

Routine Life

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“*L*ife in a city is pretty tough. And life in a big city is obnoxious”, thought

the morning sun as it tried desperately to wake up the entire city but the tall buildings with the even taller shadows prevented it. The early morning smog that hung over the city had cast a grey shadow over the landscape. And the little house on Tilak Road wasn't a mismatch. The quaint blue gate lost most of the paint and looked more like the entrance to a junkyard. The room on the first floor looked slightly better at least, from the inside. Aishwarya Rai looked majestic in her Parvati costume on the inside of the door. The portable Hitachi TV looked out of place beside the table fan. The little pot and the gold fish added life to the room. On top of the wooden bed lay a form beneath the blanket. Everything looked calm. Everything looked peaceful.

As the alarm went off, the blanket came down and a hand searched for the source of the sound. The sleepy eyes glanced at the clock and returned inside the blanket. “My God! Its seven already”, shouted Rishi. It was his way of saying a very good morning to himself. He got up, wrapped himself in a towel and rushed to the bathroom. No soap. Never mind. Soap wasn't there even the day before. He forgot to buy it yesterday. At least he was taking bath. Whatever be his condition, he always dressed well. Combing his hair and picking up the bag, he stood before the little idol and started to pray, “God, please PLEASE make sure that at least this day is different. I am bugged with my routine life and need a change. People seek millions of dollars, scholarships; pass marks and even good wives. All I am asking for is for a slightly different day. Ok God. Got to go. Meet you tomorrow, same time and same place.”

He boarded the usual bus, same seat. After a while the fellow sitting beside him started smoking. Rishi never smoked and hated the very smell of tobacco. He tried to stay calm but after a few minutes couldn't take it and said, “Excuse me Sir.” The fellow didn't even look at him. He just puffed on. Rishi continued, “Sir, its wrong to smoke inside the bus. Will you be kind enough to put out the cigarette as it's making me uncomfortable?” The man didn't even look at Rishi. He looked out of the window for sometime took in a really big puff and to Rishi's relief threw it out of the window. Rishi said, “Thanks.”

Another minute must have passed before he pulled out another cigarette and lighted it. Rishi didn't know what to do. He tried to control himself but before his brain could pass the order, his hand went to the cigarette, pulled it out of the mouth of his co-passenger and threw it out of the window. The gentleman gave a stern look and said, “I wonder where you people get these habits. You could have asked me to stop smoking. Young man, let me tell you, you won't go far.”



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Rishi watched open-mouthed. “But Sir, I did tell you and you even threw out the cigarette. But you must have forgotten for you started it all over again.” The man replied, “I never threw out your pamphlet. I didn’t even bother you. It was you who threw away my cigarette. Where is this world heading to?” Rishi understood the situation. One more case of acute deafness! He cursed his luck and enjoyed the rest of the journey in a cloud of Charms.

He entered his office and was relieved to see familiar faces and familiar ears that did function properly. He went to his desk and sat down. IC Syndicate dealt with a lot of things ranging from insurance to Internet solutions. Rishi was a site designer who believed he was creative enough to create the world’s best sites. And actually, his boss believed it too.

He was thinking over a new design when his secretary asked his permission to send in a Mr. Kumar who wanted a website for his mushroom factory. Rishi asked him to be sent in. The door burst open and in came a tall hefty person who wore an Adidas t-shirt and a pair of blue jeans. He had a big smile on his face and before Rishi could utter a word, the other started, “Hello Mr. Rishi. I am Kumar. I deal with mushrooms and have a factory with a turnover of over two crores a year. I wish to explore new horizons and some one suggested, now who suggested? Was it Mr. Raghu or was it Mr. Sekhar? I guess it was Mr. Abhiram. Right. Hmm... Perhaps wrong. Well, whoever be it, I want to enter into the world of e-commerce. And with your help I want to compete with the world’s best. As George Bernard Shaw once said, or was it Shakespeare?” His big smile changed into an awful frown. “If I remember correctly, it was Winston Churchill who said, ... what was I talking about? Forget it, Well, Mr. Rishi, I need a website.” The big smile returned to his face.

Rishi would have thrown him out of the office but for the mention of a turnover of over two crores. Rishi said, “Mr. Kumar, we would be willing to help you with your website. We promise you that you’ll love the site once it is completed and it shall reach all your potential customers. But then, we’ll require a lot of data on your company, its share value, its profit chart, its customers, its products, etc.”

The big smile once again changed into a suspicious frown, “Now, Mr. Rishi. Why do you need all this? This looks like what Hitler faced when he was at Frankfurt. Or was it at Munich. No, it must be at Jena. Well, wherever he was, the French spies tried to make him speak. Now, wait a second. Was it Hitler? I think it was Mussolini. Now, wasn’t it Churchill? Forget it. But let me assure you, you will not get anything out of me regarding my company in this life or in the next. I am devoted to my company’s policies and whatever be the price I shall not succumb.”

That was it. Rishi punched Mr. Kumar on the chin and the whole of the office staff had to come in to stop the two from tearing each other apart.



Rishi took the break for lunch and took a shower. He composed himself over a game of snooker and hot Darjeeling tea. He adjusted his tie and reorganized his mind towards the website he was making for Image Networks.

“Hello, may I speak to Mr. Rishi please?”

“Speaking.”

“Hello Sir. I am calling from Bandra. I am Radhakrishna, the dealer for Daewoo Motors and I was thinking if you would be interested in our new Matiz.”

“Glad to meet you Mr. Krishna. But I cannot afford a car. Thanks for calling and if you will kindly excuse me, I have to return to my work.”

“I am sorry to interrupt you Sir, but one of your colleagues have recently purchased one of our products and he’s very happy with it. In fact, it was he who proposed that you would be interested.” “

Let me assure you that even if I am interested in the product, I won’t be able to afford it.”

“But Sir, we offer the best in terms of fuel efficiency, product design and environmental standards. And Sir, to add to it, Matiz was named the automobile of the year by an international magazine last year.”

Rishi put the phone down. He put his head on his desk and closed his eyes. Why should these things happen to him? Why not to Kashyap who’s sitting right next to him? Why not to Kalyani? Why not to his boss?

Rishi decided he had enough. He ran out of the office, caught a moving bus and reached the beach. He sat down on the sand and listened to the sea. So peaceful, so... “Sir, can you please move aside, you are blocking the way.” Rishi opened his eyes. The man looked to be in his early thirties. Rishi didn’t understand why he was blocking the way as he had two hundred meters of sand behind him and another fifty meters before him. He said, “Sir, why can’t you walk behind me or before me?” “Look Brother. You don’t understand. My father told me before he died that I should always choose a straight path whatever I do. I am enjoying my walk along the beach and you came in my way. Now if you kindly move away, I’ll continue my walking.”

Rishi knew what was happening. The whole city had decided that they were going to drive him mad. But he’s not going to give up. He’s going to fight until his last breath. And he’s going to win this war. He moved back so that the man could pass along his ‘straight’ path. As he snuggled under the covers, that night, Rishi smiled and looked up at the skies through the open window. He just couldn’t understand why did God have to hear his prayer for a ‘different’ day.



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