The Dean's office was like the hall of a law court for Aryan. In all 3 years, and in all campus his heard raced the most whenever he was passing through this area of the administration office. And now today, he was standing here as an accused of breaking a girls leg, whereas she was no where to be found. Instead there was an old man, loooking at him with the eyes of a vulture and his mother was arguing back at Dean Thomas.

"She can't walk. Mrs. Mishra. The girl may have lost her legs for all time.

Do you understand that? The gravity of what he's done."

"Give him one more chance, I beg you. This accident will ruin his last year. Please!"

Viren watched as his mother, who had rarely shown her care till today often not even caring for his lunch. Not even calling even if he doesn't return for two days beg against the a stern man and his stern decision. She sat on the musky chair slowly soaking her violet shirt, the makeup that she puts to hide her true face was now partly betrayed by the creases that have suddenly come accross.

"He has to go Mrs. Mishra that is my decision. Rest will be on the result of the court."

From a glance while walking out Viren saw the Shweta's father being consoled by the principal for her daughter's condition. He couldn't say much, after all it his mother's eyes that held his words back.

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The mud pot had a budding palm plant planted just a fortnight ago by the gardner. It's leaves were swaying slowly in the winds created not by gods whim but by a girl falling down the stairs from the 2nd floor. She came tumbling down the marble stairs when her head landed on the potted plant and broke it. The recess had just started and she was heading down to meet and say farewell to her sister in kindergarden. She waits for her big sister, making sure to hugs her before heading home in the bus. She must be waiting today too.

The children halted their paces. The excitement and indistinct chrous of shouts and yelling moments ago stopped, the blackness was gripping her eyes when she tried to lift her body. *I'm coming. Don't leave..... yet... Ananya.*

Her legs were not getting up. She tried with her hands to stand but they just weren't enough, and she was puzzled about the sudden heat from the sun, it was as if it had finally decided to burst. Then she realized when the warm blood in front of her eyes dripped from her brow sparkling in the its rays.

“Shit!” Tamna yelled.

She grabbed her friends head. Soaking her dress and ker'chief covering her head. Shweta didn't felt any sensation on it though.

“Lift her legs. It's the least you could do after that.”

She was yelling at someone. Someone senior. As Shweta glanced from her corner of eye the sillouette of a boy standing at the top. His face was covered with the shadow created by the sun on his back, his school dress was visible though barely, only thing clearly visible was his black hair that shone like a stone on the beach.

She remebered the boy, she liked him. A senior who had won the gold on the annual race day. She too was at the stage when he received it, when he saw her for the first time. She avoided meeting his gaze, scared by the rumors of his sudden outbursts and bullying of students.

“Shweta, Shweta! Get up and stay up. Don't you dare go unconciouss.”

The floor was covered with her blood as it flowed at a snails pace to the drainage pipe near the plant. She tried to remember how this hall looked before the palm plant was broken, before it lay dead like her on the floor, before the white marble was painted red, before she was pushed off for not moving out of the way.

“Hey, hey . Get up. You're okay. Your just fine. Try to move your hands and legs.

What did you brought in lunch, huh?” A desperate attempt from the gardner who was carrying her to the nurse, bobbing her in his arms all the way.

Her sister must be long gone by now. *I failed to hug her one last time*.

The black clouds were bigning to surrounded her. Waiting for an ambush. Her blurry friend was following somewhere behind them. The hazy red addition sign crossed her eyes before the ambush succeeded and she passed out.

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The food was what you get at a seven star hotels, the bittery aroma of the curry with a hint of cinamon raced in the nose. There was chicken, his favorite which made Viren's stomach growl with hunger to take both the leg pieces for himself. But he was sitting with only rice and Malai paneer with some salads. Today was thursday after all, one of those two drooling days in a week when he and his palate becomes vegitarian.

“Here. It's a 1911 Pinot Blanc, vintage from France. From the host.” Sameer uncorked the bottle. He had long ditched the wine glass saying 'Can't taste anything in it'. Now he was pouring the transparent wine in a beer glass and filled it to the brim while Viren stick to his guns, turning the drink in his goblet glass.

“You sure about this?” Sameer asked his friend trying to stop him from making a stupid mistake.

Viren traced the contour of the envelope against his coat. He had spend an entire month prepping each and every word written in there. He was tapping his boots on the carpet waitng for his name.

“Yes!” His voice was soft, almost like a whipser. There was a slight fissure in his words though. He needed that letter, without it he'd have to rely on his memories and his courage to speak. Both of them were dwindling like a dying flame.

“It's me, Good Luck.”

“Same to you!” Viren said, as his friend left took his hung jacket having the flag brooch off the chair as he headed towards the podium. Sameer like him was going to be a Major from tomorrow on. An honour received from the President himself. It ws fitting for him, after all they both had given so much to be here. Surviving was just the begining, adapting to home again was the hard part. He remembered the times when he had scared the nurse by suddenly waking up from his nightmare of that horror. The poor girl ran away the first time it happened. After that he was scared to sleep. To face the demons in his dreams. The silence of insomnia was more comfortable compared to the screaming dreams.

