillong.”

They sat in comfortable silence for a while, immersed in thought, sipping their own respective concoction for inebriation. It was quiet all around. Only the cicadas did not appear to have any sense of bedtime.

“How’s Arun doing?” Abhijit broke the silence. Arun was Samir’s son.

“Oh, he’s doing great. He’s in Dusseldorf now. Going steady with a German girl, Stefi.”

“Is it ok for you, a German daughter-in-law?”

“Of course it is. He’ll probably settle there anyway. But I have no problem,” said Samir while pouring a fresh drink. “He came over when his mother died. Had to go back in three days time. Very busy, these young people these days. Couldn’t stay for the Shradh ceremony.” Samir’s voice was somewhat tremulous. Or was it Abhijit’s overwrought imagination?

“Now, enough of it!” Samir sat up straight. His words had started slurring a bit. In comparison Abhijit was sober. But he could hold his drink better than many. So it did not mean that he had drunk any less.

“You, my friend, had never married. Why?”

Another shadow appeared apparently floated up to the stream. Grunts and splashes followed. Bisons. It was unusual to find them moving around so late. But, perhaps this group also had made it a habit of drinking at night. Streaks of fire danced on the far away hills. Bushes were being burnt to remove weeds and to make the soil more fertile than it was. Wordlessly Abhijit stood up and moved over to the balustrade. The fires danced gold in the moonlight of liquid silver. The bisons moved away.

“Hey, man, why don’t you say something? You were the most eligible bachelor amongst us all. From what we saw many girls swooned over you. Even then you never married. Why?”

A pair of fireflies sparkled in the bushes beyond the bungalow gates. A silent shadow slunk away. Leopard? Abhijit became instantly alert.

“Can you hear me, you oaf? Why didn’t you marry?” Samir was insistent and drunk. Abhijit turned to face him.

“Because I loved your wife.”

A night bird screeched and fluttered away shattering the fragile silence of the moonlit night to smithereens.

\_\_END\_\_

**30. Title :** [**The Illusion of ‘Zero’**](http://yourstoryclub.com/short-stories-friendship/friends-short-story-illusion-of-zero/)

## Category : Friends and Friendships

**Story :** He sits by the side walk, head low and drooping shoulders with certainly a remorseful look on the face that emerged from of a moment of weakness transforming a well evolved relationship into a meaningless and strange entity in an illusionary world…

The sweaty summer of 1978 in Mumbai wreaks unpleasantness and engulfs the sweet innocence of the teenage congregation at the college canteen with a mercurial high of 38 degrees in the month of May. Cold drinks are being passed around by the canteen boy, Chotu who doubles up as an entertainer; he sings popular Hindi songs and breaks into a jig once in a while. The applause he receives resonates in the small, dimly lit room that can house no more than twenty people but now holding fifty people; some sitting on the window ledges and some on the floor.

The ‘heart’ of the college is this canteen where inventions are created by the ‘Nobel Laureate’ types and hearts are broken and mended by the ‘Love Sick’ types. There is also room for the ones who don’t belong to either ends of the spectrum and struggle with all their might to stay neutral to stay in tandem with their rational minds.

“Hello, so do you want to go for a movie after Economics Class?” asks Ravi, a lanky lad who sports cheap imitation clothes emulating film actors. All of 19, he exhibits an attitude of an aspiring movie star though his parents struggle through the month to keep their heads above water.

“Not today. I promised that I would pay the electricity bill on the way back home from college,” replies Ashok whose attitude is defined by middle class values which seldom gets messed owing to lack of exposure and an in built animosity to anything remotely against it.

Still the two pals get along like a house on fire with Ravi doing most of the talking and planning and Ashok tagging along with few mumbles and smiles.

“Come on Ashok, do that tomorrow,” says Ravi urging Ashok.

“No, I can’t do that; the electricity at home will be cut,” says Ashok in a convincing manner.

“Always doing things for home,” says Ravi and together they walk toward two chairs around a table that had just been cleared.

“So what’s today’s number?” asks Ashok excitedly.

“Wait till I open the chocolate wrapper,” replies Ravi unwrapping the outer plastic cover of the chocolate to reveal a white paper wrap underneath. The number ‘5’ is cited on the white paper and he announces, “It’s 5.”

“Let me see the number on my coupon,” says Ashok very excitedly and searches his wallet and brings out a blue folded piece of lottery ticket. “The first number is 5 on my ticket as well!” he says excitedly.

Ravi, the boisterous of the two jumps and does a cart wheeling jig to display his thrill.

“Let’s not be happy so soon. I still have more four numbers to go,” warns Ashok.

But Ravi didn’t listen to any of what Ashok is saying and continues his histrionics.

The following day as is the usual norm they meet during the lunch break at the canteen. There is an ambient noise coming from the radio and seems a bit muffled to decipher what it was actually playing. Surprisingly, they find a table close to the window which overlooks the ladies’ common room and Ravi is happy eyeing the new entrants of the year.

“Look at the one with the purple dress; she’s so cute!” says Ravi without even taking his eyes off her.

“I’m sure she is! Did you buy the chocolate?” asks Ashok somewhat irritated.

“What chocolate?” replies Ravi still ogling at the many ‘colourful wonders’ as he would call them.

“Ravi!” screams Ashok and makes sure his tone gets Ravi into the present state.

“Huh? Sorry, yes and you were saying? Ah, yes, the chocolate!” says Ravi sporting an impish grin on his face.

Knowing the ways of his friend, Ashok breaks into a giggle and takes out the coupon from his pocket. Their understanding was that Ravi would buy the chocolate from the money that Ashok had given him by saving on the bus fares back home; he had been walking back from the bus stop everyday for the past few weeks to awaken Lady Luck and make her shine on him. And he held the coupon which came as a part of a jam bottle. The shopkeeper had commented that Ashok had a face which has the capability to invite Lady Luck to be by his side. The coupon that he was currently holding was valid for another week and he needed four numbers tallying with the numbers on the white wrappers of ‘Snow White’ chocolates to claim the prize money of Rs. 20,000.

“The number is 7,” says Ravi excitedly as he reveals the white wrapper to Ashok.

“It’s 7 here as well! But can you not make such a big deal by advertising the chocolate here? What will the girls think when they know that I’m digging into ‘Snow White’ chocolates every day?” asks Ashok.

“When you win the prize money, they will make up your fan following,” says Ravi with a twinkle in his eye. He continues, “What are you going to do with the money?”

“I’m three numbers away, Ravi,” says Ashok in a cautious tone.

“Yes, but still tell me,” urges Ravi.

“I can use it to study further to become a lawyer and fulfil the dreams of my parents,” says Ashok with a forlorn look in his eyes.

“That’s the plan?” asks Ravi in a dismissive manner.

“It may not seem important to you, but I want to see my parents happy,” stresses Ashok looking at Ravi who is now busy devouring the chocolate oblivious to the emotional state of mind that his friend is in.

“Excellent chocolate!” says Ravi licking the wrapper.

“Can you be a little discreet?” asks Ashok nodding his head in disapproval.

Ravi lets out a little giggle and says, “Yes, Mr. Lawyer!” and they walk out of the canteen.

The afternoon heat the next day is excruciating as most of the students at the canteen are holding bottles of cold drinks and sipping away at a rate fast enough for the canteen owner to order Chotu to pull out another crate from the attic to be able to cool it in the fridge.

“Mother is ill, so I must go home early today,” says Ashok.

“Chotu, get a bottle of Thums Up for our lawyer saab here,” says Ravi summoning the canteen boy who hurries to obey the orders.

“I have no time to sit down and gossip, so what’s the number?” asks Ashok stomping his feet in impatience.

“Lawyers have to learn patience, my friend. Cases can drag on for years,” giggles Ravi. “Sit down and we’ll share the surprise together and he starts to unwrap their hopes; the chocolate.

“Number 9 for you,” says Ravi and puts the white wrapper on the table.

The tea arrives and between sips Ashok brings his lottery ticket close to his eyes and says, “Yes, its 9 here as well!”

The pact was that Ashok would reveal the coupon to his friend only on the last day as his superstition had it that lady Luck does not like to reveal herself in the fear of being doubted at; so he might just displease her.

“I’ll have to rush home, see you tomorrow here at lunch time. I will be taking mother to the doctor in the morning. Don’t forget to bring the chocolate!” says Ashok rushing out of the canteen.

Now Ravi is left by himself to munch on the chocolate in the manner he deems fit without being commented upon. The canteen slowly starts overflowing with the girls rehearsing for the college play to be held the following week. With no one to reprimand his childish behaviour, Ravi asks for another Thums Up and lets his eyes pan the entire canteen; from the entrance to the dark corner facing him and from the payment counter to the girls sitting in the middle of the canteen and giggling loudly. Ravi pulls up his collar aping his favourite movie star and starts walking towards the girls’ tables to make an impression.

The next day brings Ashok to the canteen with the wrinkles on his forehead manifesting the muddle in his head.

“How’s aunty?” asks Ravi sitting at their usual place at the canteen.

“The doctor says it could be hypertension. She is worried about getting didi married,” replies Ashok sounding concerned.

“Don’t worry, let’s see if Lady Luck is on your side today as well,” urges Ravi and starts unwrapping the chocolate.

“Number 8 for you!” says Ravi excitedly.

“Wow! 8 here as well,” says Ashok unable to contain his excitement.

“Just one number to go. Why don’t you tell me what it is? I’m curious and can’t wait till tomorrow,” tells Ravi trying to get a peek at the lottery ticket.

“Don’t its inauspicious,” says Ashok scolding Ravi who is already laughing loudly.

But his mind is set on knowing what Ashok’s fate reveals. And when the mind is faced with stubbornness, it turns into a resolve to defeat the purpose it is against. “Look who’s there? Hello Prof. Sharma!” says Ravi and stands up from his chair to mark his respect for the oldest Professor of Economics in the college who also was revered by Ashok. The moment Ashok hears the Professor’s name; he stands and looks behind him with his hands crossed behind his back. Ravi jumps at this opportunity and gets closer to the coupon in Ashok’s hand and gets a glance at the last number and then sits back calmly in his chair.

“Where is Prof. Sharma?” he turns around and asks Ravi asks rather irritated.

“He was here a moment back. Sorry you didn’t see him! But don’t worry, we will be in his class shortly,” says Ravi with a straight face like nothing happened in last few seconds.

“Hmmm….” mutters Ashok, his mind still on his mother’s health.

They leave letting Lady Luck decide the course of action for the next day. Ashok is convinced that it will be his moment of glory as he has entrusted his hopes on his destiny that he is sure of and spends the night sleeping like a baby. Ravi on the other hand is restless with knowing he tricked Ashok and peeked at his destiny. Will Lady Luck be angry with them? Will she shine on Ashok?

The bright morning seems different to Ravi as Ashok is one number away from the truth and he knows that he is looking at the last chocolate he would buy for Ashok. Temptations sweep him as he is fiddling with the chocolate in his hands. “Should I get a peek?” he mutters and then decides to ignore the impulsive side of his mind. He heads to college and sits through the lectures with his mind only on the outcome of their adventure which is to shape their destiny. “His destiny!” Ravi corrects his mind. He scans the classroom scouting for Ashok who is nowhere in sight.

The hours go by and Ravi gets impatient and pulls out the chocolate from his pocket. He heads towards the canteen and his surroundings seem different to him. Maybe it’s his mind playing tricks on him; the ambient noise seems to dull around him. It falls silent and his mind seems to be talking to him. He hears it carefully and his hand again fiddles with the chocolate. “Should I or shouldn’t I?” he asks silently. He could and pretend like nothing happened. He was an aspiring actor anyway, so Ashok wouldn’t suspect him. Slowly the crowd at the canteen starts to thin down as the lunch hour is almost over. “Where are you?” he mutters and taps his fingers on the table with his eyes fixed on the chocolate.

And then after a good contemplation of an hour or so, he sees Ashok enter the canteen with a sombre look on his face and Ravi doesn’t say anything. He hands him the white wrapper of luck and truth. Ashok’s face falls. “6? And I wanted a 0. Is that all my luck?” says Ashok and gives the coupon to Ravi. “Now you can see it! Lady Luck can’t be angry with me anymore.”

Weeks roll by and Ashok’s appearance at college becomes a rarity; not that Ravi misses him.

The tubes that are running back and forth from his mother paint a gory picture of the situation. The nurses are running in and out of the room and the doctor is putting down his observations on his writing pad.

“Well, I got here as soon as I could. How’s aunty?” asks Ravi.

“She’s going to need an operation to remove the clot from her brain. I needed the money, Ravi. I needed that money,” cries Ashok.

Ravi comes out of the hospital and sits by the side walk with his head low and shoulders drooping. He searches his pocket and finds the keys to his guilt; the keys to his new, red car deflecting sunlight off its roof top, standing proudly next to him. He drops the keys on the hard cobbled pavement and along with it, two white wrappers with the number 6 which he had deceived Ashok with and the other one with his lucky number 0 on it which blinded him into an illusionary world.

**END**

**31. Title :** [I Ask For Just One Thing](http://yourstoryclub.com/short-stories-love/hilarious-love-short-story-just-one-thing/)

Category : Funny Short Stories

**Story :** My God, she is stunning. This woman is beyond movie star beautiful, she is class and hotness, elegance & nastiness. She has a thick Ukrainian accent and wears tight fitting clothes. She is the perfect woman.

“I just want her to love me forever,” Stanley thought. “And I would want nothing more out of life.” Stanley is a nerd’s nerd. Wimpy and droll. Everyone assumes he is a genius. Maybe it’s the glasses and his almost lustful love of technology. But Stanley is not a genius. He has a good job as a computer programer, sure, but anyone can learn that stuff. He knows it and occasionally thinks that if he applied himself more he could do something great. But Stanley didn’t want to do much of anything, great or otherwise. He certainly didn’t want to spend time with others. Stanley despises others.

Although Stanley knows he is no genius, he thinks everyone else he meets are complete and utter idiots. He “manages” others well enough. He gets along fine with his boss and he calls his mother every evening around supper time to wish her a “Bon appetit.” But he does this last bit only because he feels that his mother will die soon and possibly leave him some money.

Stanley keeps his one bedroom apartment in Glendale Terrace neat and tidy.  Aside from his work and his mom, Stanley has very little else in his life. He keeps to himself mostly and enjoys watching “his shows.” He watches Hot in Cleveland and reruns of Golden Girls. Stanley gets along very well with people who stay safely behind the television screen. He especially finds people in situational comedies to be quite enjoyable. He likes feisty women. At least he thinks he does. The only women he ever gets close to are the ones on the TV. Except for Anna.

Anna arrived to the Glendale Terrace apartment complex, from the Ukraine, 8 months and 5 days ago. Stanley keeps track of it on his Norman Rockwell wall calendar. It was a free gift from the time he bought a years worth of copier paper from Staples. Stanley doesn’t like the idea of ever running out of things. He shops at Costco and Price Club and anywhere else where you have to be a member and buy 35 rolls of toilet paper at once. It makes him feel prepared, safe. Anna makes him feel… warm and sweaty. No other real life person has ever made him feel these things before.

At first Stanley thought Anna might be one of those Russian mail order brides he saw in an episode of Dateline, but no men ever come around. She does leave the apartment, but never late at night and she hardly ever speaks on the phone to anyone. She always smiles at Stanley. She even spoke to him once.

“And what are you called?” she cooed. Stanley nearly wet himself, but managed to find the words… “I am called Stanley.”

“It is my pleasure, Stanley.” Anna held out her hand for Stanley to shake.

He’s not sure where it came from but suddenly Stanley had the urge to take her hand and do the unthinkable! He smelled it. Anna didn’t seem upset at all by his sniffing. She giggled, gracefully retrieved her hand and walked away. Stanley was mortified. He had meant to kiss her hand, gallantly, like he watched Clark Cable do on the old black and whites on Turner Classics. But, he somehow forgot the entire kissing bit and while his nose was pressed up against her hand, his inclination was to … sniff.

Damn, she smelled good. Like vanilla and peaches and cloves. He really wanted to lick her hand. Good thing she pulled it away before that impulse took over.

“I just want her to love me forever,” Stanley prayed to whomever was listening as he lay in bed that night. He didn’t dislike his life as much as he knew it could be better. Much better. If only he had one thing – love. To be clear, Stanley wanted to be loved, not necessarily do the loving. Stanley thought loving someone would be too much work and could get tedious. Although he did want to be on the receiving end of it. Specifically, he wanted Anna, the Russian Goddess across the hall. “Then, and only then, will my life be complete.”

The next day, while walking to work, Stanley sipped on his Earl Grey tea from his travel mug. The mug was a free gift from The Circle K from that time he decided to buy every pack of chewing gum in the store. In case he decided to take up the habit of chewing gum.

As he walked his usual route to the office, he passed a little shop and noticed the sign above “Zelda’s Psychic Reading & Wish Granting.”  Stanley has walked this way to work for the past six years and wonders to himself why he never noticed this sign before. As soon as he thinks that thought, a chubby Israeli lady opens the front door and yells in a thick Israeli accent, “We only notice what we are ready to notice.”

“Excuse me,” Stanley says, looking around, not sure who this lady is speaking to.

“YOU! I’m speaking to you. Come in Stanley, I don’t have all day.”  The lady turns back into her home and shuts the door. Stanley is frozen.

