

My December

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*A*s I stooped to pick up the evening newspaper thrown carelessly at my doorstep, I reflected mechanically, “Is this really my home?” This same set of cold, inhuman walls had become my constant companion when was away from another set of walls and windows called an “office”. I closed the door to the grey world outside, and opened the grey newspaper, hoping to see something apart from the stereotypical screaming headlines. I was disappointed as usual.

I laid the newspaper aside, and collapsed into an easy chair, loosening my tie in a vague hope of quelling the stifling feeling that permeated my being. It didn’t help. MY long day of work at the office usually ended in a long night of work at home, clearing away the loose ends of a workload that would otherwise turn into an avalanche of knots. My house in the suburbs, isolated from the bustle of city life, perfectly suited my solitary lifestyle.

A cold December evening is not exactly the right time to feel blue. I trudged to the kitchen to prepare some coffee. As I stirred in large spoonfuls of the dark powder, I had the strange feeling that I was being watched. I whirled round, only to find myself staring at a picture on the wall.

And yet again, that ill-fated car accident seared into my memory seven years ago flashed past my eyes. My wife and I survived the crash, but not my daughter. My wife, heartbroken died shortly. She committed suicide. I hated to look at that happy picture of the three of us, taken shortly before the accident. I had nothing to live for. Nobody cared for me and I didn’t need anyone anymore.

The smiling faces in the photograph brought me back to reality. They smiled warmly, just as before, but somehow, I felt just a wee bit more cheerful, as though something nice had been lined up for me. I couldn’t explain it.

The morning shed its wintry light over the still trees, casting its serene touch of hope through the melancholy of the cold season and my cold soul. I started up the engine of my car, ready for another day at the workplace. I drove along as usual, my mind full of plans about a presentation on software products that was scheduled for that day. Suddenly, something on the front seat next to me caught my attention. It was yesterday’s newspaper...I had carelessly picked it up along with my briefcase. I stared at the picture in the advertisement.



mirror, mirror on our world...



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“Too bad, really, but things will work out in the end, you know,” said my friend Jagat as we discussed that advertisement at the office over a cup of coffee.”

Appeals like this appear everyday, big deal.”

“I don’t accept children dying. And that too for want of a kidney transplant. Both kidneys of this little girl have stopped functioning. She won’t survive if the operation isn’t done as soon as possible,” I said.

“A single kidney can easily take care of all the functions that pair of kidneys normally handles in a healthy person. So no real complications can arise if a person decides to donate their kidney,” put in my secretary.

“Really? Why don’t *you* it then?” said Jagat, with a yawn, handing her the newspaper.” Come on, Dev,” he added to me.” Its time for that presentation.”

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I stepped slowly down the long corridors of the hospital, my mind in a whirl. My side hurt horribly, even though more than five days had elapsed since the operation. My doctors assured me I’d be okay soon, and had ordered me to take complete rest. They said the pain was normal, as they’d had to cut through many layers of healthy tissue to get to my kidney.

Right now, though there was only one thing on my mind. I gently pushed open the door of the Children’s Ward, and crept in as quietly as I could, trying not to disturb the soft sounds of a light breeze blowing in at a window and the peaceful breathing of the sleeping children.

I sat on the edge of on of the cots. The little girl I was looking for was fast asleep. A small smile played on her lips, betraying pleasant dreams. I watched her for a long time, not even realizing why I was doing it. The same little girl who had received my kidney—she’d never even know me. But for some inexplicable reason that my confused mind didn’t reveal to me, I wanted to keep it that way.

I left the room, feeling strangely warm inside. My own cot welcomed me, and I tried to sleep. Just then I heard a familiar sweet voice calling out to me,” Daddy, Daddy, you’re home at last!”

Suddenly there was a terrible throbbing sensation in my chest. I tried to call out but my cry was stifled in my throat as everything around me swirled into an eternal nothingness.



Cactus Flower 2003

