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Topic : The news struck him like a thunderbolt.... at first he couldn't believe it....

LIFE - A PATH OF TURNS

"Please, Uncle! I don't want to do this," she pleaded tears streaming down her olive brown cheeks. The crescent moon painted freckles of light on her glistening eyes.

"It won't hurt Sarah", the man mutters before caressing her cheeks with his vile lips.

"Let me Go!", Sarah's muffled shouts echoed in the bedroom over the man's hands on her mouth.

And then a tight slap on her cheek. Sarah Woods woke up gasping for breath



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as if that man in her nightmare finally freed her mouth. Mira, her roommate wiped off the sweat dripping from Sarah's forehead,

"This has been going for weeks, Sarah.

I suggest you visit a doctor", Mira said.

Through her panicked breaths, Sarah spoke, "I'll... be fine... It's just a nightmare".

Her breaths returned normal at the realisation that she was in the safety of her college dorm.

"A nightmare that you have been experiencing since your first day here. That's almost seven months. I hope you ask for help,

Sarah. I really hope you do. You're too

stubborn, facing all problems by yourself";

Mira scolded, concern laced in her voice

Once again the dark night passed by



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making its way for the sun to shine
Amongst the buzzing crowds of college
students, Sarah reached the canteen for
breakfast.

She placed her tray of meal consisting
Italian pasta and a glass of water, onto
one hand balancing it with the help of
her thin waist, as she picked up the
ringing phone from her backpack.

"Mr Kellings", she murmured answering
the call, her hands clammy once again.

"Sarah dear! Your father got drunk again.
I found him at his porch when I returned
home from work. I helped him, but he
was drunk out of his mind. This has been
going for days.", he said, exhaustion evident
in his voice

"I'll talk to him, Uncle. And..... Thank You



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for helping him...".

Sarah couldn't help but ponder about her life now. As she sat amongst her friends, Noah, Mira, Lisa, her mind wandered into a faraway place, while the exchanges among the table went on. One and a half years ago, her life was perfect. But Sarah of that time never felt so. She was annoyed at her always bickering parents, her overadvising mother and her overexcited father. But she loved them, for she knew love warmed her house into a home. Even her parent's bickerings were a love language. It was reasonable considering they went from enemies to lovers over the years of their teenage. All until her mother died in an accident, the brakes of her car got jammed, making her hit a



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truck. Guilt overwhelmed her father Frank, as he was supposed to change the brakes and repair it, but ^{he} never did. Guilt and grief intoxicated him so he depended on the intoxication of alcohol instead. Her home, in her mind was full of life, the delicious, mouthwatering dishes of mother, playing in the flowerfilled gardens with her dad, the weekend movie nights with all three of them huddled together in one couch. As soon as something else started overpowering her mind, visions and nights, she wished to bury deep into the dark land, she broke out of her thoughts. Sensing another panic attack rising, Sarah waved goodbyes to her friends, dashing off to her lectures.

Whistling a tune of something ^{song}, she



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couldn't remember the name of, she walked along the familiar streets she grew up in. Her backpack slung over her shoulders, she walked, dreading every step ^{as} she ~~set~~ closed neared the premises of her house. Her hands clammy, she held on to the straps of her bag. A phone call would not make her father come to senses. Sarah returned the very weekend, hoping to atleast bring him to a therapist. Death was inevitable, she knew. Mom's death broke her from inside, like shattering a piece of glass into ^{tiny} pieces with the strike of a hammer. Albeit, she tried, she tried moving on from the lingering ghosts of her mother's ^{reminders} ~~remindances~~ in every corner of her house. That can't be said for her father though. Guilt



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is like a drug, intoxicating you and luring you into its deep pits. Her father was trapped. An eighteen year old Sarah had to step up, finding part time jobs and studying for scholarships, for paying for every necessity in that house. She worked till her bones broke from sweat and weariness every day as she watched her father turn into a drunkard, into someone she couldn't recognise anymore. And then came that vile lecher, trapping Sarah in his ~~love~~ arms, blackmailing her that if she refused anything, ^{to} ~~at~~ him, he would make sure Frank was in trouble. When money became an issue in the house, Frank needed alcohol for which Sarah refused to give a penny. So he borrowed,



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the consequences not even going through his mind, for liquor had already taken over him. Sarah became a prey to the predator who visited her almost on all nights, ^{with} eyes of lust and with hands of desire, as she laid helpless begging to God, her only saviour.