Stanley stays on the sidewalk for a good five or so minutes. By the time he takes another sip of his Earl Grey tea, it’s cold. Still, Stanley was never one for rushing things. He knows better than to go inside a stranger’s home. This woman is for sure a Gypsy. He saw a segment on 20/20 about gypsies. They lead you in with a $10 tarot card reading, by the time you leave, you have paid $200 for a spell to break a horrible jinx they have convinced you was placed on you and your entire family. It’s a bait and switch. It’s a scam. It’s bad, evil, mumbo jumbo and Stanley may not be a genius but he’s not falling for it.

But, how did she know my name?

Stanley puts his travel mug down near the front door. He places his hand on the doorknob and slowly, very slowly, gently pushes it open.

“Come in already! The door is not going to bite you! Push the damn thing open!” the lady commands.

Stanley looks around the place and is disappointed. It looks like a normal home. There are no gargoyle statues or witchy type artifacts, no candle’s burning, no tarot cards, not even a crystal ball! What sort of gypsy was this anyway?

“I am no gypsy! Sit your ass down and tell me what you want.” the lady instructs.

Stanley sits. “Who are you? How do you know my name?” he asks with a hint of fear in his voice.

“What’s the matter, you can’t read? I’m Zelda, like the sign says. I know you’re name, because I am psychic, also like the sign says. Now, give my your hand.”

Stanley hands over his hand. Zelda closes her eyes. She speaks softly, “Once in a life, if you are very lucky, you will ask for a wish, from the bottom of your heart, with all of your might, and in that exact moment, if all the planets are aligned and it is very silent, and if you are ready to receive, your wish is heard and granted. You, Stanley, are very, very lucky.”

“I am?” Stanley asked, surprised.

“And since you won’t tell me, I will tell you – you want this woman, Anna, to love you forever, yes?” Zelda asked.

“Yes, that’s true. That is what I want.”

Zelda studied him a bit longer. “What if I told you that this Anna is destined to meet someone else? Someone she will be very happy with. The man of her dreams….”

Stanley interrupts Zelda, “That’s me, I can be that, the man of her dreams.”

“Silence!” Zelda demanded. She continued. “Anna is supposed to meet a wonderful man, not you, someone who will fulfill all of her hopes and dreams. A man who will love her deeply, unconditionally. Anna has had a very difficult life, she has remained positive and hopeful throughout, she deserves true love, no?”

“NO!” Stanley demands, crashing his fist down on the table.

Zelda takes a moment to consider Stanley. She continues,  
“What I am about to ask you, Stanley, is very important.”

“Okay, so ask.”

“Are you ready?” Zelda challenged.

“Yes, I am ready.” Stanley says impatiently.

“Are you prepared to have your wish granted, even if that means that Anna will be deprived of what is best for her life?”

Stanley didn’t need to think long. He had always heard that true love is when you want the best for the other person, but Stanley didn’t love anyone so that takes care of that. After all, he had only exchanged a few words, and a sniff, with Anna. Still, he was sure of one thing… he wanted Anna. For himself. And he wanted her to love him forever, regardless if it was what was best for her. This is his wish and he will not be talked out of it!

“Yes, I am sure.” Stanley replied, getting a little bored with this Zelda person.

“Very well.” Zelda closed her eyes once more and smacked the top of Stanley’s head. Hard.

“Ouch, what was that for?” Stanley asked has he massaged his head.

“Done. Your wish will be granted this evening. That will be twenty bucks. Thank you and good luck.” Zelda gets up to smoke a cigarette. Stanley puts a $20 bill on the table and asks, “But, what do I do?”

In between puffs Zelda instructed, “Just go to her, knock on her door. You won’t need to say anything. She will fall in love with immediately, just like you want. Now, shut the door behind you, I don’t want flies to get in.”

Stanley could barely concentrate at work. He thought, if Zelda was not a gypsy but an actual, true wish granter that his life will never be the same again. He will have his meals prepared for him, his shoes shined, sex whenever he wanted with a ridiculously sexy woman. How can this be possible? And for only twenty dollars? But Zelda did not say he had a curse and she did not tell him to buy anything else or to come back in a week or anything like that, so… maybe this really is happening!

Stanley ran all the way home.

As he got dressed that evening, he made a point to pick out his best white button down, his favorite striped tie, which was a gift rom Marshall’s from the time he bought 25 packs of white t-shirts because they had just the right combo of cotton and polyester.

He thought about how he knew nothing about this Anna woman and soon they will be together. How exciting. Of course, the more Stanley thought about it, the less interested he was in learning all about her, he wanted to observe her, the way he did with the women on TV. He wanted her to love him in every way possible, yes, he absolutely wanted that but he didn’t want to have to do much in return. He wanted to go about his life, as usual, with merely the addition of a beautiful, classy, smoking hot woman to love him. Will he love her? He doubted it. No matter, this wasn’t about her, this was his wish, his rules.

I hope she doesn’t talk too much, Stanley worried.

As he stood outside of Anna’s door he reminded himself that he doesn’t need to say anything. Anna will instantly love him. Good. He loves the idea of not having to do anything from the get go. He was ready. Stanley knocked on the door and waited.

Anna, looking ravishing in her transparent cream colored nightgown, opened the door.

“Hello?” she said.

Anna looks around. She sees no one.

“Hello?” Anna looks around again, still seeing no one, she is about to shut the door when she notices something on the ground.

Looking up at her with the biggest, most beautiful eyes is the cutest Maltese puppy Anna has ever seen! “Oh, look at you. Are you lost?”

Anna picks up the puppy and cradles it. She looks around and sees that she is indeed alone with the puppy. “Are you a gift? Oh, you are so cute!”

The puppy licks Anna’s hand.

It tastes like vanilla and peaches and cloves.

“Okay, sweetie-pie, you come with me. Don’t worry,” Anna says as she shuts the door behind her, “I am going to love you forever.”

\_\_END\_\_

**32. Title :** [Howrah Rajdhani](http://yourstoryclub.com/short-stories-funny/howrah-rajdhani-story-of-indian-characteristics/)

## Category : Funny Short Stories

**Story :** I, as *middleclass* Indian, am blessed with many typical “Indian” characteristics. (No hard feeling bro – my other Indian brothers and sisters – if you do not agree, I fully agree to that. But being an Indian, I have right to classify my own atypical characteristics as “Indian”).

My first characteristic is “be cautious”. I confirm everything at least 3-4 times whatsoever the case to be. Let a simple case of locking the main door when I, with family, started for a trip (to attend a family function as we *middleclass* “rarely” waste our valuable earnings for exotic vacations), leaving our “so called” valuables in “soon to be temporarily deserted” house on mercy of a 7 lever *“Goddrej”* lock. Firstly I pulled the poor rusted lock multiple times after locking the door to stress test reliability of the lock, then looked back just after taking four-five steps before lock goes out of our sight to again cross verify whether lock was still there, and the most irritating one – was asked again by wife in auto-rickshaw when nearing railway station, “did you lock the door properly.”

Until we reached railway station, everyone tried utmost effort to badly entangle my cautious mind further with layers of confusion, “have you taken the tickets”… “Did you switch off fans and lights”… “Papa, did you inform my class teacher”… “Count the bags… it must be seven including two children (Five bags are minimum count of bags we travel with – light journey is always better – two suitcases, one big bag as eatery – even in Rajdhani Express in which Railway ministry provides food and beverages – not free – price included in tickets, one bag for both kids – they are still small, and one with all remaining valuables the purse of the lady of house)”…

My cautious characteristic was still dominating when we reached Mughalsarai railway station at 11:45 PM – total one hour fifteen minutes before schedule departure of Howrah Rajdhani Express. But it was totally acceptable – better early than never. I was busy in counting our bags and kids while taking help of coolie to carry our luggage to board in our reserved 3-tire AC compartment. Suddenly I could clearly see my second characteristic, doubt everyone, started going hand-to-hand with the first one.  I took out the ticket to verify train number and timing, and kept doubting knowledge of coolie who, as per generally accepted Indian principles, seemingly knows more than the sophisticated computer system and the *babus*sitting at Enquiry Window. I looked at every computerized and manual display, demonstrating my cognizance to my wife and kids, and finally declared when the coolie turned to step down on platform number three, “On Platform number Three at 1:00 Hrs.”

Train arrived at right time (until now I had not paid to coolie – my second characteristics. You never know these coolies, they will disappear once they get money, leaving you helpless on the crowded platform with seven big bags including two sleeping children). We pushed everyone to locate (to be precise, “capture”) our already reserved births. Third characteristic woke up in late midnight – “always be in hurry”. The train was still standing. (I already checked with many co-passengers – it was Howrah Rajdhani. My brother-in-law had warned me that there would be many Rajdhanis going at the same time.) Within less than three minutes, we locked our bags with railways chain, brought bedsheets and blankets after a small fight with coach attendant who was asking us to wait for few minutes, changed our clothes — including those of our already sleeping children — to sleeping dress, and lied down on our births covering us with Indian Railways’ typical blankets.

Suddenly a *“pehalwaan”* (wrestler) looking person with his wife and ten big bags including two children entered in our section and shouted, “This is my birth, get down”. I was intimidated by his physique and voice but sill gave him free suggestion (my fourth characteristic) in imperceptibly protesting voice, “*Bhai sahib* (respected brother), it is my seat… please check your ticket again… many Rajdhanis go at this time… my brother-in-law told me already… it is Howrah Rajdhani…” I could not complete… he dragged me down from my upper seat. My wife could not protect me from falling… all four kids were fully awake and frightened (to be honest… not more than I was) and started crying loudly in chorus.

Suddenly God sent my savior (ticket checker). He checked our tickets and addressed to me, vindicating the *pehalwaan* looking person,

“Sir, your ticket was for yesterday’s Howrah Rajdhani – see November 3, 1:00 AM”

I put forth my argument (my fifth characteristic), “Today is November 3”

“No… after midnight date changed… it is November 4… 1:00 AM. Now train may start anytime… please get down quickly… hurry up!!!”

This was no problem… my already awaken third characteristic – “always be in hurry” – first time in my life helped me to get down with my light luggage and also with family safely. Train was almost running when I jumped out of it…

My wife, “I told you many times, check the tickets… check the tickets… but you never listened… ”

But I was busy in counting my luggage, “…5, 6, uhhhh… the purse 7… Complete!!! – thank god”

\_\_END\_\_

**33. Title :** [**God Runs for Safety!!!**](http://yourstoryclub.com/short-stories-funny/hilarious-short-story-god-runs-for-safety/)

## Category : Funny Short Stories

**Story :** “Ah! Where would he have gone!?” they asked each other, aghast.

“Where could he be now!?” they seemed to have lost their nerve.

“Might he have returned heavenwards!?” they wondered, perplexed.

“Would that we too had wings to reach for him!” they wished.

Meanwhile, very far away from this place, he was trembling with fear. He had hid himself in the clumps of shrubs. Unclothed; so terrified that he would flit on the stirring of a leaf. Blood oozed out from his multiple wounds. Fright had engulfed him.

Alas! Life is nothing more than a tragedy! Mere pain, it is! Suffering is its process!

No doubt, the fear of death served a purpose to life. And that was the reason, perhaps, he adored God.

In fact, it was no issue, but this very ‘no issue’ quickly snowballed into such an issue that now all other issues became pointless save this issue.

It began like the ringing of a mighty bell that shook everyone there, when people suspected he was god. He cried, ‘I’m not god’. But no one believed him.

Poor fellow! He stepped out from his cottage just for the purchase of a little salt, but a peculiar thought sprang to his mind while walking towards the market. “May what I say, come to be!” he said to himself. There was none there to share his wish. But a mysterious unseen voice whispered in his ear, “Gentle man! Your wish has been approved, but not for your own person, I’m afraid”. He was stunned. He looked all around, but found no one from any side. “Who’s that!? Who spoke it!?” He gathered nothing and continued forward.

While putting his hand into his pocket to find payment for the grocer, he discovered it empty. He became nervous. He felt the ground slipping from under his feet. He perspired profusely. His pocket hadn’t been picked; he recollected that he actually had spent his pennies on cigarettes the preceding night. Poor memory, sometimes, renders a man disgraced. He began searching his pockets, just to excite the grocer and make him inquire what the matter was. And the grocer did so.

“What happened?” asked the grocer.

“God knows where I lost them!” He deflected the grocer’s question.

“Did you lose your money?” The grocer enquired.

“I’m at a loss to understand whether it vanished into thin air!?” He played craftily; because he knew well where the money was spent.

“Don’t worry, pay it next day”, the grocer consoled. A recent lecture of a local preacher came to his mind, in which the preacher had stressed to help the needy.

The grocer’s consolation gave him comfort, or else his heart was in his mouth. Although he was at ease now, still his evil instincts made him play crafty. This very instinct disgraced Satan and he was thrown out of heaven for it. “But Sir, what puzzles me is where the money has gone!” He was, of course, lying. He surely knew where the pennies had gone.

“Feel at ease now, as I tell you to pay me back tomorrow”, the grocer repeated his word. But this time it lacked warmth. He was now apprehensive that the man might lay his hands on more items for credit. ‘What a pity! I take pity on someone, and he creates a nuisance’, thought the grocer.

While leaving the grocer’s shop, he gave him a blessing: “let your rock salt turn to gold!”

The grocer thudded onto the road outside of his shop, as if someone kicked him forcefully. All his rock salt had turned to gold. Other shopkeepers and passersby ran towards him to help and asked, “What happened!?” The grocer pointed towards the man and faltered, “go…ddd. He is god!” He fainted.

“god!!!!!!!!!!!” the crowd there cried. Then all their wishes stirred at once inside them. “It will be foolish to let this opportunity slip!” everyone there thought.

A big crowd surrounded the man. One and all were impatient. Each person wanted to be heard first by him. “O god! Grant me audience first!” each person was visibly eager. The ring of people tightened; they jostled each other to get closer to the man. He was squeezed into the crowd. He found it difficult to breathe. He was drenched in sweat. “Thirst…. Thirst…!” His voice choked. He was asking for water. He began panting with raging thirst. But, no one listened in the noise. They were making a hell of a racket there. They were imploring and soliciting his blessings to gain their wishes. He wept. Tears rolled down from his cheeks. The beseeching intensified. They clung to him. People lost their sanity. In that madness people trampled each other. Husband walked over his wife and wife pounded her spouse. Siblings were out of their minds and stepped on each other. All souls acted desperately and everyone lost sight of their own wishes. Each body was blood-stained and their dresses tattered. Their bruised bodies and ragged dresses had brought visible similarity on their appearances; and now they were not recognizing even each other. They had lost their identity. During this struggle, a button off the man came to the hand of someone in the crowd, and he cried: “I got a gift from God!” As soon as other people heard it, the scrambling increased. In this mutual bid to grab something for themselves, the clothes of the man, pulled in all directions by solicitous people, were soon in shreds. Even his hair was pulled from the roots and they rendered him bald. His underwear too was pulled as a token of gift.

And in this tumultuous situation, when they behaved rashly, he escaped and ran for safety!

\_\_END\_\_

**34. Title :** [**Doctor Sahib**](http://yourstoryclub.com/short-stories-social-moral/hilarious-story-doctor-sahib/)

## Category : Funny Short Stories

**Story : 4th June 7.32 am**

“I wake up early in the morning sir, then like every day, I went for my first morning duty…for two number (showing his two fingers, a common Indian hand sign symbolizing defecation) around 7 in the morning…in the farm. I sat there in the bush with my *lota ,*it’s along bush sir, so nobody can see. And then as soon as I sat, I took a deep breath taking Bajrang Bali’s name and within two minutes sir, my stomach got totally cleared..!!” with a smile “Thanks to you doctor..” and he shook hands with me eagerly.

It was a common practice among the villagers. They placed a doctor and God on the same pedestal, blamed them when things went wrong and worshipped them when something went right, and this gentleman, had come to me two days back with symptoms of constipation. I guessed my prescription had worked.

“But sir, when I started washing, after one…no actually after two swipes, I felt something in my hand, something soft…” I immediately regretted shaking hands with him, while he continued in his antsy style “…. when I turned back to look, I saw it was this dead man’s hand….”

Sister Tiwari, the oldest and the most experienced nurse of our hospital, who was till now eagerly listening to this narration, in desperation, asked “and then?”

“Then what..! I threw away my *lota,* tucked in my dhoti..and…”

I was by now getting frustrated with this useless explanation. This person had brought in the dead body, dragging it all the way on a blue tarpaulin sheet. My simple question to him was, where had he found the corpse? On top of that, the sister’s eagerness was making me further impatient.

So I looked at her with wide eyes, and tauntingly said “And then, they both shook hands…you got it?”

She took my hint and quietly disappeared into the examination room.

Getting back to some serious work, I walked to the corpse who had been moved onto a stretcher by now. He was an old guy, in his seventies, I guessed. The numerous wrinkles that ran into each other on his pale face suggested the same. He was dressed in the typical transparent white *kurta* and *dhoti*. I moved to feel for the absence of pulse over his wrist, but when I recollected the person’s dirty narration, and also for the fact that I wasn’t wearing any gloves, I moved my fingers to his neck. After checking for a few seconds, as expected, there was no pulse. Further I checked for the second sign, the pupil, even they didn’t respond to the flash of light and were permanently dilated. There were no injury marks on his body, nor there were any obvious signs of poisoning, it was almost safe to say that it had been a natural death.

While examining the body, I asked “So, then you brought him directly here…by the way, do you know him?”

He replied, “Yes sir, he is Bhola *chacha*. I have informed his son, he is coming here.”

And the very next moment, a huge looking guy dashed into the examination room with other three smaller fellows trundling behind him.

“Where is my father?” he demanded.

