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I know Why The Shade Shrinks

The house, under ^{the} wide canopy of many trees is where she lives. The house looks bleak and if listening carefully, one can hear a plaintive song flowing from it's top windows, drifting with the autumn winds. The wind takes the song all around the valley and sometimes even to the hills above it. The dying garden in front of the house is a vestige of the glorious past. There are dead vines on the arches and the flower beds holds no ^{remnants} ~~remnants~~ of life. The windows are grimy and no more transparent for dust has covered the glass, just as and those tiny particles have resolved to never leave the window panes, just as memories stick to her heart, covers them, stings and hurt it and never leave.

The shade that ^{the} trees spread on the grounds of the house is thick and wide. To get the glimpse of the sky, one will have to cross the grounds and gates. The world is very different here. Even the all pervasive sunlight finds it really hard to reach her old garden. The shades that would never shrink! I enjoy walking in between the trees and counting how many 'pieces of sky' I can find through the dark leaves of her trees. She had more than once told me that she really loved the shades. It seems to be guarding her. The trees were the guardians of this old lady, the lonely old lady.

It was on a hot summer evening that I saw her for the first time.

She must be in her mid fifties but looked much younger. She had long silvery white hair and a crooked nose like a witch's. Her eyes are grey and held secrets. Eyes are the window to a person's heart, people say. However, only the shallow waters of her heart was visible through her eyes. No entry into the depths of her lonely life. I was scared of her, the first time we met. The only thing I wanted then was to get away from her. My mother had sent me to give her the eggs she had asked my mother to ~~give~~^{send} every week. The fear quiteely transformed into curiosity about this old woman's isolated, abnormal life. I didn't know then that from then on, until now a year ~~of~~ later, I would visit her atleast four times a week.

We have developed a strange friendship. A lone lorn woman and a happy, talkative teenager. When I give her my ~~happiness~~ happiness, which she was long deprived of, she pours out her wisdom and eccentric philosophies about life. She often told me that a human mind is so small to truly understand life, death is even more hard to analyse. She laughs sceptically when she say that "some die while they live and some live even after they die". Life and death are not two contradicting realities but one whole real thing. She hasn't given me a definition. I would bring flowers ~~and~~ from the valley, newspapers and new books for her and she would bake biscuits and cakes for me in her dusty kitchen, in her rusty oven. And one day over a tea and cake, she opened her heart. The deep sorrows of her heart ~~for~~ flowed out as streams of tears and I saw her transparent eyes.

She always used to speak about the war days. The horrible nights and ^{the} mornings that were not dew drenched, but blood dripping. She used to say that the world should have ended with that war. She told that her world ended with the war, but she had to live on, in a world that wasn't her's.

She had always been proud of her country and wanted to do service for ^{it} ~~her country~~. But she was a woman and all she could do was to stitch uniforms for soldiers and take care of the injured. She wanted to fight and she found a soldier in her young son. Not a boy, but a young man nineteen years old and strong and fit. A promising warrior. She had asked him, why didn't he render his service for the country quite a number of times. She believed that she had never compelled him, yet he only went because he knew that she wanted him to go. Poor boy wanted to make his mamma proud. She had happily sent him away, but not without a lump in her throat. She could hold her tears, seeing him go away because of the strong faith she had in her son's fate. She ~~strongly~~ believed that whatever happened god would never take him away, ~~and~~ and he went..

It was dark by this time. She hadn't completed her story. But I had to go away. As I walked I stared up at the dark shade of the trees that surrounded her home. I had always loved that cold shade but, ~~from~~ that evening, I saw something ominous and cruel about it. The shade, unshrinkable and impossible to penetrate, had swallowed the house and the old lady who lived in it. The thick foliage of trees prevented the rays of happiness from seeping into her life. Was the shade and the trees really her guardians as she believed it to be?

The next morning I rushed to her home to hear what had happened to her son eventhough I knew ~~really well~~ really well

what ^{THAT} ^{POVE} happened to him.

She ~~looked~~ was in tears when she told that her boy had told that ~~she~~ ^{he} had really missed ^{in his last letter.} he really misses his mother. She told that she was the reason why he is missing now. She never told that he must be dead. She had written letters to many officials of army asking about her son. She even wrote to the country head seeking help to find her son. Her husband had died searching in vain in ~~the~~ cemeteries for their son's gravestone. She told me that he must be living somewhere. She asked me whether he would still be missing his mamma. I had no answers for her. I didn't have any words of consolation. All I did was to hold her hand. She cried into my shoulder and called me her daughter.

I returned home for a sleepless night. I couldn't close my eyes. The next morning, when I went to see her, she gave a letter and asked me to take it to the post office. It was addressed to the army general. Both of ^{us} knew that all these letters would go to some official's ~~po~~ ~~extreme~~ esteemed waste paper basket. I prayed before ~~dropping~~ dropping the letter into the post box that he should return.

Today, walking towards the hillside house under the ~~shade~~ shade, I ~~was~~ noticed that the shade ^{was} ~~is~~ shrinking. The darkness ~~is~~ was lifting itself from the walls and windows of the house.

I suddenly knew why the shade was shrinking and I broke into a run towards the house.

There stood a man, in his late thirties standing on the doosteps. He was dressed poorly and had a single bag on his weak shoulders. I simply asked him ~~who~~ why he was here, in those early hours of morning.

He replied, ~~that~~ "Oh! My mother lives here."