As she neared Mr Kellings house, she stole a quick glance hoping that he was not home. The sky, now a canvas of dark blue paint with light freckles of red. Two feet on the ^{cement} pavement caught her attention. ^{Sarah} She ran as soon as she recognised it was her father.

Unconscious, he seemed. She tried to pick the heavy weight failing to do so, when the screech of a car tyres startled



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her. 'Mr Parker, dad's friend', she thought. No words exchanged, he got out of the car just as Mr Kelling's car parked in his driveway. With the help of the two men, Sarah got her dad inside the house. A deafening silence drowned the room. Sarah's breaths now came in short inhales, her hands started its light trembling. Mr Kellings went out with a tight lipped smile at Sarah.

"I'll get him water", Mr Parker spoke walking upto kitchen.

Midnight crept into Sarah's room.

Her windows shut tight, the flickering light of streetlights making it more dreary for Sarah. She laid ^{still} the blanket covering her frame, fearing the predator.

She inhaled a sharp breath as ~~at~~ the locked



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door rattled. The doorknob slowly turning.

Her lips were shut with those disgusting hands once again. Her eyes overflowed with tears, the room ^{was} a blur for her.

"Please! Please stop it", she pleaded as always. The lips and a stubbled ^{chin} skimmed across her cheeks. Her hands held tight with a piece of cloth. The heavy weight on her making it impossible for her legs to fight back.

"I beg you, Uncle! Please! I'll pay back the money".

"Can you do that now?" he asked with that disgusting voice, a menacing smile creasing his lips. She could only sob more.

And then she bit, hard on his hands over her mouth. For the first time, she let out a



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loud scream.

"It's useless, your father's dead drunk",
he laughed.

'But that was always the same
situation wasn't it? Why did ~~she~~ I ever
even hope?' Sarah thought.

* * * *

"The final verdict is that Mr Parker
is to be punished with life imprisonment
for the rape and sexual assault of multiple
teenagers and for entrapping people with
illegal loans", with two hard strikes
of the gavel, the judge adjourned the
court.

Sarah heaved a final sigh of relief
as she watched her predator taken
away. Her hope wasn't destroyed. Because
for once, her scream was heard, her dad



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broke in her bedroom that night; his best friend over his daughter. There was nothing else to ~~mis~~ misunderstand from the situation.

And now Sarah stood along ^{with} her father, who had started seeing a therapist and now seemingly looked better than how ^{much of} a drunkard he was. ~~At~~ The news struck him like a thunderbolt, ^{that it was not the first time.} He trusted his best friend a lot, ^{so} at first he couldn't believe it. But Frank chose to trust his daughter Sarah, as a father should.

Sarah's life was not perfect like the ending of a happily ever after story. She still had the nightmares, but she too started consulting a therapist. But that wasn't it; Sarah finally found her father once again. Apologies could never turn time back, and grief once



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again struck Frank for not knowing what his daughter was going through. But this time, ~~he~~ chose to fight back, mend the broken bonds and be a father for his daughter.

Sarah had a long path laid in front of her, one that included healing, forgiveness and pain, she had to cross it to reach her dream of perfect life. Her life wasn't perfect, but she had chances of ^{making} ~~it~~ better life. Although it may take time, it's just how life is. Learning from mistakes, forgiveness and kindness, love and pain. ~~Good~~ And as the say goes, 'Good things take time,' Sarah chose to let time unfold its magic.

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