He was the dead man’s son. On seeing his father lying on the stretcher, he started crying like a small child and then suddenly turned to me “What has happened to him doctor *saab*?”

Now came the difficult job for me, but I had to do it. Somehow I gathered some courage and trying to hide my fear, kept a hand on his shoulder and carefully weighing my tone, I said “He ….is dead.”

Expectedly, all hell had broken loose “What!!! How did this happen? How could he just..You do something, doctor, please….”

The only thing I could really do at that moment was issuing a death certificate, but I kept mum. Angering the villagers was not good for the health of the hospital. And this was no time for sarcastic jokes and by now I had begun sweating heavily, my arms were hurting in the tight grip of this big man. Finally, the guy who had delivered the corpse interrupted. “Brother, uncle was dead in the farm, I brought him here.”

He proved to be my savior. Listening to him, the hefty guy once again broke into tears and started shouting “Oh God, you should have taken me up…..why my *baapu*..?”

I almost smiled at this stupid question. But then looking at the other three villagers quietly watching the scene like stooges, I put up a serious face and patted his shoulders, “Such are His ways”, I said.

Everybody tuned their heads to look outside as we heard a shrill cry. It was an old woman, wailing, she was at least 100 meters away from the hospital and a group of curious on lookers was following her from a safe distance, “Arey….Bhima’s father, why did you do this unfairness to me..?”

She was surely the dead man’s wife, only a wife cannot stop blaming a man, even after he is dead.

As soon as she reached her husband, she started crying heavily, beating on his chest, in a typical Indian womanish way, making it look as if she was giving some kind of cardiopulmonary resuscitation, that too to a dead person. It was amazing how much strength this frail old woman had. The beats were so hard that the stiff corpse shook each time she thumped. For a moment, I thought, the dead man would get up and shout, “Stop it woman. Let me rest in peace.”

Finally, after a long drama, some of the nurses and the dead man’s relatives calmed down the old woman who was reluctant to leave the side of her dead husband. I felt a pang of sadness. Just then, the hefty guy came to me and asked for the Death Certificate.

Usually, my practice would be to tell the relatives to go to the district hospital for getting the death certificate, as the post mortem was done only there. Most of the times the relatives would find it too difficult to travel till district hospital and get a post mortem done, and invariably I would end up accepting some bribe, in exchange for the death certificate without the post mortem, declaring it a natural death.

But this time, I was in no mood for a referral, and also the death seemed to be a natural one, so I quickly handed them the certificate, after getting an ECG done from the private clinic in the village. Taking that, they moved the body out of the hospital in what was a sad procession. Even my nurses got involved and stood by the door, dabbing the corners of their eyes with handkerchiefs as they watched the procession go out of sight.

Such was the start of my day, in the Primary Health Centre, Katoriya village in the Banka district of Bihar.

Banka district has been famous for its people, their braveness, and that is probably the reason I encounter many injured patients every other day. But it wasn’t their fault, as the name ‘Banka’ itself means brave, so when a child is born, he is brainwashed in his growing years by the parents and mostly the remnants of the society to be brave, many a times unnecessarily.

I had been in Katoriya, since 2 months, working as a Medical Officer, after completing my MBBS from Darbhanga Medical College in Laheriasarai, Bihar. I had joined here because I had to support my family, and also partly because it was getting difficult for me to crack the post-graduate course entrance exams.

It was 8.45 in the clock, the commotion of early morning had all but subsided, leaving the nurses free for gossiping about it for the rest of the day. I started walking out of the hospital to my room. I had to get ready for the morning OPD which usually started at 9:50-10 am, though sometimes after 10:30 am. That was because sometimes the peon failed to wake me up. My sleep had quickly become immune to the sound of the doorbell and the poor guy had to find new ways to wake me up. Mostly he would try to poke me with a stick through the window near my bed. That usually worked.

My room was the third in the row and I had to walk by Sister Mishra and Pharmacist Chandi’s rooms to get there.

When I was passing by the sister’s room, she was hanging her washed clothes on the rope tied outside her room for drying. She was a 25 year old, fair, north Indian beauty. The most beautiful face you could find within a 50 km radius around the hospital, the hot blooded guys from the surrounding villages didn’t mind inflicting a few bruises on themselves just to have a look at her.

I saw her putting her inner garments over the rope, but as soon as she saw me coming, she hid those by a pulling the adjacent sari over it, but it was a silky, semi-transparent sari and didn’t serve any purpose, which she noticed and further placed a thick bed sheet over it. I chuckled, wondering how those clothes would dry in time. It was an embarrassing moment for her, and she did what most beautiful girls do. She gave me a killer smile and blabbered something, “Good morning sir… it was drizzling in the morning.”

I had always been a sarcastic kind of guy in college and never gave anyone straight answers, and that habit had persisted here too.

“Oh really! I didn’t know, I was on moon in the morning.” I replied.

Sister Mishra, in her complaining girly (luring) tone said “What sir, you always make fun of me.”

Her smile and her *nakhras* had already cast their spell on me and now I had to apologize, “Ok *baba*, I am sorry, I will try to contain my words next time.” The words automatically came out of my mouth.

Watching all this from the adjacent room, with a wicked smile, was the Pharmacist Chandi Prajapati, a short-statured 42 year old man, in his customary striped, off-white shirt and a black pant which rose up to his umbilicus, and fell a few inches short off his ankle, with a black belt supporting it. His surname perfectly depicted his pervert character, ‘Prajapati’ which meant ‘husband of the pupil’.

When I waved to him, he replied by waving to me with a smile, showing his reddish-black, stained teeth, a result of many years of betel nut chewing.

Wasting no time, I moved to my room, quickly had bath, dressed in formals and I reached my cabin by 10 am to tackle the morning’s OPD patients.

They were mostly the same old cases everyday with the exception of a few whom I would refer to the higher centre. Most of them had the problem of GBA i.e. general body ache, weakness, fever or occasionally loose motions and the only remedy they would insist me to give was the magic injection. Half of their ailments would get cured just by pricking them. The general Indian rural folk are more or less infatuated with injections and are always more than willing to expose their butts for a prick or two, as if it were some pious deed and it would absolve them of all their ailments. It is the same situation with i.v.’s.

When I was new to this place, I wouldn’t administer an injection, until it seemed absolutely necessary. But then the patients would invariably come back and stand before me, begging for an injection. I was fed up of this habit of the villagers but could do nothing as I knew that somewhere down the line it was surely the fault of some injection wielding doctors who had instilled this belief among the easily convinced villagers. I once thought of inventing some injection vending machine where a person could press the ailment button and stand touching their buttocks to a place from where a needle would come and pierce their flesh.

Some patients were the real actors. One such was an old lady, who I saw(heard) was arguing in full swing with the peon over some issue, but as soon as she entered my cabin,  her backbone bent over almost twice as it was earlier, bending showing the weakness, and making constipated faces. And then, as I expected, the next sentence would be “Doctor, I…am feeling tooooo weak, please put some saline in me, and yes, please give some good tonic and yes an ointment too, these days joints are paining a lot, and yes, please give one injection….there’s no one of this lady in this world, *beta*.”

I would think it a waste of time arguing with such aunties, so I would silently prescribe them something.

But, I broke my silence when she came back and requested for the last thing…the eye drops, to keep at home for emergency.

“Yes aunty, I will do one thing, I will prescribe this whole hospital to you, take the whole hospital with you and go.”

She would then move out quietly, but as soon as she stepped out, she would start talking loudly “What type of doctor is he? Is this the way you talk to an old woman. He is not right.”

By now, I am used to such behavior, so I hardly respond.

Just like there comes a Sunday after every six dreary days of the week; after watching so many uninteresting patients, comes the moment when someone enters the cabin who brightens up the dull proceedings, an eye soother, a beautiful girl, the best among the available lot and a patient too. This time, it was Rachna, a local girl.

As soon as she sat on the chair and handed me her case paper, the first thing I did was to memorize her name, age and her village, for further reference. And then, with a smile on my face, as if I am the jolliest kind of person in this world, I asked, “So, what happened to you?” My voice showed a sense of surprise and concern at the same time.

Even she was interested in me as I was a doctor. She said, “Actually *na*, some five days back, I think on Sunday, I was feeling feverish, with chills, then I went to the private doctor in the village. He gave me some medicines, after having that my fever would subside, but just for some hours, after which I would feel the same again. And now, I am having vomiting and headache too…”

After listening to the symptoms, I started with examination. To start with, I asked for her right hand, to which she shifted her small handkerchief from right to left hand, and shyly kept her hand in my hand. I held her soft fair hand and felt for the pulse. I was nervous; because even in college I hardly spoke to any girl, so forget about holding hands. I wasn’t able to feel her pulse properly; instead I was feeling my capillary pulse as it was beating faster now as my fingers palpated her wrist. Then I looked over her forehead to check for fever and also for the *kumkum,* to confirm whether she was single or not, and then her deep bluish- black eyes for the pallor. Her vitals were normal, but as per her history, I suspected it to be a case of malaria.

So, I said, “Look Rachna, I think it is a malaria fever…”

She quickly responded “Malaria!! Now sir?”

I smiled to her “Don’t worry, I am here for you…er.. I mean you will be cured, just take the medicines and one injection, and yes, do the blood test too, ok?”

Hearing the word ‘injection’, she got worried “Sir pleassseee…. no injection.” She pleaded so lovingly, I was damned if I gave her an injection now.

“Ok ok, no injection, but the blood test is necessary *haan*.”

Rachna, in her subdued voice “Will it hurt a lot?”

I, smiling again, held her hand, I never left a chance. “No, just a small prick here over the ring finger. Ok for you, I will do it myself, will that be ok, now smile.”

She took the hint in my tone and gave me a shy smile, and moved outside the cabin with me, while I talked to her about her college, her home.

The laboratory was an isolated place in the hospital, the perfect place to be with a fine specimen of the opposite sex. But alas, all I was supposed to do was prick those soft, pink fingers. We both sat in front of each other. Then I took a slide and a lancet to prick her. I held her ring finger and swabbed it with spirit. Holding her finger in one hand and the lancet in the other, how I wished I had an engagement ring instead of lancet in my hand. But then, I knew it could be just in dreams, so accepting the fact, I moved on to do the procedure. After taking her blood for the test, dejectedly I moved to my cabin while she went to collect the medicines from the counter of Chandi. I just prayed God, to save her from Chandi’s talks.

My next patient was an old guy. He said “Sir, two days back..”

I stopped him and shouted “What is happening to you now, tell that, not about two days back. Go ahead…quick, I have patients waiting outside.”

To that, he told that he had GBA, I shook my head, another one. I scribbled a prescription for him, he moved out.

Suddenly, a tall, thin man in light brown colored safari entered the cabin, talking on his mobile with one hand holding an old lady. He was limping; probably he had some abnormality with his leg. He made the old lady sit near me, while he himself pulled a chair and sat in front of me, opposite the table and then ending the conversation, he kept the mobile over the table and said “*Namaskar*, myself Ghanshyam Gupta, brother of Indar Gupta.”

Indar Gupta was the *sarpanch* of Katoriya village, a person full of pride and ego, always thirsty for respect.

– “Oh *namaskar* sir, so why a visit over here today?”

The upper three buttons of his safari suit were open to making two heavy gold chains and a bumper crop of chest hair visible. But, at the same time, a part of the cheap vest full of holes was also visible. Scratching the neck like the famous actor Raj Kumar, he said “Nothing, my mother in law came to my place yesterday. She was feeling weak, so I brought her here to get the saline.”

I proceeded to measure the old lady’s blood pressure, having a chat with Gupta at the same time. And then something totally unexpected happened.

Rachna entered my cabin, probably to say goodbye to me, I thought, as I smiled at her. But watching her, Gupta spoke up,“*Arey* Rachna *beti*, you here? What happened? Come here.”

Rachna came and sat on the chair next to Gupta. I was clueless as to what was going on.

Rachna “Dad, actually nothing much, it’s just a mild fever.” She looked at me as if pleading me not to tell her father that I thought it was Malaria. Not that I was going to, but then came the salvo.

“Ok ok,. Did you meet the uncle and get the medicines” he said pointing towards me.

What a freak.. he just called me UNCLE!!  The hairy bastard..How could he use that word for me? I was just a 24 year old guy, soon to be 25. Rachna looked up at me and clearly suppressed an urge to smile looking at my face. I wondered, what was going on in her mind for me. It felt as if my entire hard work to impress the girl went in vain.

She just said “Yes dad.” Then she looked at me for half a second and quickly left. How I wished I could kill Gupta.

I was totally dejected and was least interested in examining the old lady further. So I ordered Sister Tiwari to fix her the saline. Everyone moved out of the cabin, but then after some 5 minutes, when the old lady was shifted to the ward, to my surprise, Rachna came walking hastily to my cabin and waved me goodbye, with the beautiful smile. I was still very much there in the game.

**4th June 12.25 am**

It was five minutes to close the case paper counter, when a man came running “Where is the doctor?”

Everyone panicked, even the patients waiting outside. On being directed by the peon Sanki, he directly came inside my cabin and taking heavy breaths, he said “Doctor, I …I …drank acid.”

After hearing that, I was startled. “What!” I quickly directed him to move to the examination room and ordered Sister Tiwari to get the antidote solution.

Suddenly, the patient held my hand, stopping me and said “Doctor, I had drunk the acid two days back, for which I went to the doctor. It’s not the problem now.”

“What! Then what is the problem?” I felt foolish almost.

Patient “Doctor, lets get into the cabin first.”

We both moved in the cabin. He better have a good reason or he was going to have it from me now.

Patient “Sir, actually the problem is that nowadays, I get angry easily and that too on anybody. I can’t control my temper, is that because of that acid?”

I was lost for words. “Huh..!! For this you came here running. And why were shouting for doctor as if it was some emergency?”

Patient “That is the thing sir; I can’t control my temper, my aggression. That is why I am hyperactive always.”

I felt like shouting at him for the scene that he had just created, but then I realized it was going to be like banging my own head against a wall, looking at this well built person and recollecting his temper problem, I calmly explained him to ease out his worry and then gave him some sedatives.

After he moved out, every other patient would ask me “What had happened to the acid patient, how it happened, is he fine now, which village?”

My answer was to give them an angry look; I was in no mood to chat. I quickly finished the rest of the morning OPD and moved to my room to have lunch.

Having done that, I quickly undressed and embraced by bed to catch up on some sleep, keeping the back door open to let some air in. There was no current and thus no fan, but it was not hard to fall asleep as the weather had become nice and cool due to the mild showers that had started this morning, and also the fact that I had woken up early and was quite tired.

The next thing I remember is the voice of this village lady, trying to wake me up

“Doctor sahib…doctor sahib.”

Through hazy vision and lost mind, I woke up from the anesthetic sleep; I wasn’t able to grasp what was happening. I thought I was disoriented for a moment because she was standing in the doorway with her back towards me and she had pulled the *pallu*of her sari over her face as if to hide her identity. But, after a few seconds, I realized that I wasn’t having anything over my body except the boxer short, that was the reason the lady was talking to me while looking at the walls, and I was considering her having a squint eye. I pulled the towel and wrapped to cover my bare half and annoyingly said, “What are you doing here? Can’t you knock the front door?”

She “Doctor *sahib*, I was knocking the door from the last 10 minutes, after which I came here. Sir, my husband has been bit by a scorpion.”

I “Ok ok…you go, I am coming.”

When I reached her husband, sister had already administered him with xylocaine, and he was feeling much better.

I moved to him to check his vitals “So the pain has decreased?”

He “Yes sir.”

I “By the way, what size was the scorpion?”

He proceeded to remove a crumbled handkerchief his pocket, and kept it on the table. I thought for a moment that he was going to make an origami replica of the scorpion to show me the actual size, I laughed at his wit. But, when he opened it, I was shocked to see that he had brought the scorpion with him “What the fish is this!”

“No sir, no fish, this is that scorpion.”

“Why the hell did you bring it here!!?”

“Sir, last time when I was stung by a scorpion, the doctor had asked me a thousand questions as to how long was the scorpion, its color, did I kill it, bury it, and God knows what more, to which I wasn’t able to answer anything properly. So this time, I deliberately brought this fellow with me, so that all your doubts get cleared.”

The heir has to reap the fruits of the deeds of ancestors, someone has said. I had to pay for what the earlier doctor had done.

I hate scorpions.

**4th June 5 pm**

Today, there were fewer patients for the evening OPD, and the one that came were the regular ones; the GBA’s who would come here to get their monthly medicine ration.

But the last one was an entertainer. He was a 67 year old man. Handing over his case paper, he sat on the chair. I was going through his name, when suddenly I heard a hissing sound. I jumped in my seat; snakes were a common sight in this place and I hated the thought of having one in my cabin. I looked around but didn’t notice anything on the floor near my feet, Half my thoughts occupied by that dreaded sound, absent mindedly, I proceeded to ask him,

“What happened?” and as soon as I touched the pen tip over the paper to write his complain there was that hissing noise once again. It was unmistakable, I was sure that there was a snake hiding somewhere in my cabin. I pulled my legs over the seat of the chair and told the patient to do the same.

To that, he looked at me and asked, “What happened doctor *saab*?”

“There is possibly a snake in here. Didn’t you hear the hissing noise?”

I had just completed my question, when I found my animal. It was the patient himself who was making that hissing sound; he seemed to have this habit of pulling his lips over one side of face and making that absurd sound.

I reacted the way I think anyone would have reacted. I shouted at the human reptile “What the…why are you making that noise?”

– “What??”

I repeated the question, to which he repeated the “What?”

