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Daze

Ritam Gupta

I am shaking while writing this account. The state of shock (perhaps I'm overreacting) commenced on Saturday, 11th March 2017. It was the last working day before the mid-semester break with more than half the class absent. We have full three weeks to write thousand words about a tale by a British fourteenth century proto-feminist (that is debatable), the father of English literature. There are only a few things we know (rather, have been told) - no plagiarism (obviously), display of the struggle we have gone through while formulating our below average answers is appreciated and is the best part about checking assignments, include critics,

quotes from the text and critical analysis along with our own subjectivity.

We'll get seven and a half or an eight if a certain someone 'dreams' about our assignment. So it immediately became our far-fetched dream – both the assignment as well as that certain someone (for me personally). She was one of the greatest teachers I've ever had.

Anyway, we leave the college premises on that day at 10:30a.m., exhausted from the two-hour long class and also the annual department fest 'Ekphrasis 2017' held the day before on Friday, 10th March. We were drained of all energy, realization of the fatigue gradually dawning caused by one month of blood (scissor cuts), sweat (running around for fest-related errands) and tears (really? maybe not). P (now one of my best friends) and I had plans of going to the famous French bakery Lopera for macarons (courtesy- Blair Waldorf, XOXO, Gossip Girl) as well as Big Chill for tomato-garlic risotto, Ceasar salad and blueberry cheesecake, both being in Khan Market. So after everything we went, hogged, stuffed ourselves and ranted which is where it all started (or did it end?).

Five thirty in the evening on Saturday, we both go our separate ways. Since procrastination seems to be my best friend, thinking we have one week of holidays including Holi, I keep delaying the assignment (although I read two plays which is quite an accomplishment for me).

The submission date is Saturday, 1st April 2017. I am quite aware of the same approaching. Come middle of the week, the due date of submission is nearing (hanging on my head like a sword) and I have still not started climbing the mountain that this assignment was.

To once again emphasise (the gravity of I'm genuinely not sure what), I am still shaking. I had contacted my seniors regarding the content of my chosen answer (there was an option between two questions) and even discussed it with my mother.

The Wife of Bath is till date the most favourite text that I have studied in these three years of graduation. Perks of sharing my syllabus (especially the prologue and the tale) with my mother was her saying in November 2019, “*The Wife of Bath* was Geoffrey Chaucer’s version of *thank u, next!*” HA! I started making the points for the assignment at 6:00p.m. on Friday, 31st March, finished it at three-thirty in the morning, mailed S (bless her soul because I didn’t own a printer then), slept at 4:00a.m. (I guess), dreamt about how could I make it better and woke up at 6:15 a.m. with swollen eyes.

I was shaking of fear (I still cannot decipher the exact reason) while writing it, typing it, submitting it, receiving it and the marks back, and afterwards too. Never have I ever been so terrified of anything (as far as I remember). I still can’t seem to answer- why? Am I truly this afraid of failure or disappointing myself? Someone needs to tell me to shake it off- my shaking spree. This is an illusion and I am not able to come out of this daze (do I want to?). In retrospect, I can say that that answer was probably the highlight of my life and things I’ve written (exaggerating much?).

I am frightened to say out loud that I got the highest in class (scared to even type it). Paranoia seems to be developing – I held those four pages as if they will vanish. What is this? I did not study for even an hour for another test of the same paper. This test was on Monday and I slept the entire Sunday, exhausted from farewell practices (things I do for my lovely seniors). Some say assignments are easier than class tests (because they are done at home). This is true only at times and to a certain extent. Class tests are a headache but only for half a day – from the time you start studying for it (which is obviously the night before) till you write it in class and submit it. Whereas assignments remain a source of additional and unnecessary stress for two to three weeks (how is it even possible to not write them one night before?).

To conclude, I recently met the teacher previously mentioned at Sri Venkateshwara College (it was my dream college) where I had gone to present a research paper. Part of the reason I chose to submit an abstract for their conference “Disability Studies: Towards a Disabled Humanities” was the expectation to see her again (I know I sound like a creepy stalker but I assure you I am not). So it worked out. I went there, saw her and she remembered me! Even though she taught us for just one semester and I had practically no contact with her since two years, she knew my face! She told me I should’ve kept in touch if I had her number (which I did). I told her I had not wanting to be too obvious and direct with my affection for her (this was cringe). She heard my paper and sent me a text later with compliments. It was an intensely validating experience overall. You think I told her that I wrote an entire story detailing the emotional rollercoaster ride triggered by an assignment which she is most likely to not even remember? I was about to but I’m not THAT stupid!

Ms. Ritam Gupta

Ms. Ritam completed her schooling from Modern School, Barakhamba Road, New Delhi in 2016. She did her bachelors and masters in English literature from the University of Delhi in 2019 and 2021 respectively. She is currently working as an Assistant Professor in the department of English, Shaheed Bhagat Singh College, University of Delhi, having joined in June 2023. Her areas of interest include Disability studies, Indology, East Asian literature, performance theory and feminism, and self-help literature. She’s also pursuing the Korean language course from Korean Cultural Center India, New Delhi and is a trained Bharatanatyam (Indian classical) dancer.

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