



THE DAY COULD HAVE ENDED DIFFERENTLY

"Mom, are you sure it will not take long?" asked my daughter, with her puppy eyes.

"Yes, of course. I promise it ~~too~~ will not take long. I will be back in no time," I replied. It was my daughter Amy's birthday. My little princess is turning ten today. I had been planning her birthday party for weeks. As a kid, with ~~no father~~ growing up without a father was really difficult for her. Even it was really hard for me as a single mother. But my Amy was very mature and brave for her age. She has never once asked me for anything. She was ~~really~~ ^{an} understanding girl and I am so damn proud of her. Today, it is my turn to make my child happy, no, the happiest. I am planning to give her the best birthday party of her life. Before that, I just needed to have a quick meeting with my client. Event managing is stressful, but atleast I am doing what I like to do.

"Mom, can I play in this playground while you go?"

"But it is not safe. You can..."

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"Mom please."

How can I say no to my beautiful girl? We were right outside the office of my client when someone called my name. "Clara?"

"Yes?" I turned around to see my client, Mr Adam, in a grey suit and crisp white shirt. "Can we go inside my office and discuss about the event?" He asked in a respectful tone.

"Yes sir, sure. Just a moment!" With that I bend a little to talk to Amy.

"Just give Mama half an hour, and then we will both leave here and have your party, okay?"

"Okay Mom.", she giggled.

I couldn't hold it anymore. I wanted her to know about the best gift she was about to receive.

"By the way Amy, would you look good on a pink bicycle?". She looked at me with confusion.

Soon, her confusion melted away, replaced by a familiar laugh she only made when she was over the moon.

"YOU BOUGHT ME A BICYCLE!?" Amy jumped squeaked

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while jumping around.

"Yes!", I could not help but laugh along with her.

Oh my God, she looked beautiful. I am going to

make this day unforgettable for her.

"Stay here and don't go anywhere, understand?"

I said to my now-dancing daughter as I walked to the office with a little smile on my face.

"So, will you be able to arrange those lilies for the day?",

Mr. Adam had a little confusion on his face.

"Yes. Sure. I can arrange that. After all, it is your engagement that I am organizing. I can handle that sir.", I said as a little grin appeared on his face.

"I believe you can do that Clara".

"Sure. If everything is had been discussed, then shall I take my leave."

"Yes, absolutely."

"Thank you for your time, sir." As I walked out of his office room and entered the elevator,

excitement rushed through me. I cannot wait for

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... to take Amy for the party.

As I stepped out of the elevator, I realised it was getting dark. I walked towards the park, where Amy went. But the park was empty, except for the pigeons pecking bread crumbs.

"Amy!?", I called her name. No reply. "Amy, where are you?", this time a little louder. Still, no reply.

Panic rushed through me.

"Amy?", I called again, while searching the park. But there was no one. I have never been afraid of silence, but this time it pricked my skin.

That was when I noticed the camera at the corner of the park. I ran towards Mr. Adam's office room.

"Mr. Adam?" I called out.

"Yes, Clara. Did you forget something?"

"No, no. My daughter, she was playing in the your park. But there is no one in park right now. Could you please check the CCTV installed there?",

I said that all in one breathe. I need to find my daughter. I felt like vomiting. throwing up.



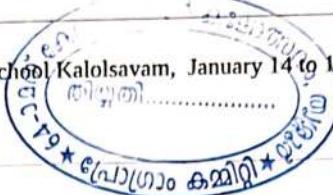
"Calm down, Clara. Here, drink a some water" he said as he handed me a glass filled with water. "Miss Clara, I'm sorry to say this, but the cameras has only been installed. They are not connected to anything. It is of no use."

My mind went blank. "What?" I gasped.

"I'm sorry, but we can search the nearby areas if you want. I'm sure she will be in a nearby shop or something. I will take my car." Mr. Adam offered. But something told me she was not anywhere near ~~here~~ this place.

For the past one and a half hour, both of us have been looking for Amy in the neighbourhood. No one has seen her. I was showing a picture of her to every shopkeeper and every person we met on the way. No But, no one has seen her. After each passing moment, my heartbeat was getting louder and louder. I felt a burning pain in my chest. Where could have she gone? Did something happen to her? The possibilities were endless. An my heart ached as I imagined each of them.

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"No, I have not seen this girl.", said a woman. as I showed her Amy's picture. My heart dropped. This is the millionth person that I'm asking and nobody has any idea about Amy's whereabouts.