Viren saw his mother smiling at him from the starter table. She had took a liking to the sweet dishes it seems. He waved his hands back assuring her that he was okay. He was all she'd left with after father's death. His DiDi was gone, married off to another military family, and his father? He must be fighting with the gods to come down and smack some sense in his son. *But they aren't enough. Even the gods aren't enough.*

Sameer was about to finish his speech. He had recited each and every word to Viren over a dozen time arleady.

“And I thank my father, and his guidance for bringing me here. It was an Honour serving the country in it's time of peril... ” Viren traced words with Sameer giving them his funny accent.

“Thank you!” Sameer came down. And the General went up to call Viren. They were a little short on time so there was no introduction just the name call.

He sighed, grabbing his elbow crutch he stood up. His right leg clicked. Even after a month he couldn't get used to that sound. It was overwhelming to realize that this feeble stick was his life long partner now. He'd thought of naming the damn miserable thing but couldn't come up with anything fancy.

“Just say Thank you and get off.

Seriously, take the Promotion tomorrow.” Sameer sat down at the table.

“Yeah...”

Viren looked at the stairs, they were white like the ones he'd ran from. *But not Today.*

He went on, climbed the stage. They were a little lower compared to his school and his college which had none. From the podium he saw his mother tearing with smile, her table had three empty plates of Gulab Jamun. She was proud, her wrinkles seemed to have rescended alittle from the smile. She went a flying kiss to his son, while he just smiled opening the envelope containg his resignation and his speech.

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*Why am I here? Aren't I supposed to be on the train?*

“Come on. Let's meet Her.”

“Why? She doesn't even want me here.”

“Shut up or I'll beat you to a pulp this time. ” Viren grabbed his biceps, the swollen tissue had turned purple and it sended a surge electric jolts all over body everytime he touched the area.

They were walking down the hall of the first floor of Emissary Institue, best hospital for the spine injuries in the city. Very expensive. As Mr. Laghari had to sell his car and break his PF just to cover the bills. Viren liked that car, he was one of the very few ones in the school who came in one. He remembers the long trip they had taken in it to Shimla. Seeing the snow fall on the window pane while hiding in the safer warm place had something of a magical feel to it. The fights and singing still rang a hym in his mind in a torrent of memories. Last of which was of yesterday when a man had bought it off for 5.25 lakhs taking it away from his garage. Never to return. That was the deal Shweta's father agreed to for not reporting them. Taking care of her till she was able to walk again. In exchange for rescinding the case.

His feets growed roots, hessitant, trembling to move. His chest tightened and palms sweated. They were near the ICU ward.

“Come on!” Viren's father Mr. Laghari called him in. There they met Shweta still unconciuss and his father by his side waiting for them.

“How's the condition?”

“Head will recover. But the legs. Doctor said it was an incomplete injury so their is hope that she will walk again but it will take a long time and a few surgeries.”

“Any estimates?” Viren's father. Major Laghari questioned looking at the faint girl. Shweta's head was covered with a thick band of of yellow. She was wearing a black dotted gown loosely and carelessly tied as Viren due to his small height could see her nude top from the sides.

“8 to 10 months. Maybe even a year.”

The figur hit Viren hard.

*A year of care!? On top of my boarding school. Greedy Fuckers!* He said in unheard voice gritting his teeth.

“You have my condolences. She was conciouss just a moment ago right?”

“It comes and goes.” The devastated father replied.

“Viren!”

Viren presented himself at them. Fidgetting with his hands he said “I'm Sorry Mr. Adarsh. I know aology isn't enough. I didn't mean to. It was my IED disorder. I'm sorry for all I've done. And I promise you that I will atone for it. I've left the school. Won't be going back to hurt you or your daughter, or anyone for that matter.” All of it was feeded line, memorised overnight with beating and incentives.

“Where's he going?”

“Military school. I've talked with them. He leaves tomorrow.”

“Good!” He said with dead eyes.

Before going back home and then to army, Viren glnced from the edge of the last time over at Shweta. Her face had started to twitch.

“He's gone now. Don't worry he's going far away.” her father whispered with her hand on his.

Viren felt the tug of pull on his hand. They were going towards the bus stand.

“Greedy Fuckers” Viren muttered.

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His hand let go of the stick. They were jittering, he suported both of them with each other. *I hate the stage. Never was a fan from the start.*

His hands started to jitter the same way they did at the top of stairs in school. He froze, his practiced sentenced and sessions broke like glass in his head. He was mixing them up, fusing his apology with something about a camel, or his thank you with the red flag in his pocket.

This is much harder than the speech. Viren Thought. Seeing Shweta on wheelchair. She had cut her hair short, before it reached her shoulders not it was like the

Intermittent explosive disorder.