I was still shouting at him, when Chandi entered the place “Sir, there is no use in shouting at him, he can’t hear a thing, he is as deaf as a hen.”

I calmed down at once. “Oh.. really?”

Chandi “You want to test him, ask him anything.”

I turned to the old man “What happened?”

He “My joints are paining and back too.”

I turned to Chandi again “Chandi, don’t make fun of the poor fellow, he can hear me properly.”

Chandi “Sir, you just go on with your questions.”

– “Is your joint swollen?”

He nodded to that, signifying a sure yes, while Chandi just signalled me to go on.

– “Fever?”

He again nodded in the same way.

Chandi interrupted “Sir, now let me ask.”

He tapped the old man and assuming a serious expression on his face, said, “Can I marry your daughter?”

Old man nodded.

Chandi continued, making a pitiful face “Isn’t your wife hot?”

The old man copied Chandi’s expressions and said,” It is a real pain *sahab*, please do something about it”

Unable to control my laughter, I tried to cover my face as if trying to suppress a yawn. It was hard not to smile.

Chandi was unstoppable. He held his head and said, “Is world going to end in 2012?”

The old man predicted it to happen.

But after a few seconds, I felt bad for the poor fellow. We were doing wrong, making a fun of a person’s disability. So, I stopped Chandi in his antics, examined the old chap and prescribed him the appropriate medicines, also I wrote him a referral letter to the district hospital, so that he could get himself a free hearing aid from there.

It had been drizzling throughout the afternoon, but now the sky had partly cleared and there was a nice breeze blowing. It was perfect weather for an evening stroll and I was longing to have the *Litti chokhas* and tea at the Ramkhilawan’s *tapri*. My partner, as always was Chandi. Even though he was middle aged, his enthusiasm level of the stout, little fellow was like that of a college boy, and yes, the perversion level too.

We both walked through the muddy road to Ramkhilawan’s *tapri* at the village market. It was quite crowded with people, as Ramkhilawan’s home made *Litti chokhas* were popular with the village folk. *Litti chokha* is a famous Bihari snack, made of groundnuts and mashed potatoes. Ramkhilawan greeted us and quickly cleaned a wooden bench with his *gamcha*, a tattered piece of cloth that he carried over his shoulders all the time. Actually, most north Indian rural folk use a *gamcha*. It’s an all-purpose accessory used as handkerchief, napkin, duster, bandana, carpet and what not depending on the situation, a purely Indian invention.

“Doctor*, have a seat.”*

He then proceeded to order his son, who helped him at the shop, to serve us the snacks and tea.

The small boy served us the delicacy in a paper plate and the hot tea in the mud *kullhad*.

“*Saab*, the weather is just perfect for hot tea and my *Litti’s*always taste better in the rains, you will enjoy them.”

Chandi meanwhile, was making absurd noises while sipping his tea “Really Ramu, this is just sexy..”

Ramkhilawan didn’t understand the word “What? What Chandi *babu*?”

“Tasty…he meant tasty.” I explained in civil words.

‘Sexy’ was Chandi’s favorite adjective and he used it liberally, many a times even before the female staff.

Rejuvenated by the tea, we decided to extend our walk and go to the nearby lake.

By the time we reached there, Chandi was in full flow with his interesting observations of the female staff in the hospital.

“What sir, in the morning, Sister Mishra was giving you the signal, didn’t you get a beep on your radar, my tower was getting full signal..”

– “Chandi enough, she is a sister, I mean a nurse by profession, it even sounds absurd of having an affair with a sister.. or nurse.. or whatever.. Yukk.”

Chandi “Sir, but seriously she likes you, you know, whenever she talks to me, she only asks me about you.”

Flattery was an art that Chandi was skilled at, but I knew all his moves, so I just laughed away his comments.

Time flew quickly and as we reached the hospital, it was almost 9 in the clock. A small crowd had gathered in the waiting area. Usually I left the management of such flash mobs to Sister Tiwari who was highly experienced in doing that, she had learnt much more about handling emergencies in her real life experience as a nurse. Rote learning the answers just for exams and bunking postings and a large part of internship didn’t exactly make me adept at handling emergencies.

But as soon as I reached the hospital entrance, Sanki, directed the whole crowd to me and handed the patient’s papers.

Sanki was talking to the crowd in his usual rude manner. He was the head peon of the hospital. His actual name was Kisna, but owing to his quirky nature, especially towards patients, he had earned this new name. ‘Sanki’ meant ‘maniac’. He had a history of beating up patients for arguing with him.

I was silently hoping that Sister Tiwari would handle the situation but she was nowhere to be seen. There was quite a commotion and I had to bang the table to make them quiet.

“Where’s the patient?”

To that, they all presented me before a lady with a swollen abdomen. She looked pregnant.

But I didn’t panic, as I knew Sister Tiwari was an expert in conducting deliveries.

“Sanki, where’s Sister Tiwari?”

“Sir, she went home, today’s duty is of Sister Menka.” Sanki retorted.

How I wished I had not bribed my college clerk into marking my attendance in Obstetrics and Gynecology postings and actually had attended some of them. I was blank as a page. And the bonus missile on me was Sister Menka.

In Indian mythology, it is a famous story of how the *apsara* Menka interrupted the penance of Vishwamitra, by luring him with her charms. But in my case, this Menka disturbed me, not by her looks, but by her talks, asking silly questions all the time. She was so unconfident that she used to ask me even before placing a needle over the syringe. And today it was the great delivery challenge. God save the baby.

Sister Menka entered the place. She looked already nervous, looking at the crowd.

I confidently ordered her “Sister Menka, take the patient to the labor ward, and tell me how much the cervical dilatation is.” I had to act confident or all was lost, and acting is an inherent part of the medical profession.

To my surprise, she straight away followed my order, but after a few minutes, as I had foreseen, she called me in to see the dilation, as she was not able to find the cervix.

I ordered Sanki to take care of the crowd. They dispersed as soon as I took his name. So far so good. I took a deep breath and went inside the labor room.

The dilatation was one finger loose and also the lady was having labor pains. After going through the papers I heaved a sigh of relief. This was her second child and all her investigations were normal. It was 9:30 pm and I knew that it would take her about an hour to get to four finger dilatation, so I decide to have dinner and then get back to work.

**4th June 10.30 pm**

I was eagerly waiting for the time to move further. I wanted the delivery to get over as soon as possible, and obviously with a favorable outcome.

I moved on to examine the dilatation. It had increased to three fingers loose.

I asked the pregnant lady “Is the baby moving?”

“Yes.” She said, breathing a little heavily.

I confirmed the fetal well being by measuring the fetal heart rate with a stethoscope, though I had heard it only a couple of times earlier, I got it right away and  it was around 150 beats per minute, which was very normal for a foetus.

Ordering Sister Menka to monitor the patient every 15 minutes, I retreated to my cabin.

Nodding to my orders doubtfully, she stood close to the patient, continuously watching over her, which I thought wasn’t much of a help, but it seemed futile to explain her what monitoring meant in that situation, so I left her to sort it out herself.

I went to my cabin to have some rest over my chair. I took out my mobile and saw that the time. It was 11 pm. Leaning over the table, I rested my head over folded hands and was asleep in a tick.

My sleep was disturbed when I heard Sister Menka in a loud voice calling me “Sashank Sir, the baby is coming..!”

Coming from Sister Menka’s mouth, I knew that those words could have meant absolutely anything, but mostly they meant trouble, so I rushed into the operatory. She had been quite literal about it and really the baby’s head was near the vaginal opening.

“Sister, why didn’t you call me earlier?”

She dumbly replied “I wasn’t feeling any problem earlier. It is now that I felt the problem.”

I wanted to reprimand her for using such layman terms and also for not monitoring the descent of the baby, but the pregnant lady needed more attention at that moment, so ignoring Menka, I moved on to motivate the lady “Push *rani*…push.”

‘*Rani*’ was the common name for all pregnant women. Whoever came to the labor ward, was called by the name ‘*Rani*’.

Watching me motivating Rani to push and the progressive descent of the baby’s head near the vaginal introitus, Sister Menka also got the confidence.

She started shouting loudly at Rani “Push rani…push…c’mon push.”

Menka was so involved in doing that, she didn’t even notice that all of us were silent and were watching her shouting.

Finally, I calmed her “Menka….Menka..Its her labor, let her show the vigour, why are you showing it?”

Everyone in the ward started laughing, *Rani* too, then suddenly she recollected that she was in labor and again started with the straining and gasping.

The lady next to Rani was fanning her with her *pallu*, a completely useless exercise, but frequently seen in old Bollywood movies. When I told her that the ceiling fan was moving, she stopped it.

Rani was continuously pushing, but in the middle of labor, she got exhausted. The baby’s head was about to deliver. At such a time she couldn’t afford to stop the descent as it would endanger baby’s life.

So, we motivated her to give a few better pushes, I suddenly recollected how Sister Tiwari would stand on the chair next to delivery table and would push over the patient’s abdomen to get the baby out.

I quickly started doing that. Initially, I was being gentle in doing that, but when I saw that it was showing no results, I increased the force of my push. Meanwhile, I was feeling some sudden intermittent vibrations on my left chest wall. I panicked for a moment, it was going to be no less than a disaster if a doctor had a heart attack while performing a simple delivery. But soon I realized that it was in fact my cell phone that was vibrating in my shirts pocket. I couldn’t possibly receive the call, had more pressing matters at hand.

Finally, our hard work paid off, and in a few minutes that resembled an eternity, the most difficult part of labor, of getting the head out of the introit’s was done.

The moment the head was out, the two lady companions of the patient, quickly left her side and stood behind me to see it and asked, “What is it, boy or girl?”

I shouted at them “The genitals are not located on the head. It’s in the lower part. Let it deliver first.”

They understood that I was angry for that foolish behaviour and tiptoed back to their place.

Eventually the baby was delivered. It was crying well, and otherwise looked healthy. But Rani’s companions were especially excited after seeing its genitals as it was a boy, as they all wanted. I looked at the clock; it was 12:07 am.

I directed sister to note down the time of birth and the birth weight.

Sister Menka nodded while she cut the umbilical cord and removed the placenta, the only work in which she was a perfectionist, as most of the time, even the other sisters would give her the same easy work.

As soon as the baby was in the relative’s hands, the companions left the mother as if they didn’t know her and started celebrating the baby’s birth.

The mother and son both were in good condition. Sister Menka was doing the post delivery procedures, while I moved out of the labor ward. Passing through the mob of relatives thanking me, I moved to my cabin.

I was exhausted, as it had been strenuous labor for me too. So, I rested my head over the back of my chair.

Suddenly I felt the vibrations again. I took out my mobile out of my pocket. It showed ‘Javed calling’. I pressed the green button.

“Hey Javed, how come you called after so many days?”

Javed “*Achha beta*, by the way, where are you?”

– “At the hospital.”

Javed “Ok, you ra\*cal, then why were you not picking up my call?”

– “You were the one calling me all the time! Couldn’t you wait for sometime? I was delivering a baby.”

Javed “No, I can’t wait….by the way…Happy birthday.. To both of you.”

I turned my eyes to my watch. It showed 5 June 12.22 am.

It was my birthday.

“Thank you Javed.” I said.

\_\_END\_\_

**35. Title :** [**Neighbour’s Secret**](http://yourstoryclub.com/short-stories-social-moral/short-story-with-moral-lesson-neighbours-secret/)

## Category : Funny Short Stories

**Story :** Some people in the colony especially the elderly people were watching them surreptitiously through their windows and some others had opened their doors and stood at the doorway, watching, on the pretext of trying to get some fresh air.

Kailesh was busy going here and there answering all kinds of queries about the three people who were getting into a car.  
Kailesh was the one who was an all-in-all assistant to all the residents of that colony. He went to pay their electricity bills, delivered milk sachets at their doorsteps, bought vegetables for them lent a hand in rolling out rotis and ran all kinds of errands they could think of. On Sundays he worked overtime.

So it was not a surprise that he knew considerable details in the family matters of everyone there.

It was a Sunday morning and so everyone got up late, took the phone and indulged in a bit of idle talk or came out to watch the traffic lazily; and this Sunday started with a promise – a promise of some new interesting gossip.

It was Sumit and his family who saw Prakash bringing two large suitcases and placing them in the boot of his car. Sumit’s wife Sarala joined him now in the balcony, watching. Prakash got into the driver’s seat and waited. His father walked out with his customary tripod and then his mother. They got into the car. The noise of the car door brought out some of the others. Prakash’s wife did not come out. Where were the three going out?

Here’s where they relied on the mastery of Kailesh.

Kailesh had just then come from the market; he pulled the cycle’s stand with his leg, simultaneously got down and climbed the fourth floor in a jiffy, with the expertise and ease of a trapeze artist. He found the inmates of the house for which he had brought milk sachets, watching something on the ground, from their balcony.

“Kailesh! Where are they going?” asked Sarala.

“Mmm… not sure. In fact I don’t know,” Kailesh said, and Sarala and Sumit looked at him incredulously.

“Really! I thought you would have known. Yesterday you had been there to take a huge number of their clothes to the drycleaners, hadn’t you?” Questioned Sarala.

Kailesh cleared his throat and said,”Yes, I don’t know if Prakash saab’s phone call has something to do with this. While I was collecting and counting the clothes, he asked someone for the address of a home – a home for the aged, you see.”

“We see,” said Sumit and Sarala together, and both of them had urgent calls to make. Now the people who were busy watching TV or movies also came out to see what was happening.

“Prakash saab’s father, when I was leaving, was muttering that Punitha was making a too much of a fuss for nothing,” added Kailesh.

It took ten minutes before the car had started moving as the old couple could not get into it fast and needed Prakash’s help. By now Parbathi, the house help, who worked in most of the homes there, had arrived and she could supply them a few missing pieces in the puzzle, and together they gave shape to the picture.

Prakash’s wife Punitha’s parents were arriving that evening – this was the information given by Parbathi. So it was obvious that Prakash was taking them to the most probable place, as Prakash was their only son, a home for the aged.

“Only a few weeks back Punitha advised us all to care for the elders of our household well,” observed Sarala.

Rita remarked,”Punitha has always been reserved and secretive. I knew something would happen like this.”

Kailesh joined in,”Punitha didi is the only daughter for her parents. So where will her parents go?”

Kumar retorted,”That does not mean Prakash has to send his parents to a home!”

“Kailesh, do you remember the name of the place Prakash was mentioning?” Sumit asked.

Kailesh wrinkled his brows, trying to remember. “Something like anda – dhal..”

“Anda – dhal? Is there something like that?” Everyone wondered.

All on a sudden it struck to someone in the group – someone who had been on the look out for a home, to deposit his own parents.

“Amanda Dale! That’s it. But it is well out of the city limits!” He exclaimed.

They all grew tired, the whole day discussing it, and the elderly of their households, listening to them.

Evening came and a taxi pulled up in front of Prakash’s house. A middle aged couple alighted and Punitha opened the door with a beaming face, took them in, and then bolted the door from inside.

They all waited for a while outside and then walked in with a sigh. Almost at once they heard another car. They could guess whose it was. They were right. Prakash was getting down and,- why? His parents were also getting down slowly. Punitha’s parents walked out to greet them. Then they all went inside the house, laughing, to the great disappointment of the neighbourhood. Some shook their heads in disapproval. What kind of neighbours were these? Not disclosing anything to anybody – so secretive!

Yet, very soon, Punitha and Prakash went to everyone’s place and told them that it was Prakash’s father’s eightieth birthday, and that they had been to the home for the aged to distribute clothes and sweets but Punitha could not go with them as her parents were to arrive.

Now they told them all not to cook dinner as they would send packed dinner to every house in the colony, to celebrate Pitaji’s birthday!

\_\_END\_\_

**36. Title :** [**The Alien**](http://yourstoryclub.com/short-stories-science-fiction/short-story-science-fiction-alien/)

## Category : Science Fiction

**Story :** It was a cold day in June. I hurried home after my shopping which had left my spirit high and purse depleted. It was dark, the shadows overlaying each other on the floor as I walked on the sidewalk, before entering my garden pathway. It was chilly and I was very hungry having resisted the snacks and ice creams at the mall eateries. Somehow the mounting hunger made me irritable and I hurried to my house.

Just as I walked up the steps that led to the doorway a sudden dazzle hit my eye. A torrent of light had capsized upon the house and I felt the glow of a thousand suns cascading upon me. The glaring white blinded my eyes. I dropped my shopping bags around me and shielded my eyes from the deluge. I stood still panic stricken.

Looking up I saw a fascinating sight. It was a UFO. It was an exact replica of the ones in comic books and fiction movies, so I couldn’t possibly have mistaken it for anything else. And sure enough my eyes wandered around the craft to see if any aliens emerged.

At the same instant I felt a tug at my saree pallu. I was wonder struck at the sight of an alien, very humanoid in appearance. And of course he was sea green, as they were always portrayed, and he stood there with his strange enormous eyes straining to see me, eye lids fluttering as though he were myopic. His eyes were watery with rainbow shades floating in them very strangely, and I felt magnetized. He wore a glowing silver metal helmet which was actually his head. The inevitable antenna (like the two tentacles found on the head of a snail) glimmered and shone in florescent shades of green and red as though it were traffic lights. He became too interesting a spectacle for me to feel afraid of, as my eyes explored this fascinating intruder.

His head was mango shaped and his mouth widened and contracted on and off in a perpetual grin that stretched wide to right behind his head. I was relieved he wasn’t scaly, like some of them from comic books. I gathered up courage and said, “Hi!”

