



“FOR ONCE IN MY LIFE”

-Life is not always a bed of roses, but it is a bed of thorns.

It had grown dark by the time I was alone with her. I watched the soft moonlight filter through the dark glass window and rest quietly on her closed eyelids. I remembered her love for me in every way. Walking me back from school as a toddler, reading stories with me, breaking her nap to cook a warm meal for me at odd hours in the afternoon, and when I had fever, to stay up most of the night.

My home was like heaven. Life was so simple yet wonderful. I was elder sister and I had only one brother named Ahmad. We were living with our mother as my father had died when I was in 5th grade by a car accident. My mother was a working lady. She was a teacher at college level. She worked hard day and night for the sake of money to make both end meets. Unluckily, my mother was diagnosed with cancer which completely changed our life. We had no enough money for her treatment. With every passing day her condition was becoming more critical. One day I was leaning on chair, Ahmad was crying in the other room. I called him and asked, "What happened? Why are you crying?" he said, "Mom is not answering me". I said "Ahmad! She is sleeping. Don't disturb her" He replied, "But her eyes are open." I rushed to the room where my mother was lying. She turned her head immediately as I entered and I bent down. She had looked into my eyes and said something. It was one of those moments where you have caught the words but you can't unscramble them immediately. Like that nanosecond when the bullet has hit you but the pain has not yet begun. I knew she was dying and very close to leaving us. That scene is still in my mind like it happened yesterday. Everything was changed. After her death, I and Ahmad had to live alone. We had no source of income to feed ourselves. We meandered aimlessly, in search of money, but sadly we could do nothing. I wanted to depart college because I had no money to pay my fee, but principal gave me and Ahmad a scholarship. One day I was lying on bed, Ahmad came, he was weeping. I said to him, "What happened Ahmad?" He said, "Due to monsoon season, my Footwear has torn", he told me that students were making fun of him because he wore torn shoes; they were laughing at him and calling him poor. I used to be concerned because I had no money for brand new footwear. However, I promised him that I would buy new pair of shoes for him. The only solution I had left, that I had to borrow money from my friend so I could buy shoes for him. Now I had to do job to earn our livelihood. But we were living in backward village area and there were no opportunities of jobs for women in village. Finally, I decided to leave the village and I moved towards the city. The people of my village were conservative they called me shameless when I was leaving my village. There was load of pressure on me. Everyone was saying, "How can a girl do a job?" I was mentally disturbed. People's taunts were drowning me in depression. But for the sake of

my brother's future, we had to go to city to fulfill our basic needs. So we left the village but we were not having enough money for food and no place to live. I stepped out of bus and looked at the sky with eyes full of tears, I sat on the station for a while where I met my old friend Sara. She has been living in this city for three years. Sara greeted me and hugged me. At first I did not recognized her but after a while I remember all our memories we had together in our childhood. She asked me what I was doing here. Then I told her everything. She hugged me and said "You can live in my house till you find any job". I was in bad need at that time and I said "Thank you so much for understanding and helping me but I promise you that when I will find my job I will take a house on rent. I am really sorry that I bothered you." And then we started walking towards her home. Her home was near the bus station, I asked her that what she was doing at the bus station. Sara said that she was doing a job and was given a project which she has to complete by tomorrow. So for that purpose she was out of the city. She also told me that she is doing an online job too .I asked her that how she could do an online job. She told me about her job and suggested me to also start an online job with her. I liked her idea and started thinking about that. Our conversation was ongoing and we reached her house. She rang the doorbell and her mother opened the door. Her mother looked at me and then asked Sara "Who is she?" Sara told her mother that I was her old friend. After taking a rest, Sara showed me her house. The house was so beautiful and furnished. I was astonished at once, we sat on a Couch and then she showed me her way of doing online job and as she was showing me that she got a notification. I asked her what that was. Sara answered me that it is Facebook where you can make new friends and post your pictures and entertain yourself. She quickly got up from the couch and ran towards her room I got worried at once that what happened to her. She came back with a mobile in her hand and gave it to me and said to turn it on. I said to her, "I don't know how to turn it on. I have not used it before." Then she taught me how to use it and created my social media account and gave the mobile to me. I refused to take it but she resisted me to take it. After that we had then a dinner. She showed me the room where I lived comfortably with Ahmad. I started using the mobile. Initially I was having some difficulty using it. Within several days I got used to it and applied for an online job of digital marketing. It was easy. Anyone could do it but it just needed some time to manage it. I got my first pay and I was so happy that day. I could not explain that happiness. I asked Sara to guide me about the secondary schools here so that Ahmad could continue his studies. Now Ahmad started going to school but still it was hard to for me to fulfill our needs and requirements. So I started searching for the jobs in the city. It was really a hectic time searching for a job. But due to my continuous efforts I found a catering job at local hotel. I started my work there side by side with the online job. After two months I started living in a small house on low rent.

