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Topic: With a heavy heart, burdened with all that had happened, she started out. The road to future stretched out before her, uncertain yet hopeful.

A Great Lesson that got to learn.

With a heavy heart, burdened with all that had happened, she started out. The road to future stretched out before her, uncertain yet hopeful. She hadn't genuinely known what her next move should be or how to convince her parents; especially her father. To her, everything felt like clouds on the horizon as she kept pathetically scampering on the dusty path with a heavy backpack dangling lopsided on one of her shoulders. Yet, deep down inside her, a minuscule splint of hope had penetrated, that probably in the upcoming days her life would be as beatific and as animated as it used to be once upon a time. A lot of things had been going on in Anna's head as she kept pathetically mounting her pace up on the muddy path. A barbaric holler of the wind yanked Anna into its side and drastically, she shoved all her obnoxious thoughts aside and flicked her gaze towards the serenity



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of the nature that it had worn between itself. The inky sky had brightened and the fulgent sun had already sought a safer place beyond the sombre clouds. The white, bright clouds kept racing in the cerulean sky and looked like ice flakes ~~mel~~ ^{blazing} in the sky rather than melting. The trees and the plants, which had been on the sides of the road, kept leaning in to the air. The mellifluous sound of the leaves rustling waltzed ~~into~~ ^{towards} her and mollified her tension. The whooshing air kept thrumming against Anna, and her wavy-brown hair looked like an avalanche of caramel-coloured coffee falling down from the mountain side. But, Anna didn't find the nature mesmerizing. The resplendant flowers which kept fidgeting in the air, looked like dead flowers in the graveyard to her. Again, she seemed to be lost in her own kind of spooking hallucination despite the thrumming air perfum-
-tively trying to seek Anna's attention.

The exuberant turmoils and the tumultuous hollers of people filled the air and shuddered it as Anna made it easily into the Railway station of Chennai. The train arriving announcements



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kept playing constantly, one behind the other, and rather kept exasperating Anna's already-deteriorated mind. Anna didn't mither about anything as she sat on one of the benches in Platform number 3, and kept twitching her glance everywhere. She had to travel from Chennai, her school place to Mangalore, her hometown. She glanced at the clock. 8.29 a.m. The train would've to arrive in a minute, she kept musing and in the blink of an eye, the train had come like a moving bullet. She clambered the steps to the train up and deadpanly sat on one of the seats. It didn't take much time for her to acknowledge that there still had been an ominous trepidation lurking beneath her heart, like grains of salt in the solution trying to dissolve with the water and never to be easily separated again. She mustered an exhausted huff up and started glancing outside the window, in order to dwindle her fear as the train started moving. She plaintively closed her eyelids, seeking the tranquility that she'd been missing for so long.

I don't fathom if my parents would really be okay with

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(Anna)



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this; my marks card. I had^{ve} never made my mind up for this - I don't authentically want my parents to see my marks card. I know that they'd blame me. Again, I will have to fail my sophomore year in school for the second time. I acknowledge the seeds of fear mushrooming in me as I keep glumly sauntering back home from my school. I know I've never been inquisitive, but even I can't help that. Maybe it was my nature, though. That too I cannot crystallize. The humming air tried to ~~be~~ burgeon the pent-up elation in me, but, the pity even the air is holding in it, is rather aggravating my problem. I mull over the fact that even my parents know that I will receive my marks card today. No one will be more ferocious and pugnacious than my father to see me failing in exams. I decipher the lingering fear in me as I open the gate to my house and the fear piles up like weeds flourishing throughout the garden as I see the door to my house being ajar. I take two sharp breaths before thudding in to my house and I was utterly bewildered to see my father lounging on the couch in the hallway, with a



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haggard face. There has been no way for me to creep inside my house when my father saw me before I could even thwart him from. He superimposed an awkward smile over his mundane look and tried deciphering the unspoken words dwelling on my face. It should be curiosity to scintillate in his eyes. Or at least, it should've been. Likely, it seemed to be animosity to secretly beam in his eyes.

