



Item Code: 695

Participant Code: 060

The hoop of Trusting and Betrayah

Topic: Someone you trusted has treated you badly.

The sound of waves crashing against the shore . . .
 . . . ringed in her ears as she gazed at the ocean. She used to love
 the sea. The ^{Feeling of} warm salty water caressing her feet, the ^{cold} sea . . .
 breeze - she loved them all. Until that incident, which took . . .
 away all the love and trust she had in the sea. She trusted
 anything she loved. She didn't trust strangers - because ^{to her} even
 her parents were strangers ~~to~~ who abandoned her, ~~to her~~ . . .
 The one and only person she loved and trusted dearly . . .
 was her brother, Mateo. From taking care of her to being
 her best friend for life, he was everything to her. He was . . .
 the one who encouraged her to paint, the one who took . . .
 her to play in the ocean. But that fateful day - where . . .
 they were both at the sea, Mateo playing in the water
 and her little hands trying to sketch him on her canvas.
 One minute he was laughing at her and the next, he's gone.
 As if the ocean had swallowed him. She had ran to the
 sea, frantically searching and calling out to him, but to
 her utter dismay - he was gone. Gone forever. She was
 left all alone in this world. She was only ten back then.

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.. after all. And thus, she had stopped trusting anyone, or ..
.. anyone, including the sea which she had once loved ..
.. dearly.

.. Sunlight glared at her closed eyes, as she & slept ..
.. When she finally woke up, it wasn't to the sound of birds ..
.. chirping. It was to gunshots. ~~It's~~ ..

.. It's been 3 long years since her brother passed and ..
.. since their hometown had become a warland. The gunshots ..
.. and bombing nearby were her morning calls. Used to it, she ..
.. peeked out the small ^{window of the room} ~~tent~~ she dwelled in. ~~Inside it,~~ once ..
.. she saw nothing she went back inside. Even now, she hadn't ..
.. stopped painting. Even though she didn't feel anything much ..
.. the small trust she had in herself came from painting. The ..
.. small hope that one day she would be free from this war. ..
.. Her brush moved against canvas, painting something bright ..
.. and colourful. It only faltered the moment she heard ..
.. her neighbour's door open. In ~~her build~~ the building she ..
.. lived, it was only her and the neighbour. It was an old man, ..
.. who had lost his relatives to the war.

.. They didn't interact much directly, but they did help ..
.. each other silently. He always left bowls of left over dinner ..

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.. at her doorstep. She always cleaned his courtyard. Even ..
.. though they didn't talk much, they trusted each other. ...
.. But today, she ..

..... But that day - something compelled her young mind
.. to talk to him. They were both lonely after all. At the quiet ..
.. knocking on his door, he opened it, and blinked in surprise ..
.. at the visit of his young neighbour.

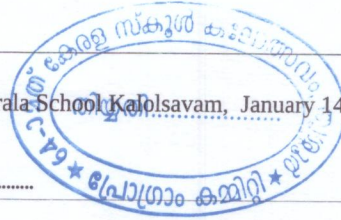
.. "Clara?" ..
.. "Morning, Mr. Holmes." She muttered, ~~had~~ looking at him ..

.. while holding her canvas and paints in one hand behind ..
.. her back.

.. "~~Come on in morning, young one. Come on in! May I ask why.~~
.. "Oh good morning young one. What're you doing here? ..
.. want to come in? I've got tea." ..
.. "Thank you" ..

..... That small interaction was the beginning
.. of the bloom of a small friendship between the said ..
.. two. Hanging out in Mr. Holmes' garden was now a daily
.. routine to her. After discovering he was also an artist
.. she was ~~thrilled~~ ecstatic, now having someone to share
.. her passion with.

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..... She shared her dreams of ~~becor~~ becoming free of this war, and how she wanted to go to art school when she's older and even her griefs ~~ev~~ of losing her brother. In turn, the old man would share his own stories and experiences, how he lost his wife and children in a bombing.....

..... one such evening, they both sat in his courtyard as she painted a scenery from one corner and he sipped tea on his chair.....

..... "Why don't you paint anymore?" -she suddenly asked to him. He looked up at her and smiled gently.....

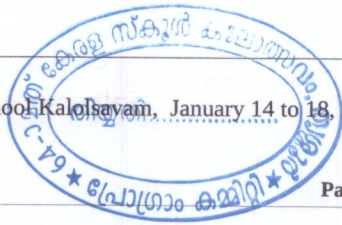
..... "After I lost everything, I lost hope too. Losing hope meant seeing the world with no colours. Everything seemed to be black and white to me. And I couldn't bring myself to paint. But..." ~~He~~.....

~~But what~~ "But?" she asked, waiting for him to continue.....