The alien nodded as though in acknowledgement, but it was not to be. He nodded all the time even when I hadn’t spoken to him. Since he seemed to be of a congenial temperament I grew braver and extended my hospitality by asking him if he needed food. He grinned and nodded, and I doubted that he understood me.

This time I softly prodded him stomach and was surprised to find it sounded very metallic though it didn’t look it. It was almost a drum.

Still he repeated the grin and nod.

By now I was enjoying this strange encounter, considering he wasn’t harmful, and I really wished to communicate with him. I was afraid he would take off abruptly, as it always happened in movies I had seen. I prodded his tummy again and

said, “Food?” I made a chomping sound as if I was munching away. Grin, nod. Grin, nod.

“Drink?” And I made a gulping sound.

He stared bewildered, the rainbow hues swirling wildly in his eyes. I was transfixed at the sight, for it was a truly spectacular sight. I picked up a tetra pack of Amul Lassi from the shopping bags I had dropped open and punctured the silver blocker. I offered this to my alien friend.

Grin, nod. Grin, nod.

And I tried an apple, an orange, a packet of cummin seeds. Then I waggled a sachet of Sambar Podi Shakti Masala, to no avail.

Words like ‘fridge’, lunch, chappathis, rice made absolutely no sense to him.

When I next tapped his tummy I heard some static sounds as though he were a goofed up radio. Few beeps followed and the antenna on his metal head flashed tiny lightning lights.

I just stood there asking myself if i was having a psychic experience. Have I turned paranormal? I hoped my sighting of this humanoid was not some sort of change in electromagnetic energy in its immediate vicinity.

The brightly lit UFO had lodged itself upon the field beyond and like all the UFOs I’d seen in movies, dimmed its lights and stood like an enormous dark shadow in the background. A few serial lights flashed on and off to remind us of its presence.  
I gestured for my friend to come into the house. I took few steps forward and began climbing the few stairs that led to my veranda. I was amazed and happy to find the alien hadn’t slackened his hold on my saree pallu. He slid in with me and floated up the stairs. His every move fascinated me. I just had had to slow down and watch his every move. I couldn’t understand how he mobilized without legs or feet.

However, he stopped moving once we were in the veranda. He turned himself to face his space craft and emanated a few of his beeps and static sounds. I heard a soft crackle from the craft in answer.

The alien turned around a full circle, grinning and nodding non- stop, and looked me straight in the eye. Two pinpoints of light like keen daggers pierced mine. He then did to me what I had done. He prodded my stomach with his spindly fingers a few times and let off more static sounds. He then turned towards the space craft, floated down the three stairs as though he were a spirit, and swish, disappeared into the spacecraft. More lights. More beeps. More crackling sounds. A big woosh. And I was left there on my house front, alone with my thoughts and thoroughly perplexed. A terrible loneliness filled my heart and I hated to see my alien go!

I wandered into my house like a zombie, and looked out the window to see a tiny spot twirl and vanish like it always did in my books. I fell in a faint.

I slept a fitful sleep and woke up in a hospital bed. My nurse gave me my breakfast, but hunger evaded me. I had lost all appetite. I asked about my alien and they gave me a pill to make me doze off. When I woke up I still felt no hunger and refused all food. Everyone was worried sick that I hadn’t eaten for three days. Then four. Then five.

“Six” said someone.

“Seven!” said someone else.

“Eight!” said my husband’s loud voice. And then I awoke.

Yes it was eight in the morning, and here I was pining away for my alien in my dream!

\_\_END\_\_

**37. Title :** [**Nahmus**](http://yourstoryclub.com/short-stories-social-moral/science-fiction-short-story-nahmus/)

## Category : Science Fiction

**Story :** “Will the defendants rise please?”

“Members of the defending race of Nahmus; members of the rest 127 races. The Supreme Court of the Galactic Union, taking into account all the evidence presented during this trial, has reached its verdict.”

“The defending race of Nahmus has been tried for the following offenses: development of war technologies, acts of war against fellow members of the Union, acts of war between groups inside the race itself, genocide of the race of Phlidons, exploitation of less intelligent living organisms, annihilation of planet’s GA3551 natural resources, clear tendencies for out of limits colonization, development of economy based on currency, racism and coercion between its members and finally, government formation.”

“With a unanimous vote, the Supreme Court of the Galactic Union of the 128 races, finds the defendants guilty of all their crimes and imposes the following sentences: Expulsion from the Galactic Union, and a two thousand standard years’ exile from any habitable planet. All members of the race of Nahmus will embark on a fleet provided by the Union and serve their sentence in space.”

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Apparently, an appeal was submitted and apparently, it was dismissed.

Apparently, there were violent reactions from the convicted race’s side and apparently, they didn’t last long. The sentence would be carried out, and Nahmus would spend their next couple of millennia in the void.

It was the most severe punishment ever imposed in the Union’s history. Truth is, though, nobody felt really sorry for the banished ones, since they were asking for it. Whatever pity about them would probably be derived from their complete lack of insight. How was it ever possible for them to believe that their actions would remain unpunished forever? However, it was common knowledge between the Union’s members, that Nahmus were aspiring after an exit from the Union’s web sooner or later. Their philosophies just didn’t match.

Well, their wish was granted and they left the Union. But the price was far higher than they could imagine. Two thousand standard years was an immense amount of time, especially for beings with an average lifespan like theirs. It would pose no surprise, if by the end of the exile, there would be none of them left, and maybe that was the Union’s ultimate goal after all.

At random points in the course of the passing centuries, the exiles would often receive different kinds of messages from the Union, more often though, when they were floating towards worlds where they had no right to. A few years before the one thousand mark was reached however, these messages just ceased coming, a fact that sparked Nahmus’ curiosity.

After their visits to various planets, one of their first suspicions was affirmed: all of them had vanished. All known races in the galaxy seemed to have disappeared into thin air and space. Every city or space station was empty, and there was no sign of space traffic at all. They were alone. A whole galaxy at their disposal, just as they always wanted it to be, according to their ex-allies. But whatever happened here, whether they were all annihilated by some kind of colossal disaster or they just left at their own free will, would remain a mystery, forever.

So, eventually, the prematurely free Nahmus were left alone with their dilemma: settle on one of the recently abandoned by other races planets, so they could have some kind of technology at hand, or start from ground zero?

[[](http://d688i9578ejn6.cloudfront.net/wp-content/uploads/2012/07/earth.jpg)](http://d688i9578ejn6.cloudfront.net/wp-content/uploads/2012/07/earth.jpg)The generations of Nahmus created during the centuries of the exile had grown wiser, and through its transmissions, the Union made sure they learned what their ancestors did and where the root of their suffering was to be found. Looking like they had learned from their – to be more precise, their ancestors’ – mistakes, they made the decision that would probably stun the judges of that historical trial, which was still remembered, but soon to be forgotten.

They landed on the first empty planet that could support their organisms, and started over. Their sole technology were the spaceships themselves, remnants of the mysteriously absent Union. But even these would soon be abandoned, and buried under the forests, deserts and oceans of this new world by the passage of time.

Even without any technology at hand however, Nahmus were getting along pretty well. They were really crafty beings. It wasn’t long before they built their first pyramid.

\_\_END\_\_

**38. Title :** [**THE PHOTOGRAPH**](http://yourstoryclub.com/short-stories-science-fiction/short-story-suspense-the-photograph/)

## Category : Science Fiction

**Story :** “So you are trying to say that I can actually..?” I asked.

“Yes, of course. You see Lina, I already told you how this works.” Dr. Matthews seemed convinced upon his theory.

“But, how will I be able to look into the past?”

“All you need to do is to *concentrate*. That’s the key.”

“What?”

“You see, thoughts are a very powerful tool. Every thought has a weight. But that weight depends on how strong your thought is. So if you think hard, hard enough for anyone to think you are in frenzy, then maybe you can go back in time.”

“But there has to be something else too?”

“Yes, there is. There has to be absolute silence around you, nothing to disturb your concentration at all. Other than that, I think it is pretty simple.” The doctor was smiling.

I wondered what was there to smile about. I had my doubts, this was sheer madness!! It was just not possible, breaking all the rules of physics, how can you look into the past?

“Doctor, I still think this is not right. I know you want to help me out. But this is a mistake. “

“I already explained it to you.”

“Tell me again.”

“Listen, a photograph ingenuously does something that not even most complex mechanisms fail to do. It captures time. Something that flows, something that cannot be brought back, but a photograph, it captivates time. Thus it acts as a gateway to go back to *that* time, and revive our memories.”

I was getting confused with every word being said. How is it possible to literally *enter* a photograph and go back in time?

The doctor continued, “The time that has been captured in the picture is fixed. But that time in our present frame of reference is an event in the past. You may say that this gives rise two parallel time dimensions, one that is going on right now, that is, the present. The other is the stationary one in the picture. And our thoughts, they give you the power to translate between these two dimensions.”

I didn’t know what to say. This seemed like an inconceivable thing to happen. But Dr. Matthews seems so confident. I got up to leave. After hearing all these intricate assertions, all I wanted was some rest.

“And one more thing” Dr. Matthews stopped me.

“Yes doctor?”

“Since you are the subject that has to travel, you *must* be in the photograph. And the time of the photograph must also resemble the time of the actual incident. Then only will you be able to know who murdered your father.

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I was standing on the terrace at my home. It was the right time, around five pm. The sky looked so bright, the breeze so cool, for one split second, I forgot why I was here. This terrace was the same place where my father was murdered a week ago. The police said that it was a suicide, but I never believed them. My father was not one of those who could commit suicide. He was a man of headstrong principles and values. He had faced so much in life that nothing in this world could cause fear in his eyes. The whole business empire, and raising me especially after my mother died, it could not have been done by a man with a fallible heart.

Dr. Matthews was my father’s close friend. He came to visit me after his death. When I said that I doubted if it was a suicide, Dr. Matthews asked me to come in his office. And what he told me yesterday was way beyond anything to be believed. But then, what could go more wrong? I could give it a shot, though deep inside, I knew that all this would result into nothing.

I disembarked my camera on the ledge and sat down on my daybed. The timer was set, after a fixed time interval, the camera captured the picture, the picture which holds the time, the picture which may unlock the mystery of my father’s murder.

The next day, I had the photograph developed. I was eager to conduct the experiment as soon as possible. So I went straight to my room, switched on a very dim bulb, and looked at the photograph. It was just me sitting on the terrace. I stared at it for a very long time. My mind was still filled with doubts.

“What a foolish idea this is!!” I thought.

I didn’t know what to do except looking at the picture. It was just me, I didn’t see my father, or anyone else. I started thinking why I am doing this, about my theory that he was murdered. I kept staring and thinking about his death. My eyes became watery, my head throbbed, dizziness was taking me over. I kept thinking about my father, the moments I had shared with him, the life he gave me, the time when I got the news, the first time I saw his dead body, the moment when I was numb with pain.

Tears rolled up in my eyes, I thought I was going to pass out. Suddenly I felt that I was being lifted upwards, my body seemed weightless though I could see my feet on the floor. I started hearing screams in my head, and all I could see was my father, his smile, his dead body, the terrace, the murderer.

And then there was darkness.

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I wished I could die. The suffocation was becoming too much to handle. I wasn’t able to breathe, the blinking lights in my head were making me insane. I wished I could make it stop. But I couldn’t, if only I could know what was happening.

The door in front of me creaked. Wait, there was a door? Where the hell am I? I started to get up to see what was happening, but then I realized, I was floating, not in air but in water. I started to swim, but I was losing my stamina under the sun. The door ahead was still open, maybe my answers were hidden behind that door. I kept swimming under the bright sky. The cool breeze flowed, the evening was all set at the pinnacle of its beauty. I was getting tired from the excursion. After what seemed like an infinite time, I reached the door. My clothes were drenched with sweat and water (or was it all sweat?).  The door was wide open. I went inside to find myself on the terrace of my home. This was strange. I went ahead to see that there was someone standing at some distance. It was my dad!!

I couldn’t believe what I was seeing. My dad, he looked so alive. I couldn’t control my emotions. I started running towards my dad. But suddenly a stupendous force hit me. I was thrown backwards. Somehow I got up and started running again. But at the same point as before, something hit me. This time, my nose started bleeding. I didn’t care and got up again. My dad was very far away, he was pacing on the terrace, definitely tensed over something. I was giddy from all the sweat and the blood. I started again to reach my father, if only for once, I can feel him, it seemed a long time ago had I felt his touch. As I reached that place, I was again thrashed by the invisible force, but this time it was so large that the floor cracked. I was almost knocked out. My eyes were filled with stars, everything was zooming in and out of focus. In this frenzy I could still see my dad talking to someone. Wait, who was that? They were having an argument, my dad was definitely very angry. The other person took my dad by the arm and brought him closer to the ledge. I wanted to save my dad but suddenly I felt the floor beneath me cracking away. I was going to fall down any minute. If only I could see the murderer’s face before I fall down.

Suddenly that stranger pushed my dad over the ledge, and my dad, he was falling, falling like a dummy, screaming all the way down. The floor finally gave away, and now it was my turn to go. But I kept looking at the stranger who killed my father. The murderer also looked back at me and for one split second, I thought the world had ended, the gravity did its work, I was falling, falling freely with nothing to hold me, moving away from that unknown person. But at the last moment, I saw the face, the grotesque visage winking at me. There could be no confusion at all. It seemed I was looking into a mirror kept far away. The other me standing on the terrace turned away, leaving me to fall down to the infinity, as I remembered everything what happened a week ago.

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“Officer?”

“Hello Lina, what made you come here?” Inspector Broad Mark asked.

“I have something to tell you.”

“Oh please, I told you so many times. Your father committed suicide.” He castigated.

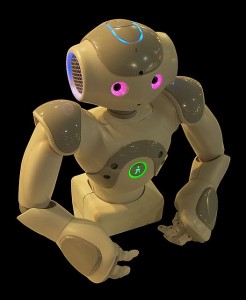
“I have a confession to make. It was not a suicide, I killed my father, pushed him over the ledge. Please arrest me officer.”

\_\_END\_\_

**39. Title :** [**Maggie – Return to The Earth**](http://yourstoryclub.com/short-stories-science-fiction/maggie-return-to-earth/)

## Category : Science Fiction

**Story :** *[Short Story Science Fiction for Children: Maggie – Return to The Earth]*

[](http://d688i9578ejn6.cloudfront.net/wp-content/uploads/2012/01/short-story-science-fiction-robot.jpg)

**Maggie – Return to Earth  
Image Source:**[**www.cepolina.com**](http://www.cepolina.com/)

Maggie pressed her small round face against the thick oval window, flattening her tiny nose on the cool glass of the spacecraft, and cried out with joy.

She could see a tiny blue dot, lying suspended in the blackness of the space far away.

She knew it was Earth. Her home.

She couldn’t believe she was almost there.

She rubbed the tears out of her eyes with the back of her hand and went to the next chamber of the spacecraft Vanilla (named after her favorite ice cream flavor), flying through a round pneumatic door.

Though this chamber was named as the control room, there was hardly anything to control or operate in the spacecraft. Vanilla was fully automatic. She picked up the radio, which had been dead for a long time. Now that she was so near Earth, she was hoping she would hear the familiar voice of John crackling out of the radio receiver.

“Hello Maggie. Congratulation on your success in the incredible interstellar voyage you have taken. You have made us proud today”

But no such voice came out from the radio. It has been dead for a long time. Maggie wasn’t sure how long. She impatiently flicked the radio switches several times before giving up.

Maggie had lost the track of time a long ago and never bothered to check it in the computer, which flashed the time and the number of days like a stopwatch counting time, for the fear of finding an incredibly high figure on the screen.

Most of the time she slept; because that was what she was told to do. She would strap herself in her bed so that she didn’t float away, and then inject the blood-red liquid in her arm and fall asleep for an uncertainly long period of time.

Every time she woke up, she went to the window only to see the vast enveloping blankness of the space, dotted with tiny white lights of distant stars. They didn’t twinkle like they did in the Earth.

The dose of the medicine she took after lying down was very important. The scientists had told her that, one month prior to her departure.

The medicine would keep her young and alive. Without that, she would just age up and die, or even starve to death. With that, she would remain 13 for a very long time. Maggie needed to give the shots within fifteen minutes after waking up every time.

The medicine bottles were kept in a small refrigerator in the chamber where she slept. There were perhaps a hundred of them when she had left the Earth.

Now, there was only one tiny red bottle left.  
There were several things the little girl did not know.

Project Maggie was a Top Secret. A classified project which only a team of twelve scientists and an anonymous funder was a part.

Maggie was more or less, a laboratory specimen created in their lab from a fertilized egg. It was something that the word had only seen in sci-fi movies.

Maggie spent thirteen years of her life locked up in the lab before she was sent away to outer space to carry out their project. In the thirteen years she spent in their underground top-secret laboratory, they never took her out to show her the world. Not once. They only showed her pictures and videos of the Earth and the world outside. In her free time, when she wasn’t being trained, they allowed her to watch TV. Of course, the channels were censored and filtered so she saw only what they wanted her to see and therefore she didn’t raise any questions regarding her parents or other questions of the same ilk.

They told her she had to go on a small journey and when she came back, they would take her to all the places she had seen on TV.

Maggie was obedient. She loved them- especially John-and trusted them and did whatever they told her to do.

By the age of thirteen she was ready to execute their project.

One year later, she boarded the spacecraft Vanilla alone. To their surprise, the scientists found the girl to be strong and confident instead of being apprehensive.