'Well, you're up earlier today,' said my father after a moment of unnerving silence. 'Anna, at least now, I hope you will show me the marks card of yours,' he adds gruffly. My mother, who'd now stopped washing the dishes, stood aside and sympathetically kept flicking her stare between the two of us. 'Father, hmm..', I stuttered, unable to look him in his eyes. 'I think I might fail this year too..', I quip, mustering up as much courage as I could. I get no reply. Again, a threatening silence fills the room. I can hear my heart beat hazardously skyrocketing against my ribcage. I tremulously rummage through my school bag and fearfully hand



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the marks card to my father. My father doesn't respond as if he had been paralyzed. Seconds later, he furiously chucks the paper aside and savagely reads my face. I know that my father had always been meticulous about my studies and was lividly hell-bent to do anything if he'd wanted to. But this time, I don't see aversion or anger dwelling in his face. He looks nonchalant. 'Anna, it is utterly necessary for me to take this decision', he says hoarsely, breaking the silence. 'But, I've pondered enough.' I don't understand what he's talking about, nor my mother does. He stomps to his room and comes back with a little money in his hand. He hands me the money with a jittery face and says, 'I don't know how to make you learn things,' he says pathetically. 'Maybe you'd never understand the things until and unless you leave this place. You have a year remaining from now, Anna. Go wherever you wish to. Do whatever you wish to. But learn something good and do something good. Make me, make us, your parents feel proud of you. And when you return back after a



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തിരുവനന്തപുരം

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a year, I don't want you to be a hopeless wanderer, but I rather want to see you become a triumphant person who learnt good things in life and did good things," he twattles coherently. It takes all my willpower not to break down and sob hardily. I blink my tears back hastily and pack my clothes and leave home without a second thought. It is as if I have challenged my father, but, the thought of what next? ~~came~~ seeped into my mind amidst the chaos as soon as I start trudging. I allow tears to fall down from my eyes; ^{as I start} wandering to somewhere, probably even I don't know where I am going to....

Present

The gruff sound of someone weeping yanked Anna out of the memories she'd had a year ago. It had been the moments of Anna that she had to go through a year ago. And now, a summer had passed ^{since since the last summer} ~~after the last summer had come~~ and Anna was everything but helpful. A year ago, she had come to Chennai in order to achieve something, but, she could do nothing. She had been profoundly perturbed about the



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fact that she'd lost the challenge she'd put across her father. Some kind of sound of someone sobbing, made its way into Anna's ears and she was tremendously muddled to see a dark silhouette dwelling on the floor of the train. She was a lot more than sure that the silhouette reflected from ^{under} behind the seat and she was apparently pestered and perplexed to see a little boy, ^{huggi} ~~gruggi~~ng his knees and continuously weeping. It should be malice to glisten in his eyes. Yes, it would've been. It would be vengeance to ululate in his small voice. Or atleast, it would've been. Blood kept flowing down from his forehead, temple, hands and knees. His clothes had been torn. How vicious and brutal one should've been to excruciate such a little boy, thought Anna. Some kind of persuasive feeling inside Anna shook her temple and persuaded her to bandage the little boy's gashes. She knelt down and tried pampering the boy, but he wailed and shivered. 'Hey, I know it hurts', said Anna vulnerably. 'But, I am not here to belabour you. I am rather here to



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help you out. See, you're a whole mess of gashes and wounds,' Anna mustered a charitable smile up and tried cajoling the boy. He gave a vague nod tentatively and Anna made the boy sit on her seat before rummaging through her backpack to seek her first aid kit that she always kept with her. The other passengers kept nosily glued their eyes on Anna and the little boy. 'Tell me if it hurts more', commanded Anna as she bandaged the little boy's gashes and her face was engulfed with happiness to see the little boy's eyes filling with composure. The boy might've been tremendously ravenous that even Anna could hear his stomach grumble as she finished bandaging him. She gave him the biscuit that she kept with her and ~~he~~ ^{he voraciously} ~~ravenously~~ devoured on the biscuit.

