

The Quadruplex Building

On the way back to Warangal during his journey Karen was carrying his first year experience of diploma at the college and felt that he had to change himself while dealing with his father and family.

Karen had a younger sister, studying 8th standard and an innocent household mother.

The Quadruplex building was facing west on the road towards Nizamabad and Karen usually gets down the bus on that road from where the building was at a walkable distance. His family lived in one comfortable portion on the north side-first floor of the building. The building had two portions on the first floor and two on the ground floor. In the ground floor portion just below their house lived Karen's paternal uncle, younger to his father and the two other portions on the south side were occupied by another paternal uncle, elder to his father.

They all were combined as a family and the separation of walls existed only virtually but in reality there were no walls between them.

There were two entrances to the building one on the north and the other on the south. Karen always preferred the north entrance to get in.

Karen got down the bus and started walking towards the building through a lane perpendicular to the main road. He was thinking of his father and was desperate to speak to him for giving him such a good life. He wanted to hold his father's hands and tell him sorry for all the painful acts that he did to him.

Karen never listened to anybody, neither his father nor his mother but for unknown reasons, very rarely he used to listen to his elder paternal uncle. His uncle was a professor in one of the city's top engineering colleges.

He entered the building seeing the garden that was maintained by his elder uncle in the space before the building. He knows that if there was life to those plants, they would have shown some intimacy towards him.

He walked through the stairs to their portion and his mother opened the door.

He threw his bag on to the couch as soon as he entered.

Where is dad? He asked his mother with a gratified excitement.

In the hospital, his mother replied in despair.

Karen's father was a psychological patient and gets admitted into the hospital very frequently. His father used to have sleepless nights for reasons known to him and sometimes his behavior had a strange tone leaving Karen, his mother and sister in misery causing disturbance to their sleep. It is just because of this reason Karen's family had to stay in this building as advised by his elder uncle. Doctors always said that it is the depression that causes insomnia to his father.

His body and brain was a mystery to doctors. Karen always thought that doctors used him as an experiment for their research by changing the drugs frequently without examining the effects. Karen's father never had the ability to make an independent decision for his family. Almost everything was looked after by Karen's elder uncle. Karen never liked it but this continued for years from Karen's childhood to till date.

Though they all lived in the same building, the emotions shown by the families of their uncles towards Karen's family always had an imbalance weighing more of a hatred towards them than love. It is because of the frequent health issues of his father and regular hospitalizations causing disturbance and frustration to others. Karen, his mother and sister had no independence and they were suppressed severely by every relative of them. They were criticized for all the mishappenings in their family as if they were the sole reason for their father's present situation. Almost everybody exploited them, taking advantage of their helplessness. Especially Karen had many miserable childhood influences which made him a rebel as what he is today.

Karen's mother started weeping as soon as he entered the house. All these years, Karen was the lone defender of his family.

What happened mom? Karen asked in an intimate tone.

Mother replied with a shivering voice trembling her words:

Two days back, father was going to the office in the morning. He was getting down the stairs, I was in the kitchen.

Suddenly there was some mysterious sound and a loud voice for help. I came out running and saw my father skidded on the stairs and collapsed at the last step .

There was severe head injury and by the time I went near, father was unconscious.

Later, I called both the uncles and luckily they were at home and helped us to take dad to the hospital by auto.

Why didn't you tell me? replied Karen with a shock on his face.

I don't want to disturb you because that day was your last exam, his mother replied.

How is dad now?, said Karen with strain.

Still unconscious... his mother replied nervously.

Which hospital? said Karen.

Jaya hospital, his mother replied.

Who is there in the hospital? said Karen.

Sister and elder father, she replied.

Now I have to go there and they will come back for dinner, she said.

Karen went inside and put some water on his face and told his mother: You stay back, I will go to the hospital and will stay there in the night.

Mother said it is 10PM and you just had a journey, you better eat some food and take rest. You can go to the hospital tomorrow morning.

Karen never listened to his mother and said: Mom, I am going there and you take rest. I will send my sister and elder father back.

Karen started walking towards the hospital and thinking of why this happens only to them?

What sins did they commit?

He reached the hospital by walk. It was around 3 KM from their home. He just forgot to take an auto thinking of his father.

He went inside the hospital and enquired in the reception. In the meanwhile, his sister and elder father came near and told him that father is in ICU.

Sister's eyes were filled with tears and his elder father informed him about the latest status of his father's health.

Karen told earnestly: I will stay here, you both go back to home.

They both went back home and Karen stayed in the hospital.

Karen was sitting in one of the seats arranged in the hospital at the reception with his head down and hands on his face.

He tried to go inside the ICU to look at his dad, But Nurses told that nobody will be allowed now and visitors are allowed only during visiting hours between 10 AM - 11:30 AM and 3PM - 5PM.

After some time, It was 12 in the midnight and he walked straight through the passage on the way to ICU. Luckily there was nobody there and he went inside.

He saw his father and went close to his bed. He was covered with all the biosensors and various connecting tubes.

The nostrils of his nose were covered with nasal cannula with a connecting tube, there was a tube connected to a nerve near the heart to feed the medicines or fluids, there was an inflatable cuff on the arm which takes the blood pressure readings and sends the data to the blood pressure monitor, there were temperature probes attached to the body to monitor the temperature, there was a pulse oximeter connected to the end of a finger to measure the oxygen in the blood, there was a catheter connected to drain out the urine.

Karen was just watching him and held his dad's hand in a hope that his father would open his eyes by the touch, but the attempt went in a despair.

Karen for the first time made an attempt to understand the pain of his father all through the years right from the age when Karen was 6 years old, when his dad first purchased him a toy robot even when it was not affordable for them.

Karen thought about that pain, When his dad gifted him a bicycle during his 6th standard in spite of the financial crisis at home.

Karen tried to visualize that pain of his dad very recently when Karen had a verbal fight with his father just before joining the diploma...

He thought that the pain he caused to his dad is much more vigorous than all those feeding tubes and measuring tubes attached to his father's body.

Suddenly somebody came inside and told Karen to move out of the ICU and warned him not to repeat again.