The house had only one room, a kitchen and a bathroom which was our basic need. Although the house was quite old, we still managed to live there. Being a girl it was not easy for me to do all this on my own. After the death of my parents, life had become miserable. My job at the hotel was not safe for me as I was facing sexual harassment by my co-worker. He used to touch me inappropriately. At first, I remained silent for the sake of not losing the job because I knew that no one was going to believe me if I made a complaint. But it made me so insecure. I did not feel safe whenever I went to the hotel. I was so much mentally disturbed. After many sleepless nights I finally decided to quit this job. After quitting this job, it was really hard for me to make both ends meet. But I did not lose hope. I kept looking for another job. With every passing day, life was becoming more difficult for me. After roaming here and there for days, at last I was given the job of a government school receptionist. After getting this job I felt some relief. But like before my coworkers and clerks always gave me the mean look. Negative thoughts can make you feel sad and anxious. They take the joy out of life-and they can take a toll on your physical health. I felt depressed and started looking at the things in a negative way. One day, I was sitting on the park bench just thinking about why have people been cruel to me my whole life. The park bench was deserted as I sat down to read beneath the long, straggly branches of an old tree. Disillusioned by life with good reason to frown, for the world was intended on dragging me down. If that weren't enough to ruin my day, a young boy out of breath approached me. He was tired from play. He stood right before me with his head tilted down and said with great excitement, "Look what I found!" In his hand was a flower, and what a pitiful sight, with its petals all worn - not enough rain, or too little light. Wanting him to take his dead flower and go off to play, I faked a small smile and then I started looking away. But instead of retreating he sat next to my side and placed the flower to his nose and declared with overacted surprise, "It sure smells pretty and it's beautiful, too. That's why I picked it; here, it's for you." The weed before me was dying or dead. Not vibrant of colors: orange, yellow or red. But I knew I must take it, or he might never leave. So I reached for the flower, and replied, "Just what I need." But instead of him placing the flower in my hand, he held it mid-air without reason. It was then that I noticed for the very first time that weed-toting boy could not see: he was blind. I heard my voice quiver; tears shone in the sun as I thanked him for picking the very best one. "You're welcome," he smiled, and then ran off to play; unaware of the impact he'd had on my day. I sat there and wondered how did he know of my self-indulged plight? Perhaps from his heart, he'd been blessed with true sight. Through the eyes of a blind child, at last I could see the problem was not with the world; the problem was me. And for all of those times I myself had been blind, I vowed to see the beauty in life, and appreciate every second that's mine. And then I held that wilted flower up to my nose and

breathed in the fragrance of a beautiful rose and smiled as I watched that young boy, another weed in his hand, about to change the life of an unsuspecting old man. This incident was life changing for me. I used to be ungrateful for my life but I understood that every person has to face challenges in this cruel world. I started working diligently. By my continuous efforts of days and nights, I got the job of lectureship at matric level. My profits were multiplied. Then I took the admission in the university. I continued my studies along with my part-time job. And then the day finally came when I got graduated. Ahmad was also done with his matriculation. Now he started going to the college and I took the admission at master level. I was feeling satisfied and contented. I started feeling positivity in my life. I became more grateful for what I had in my life. And then I just started flowing with life like a river. My life has given me the greatest lessons. I became mature at my early age just because of my responsibilities and the challenges I faced. I understood that pain is a part of life, and that pain helps you grow into a better-rounded and mature individual who is more capable of handling the ups and downs in life. But getting through that pain is all about mindset, and it is about choice. You can choose to wallow in an extended period of grief or despair, or you can choose to allow yourself to do that for a short, or specified, time and then move ahead with your life. The important thing is to give yourself the time to work through your normal human emotions without getting too stuck in any one phase of grief or loss. Surviving a difficult time is truly a choice. It is the most difficult times in our lives that truly test our faith in God, a person or people, or the world in general. We may think that we are alone in the world dealing with our problem or that no one understands what we are going through. Rest assured that someone somewhere has experienced what you are experiencing, perhaps right now. When enduring a difficult time in your life, it's important to acknowledge and accept that you can't control everything in your life. You can't control the economy, which might affect your job. You can't control another person's health, which means they might not be with you for as long as you would have liked. And you can't control whether or not another person loves you. What you can control is your reaction to the situation. While it's completely acceptable and normal to go through a grieving process for any type of loss, at some point you'll need to point your feet forward and continue on. After all, life is for the living. We only have one life here on earth, so we need to make it count. You won't want to end your life with regrets of wasted time and missed opportunities. Nothing lasts forever. And everything in life is just temporary—both the good times and the bad times. It's how we choose to react to these periods in our lives and how we decide to let them mold and shape us that truly creates a story to tell.