'Feeling good?', asked Anna after minutes of silence between the boy and her. The boy nodded in return. 'What's your name, by the way?', asked Anna quizzically. 'Don't know', blurted the boy. That sounded bizzarre to Anna



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because who wouldn't know their name? Anna tried walking on eggshells that she searched for a safe path to tread on before asking, 'Who did this to you?', she asked. 'Oh, how did you end up like this hiding under the seat?' The boy didn't reply. 'Couldn't fathom,' said the boy, fear draped in his voice. Anna said nothing. She didn't understand through what the boy might've gone. For she had her own problems to look after. It was absolutely gruelling and tedious for her to spend the rest of the time, but, however she managed spending her time by talking to the little boy before reaching the railway station of Mangalore in the night, 9.42 p.m.

Anna felt a lot more than fearful to return back to her home that even after a year of time, she'd accomplished nothing. It was painstakingly hard for her to survive a year without her family, house and enough money. She had ~~not~~ known how livid her father would be not to see her being triumphant. A lot and a lot of things kept somer-



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-saulting on in her head and she felt as if the future she'd dreamt of buidling would probably vanquish. The charismatic future she'd been dreaming of was very far from her. She shored all her thoughts aside as the cool wind made her seep into the reality. She could only see dark silhouettes of trees and plants leaning in to the air despite the ~~fl~~ torch in her hand being lit. The slender crescent of the moon shone as bright as ever. Hundreds of stars embellished the sombre sky. She was astonished to sense some kind of palpable sensation on her thumb and it was then, she'd acknowledged that the little boy had been holding her thumb with a tiny, puny hand of his the whole time. Some kind of feeling inside her coaxed her to carry the little boy in her arms and so did she as she made her way feasibly into her house.

'You will not leave me alone, will you?', asked the little boy quizzically, innocence draped in his voice as Ann-a opened the gate to her house and tromped in.



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'Hey! There is no chance for that, is there?', replied Anna, caressing the little boy's tousled hair. A twinge shook Anna's temple to that words of the little boy and she felt strange to feel attached with someone whom she met ~~a day~~ ^{a few} hours ago and with whom she'd grown no camaraderie. Somehow, that words of the boy hit her hard.

Anna was frightened to knock the door to her house and the world of what ifs kept threatening her immensely. Seconds later, her father opened the door and in the blink of an eye, her mother too had come. Anna couldn't face her father that in a year, she'd done nothing. Nothing accomplishable. Nothing victorious. She felt shame on herself that embarrassment engulfed her face. But, her parents had been puzzled to see the little boy who'd been with Anna. Anna's father gesticulated her to come in and sit and so did she. Her parents asked about the little boy at first and Anna told them the whole



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Story that had happened in the train. 'I am sorry that I couldn't fulfill your wishes and I'd relent to any punishments that you owe me', said Anna, sadness draped in her voice and melancholy engulfing her eyes. 'But, I've one last request that I wish to foster this little boy ~~with~~ until I seek his family. I don't ~~mo~~ither you about this, but, I'd look after him', added Anna concisely. Her father said nothing but after a minute of silence, he ~~sa~~nk into a fit of laughter. Anna didn't fathom why her father'd been laughing, ~~but~~ nor could she respond.

Her face filled with chaotic questions. 'Anna, you don't want to be sorry. Actually, you've nothing to be sorry about', said her father with a triumphant face. 'I am on the top of the world to see you learn something good in life and do something good. I agree to whatever decision you take', he added saccharinely. And in a few seconds, Anna's father hurried out of the house.

Anna didn't know why her father had behaved



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Strangely and she kept racking her brain about this. Anna scurried to the terrace of her house, and the ~~seren~~^{night} catapulted its serenity onto Anna's face. Seconds later, the trees which kept leaning in to the air, caught her attention. Then again, her thoughts started gallivanting.

When one tree leaned in to the air happily, the other one did so. And when one knelt down with sadness, so did the other. And that's 'cause the trees had genuine feeling for others and one wouldn't let the other one feel things alone. And Anna, unknowingly had learnt something good in life. ~~and~~ done something good.

And that something good, the so called compassion, was going to stay with her forever...