They were happy for that. Thirteen years of training, thirteen years of lies they had told her were paying off. On the other hand, the poor girl only knew she was going on a short journey and when she comes back, she could go to all the beautiful places on the Earth that she had only seen on TV.

When the spacecraft finally took off successfully and left the Earth on one cold night, the scientists cheered with joy and celebrated. They knew they had done something unique and when the world comes to know, they would become celebrities. Then the money would flow.

One of the twelve scientists who was a part of the group was named John. John cried the night Maggie left. He did not cry out with joy at their accomplishment neither did he celebrate with his mates.

John loved Maggie like his own daughter. The others just saw her as a laboratory specimen.

John felt he had selfishly betrayed the little girl. He had told her she would be back in days. He later wished he hadn’t. He knew, when she comes back they will not be here. They would long be dead.

It was a long voyage.

The creation of the RL35 was a miracle. It was a priceless boon to the project, created by two of the twelve scientists. It was what fueled the idea of the project in the first place.

Countless tests proved that the medicine, which was to be injected in blood periodically, increased the lifespan of a human by severely slowing down his metabolism. The catch was that it worked only in zero gravity.

This made the scientists think of far and long space travels, beginning with Project Maggie.

Maggie had spent the first day aboard the starship speaking on radio with the only people she knew.

The scientist whom she called John asked her through the radio, his voice interrupted only by the statics ‘my Maggie how do you feel?’

‘lonely’ she was already sobbing ‘I feel so lonely John.’

John tried to console her. He told her to be strong like she always was. It was only a matter of few days before she comes back.

Then another scientist spoke with her. His name was Milton. ‘what do you see outside sugar?’

‘I can’t see from here. But a little while ago I saw the Earth. I was going farther away from it’

‘Soon. Very soon you will be here with us again’

The conversation went on.

When it was time, John spoke to her once again. They exchanged goodbyes. John reminded her to take her medicine like a good girl at the right time. He told her he loved her. She said she loved him too.

Five minutes later, she took her medicine, after strapping herself to her bed because she needed to lie down while taking it. Then she injected the first bottle of the liquid in her arm. Within a few seconds, she fell asleep. Actually, she slipped into a temporary coma.

When she woke up after a long time, she found the radio irresponsive.

She had never heard from them again.

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[](http://d688i9578ejn6.cloudfront.net/wp-content/uploads/2012/01/science-fiction-earth.jpg)

**The Earth  
Image Source:**[**www.cepolina.com**](http://www.cepolina.com/)

The Earth, a big blue ball floating in the emptiness, was looking bigger, now that she was getting closer.

Maggie spent the fifteen minutes she got after waking up this time, near the round glass window, watching her home planet from which she had been away for a very long time. Her heart raced just by looking at it. She felt like screaming at the top of her voice.

Once she gets there, she thought, she and John would go out together to visit many places she always wanted to go after seeing them on TV. John had promised her to take her to amusement parks. They would go shopping together…

Her head was full of thoughts and ideas that she would do with John, Milton and others.

When she lands, she thought, she would find them waiting for her. She would walk out of the spacecraft and run into John’s outstretched hands.

She started to sob. She was alone here. There was nobody to console her or wipe away her tears. After some time she composed herself by remembering John’s words to be strong and a good girl.

She went to the refrigerator and took the last bottle of RL35 and a sealed syringe. Pushing against the wall, she floated to her bed and pulled on the straps.

It has been a real long time, she thought. They had told her it would only be for few days but…

She thought of checking the computer in the control room to see the number of days she has been in the spacecraft.

No. She told herself. She did not want to see it, now that she was almost home. What’s the use of disappointing herself when it was time to be happy.

It was also time for her to take the last dose of medicine, immediately after which she would fall asleep.

She hoped she would wake up in the Earth and see John first.

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[](http://d688i9578ejn6.cloudfront.net/wp-content/uploads/2012/01/science-fiction-robo-man.jpg)

**The Humanoid Robot  
Image Source:**[**www.cepolina.com**](http://www.cepolina.com/)

The humanoid machines stood at the seashore, staring up at the clear blue sky. There were six of them in total, standing with their thin metal arms dangling by their sides; their smooth oval heads tilted back; their eyes, round and sleek like lenses were staring up at the white streak in the sky.

It looked like a meteorite coming down with high velocity, trailing a fanning jet of white smoke behind it.

The machines stood there watching as the thing descended from the sky and hit the ocean’s surface sending long white walls of displaced water around it.

The machines prudently stepped back from the shore, as the waves got larger within few minutes due to the impact. The water decayed their cover. Their once glossy white coat over their metal body had eroded away to a rough reddish brown coat from which flecks of oxidized metal kept falling frequently.

They could see something large, mostly white in colour and elliptical in shape floating in the ocean, bobbing up and down in the water body. Slowly the waves were pushing it shoreward.

They waited. Several more lookalike humanoid machines came down to the shore and joined the group of watchers.

“Is it them again?” one of the newcomers asked in a resonating tone. It sounded like a voice coming from one end of a hollow metal pipe.

“Who?” asked another robot in the group in the same metallic voice.

“You know, the humans. It could be them coming back,” the first robot said. Its eyes were fixed on the floating spacecraft in the ocean.

“They created us and left this world to find a new good home, something they haven’t destroyed with their own hands. Why would they be coming back? Besides I don’t see any other ships”

“The spacecraft is so small. What if there are humans in it?” a third robot asked.

“We will be a good friend to them” the second robot answered. Then everybody fell silent.

In the evening when the sun was a soft glowing red ball at the horizon, the ocean washed the spacecraft in which Maggie lay sleeping to the shore.

**40. Title :** [**The last day: A few moments from the life of a dying man**](http://yourstoryclub.com/short-stories-social-moral/short-story-on-end-of-the-world-last-day/)

## Category : Science Fiction

**Story :** Short Story on End of The World – The last day: A few moments from the life of a dying man

[](http://d688i9578ejn6.cloudfront.net/wp-content/uploads/2012/08/blue-globe-in-eye.jpg)

**Short Story on End of The World – The last day  
Photo credit: [jdurham](http://www.morguefile.com/creative/jdurham) from**[**morguefile.com**](http://www.morguefile.com/)

The room was lit brightly. Blinding lights focused on a shiny white stage. A gleaming black desk stood right in the middle of it all. Everything shined obscenely. Everything seemed to be waiting with bated breath for something.

A man walked in wearing a dark blue suit, a suit sharply cut. He had a folder tucked under his left arm and had a shiny candy wrapper in his hands which he was struggling with to eat. It was quite a long walk from the end of the room to the table right in the middle. The man struggled all the way even as the cameras followed his progress. He finally was at the desk, the candy in his mouth as he flicked the empty wrapper away from him and set the folder down. His mouth moved a few times as he swallowed the large piece of toffee he just ate.

“Hello!” he smiled for the camera. A row of pearly white teeth shone in the glaring lights. “I am your host for tonight so just let me look up the agenda!”

He opened the folder and sifted through the pages. “Well apparently the Earth is coming to an end just like it has been coming to for the last 100 days!” he let out a piercing laugh after that. “And on the agenda is the same god damned thing that’s been there for the last 100 days!”

“WE ARE THE CHOSEN ONES! And by that I mean we are the ones who are left behind while the important people moved away from the disaster zone-**EARTH!** Yes folks, we are going to be dead soon. and the governments have decided that WE are going to die in comfort. So get your drugs from the nearest shop around you. Get stoned, get drunk, get weird! It’s an exciting time in our lives. Do ANYTHING! Just don’t despair. We have no hope left! But HEY! At least it ENDS TONIGHT!” Another shrill laugh. The transmission cut.

A new ad appeared. “Do you feel down? Do you feel the end of the world is getting is overwhelming you? If yes then you’re a loser! Just go get your drugs and forget. Get high, get drunk, get stoned! It’s all free. We are the chosen ones! Death and destruction and chaos chose us! We are gonna have a fuc-”

**ME**

“I can’t listen to this anymore.” I said to no one. Actually I did say to a few, they were just too stoned to hear me anymore. I looked around the room. People sat around like zombies. A 100 days of celebration and it showed. A 100 days of free drugs and free booze and free what not. They were all locked in their own small world.

I snatched my overcoat from the make shift bed and picked up my book. Navigating my way through the mass of stacked and stoned bodes was easy enough. I just trod on them. No one noticed.

The streets were dead quiet. A few men and women moved around like zombies, most probably headed to a shop to get their next hit. I navigated my way through the ever growing crowd. The sun was barely out but the people were on a different schedule. A hit schedule. A schedule that was now completely warped by their addictions. A few people were lying around on the few streets near the shops. And when I say a few I mean dozens. Hundreds. Thousands. The earth stank. The stench was too powerful but I had gotten used to it. It was hard now to approach any shop since every store was authorized by the government to carry free stuff, free booze, free drugs. Drugs now mostly but groceries too. I pushed my way through the zoned out junkies and found my way to the few tinned edible items. I filled my pockets with as much food as I could. The over coat with it’s deep and plentiful pockets came in handy. I now had candy bars and tinned cans of fruits, pickles, condensed milk with me plus a few loaves of bread.

I didn’t need the drugs, I didn’t use them. I had decided early on that I liked my mind too much to let it go waste so quickly. Plus I wanted to see and feel the moment before I died. That moment of…whatever. I wanted to feel it. I will not be stoned out of my mind to not feel a thing. I looked at the counter where the drugs were piled up. The store clerks were there but they were zoned out. Or dead. Two of them were resting with their backs to the wall just behind the counter. I couldn’t see their chests moving. Dead then.

I walked out and again had to push my way past the clamoring idiots, the rotten apples, the dregs of society. Except they all were like this now. They had all succumbed. At the end they had decided to die a pitiful death.

I walked away from the shop. The bodies moaned and gesticulated. They thrashed and turned. I don’t know how many of them are dead already. Or how many of them are dying. At this point it didn’t matter. The streets had become a mass graveyard.

I found myself walking the same path I have been walking since the first day of this madness struck. The first day the news came in that the world was going to end soon I walked into the library and headed straight to the fiction section. I did that today too. I picked up a few books and headed out. It was quiet in here. The signs “Please keep quiet” and “Silence is golden!” stared back at me all too depressingly. I think even the signs missed the shuffling of feet and the whispered chats shared by the libraries patrons. The library had become unnaturally quiet. There was no need for signs anymore.

I had decided on my previous journeys out that there was no need for me to look up . The area I was headed to didn’t have as many bodies since there weren’t as many shops around. The people had decided to leave for the shops permanently and now this part had essentially become a ghost town. I buried my nose in one of the books I had picked up. Sifting through it’s musty old pages was a relief. A relief I had needed more and more since the day the world started degenerating into a madhouse. A perverse colony.

My foot struck something and I fell hard. I barely stopped my fall as the ground came rushing up towards me. In the end I had to fling the book away and use my hands to stop my fall. I was on my knees with whatever that made me stumble lying near my feet. I got up and looked once. It was a bundle of clothes, or so I thought at first. There was some hair on top so I decided to stop my investigation right there. Whatever it was, was dead. I gathered my book from where it lay and walked on. Nose buried in one of the chapters, completely oblivious to the outside world. I had to be.

I stopped at the rusted old gate and pushed. It was always hard to get this opened. I was always worried I would get a cut but not anymore. It was the last day. The very last. Nothing mattered anymore. Nothing mattered but the fear.

I walked in and closed the gate behind me. I didn’t want anyone to stumble in. I kept on walking then, past the small guards cabin to the graves behind it. And there they were, the people. The alive and healthy ones, waiting for me. The graveyard had become the last resort of the living. Or the ones still left with the will to live. As I walked in a few of those who were reading looked up at me and smiled. I fished in my pockets and started handing out tins and books. I was the supplies guy here, the “scrounger”, a term I fondly remembered from the movie “The Great Escape”.

I chose an empty corner, my usual corner, and sat down next to the grave of someone whose name was now not visible but apparently he had been ” A great friend, a great husband and a great man.” I always looked at that inscription and I couldn’t help but wonder, I will have no tombstone, no grave, no one to grieve after me. It was harder to swallow in the early days but now I have come to terms with it.

One of the children came running towards me and sat down to hear a story. It was a routine now, everyday I read the children a story and in return they got candy bars.

“It’s just you today?” I asked her, tickling her under the chin. She giggled at that but replied nonetheless. “Their parents didn’t want them to come today.”

I nodded at that. The attendance was poor enough. Still, she was here, so I read her a story. “Do you remember Harry Potter?”

“The boy who lived?” she said with a smile.

“Yes that’s the one. And do you remember the villain?” I smiled back.

“It’s you-know-who!” she squealed out, a squeal of both fear and excitement. She is 6.

“Oh you need not worry. You can say his name!” I said. She just crossed her arms in front of her and said nothing.

“Hey I’ll keep you safe. You know I will.” I said fondly.

“I don’t like him, no nosey. What do you fear? I don’t like men with no nosey.”

I sighed inwardly, what would I tell her?

“Ok I’ll continue with the story then!” So I read her the last part of Harry Potter till lunch. To her credit she did try to stay awake till the very end but by lunch she was fast asleep. I smoothed her hair a bit and then walked over to where the others were sitting.

“So what are you guys planning to do?” I asked. It was the last day, it meant nothing now to almost the whole world but to us few, the ones who had resisted the drugs, it meant a lot. We muttered among ourselves for a while. We all said our farewells. Some of the more religious ones sat down and prayed. We shared lunch. I got up then and went back to my own corner. The girl was still asleep. I knew she’d wake up soon and she would be hungry so I kept two candy bars handy.

I read one of my own books, I had used the 100 days to catch up on my reading. I was an analyst when the world was sane. Now I was a guy who read as many books he could before he died. I thought, if I have to die soon then why not live as many lives as I can? So I read books and the people with children who had decided not to go crazy with the others followed me to my graveyard. Followed me and sat with me and all of us gave each other a little comfort. It was all we could have done. It was all anybody could do.

I know that mankind will survive the day. The 100 day warning had come only when the REAL chosen ones had been shipped out of the planet in tiny spaceships. One night the sky was set ablaze as many spacecrafts took off at once. The next day we got the news. So the CHOSEN ONES had all departed. All of them already gone. We were left stranded, unable to survive. That was why of course they gave away all the free drugs. They had been stockpiling them for months, years even. Who knew? All I know is there will be no tomorrow.

I fondly stroked the book in my hand. Foundation by Isaac Asimov. I want to see the future so bad. It’s probably why I had been reading so much sci-fi lately. A world which I could never see, which I could only yearn for but one which these writers made possible for me. I kept reading for a while but I really wanted to walk. I gave the girl the candies, put them right in her tiny hands and then walked away. I waved goodbye to the others and just headed out.

I found one of the taller buildings and walked straight to the roof. One last sunset.

It was a glorious sunset.

The last one.

A wonderful one.

A beautiful one.

**THE END**

He wrote down the last lines in his diary, something he had started maintaining since the world went mad and crumbled. He threw it away from him. It didn’t do him any good. He found the remote and flicked on the TV. A few grumbles erupted from the sleeping slumped junkie hordes. He wanted to see what was happening. He couldn’t sit still, he was feeling agitated.

“HELLO FOLKS! IT’S ME! Your host! And I AM STONED! It’s the **end of the world** **PARTY**! And it’s INSANE! We are all gonna die in one glorious spurt of power! A billion voices crying in anguish! Oh what a brilliant chorus it will be! Oh what lovely sound! Oh what music!”

The host weeped a little but then the drugs kicked in. “I wish you all!” now his eyes shined with madness, with lunacy, “I wish you all a merry merry death! I wish you all to be so stoned you don’t feel a thing!”

The transmission didn’t cut this time. The host had gone mad it seemed. He was jumping around and celebrating. A bizarre end to life. The earth rumbled then, the sky screamed. **IT**was beginning, **IT** was happening. The host could feel it too and was laughing his high pitched laughter, no, he was screaming. Shutting off the TV he glanced out of the window. The world was changing, he could feel it. He could see it was affecting the junkies too, some of them were standing up and gazing at the stars while some of them stood up to see what was happening. He could see their confusion even through the high window. He could see they were tense, tense and terrified. But strangely enough he wasn’t, he was calm. Calmer than he had been before.

Something about the hosts madness had calmed him down. Somehow he knew that if he let go of his sanity now it would be worse than the drugs. He would loose his mind, his one precious commodity. He wanted it to be with him till the very end. So he sat down and waited, closed his eyes as the world went mad around him all over again. HE could now hear the people around him howling, screaming. More sounds came from the open window. But he just smiled, it was the end and he was the only human left who could rationalize, who could still think clearly. In the end, as he felt the searing heat and the flesh burning of his skin, as the building he was in began to crumble, he just smiled. He had no fear anymore, he was at peace.

\_\_END\_\_

**41. Title :** [**Tunnel Vision**](http://yourstoryclub.com/short-stories-suspense-thriller/suspense-short-story-tunnel-vision/)

## Category : Paranormal and Unusual Experiences

**Story :** The tunnel smelled like death.

That was the first thought that went through Pratap Kulkarni’s mind as he stood in front of it. The tunnel gaped in front of him like the maw of an ancient monster. The inner walls, once yellow, were now a dark, rusty brown. The ceiling was lined with cobwebs, and the cool night breeze brought its scent to Pratap’s nose. The smell of old rubber tires and the sickly-sweet scent of dead leaves.

The tunnel had been closed down for a year now. It had been a disaster. The lighting had been poor from the start. Half the bulbs that had been installed went defunct in a month.  The rest had flickered dimly, causing a spate of violent accidents. Finally, with the death of a businessman last year, the tunnel had been out of commission.