"Clara, I think we should reach out to the police now. It has been two hours." sighed Mr. Adam.

He was right, we should have filed a complaint the moment I realized Amy was gone.

"You are right. Let's go!"

"~~Dear~~

"What is your name, ma'am?" the officer asked.

"Clara. Clara Davenport".

"Can you describe your daughter? What was her name again?"

"Amy sir, Amy. She has brown eyes with black hair. Fair, ten years old, about the height of my leg.

She was wearing a baby pink top with shorts. She also have a burn mark in her left wrist."

"Do you have a photo of her?"

"Yes, sir!". I ~~get~~ send them her picture with shivering hands. Will they be able to find her? Or will it be too

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late before --- before something happened to her?

I was deep in thoughts when the sound of thunder brought me back to reality. It was starting to rain heavily.

"Clara, the officer said that we could wait here, and since it is raining we don't have to go for a search. The officers will leave in a minute."

"But..."

"Clara, listen to me. We can stay here till the rain stops. Okay?"

"Okay!"

I waited in the off station with Mr. Adam.

Neither the rain nor time stopped. The police were still in search for Amy. No witnesses have been found. Yet. The clock struck one 'o' clock. It felt like I was waiting for an eternity when I finally stood up.

"Mr. Adam, the rain is not going to stop any soon."

"But please, we can leave now and search for my daughter, please." I begged Mr. Adam.

"Clara, but..."

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"Miss Clara?" an officer called me.

"Yes, what happened? Did they find my daughter?"

"I think you should go to Holy Cross Hospital right now.

The police have found a body similar to your daughter's but please do not panic. We are not sure yet. You need to go there for identifying.", she said in a regretful way.

My body went numb. "A--- body? Body as in dead body?"

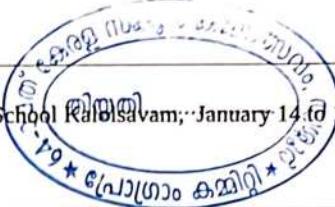
"Yes ma'am. But we are sure if it is Amy's."

I don't remember the events that happened after what the officer. I vaguely remember Mr. Adam asking me to calm down and somehow we were in Holy Cross Hospital right now.

An officer suddenly came towards us and guided the way. He took us to a room. There, I saw something or someone covered in a white sheet. I went near it, hoping, praying, begging to God to not see Amy's face in there.

~~The~~ A nurse came and The officer removed took the sheet away to reveal the face of that body.

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I've only heard of heartbreak. But at the exact moment.

I saw Amy's face covered in blood and I could feel my heart

shattered, into a million pieces. I could hear it

breaking. My body went cold. Tears were streaming

from my eyes. Never in a million years did I imagine

to see my daughter in this state.

"Amy..." She didn't wake up.

"Amy, wake up it's you mom." She didn't move.

"Amy..." I screamed as I shook her to

wake up. But she did not.

With blurry eyes filled with tears, I saw a doctor

coming towards me.

"I am sorry miss Clara, but your daughter... she...

was brutally raped by someone. And then they had hit...

her with a rock to kill her. We found her. The...

police..."

My mind, body, soul, everything went numb after I heard

the word rape.

My daughter, my sweetheart... was raped?

Someone out there ruined her?



It is all my fault. My daughter went through something... disgusting... because of me. She's just a child. How can someone...? Why I couldn't handle it. I went violent. I even started screaming. I needed something to break. My eyes scanned the room. I found a vase and I threw it somewhere. I needed more. Someone got hold of me - Mr. Adam. He hugged me tightly, tears in his eyes. "Calm down Clara. Calm down".

"CALM DOWN!? WHEN MY DAUGHTER HAS BEEN RAPED? SHE IS NOT WITH ME ANYMORE!"

"I know. I know. But you need to calm down."

"It's all my fault. I shouldn't have left her alone."

"It's not your fault..."

"I shouldn't have left her alone", I screamed as I cried my heart out.

What if I hadn't left her alone? Would she have been with me right now? Alive? What if I had cancelled the meeting and just stayed with Amy at her home? Then would she have been alive?



If I had only taken her with me.... She would have been with me. We would've celebrated her birthday together. If only I had cancel my meeting, instead she would have been riding her dream bicycle right now, instead of lying covered in blood. If only I had taken a different decision, the day could have ended differently. And I will always carry the guilt of my daughter's death. ~~Her~~ Till the day I reach her.

Some goodbyes were whispered. But her's was torn from my heart.