..... "But ever since you came in my life, ~~thk~~ I saw you as a ray of hope. You didn't trust me at first, but seeing you warm upto me, reminded me of my own granddaughter.".....

..... She looked at him in surprise, before smiling at his words.....

..... "I didn't trust you at first." she started speaking.....



" I felt like, everyone was leaving me. I was abandoned by my parents. Then ~~the~~ the only person I trusted - my brother died - leaving me. Then the war started, and I felt like all ~~the~~ my hope and freedom was^{er} leaving as well." She talked thoughtfully, as he listened with a calm smile.

" Then you, Mr. Holmes, you always left food for me at the door. You fixed the broken windows. ~~You~~ I felt like I was finally being cared for after years. So I finally approached you with trust."

He smiled, feeling his eyes wet at her words.

" ~~But, you~~ " I guess we're both hopes for each other."

He said, as he stared into the night sky above them, before standing up to point something out.

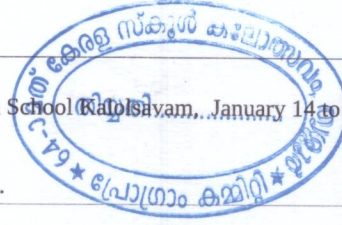
" Have you seen these before?" He asked to her pointing at fireflies, flying around, illuminating the surrounding. She stood near him, watching them in awe.

" I believe they're symbols of hope and trust for us."

He began to speak:

" They carry such small light, but that is enough to get rid of darkness. Just like that even the tiniest

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.. amount of trust or hope in others will help us survive.”
.. ^{clara} ~~she~~ listened intently, nodding thoughtfully
.. at his words, before turning to him with a determined
.. smile:

.. “I’ll never lose that spark as long as you’re here with
.. me. You won’t leave me too... right...?” She asked,
.. her small eyes glimmering with hope.

.. He chuckled and shook his head:

.. “I would never.”

.. “You promise?”

.. “I promise.”

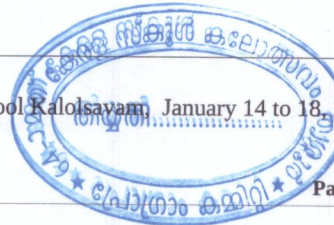
.. But that promise didn’t last long. It wasn’t
.. long before their hometown was bombed as well.

.. It was a ~~normal~~ quiet night, after one of their bang
.. outs. She had left to her apartment ~~after~~. ~~But~~ ~~tragedy~~

.. ~~can~~ ~~But~~ ~~as~~ ~~always~~ The moments before tragedy were
.. quiet. The bombing had blasted off many buildings

.. simultaneously, including theirs. All that was left
.. were ash, debris and dead bodies beneath crumbling

.. buildings on fire.



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..... Clara gasped as she jolted awake and looked
.. around frantically. She felt as if her entire body were
.. on fire. Blood was oozing out ~~tt~~ from a gush of wound
.. on her forehead, and she was stuck under ~~a~~ debris..
.. "Help... Mr. Holmes...?" She croaked out weakly and..
.. after struggling for a while she finally ~~er~~ crawled..
.. away from the debris.....

..... She was now crying as she limped slowly ~~to~~
.. desperately searching for her dear friend. He had.....
.. promised he wouldn't leave her. He must be okay... right?
.. She had trusted him.....

..... A million thoughts ran through her mind but she
.. they all vanished when she saw a body on the ground.
.. A body of someone familiar. Someone she trusted.....

.. "Mr. Holmes!" She yelled in panick trying to rush to
.. his side, but stumbled. She reached out to him, sobbing
.. as she saw his state. He was dead.....

.. "No no no - Mr. Holmes - wake up!" She crouched near
.. him, her small figure crying into the dead man's
.. body.....

.. "You promised me!"

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"You promised me you wouldn't leave like the others! ...
 ...! trusted you!" - She cried out, feeling betrayed...
 She couldn't accept this. Once again, someone she
 trusted has ~~disappointed~~ ~~treated~~ left her. It felt like
 he betrayed her, like he treated her badly by leaving
 her all alone in this cruel world.

... Around her, hugging his body in the dark,
 were fireflies, flying around. But they seemed
 slow, and the little light ~~th~~ they carried seemed
 to be glowing less. Like it was diminishing. Like they ^{were dying.}

Just like the trust she had. ~~is~~ The hope she had...
 They were all diminishing...
 She had trusted ~~her~~ them all. She had trusted the
 the world, she had hope that she would survive and
 be free - along with him.

But ~~the thing~~ she was only met with betrayal,
 The world had betrayed her; treated her badly - ^{she was just} cruelly. ^{a child.}

That was the last thought in her mind before the
 sound of another bomb ~~falling~~ being dropped echoed
 through the air.