The route of the cars had been changed, so the cars had to go around the mountain to get into the city. It took 40 minutes. The tunnel would have taken 5. But nobody objected to the tunnel being closed off. Everyone agreed that the thing was plain spooky.

Pratap gazed at the mouth of the tunnel. His legs were shivering, but not from the cold. He had heard enough ghost stories about this tunnel to last him a lifetime. Rumours about the ghosts of the accident victims ran wild and he wasn’t very anxious to see if they were true. But he had no choice.

He sighed and looked at the parcel in his hand. A toy car, gift wrapped in yellow paper for his son. It was Christmas Eve. His wife would be staying up to see him. They always prayed at midnight on Christmas. It was more of a necessity than a tradition. He looked at his watch. 11.30pm. He had to get home soon. The normal way into the city took an hour to go by. The tunnel would be much faster. He could get home before Christmas.

The solitary lamppost next to him flickered, the dancing beams casting frightening shadows at the foot of the tunnel, not helping the gnawing fear in his chest. He glanced at the post, noticing a piece of paper stuck at the bottom, like a pamphlet of some sort. It looked new.

He took a deep breath. “There are no such things as ghosts,” He said to himself. The tunnel seemed to be laughing at him, the shadows beckoning him forward. He took his phone out of his pocket to call his wife, and cursed softly.

The display was shattered. He had forgotten that he’d broken it earlier in the day. It had fallen to the floor from the second floor office window, all smashed up. He threw the pieces into the bushes nearby and looked at the tunnel again; his face contorted in a grimace, and started to walk.

He stood a couple of feet from the tunnel now, and peered inside. It was completely dark. Not a single source of light was visible anywhere. He couldn’t even see the lights at the other end. His heart beat quickened. “Stupid,” He told himself, setting foot inside the tunnel. He wasn’t claustrophobic. There was nothing to be scared of.

That was precisely when an old story about the tunnel came to his mind. This was the one that had given him nightmares for weeks. He heard it from the people who worked with him. A year ago, on Christmas Eve, a pizza delivery boy had tried to walk through the tunnel, but he was killed in an accident. A truck had run over him, crushing every bone in his body, and decapitating him. They said the head was never found, and the ghost of the pizza boy was the one most people had reported seeing, searching for its missing head.

“Old wives tales,” He thought. He had to get home. Tonight was special. Very special. He stepped inside the tunnel.

He walked slowly, his feet echoing with every step. His eyes darted left and right, trying to get accustomed to the darkness. A single line of sweat was running down his back, tracing a perfect line down his spine. His breathing was getting shallow and ragged by the second, his heart still thumping in his chest.

The darkness of the tunnel seemed to press down on his face. He seemed to be suffocating under the absence of light, his breath coming out in wheezes. He turned around, looking for the way he had come, but there was no light there as well. He seemed to have been trapped in a vortex of darkness.

His hands were trembling as he patted his pockets for his cell phone. Too late, he remembered how he had thrown the pieces away. It was broken anyway, there was no way he could have used it. He blinked furiously, trying to get rid of the sweat creeping down his forehead and into his eyes. His ears strained for some noise- the chirping of insects or the rumble of cars from the outside- but he could hear none, save for his own heart, which was sprinting in his chest, the sound as though magnified ten times.

He was close to tears now, the numerous accounts of ghost stories coming back to him, as he imagined one ghostly form to another, passing before his eyes, his feet staggering wildly, trying to find the exit. There seemed to be no way out. He moved slowly, his hand desperately searching for some kind of hold on the tunnel wall, but only finding empty air.

Then suddenly, he heard a noise. He stopped, his senses sharper. His ears strained to recognise what the sound was. Tap-Tap-Tap-Tap. *Someone was coming!*

He went perfectly rigid, not moving a muscle. He wasn’t even breathing, his heart rate now doubled. His nose took in the musty scent of the tunnel, now with a small scent of something else. Something like… was that pizza?

His eyes went wide. He was the faintest outline of a man, coming towards him. Only a rippling shape, just about decipherable in the inky darkness. The man was shorter than Pratap, approaching slowly. Pratap looked at him fearfully, as the man’s hand went to his pocket, and took something out.

A faint light appeared in the man’s hand. It was a cell phone, and the time showed 11.50 pm. The man was dressed in a red shirt and blue jeans, holding a pizza delivery bag. The hands were wheatish in complexion, with short fingers.

“Just a pizza delivery boy. Probably making a late night delivery,” Thought Pratap, relief filling his heart. That was when he looked up to the Pizza boy’s face.

He had no head.

Where there should have been a head, there was nothing. A portion of empty, black space, under which the neck and body hovered, lit by the faint blue light of the cellphone.

Pratap stiffened. His whole body shook as he backed away, a finger pointed at the ghost. He was trembling violently, trying to scream. But no sound came out. It was as if the sight had frozen his vocal cords, rendering him unable to speak. The headless man stood calmly, phone in one hand. And he reached out with the other, going for Pratap’s face.

Pratap ran. He turned the other way and ran for his life. The headless man watched him run until he became part of the shadows of the cave, and was not visible anymore.

The headless man stood there for another moment, trying to hear the footsteps of the man who had just ran. He heard nothing. And then he started to laugh. He laughed hard, doubling over and clutching his stomach. He straightened up and took off the pitch-black towel which was covering his face and wrapped it around his neck like a scarf.

“Wish the guys from work had seen that!” he thought to himself.

He walked slowly, holding the mobile phone in front of him, grinning to himself. He had planned to dress up like the headless pizza boy and scare someone for ages. He had finally tried it out today, and the result had been fantastic! He chuckled again, as he came out of the tunnel, breathing in the cool night air.

He stretched his arms, and ran his fingers through his air, thinking about the dude who had run away.

“Nice,” He thought. “Maybe I’ll do this some other time,” He looked at his surroundings, and saw the old lamppost, the old bulb inside it flickering away. It was time for him to go home. He walked a couple of paces and looked down, cursing. His shoe had come undone.

He looked around and went across to the lamppost and put his foot on it, tying the laces. His eyes wandered over the rusty post, and fell upon a piece of paper stuck to the bottom. It looked new. He bent down and read it. The text was small, but not hard to make out. It was like an obituary, the kind you see in newspapers. It said:

“First death anniversary. Died inside the tunnel on Christmas Eve last year, hit by a car. Mourned by his wife and son. You will live on in our hearts.”

It sounded cheesy, like the people who had printed it hadn’t wanted to spend a lot of money on it. He glanced at the name under the black and white photograph of the dead guy which was under the text.

“Pratap Kulkarni.”

The picture of the man seemed vaguely familiar. Like someone you once knew but now forgotten. He gazed at the picture intently, hoping for some flash of recognition. None came.

He sighed and got up again, dusting his knees.

“Ghosts,” he said to himself and smiled. Ghosts didn’t exist.

He started to walk slowly, away from the tunnel, towards home, the solitary lamppost winking behind him; like they shared some dark secret.

\_\_END\_\_

**42. Title :** [**OUIJA ADVENTURE**](http://yourstoryclub.com/short-stories-unusual-experience/suspense-short-story-ouija-adventure/)

## Category : Paranormal and Unusual Experiences

**Story :** “I don’t like it.” Jennifer said with a strong undercurrent of suspicion and tension in her voice.

“Come on, Jenny, don’t be a spoil sport.” Imran pleaded with her.

“I agree with Jenny. We may be getting into something about which we know next to nothing,” said Sharad, concurring with Jennifer, which brought a nervous smile on Jennifer’s face.

“What’s wrong with you guys? A week ago we agreed to do this. Didn’t we? Why the cold feet now, Jenny and Shar?” Vikram was visibly annoyed.

“Yes, but…” Sharad mumbled.

“No ifs and buts Shar. Are you with me and Imran or not?”

A moment’s pause. “I’m in, guys,” said Sharad looking guiltily at Jennifer.

“No, Shar. I feel this is wrong.”  Jennifer said nervously.

“Look, Jenny, you were all enthusiasm last week for doing the Ouija board. My parents are away for the weekend; will only return tomorrow morning. So, we have the house for ourselves. I’ve ordered pizzas, burgers, Cokes, Pepsis, the whole works. Don’t spoil the night for all of us, please.” Vikram insisted.

“It’s not that, Vicky…” Jennifer sounded unsure.

“We’ve always been *‘one for all and all for one’*. Haven’t we, Jenny?” Imran joined Vikram in trying to convince Jennifer.

“What if something goes wrong?” Jennifer was doubtful.

“What can go wrong? It’s a simple Ouija board; we’ll call a small spirit or something, ask a few questions, that’s all; strictly fun. When it’s all over we’ll ask it to go away.”

Jennifer was lost in thought.

“Come on, Jenny, please…” The three friends cajoled her.

Finally, Jennifer conceded and reluctantly said ‘yes’, peer-pressure having got the better of her judgement.

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The four close friends settled with their Cokes and Pepsis in the study of Vikram after finishing the pizzas and burgers. The illumination was low, all the windows were shut and drapes drawn. They were seated on the carpet in the centre of the room with a makeshift Ouija board prepared by Vikram on paper. It had the alphabets A-Z in upper case in two rows along the lower edge and the digits 0-9 along the upper edge. In between were drawn three large circles. The central one contained an “X”, the one on the left had the word “YES” written inside and the one on the right had “NO” written in it. Vikram placed a smooth, circular, ivory-coloured carrom striker on the “X” and turned towards his friends.

“OK guys, it is past eight o’clock. Shall we start?” Vikram asked his friends.

All of them nodded their heads, Imran and Sharad enthusiastically and Jennifer nervously.

“OK. Whom shall we invoke, I mean call?”

They discussed for a few minutes several alternatives of dead persons, including an old ‘cantankerous uncle’ who used to live in the house at the end of the street.

“Hmmm…No guys. They are no good. We need something good, I mean strong.”

Jennifer was really worried. “Vicky, I am afraid. This isn’t good. Let’s drop the idea and go back home.”

“Oh, shut up, you chicken. Don’t spoil the fun. What guys, any suggestions?”

Imran and Sharad shook their heads.

“OK, then leave it to me.” He thought for a minute. “I’ve decided. We’ll call *Pazuzu*.”

“Who’s *Pazuzu*?” They asked in unison.

“You haven’t read *‘The Exorcist’* or seen the film!” He looked at them scornfully.

Again they shook their heads.

“It is a ghost, a devil. It possesses a little girl. Two exorcists pray for a few days and drive it away.” What Vikram didn’t reveal was that the two priests die in the process. His friends nod their heads in approval.

“OK, guys, let’s start. Do as I explained. OK?”

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They sat around the Ouija board and placed their right-hand index fingers on the carrom striker.

“Let’s close our eyes and concentrate and call for *Pazuzu*. Let’s chant the name *Pazuzu* till it descends into the striker and answer our questions. OK?” They all nodded in agreement.

They followed Vikram’s instructions and closed their eyes, concentrated and chanted the name *Pazuzu*, slowly and again and again. Nothing happened for some time. While the other three were restless and disappointed, Vikram persisted.

Half an hour elapsed.

Suddenly…

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…The windows opened with a bang and the drapes fluttered violently. A strong wind that rose from nowhere swooshed into the room and threw papers and small articles helter-skelter. The hot summer air inside the room became so chilly that their exhaled breath froze instantly. They shivered in the chill but Vikram urged them to continue.

“Are you here, *Pazuzu?”* Vikram asked.

Their eyes were glued to the striker. Nothing happened for a few minutes, while Vikram repeated the question. Slowly, the striker came alive and started sliding on the smooth white sheet of paper.

It came to a halt on the circle that said “Yes”.

A chill ran down the spines of the teenagers. They stared at each other.

Jennifer the skeptic asked, “How do we know that you are actually here? How am I to know that one of the others is not moving the striker?”

What happened next erased all doubts from their minds.

The striker flew off the paper surface at tremendous speed and hit a window pane, shattering it into a million slivers.

The friends were aghast, not knowing what to say or how to react. At last, realisation dawned upon them that they had meddled with something, which none of them even began to understand.

Jennifer screamed, “Vikram, ask it to go away.” All of them concurred.

“*Pazuzu*, go away; *Pazuzu*, go away…” They chanted in unison.

But it was too late…

There was a raw energy that engulfed the room. It was throbbing, humming and all the articles in the room seemed to come alive; books, CDs, clothes and several other objects were floating in air moving violently around the room.

“*Pazuzu*, go away; *Pazuzu*, go away…” They continued to chant in unison but to no avail.

It wouldn’t go away. The friends stared at each other for a solution to their problem but none had any.

Finally, Vikram screamed, “Let’s run from here, come on…” and they got up and ran to the door.

The door, which was open till then, shut itself violently with a bang, splintering the wood. The four of them were thrown to the floor by an unseen evil force. They heard a blood-curdling, hysterical and maniacal laughter.

And then they saw it; a smoky, ghost-like form with a man’s body, a lion’s head, an eagle’s clawed feet, two pairs of wings, a scorpion’s tail, the right hand pointing upwards and the left hand pointing down.

While the four friends cowered into a corner, screaming for their lives, the daemon moved towards them menacingly.

They screamed…

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A year later…

“Here are the keys to the bungalow, Mr. Ramanna. Good luck.” Shravan Kumar shook hands and handed over the keys.

“Thanks, Mr. Shravan.” Ramanna, who purchased Shravan Kumar’s bungalow, reciprocated.

Shravan Kumar and Kajal drove away in their car, leaving behind Mr. Ramanna, his wife, Rajam and their two teenage sons, Pradeep and Praveen.

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A year earlier…

When Shravan Kumar and Kajal returned from their week-end trip, they were shocked to find their house an absolute and bloody mess. Their son, Vikram’s room was a total chaos, things strewn around everywhere. They were shocked to find blood stains on the floor and walls and their son was nowhere to be found.

The police were called in, made elaborate inquires but reached a complete *cul de sac*. They discovered that, along with Vikram, his three teenage friends were missing too. The state-wide alert and search yielded no results. After pursuing the case for a year the police kept the case-file in abeyance.

The four teenage friends seemed to have simply disappeared without a trace.

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“Come on, guys let’s get into our house…no, home…beautiful isn’t it?” Ramanna asked.

“Yes, dad,” screamed the children joyously while Rajam nodded and rested her head on Ramanna’s shoulder as they walked into the bungalow.

In a dark corner inside the basement*Pazuzu* chuckled…

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**Author’s remark**: Through this miniature effort of mine I pay tributes to William Peter Blatty, the man who created *“The Exorcist”*, a cult classic and one of the most famous and controversial horror stories of all time, which frightens me even today.

**43. Title :** [**The Ghosts Inside My House**](http://yourstoryclub.com/short-stories-unusual-experience/ghost-short-story-ghosts-inside-house/)

## Category : Paranormal and Unusual Experiences

**Story :** Today was like any normal day, well so I thought as I pulled open my cream curtains that opened up the fields and the bright blue sky, like I did every day, and I didn’t think this day was going to be any different, why? Because I hadn’t seen any ghosts in my house for a while, no noises, not moving objects, nothing, and because of this I was happy.

Now you may not believe me as I tell you this, just like my mum, and my dad, and I am not allowed to mention in in front of my little sister Mary as she gets scared easily, But here it gose.

I live with my mum, dad and little sister, we live in a big Tudor house in the middle of no where, now that’s not the part I’m worried about you not believing it’s this part, I can see ghosts, yes that’s right actual ghosts, like people that aren’t there, I hear them, see them, and feel them around me, since I was a little girl my sisters age actually, only 3 I realised I could see them at first I didn’t know what they were, they looked odd, Old big dresses, suits, they looked very  posh.

On the evening of my 5th birthday I was asleep in my room and I got woken up by objects moving around my room, things like my rocking horse that was usually by my window had moved next to my bed. My music box open and playing a sweet lullaby. When I was home alone, at 10, just after my sister was born my mum and dad went out and left me in charge of the house, because it was in the middle of no where there were no worries, and because my mum when she was younger grew up in this house and nothing ever happened to her that she needed to be worried about she thought she had nothing to worry about.

It was that day, the day I was home alone that I saw the first little boy, it was only when I was 10 I started to wonder what they were, and because I heard adults always talking about how children have vivid imaginations, make up people, images of the mind, that children often invented to make there child hood more exciting. Because I was quite a lonely child, I played alone in my room, or in the garden while my parents did things around the house and because I was 10 when I got my first baby sister I lived most of my life alone, so I thought that these people I saw around my house were my imagination so I dont feel lonely.

This was strange because the ‘people’ never really payed any attention to me, but I thought as an imaginary friend they were meant to play with me and talk to me but they didn’t, all they seemed to do was move my things and stair at me. Anyway on the day I was alone I was walking to my play room I was hall way down the hallway when I heard a gentle humming and moving around, I got scared so I stopped midway, clutching to my dress, not daring to blink, I felt a cold breeze past my face and whispers in my ears. They were so gentle I  couldn’t understand them and as I was staring at the play room door I saw a boy run out towards me.

He looked younger than me, about 6, he was pale and vivid like he wasn’t there, like a mist, he was wearing blue, a blue hat, long white socks blue shorts, a white shirt, and a blue jacket, he had a small face with blue eyes and he looked up at me with them, glaring at me, not moving, not saying anything, until he whispered,

“This is my house, who are you? I’m telling mother, get out! get out!”

Then he vanished, my heart was pounding, I was terrified, this was not my friend this was an intruder.

