



Item Code: 695

Participant Code: 054

"Someone, you trusted has treated you badly..."

PATH OF FIRE AND FATE

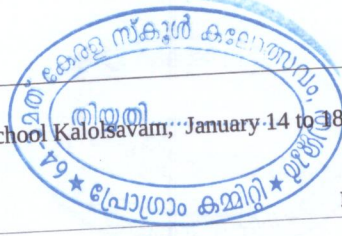
"Funny thing about time, It keeps moving whether you regret it or not. Might as well walk with it instead of chasing it", my Mom breathed staring into the horizon.

Warm tears streamed down my face as I followed her gaze. "When will I see you again?", I choked.

I watched as the last people packed up their things to leave, as the sun slipped into the horizon. The beach smelled of salt and freedom. Waves rolled around, pulling at the shore with quiet persistence.

"When the time comes, but just know... I love you always - until the end of time."

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she whispered.
We drove back home in silence. She only had a few hours, and I wanted it to last.
* The front door creaked as I opened it. My aunt greeted me with a warm smile. She was the only family I had other than my Mom. "Mira, it's good to see you", her smile dropped an inch when she took in my face. "There, there Everything's fine. I'm here", she consoled me, as I sobbed into her arms. She had to move in with me into our house, because I couldn't let go of the memories me and Mom had here. "She's probably looking over at us from heaven", Aunt patted my back, trying to lighten the mood. After that I kept to my room, refusing to talk to anyone. I laid in bed and cried all day for weeks. Until Aunt finally lost it and forced me up. "You can't sulk in -"

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bed all day. "Go to school, live your life" she growled.

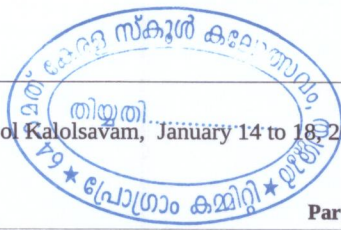
The hallways smelled of dust and teenage exhaustion. Laughter echoed from across the hall. Walls were papered with posters, scribbles, old announcements that were always ignored.

The scent of ink, old books and someone's lunch lingered in the air. I already hated coming here. I needed more time to cope with the loss but Aunt's words made me comply.

A light tap on my shoulder interrupted the trains of thoughts. "How are ^{you} feeling?", my best friend asked. I stared into her eyes, the light brown pools were laced with concern.

"I'm good. I feel like I lost a part of me. Other than that everything's fine", I muttered. "I'm sorry, you had to go through that", she whispered, as she laced her fingers with mine.

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After the bell, we headed to our respective classes and agreed to meet at lunch.

"Sarah..." I called, but stopped short when I saw her surrounded by the group of girls in her class.

I thought of letting them be, but curiosity got the best of me. I hid behind a wall and eavesdropped.

"Sarah, a pretty girl like you shouldn't be hanging out with an outcast like Mira.

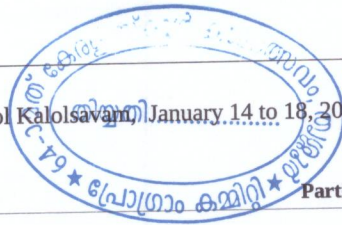
I mean look at her, she looks like she crawled her way onto Earth", one girl murmured.

I felt my stomach twist, and the sandwich I'd downed at lunch churned in my stomach threatening to come out.

"I heard her dad left her when she was young, I get it. He probably took one look at her face, and walked out the door",

another girl laughed, and everyone joined except Sarah who stood as still as a -

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statue:

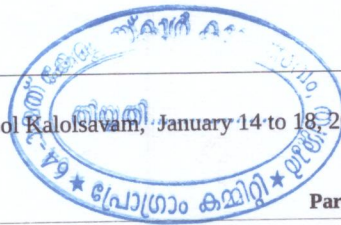
"Stop it", she snapped. "She's going through a lot. You don't get to make mean comments about her looks. Beauty is in the eye of the beholder, and I think she's stunning. Her personality is better than all of yours combined", she retorted.

Sarah has defended me, ME? Warmth spread through my chest, as her words rewinded in my head. I glanced at my watch. Break was almost over. I scrambled off to class. I made a mental note to thank Sarah for her kindness.

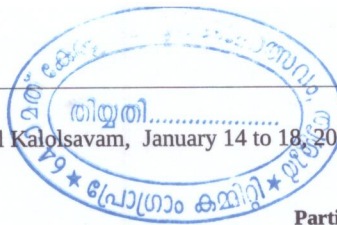
The rest of the day passed by in a blur, teachers took class like they'd rather be anywhere but here, and soon it was time to leave.

I scurried off to the exit. I needed to be alone. Thoughts raced through my mind as I made my way to the park.

A place where me and Mom used to spend



time together, basking in the evening sun. I settled on a swing. A cold breeze brushed past, sending a shiver down my spine. I leaned back, letting the sunlight wash over me. "Mom, you there?" I asked, but no answer. I didn't expect one. After the light faded and darkness enveloped the sky, I made my way home. Cold sweat beaded in my hairline and my breath came out in sharp, ragged gasps. "Aunt", I called out, as I entered the house. She must've went out? I headed upstairs to her room and knocked, then opened it when no one answered. I breathed in the warm scent of my Aunt's perfume. She moved into my Mom's room after Mom left. I glanced around, nothing suspicious. A loud 'THUD' caused me to jerk forward. A gasp tore-

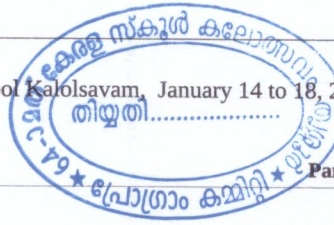


through the room, before I realised that it was mine. I turned back to find a diary on the floor. Something twisted inside me as I gazed at the book. My hands brushed against the old leather. A gasp escaped my throat as I realised that it was my Mom's diary. I never knew she had one. I thought of keeping it back, but something told me I should read it, and I gave in. A sob racked my throat as I read the lines.

01/06/2000

Tuesday

I can't believe, I birthed such an ugly thing. She looks hideous. Dark skin, her features look grotesque. I had to choke back tears when I saw her. John left me - to take care of her. I wanted to take her



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into an orphanage, but my sister stopped me. I'm stuck with her. I hope she looks better when she's older.

- Maria

My fingers trembled as I dropped to my knees. My own Mother despised me? The pain when you realise, someone you trusted has treated you badly, letting your back. My own Mother, the woman who birthed me, fed me, raised me - hated me? My breaths shallowed and I was on the verge of passing out.

"Mira, are you there?", Aunt's voice trailed off when she saw me. "Oh my God", she screamed, rushing towards me. She took one look at diary and immediately guessed what was wrong.

"Why did you stop her?", I choked. "You should've let her get rid of me."

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"She hates me", I breathed:
"Listen to me... She doesn't hate you...
and even if she does... I love you... I'll
be there for you... You're not ugly, you're
beautiful... And anyone who doesn't think
that are idiots." she smiled: "There's
nothing we can do... Your mother must
be rethinking her decisions in heaven-or
hell?" she paused: "Don't let hate get
to you... prove everyone wrong... I'll support
you."

And it was decided... there was no use
crying about it... All I could do was
move on... rise like a phoenix and
leave the past behind into a new
beginning.

I clasped Sarabi's hand with mine, as
we walked through the hallway. Every-
time someone flinched in my direction:
I lifted my chin higher. Everytime.

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someone showed disgust, I smiled at them because their opinion of me didn't matter in the least.