Later that day when my mum and dad and little baby sister returned home, we sat down to dinner, half way though eating my chicken I looked up at my parents and said

“Who are those strange people that walk round out house mummy?”

She looked at me blankly and laughed,

“What do you mean? there are no people in this house other than us, Oh Jean you and your imagination.”

I looked back at her and said,

“I saw a little boy, he’s younger than me, he was in our playroom, playing with my toys, then he came out and spoke to me”

Then my dad looked at me with a puzzled look,

“Yes Jean? and what did the little boy say to you?”

When I gulped down my water I stared at him,

“He told me that this was his house, and he wanted us to go away, daddy he scared me, this is our house not this!”

That’s when my mum once again looked at me and said,

“Bertie will you leave her alone and stop encouraging her? and Jean honey, this is our house and I doubt very much that there was a little boy here who told you to get out”

At this time I got quite annoyed at my mother because was she listening to me? there was someone here, not just one person but there are lots, I only see them when I’m home alone and I know I’m not imagining them.

I have just turned 11, and since I saw the little boy in my playroom I have just seen things move and voices and the occasional person, Now at school we have just read a book, It was about these things called ghosts, apparently there dead people, lost souls trapped in our world, some are harmless, but some are very dangerous, and from what happened next in my life of ghosts I don’t think these are kind ghosts.

It was a winters morning and me and my sister were home alone, it was 8:00am and mum and dad had gone for a walk to the village for some food, I was looking after my little sister Mary who had just learned to walk, so I let her out of her cot, and took her downstairs and placed her in the playroom, where I knew she was safe and only a few feet away from where I was, in the kitchen getting some warm milk and cookies for us to share, as soon as I had started waking towards the kitchen I heard a loud BANG and as I turned around in shock I saw that the playroom door had been slammed shut and Mary on the other side of the door screaming and crying, I tried to get to her but the door was jammed, I knew it wasn’t locked as we don’t have a lock on the play room door, I couldnt get in and I was worried, I ran upstairs to try and find something to open the door with and as I reached the top of the stairs I saw the little boy that I had seen when I was 10, he looked at me with the same blue eyes I remembered him having he opened his mouth and this time in a loud whisper that seemed to echo in my ear he said,

“I told you this was my house and I told you I wanted you out! you never listened to me, so I told my mother and she is very angry with you.”

I looked back at him trying not to be scared for my sisters sake,

“What are you doing to my sister? Its not her fault, Please don’t hurt her! Let her out and punish me, not my family!”

The boy laughed,

“I gave you the option of leaving but you didn’t, I don’t know what my mother will do, but there is no way of getting the door open”

I had heard enough and ran down stairs the nursery door was open so I ran in, the window was open, which was impossible because dad keeps a lock on them so no one can get in. And Mary? No where no be seen.

“Where’s my sister?! what have you done with her?!”

The little boy appeared,

“Look out the window, Mother said she needed some air”

I ran to the window and looked out over the massive field and there I saw my sister, Her blonde locks blowing in the wind, her pale face had turned red, she had tears pouring from her eyes, she was at the other end on the field by the pond that dad and put a fence round because it was dangerous she was on the other side of that fence, the side with the river, she was so close to the edge, she could fall in any second! I ran to the door, forgetting about the shoes, I ran to the pond where I saw my sister, I climbed over the fence and grabbed Mary and held her tight,

“Im so sorry Mary this is all my fault, I promise I wont let anyone touch you again!”

As we headed back to the front door It had closed its self and locked its self, I looked through a window and saw pictures flying around the room, tables turning, curtains being pulled down, chairs being thrown from one side of the room to the next, I saw lots of people, Ghosts, what ever they were they were in our house, and had locked us out, they were wrecking everything, my mums glasses, cups and plaits were being smashed, my dads clothes spread on the floor, now hopefully, my mum would believe me.

After sitting in the garden for what seemed like a life time, still clutching to my baby sister to afraid to let her go, I saw my parents walking back up the drive, when they saw us sitting there my mum was shocked you could tell by the look on her face,

“What on earth? Why are you out here? its too dangerous!”

I had tears in my eyes, I was afraid of what would happen,

“I cant get in.”

“What do you mean?”

Asked my dad now looking equally as surprised as my mum.

“The ghosts, remember them? the little boy I told you about, the one you said was my imagination? His family have locked us out and wrecked everything, go on look through the window see for your self!”

My mum and dad ran to the nearest window after 1 minute of no one speaking my mum let out a huge scream and fell to the floor, my dad turned round, his face red with anger, I had never seen him looking this angry before,

“Jean! What is this?” He burst out “Your telling me that some called ghosts did this?!?”

“But daddy..”

“But nothing, you have wrecked out house, Locked your self out, made your sister cry, anything else you wanted wreck!?!”

“It wasn’t me!”

I shouted bursting into tears. I told him everything to Mary getting locked in the play room to the little boy at the top of the stairs, even when Mary almost fell in the pond!

After a few minutes of getting shouted at and blamed for the whole thing my mum calmed my dad down and he went to the village for a black smith to open our door, when we finally go in I showed my mum the play room and the open window because I know she knew that there was no way of us opening them. She ran to my dad and said that I must have been telling the truth and also there was no way I would have been able to do that much damage to every room in the house alone.

That’s when my mum and dad finally decided to get the village exorcists to come and get rid of the bad spirits in our house. They came at 10am, and they set up a table in the playroom because thats where I had seen the most ghostly activity. They started off with a table that allowed them to connect to the spirits and talk with them to ask them what they wanted apparently they had never seen anything like it, and that we were in great danger with there spirits there energy was so strong and powerful that they would do what ever they could to get us out of there house. Then they tried to get rid of them.

Since the exorcist came to our house we have had nothing, I’m now 13 and I haven’t seen a single ghostly thing, no noises, no moving objects, and no ghost sightings, and since the exorcist went we haven’t mentioned anything to do with ghosts especially since my sister forgot everything that happened when she was 2 she has stopped believing in them and she is now scared of anything to do with them so if we mention them she wont be happy.

Which brings me back to the day when it feels like a normal day because nothing has happened for so long, nothing could possibly go wrong any more, right? Well no I was wrong because the same day that I opened my curtains thinking that this would be like a normal day it wasn’t, my mum hadn’t said anything all day, I mean nothing not one word, she has been sitting in her chair staring blankly at the fire place she had a chunk of hair missing that dad said he had found on her side of the bed when he got up, even when we ask he a question she doesn’t respond.

It was 3am when it happened, I cant even speak about it, it makes me feel sick but at 3am on a Thursday morning I was woken by a scream. My mums scream. It wasn’t coming from her bedroom because she wasn’t in her bedroom. she wasn’t in my sisters room, or downstairs, in fact she wasn’t even in the house she was in the garden we saw her in her white gown the sun was rising and we just about saw her, at the back of the garden where the pond was fenced off. She was standing on the other side on the fence and there right next to her, I saw the little boy in blue, just like when I was 10, standing next to my mother, then I heard a whisper,

“I told you, you should have gone away, my mother wasn’t happy, and you took her away from me, so now I’m going to take your mother away from you”

And with that my mother fell into the pond, she didn’t move, she didn’t struggle, she just lay there face down in the pond. I knew I had lost her.

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**44. Title :** [**Murder in the Graveyard**](http://yourstoryclub.com/short-stories-unusual-experience/suspense-short-story-murder-in-graveyard/)

## Category : Paranormal and Unusual Experiences

**Story :** A murder committed in cold blood and these people are attributing it to a ghost! How very idiotic!

It was a graveyard all of us saw from outside and some of us the inside too, as the near ones were accompanied till they they were buried. In a crowded city like ours, there had been a mushrooming of flats even near the graveyard and the graveyard was not a far off, dark and gloomy place from where eerie sounds of anklets or the whines of sickly dogs were heard or that’s what people believed till sometime back.

The graveyard was at the back of a small church and once in a while people were not startled when they heard the slow ringing of the funeral toll in the neighbourhood.

But in the recent past some rumours were being spread about the graveyard. People started talking about shady figures seen inside the compound at dusk and strange shrieks heard in the dead of night. Some said that the old church organ was also heard in the dead of night, sometimes, though the church was locked from the outside. But the rumours helped keeping the petty thieves at bay.

The real estate people who were trying to build all over the vacant land around the graveyard, considered these rumours malicious lies, spread in order that the price of land would hit rock bottom.

As the graveyard was big and was the only one for the entire Southern and Eastern part of the city, it was used by a huge population and many started believing the rumours.

Now, this murder had given a kind of authentication to the stories on ghosts. Though the police came, it was suspected that, even some in the police department believed that a ghost had a hand in the murder.

I walked out of the crowd. Quite suddenly I saw him also moving out of the crowd. He was wearing a grey overcoat, though it was not very cold. The coat reminded me of something. I recalled the face of the dead man. I turned the pages of my memory. I could recollect the coat, because it was unique. It looked like the overcoats worn in western countries two centuries back. Yet it it did not look worn out. In this city too people wore coats, but shorter ones. The recollection of the coat led the thread of memory to where I had seen it before.

Yes, I had seen the dead man with the man wearing the overcoat. I had seen them in heated argument a few days back. I had found out something. In my excitement I went very near the man. A speck of blood on the coat near the right shoulder was what I saw.

Apparently no one had seen them together except me and so no one suspected him. He seemed just another man drawn by curiosity. But I could guess who he was. I had seen them near the graveyard in pitch darkness. He seemed a mean fellow. Should I tell the police? Who would believe me?

I followed him silently. I got into the bus along with him. I found out where he lived. I was one hundred percent sure he was the murderer; he had that dirty smirk in his face that said it all.

The police could not get a clue to the murder. The body was brought for funeral after the postmortem. I was not surprised to see him at the funeral. He was wearing the coat without the stain now.  It was a dark cloudy day and people who attended the funeral, and those weren’t many,  left quickly. The man lingered for sometime just outside the compound. I knew what I should do. I gave him a powerful smack on the back of his head. Blood splattered and drenched his overcoat as he fell down, lifeless. A fit punishment for one who was the cause of tarnishing the image of ghosts!

I went inside the graveyard. I could hear someone shrieking outside. A huge crowd was gathering near the body and the arrival of the police jeep – I could tell from the noise outside. All became quite once again around midnight. My pale friends rose from their graves as usual for their midnight party. I walked into the church, through the church wall and sat at the organ to play.

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**45. Title :** [**Redemption Cemetery: Curse of the Diamond**](http://yourstoryclub.com/short-stories-suspense-thriller/thriller-short-story-redemption-cemetery/)

## Category : Paranormal and Unusual Experiences

**Story :** A bead of perspiration rolled down John’s face. The hot midsummer night was unusually humid. He wiped the sweat off with the back of his hand, smearing his face with dirt in the process.  “Damn!” he muttered in exasperation. This was turning out to be harder than he had imagined.

He summoned all his energy and swung the pickaxe one more time. A dull metallic like sound echoed as the pickaxe made contact. John stilled himself for a minute, fear gripped his heart. He looked around himself warily. It was dark all around and not a soul seemed in sight. The fifteen hundred odd tombstones stared back at him mutedly. The moon played hide and seek with the clouds, throwing random shadows on earth in the process, adding to the eeriness of the place. The steadily deteriorating edifice of the village chapel loomed in the distance. It was supposed to have been built in the 19th century by the duke of the region, but when the French revolutionaries had invaded the village, they had vandalized the place. Yet surprisingly, it had managed to survive the ravages and although it was in a pitiable state, even two centuries later, it stood like an epitaph, a reminder of the atrocities that had befallen the peaceful village.

John resumed his work. There was not much time at hand and he feared lest someone should happen to cross that way, he would be spotted and the prospect of being questioned or worse still of getting arrested was not a very appealing one.  He brought the axe down with greater gusto. He was almost there; his long cherished dream was now just one foot under.

Ten minutes later, John surveyed the scene of his work. He could now see the wood casket, and he could decipher the *fleur-di-lys*that was carved into the top. He brushed the layer of dirt hurriedly with his hands. The casket appeared fragile and John was surprised that it had managed from disintegrating completely. If the tales were to be believed, it had to be at least two hundred years old. How was it possible that the wood had survived even though it had been buried six feet under?

But this wasn’t the time for retrospection. He needed to break into the casket immediately. As per the legend, the casket contained precious jewelry that belonged to a French monarch’s daughter. But the most intriguing part of the legend was that there was a necklace that had a diamond which was rumored to be bigger than even the *Kohinoor.*  John rubbed his hands with anxious gaiety.  Like the *Kohinoor*it was believed that this diamond was cursed as well and brought great misfortunes to the person who possessed it. But John was not falling prey to old wives tales. He had dismissed this curse theory the very moment he had heard about this diamond a year back.

“I win”, Scott said as he brought down the pitcher with a huge bang on the table.

John finished his beer a minute later and grinned sheepishly at Scott.

“Ya, old man, you win” John said, his speech was slurred from all the drinking that they had been doing throughout the day.

He had met Scott after almost two years, had put him down as dead when he heard nothing from him in the months gone by. And then today morning, an incessant banging on his door woke John up. Grudgingly he opened the door only to stare into the old Frenchman’s sharp blue eyes. He let out a loud yelp of joy, and they hugged and thumped each other vigorously, shouting and cheering vociferously, much to the annoyance of John’s landlady.

“Where’ve you been?” John asked as he dug into a Spanish omelet an hour later. They were seated in an old café on the corner of the street.

“Don’t ask, for you not gonna believe it!” Scott replied with a sly and mysterious smirk on his face.

“With you, I’ll believe anything” retorted John.

Scott took a big swig of beer, and looked piercingly into John’s eyes.

“Was out on the sea with them goddamn pirates” Scott paused for effect.  “We looted ships in the route Saint Muar to Jurong Port, sold off the goods at cities along the way” He grinned. “It was a hell lot of fun. High adrenaline, manly stuff”

John merely grunted. The sea life had never excited him. He found the land more enticing and less risky.

“It was there that I heard an old French tale.” Scott resumed. “In the 19th century, a remote village in the south of France was burnt down by the revolutionaries. At that time, the duke was staying in the village along with his wife and daughter who was merely sixteen years of age.  The wife and daughter were very scared, and the duke feared that the revolutionaries may exploit the young beauty that her daughter had blossomed into. So before the revolutionaries could reach her, he shot her with his gun and buried her in the graveyard behind an old chapel. Along with her body, he buried her favorite jewelry. It is believed that it’s quite a lot and that there is a huge diamond stored as well”

A silence followed.  “So what are you saying?” John asked.  Scott gave a wry smile. “I sure would like to get my hands on that diamond, but it’s a long shot and the details are vague. The name of the village is not sure; there are hundreds of villages in south France. It will take decades to find the right one.  Plus there is the matter of the curse“

That was a year ago, and in the twelve months that had passed, John had researched and scavenged and spent all his savings in finding the elusive diamond. He scanned villages after villages, questioned the habitants till they became suspicious and then moved on to the next one on the route. Of course he didn’t let Scott know about his activities. He couldn’t even if he wished to, for the man had disappeared once again.

John tried to pry the casket open, but even though he applied all the force, it wouldn’t give way. “This is strong stuff” he muttered under his breath.

“Or maybe the curse protects it” a hollow voice sounded from above.

John jumped out of his skin, letting out a scream in the process. He bit on his lips to stop himself and noticed that he was trembling like a leaf. He couldn’t see the ground above him for he was six feet under.

“Who’s there?” he whispered. His voice sounded strange even to his ears. He heard the shuffling of feet and deep grunting as someone made his way closer. A pair of feet swung from the opening of the hole that he had dug.  Feet that were covered in frayed beige leather boots that had an anchor embroidered on the ankles.  He recognized who the person was without even needing to see the face of the owner of the boots.

“SCOTT!” he shouted. “What on god’s name are you doing here?” John was unsure if he should be glad or saddened by this discovery. The thought that he may have to part with his loot flashed through his mind.

Scott jumped into the hole and stood beside John. He looked cadaverous, and his eyes had an inhuman gleam in them. Probably the last excursion had been a tough one, thought John.

“So you found the jewel?” Scott questioned the obvious. John thought he detected a hint of regret in his voice.

“Yes. I did it. And that is why it belongs to me. Only me” John’s voice came out in a high pitch.  Scott continued to smile, a tired sad smile.

“It’s not yours. It belongs to the French duke’s daughter”

“Bah. You are out of your mind. She’s dead two hundred years. It’s no good to her. But for me, it means no longer would I need to suffer the drudgery of the common life” John laughed greedily.

He unhooked the rope that he had tied around his waist and wrapped the rope around the handles of the casket. The other end he threw outside the hole.

“Wait” Scott said quietly, but John ignored him. He had less than an hour from dawn and he had to move fast. He climbed out of the hole, grabbed the end of the rope and started heaving the casket up.

“Wait” Scott’s voice came from behind him. John started. He hadn’t seen him climb up from the hole. He felt panic clutch his heart and his blood froze as he stared into Scott’s face. Something was definitely amiss.

“Follow me” Scott said curtly, motioning him with his fingers. John obliged, as if he had been hypnotized.  Scott meandered through the rows of graves and suddenly he stopped. Without a word, he pointed at the flagstone in front of them. John read the letters on the flagstone. “Scott Augustine. 1956 – 2010.”

“What does this mean?” John asked incredulously. “Going by this it means you are already dead!” his voice sounded hollow to his own ears and he gulped nervously as he looked at Scott. His eyes widened as he looked beyond at an open grave. The last thing that John read before losing senses was the writing on the flagstone.

“John Beaumont. 1978 – Today.”

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