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A Donkey in a Horse Race

I do not want to say it but it is a madhouse all around, like literally! I live in a medium-sized house, with my not-so-big family. My parents, a brother, a sister, and I. You, my readers, must be thinking what can go wrong in such a house. It must have felt like a fairytale from the storybooks. Stories, the likes of which, you and I have read plenteously.

Such stories, usually, have a mom, who is a love-angel. A father: strong protector and glue for the whole house, brothers sharing a bond among them, a lovely sister playing with dolls and outgrowing her pajamas. Peace everywhere!

But you know what is the problem with such stories: they never occur in reality. Despite the fact that these tales could never be real, the inescapable wish of humans to live in such a story is appalling. It is nauseating to think that these men would want to live in no other emotion, in their lives, than love.

I know humans enjoy being loved. I also like it. It is altogether a different matter when sometime later you come to know that you can never be the person, your lover assumes you to be. Yet, you don't think of popping

the bubble. You stay in that state like a bat hanging upside down all day long.

I remember my dad telling me:

“Listen to me carefully son; you are the eldest, so you must be responsible”.

I wanted to ask what did he mean by being responsible but “Yes father” was the only reply that I could give. Not because I was not capable of saying something different. But because I didn’t know there could be some other answer to this. I was stripped of thinking about alternate possibilities. Maybe he loved me that much that he thought thinking would hurt me. I don’t know!

I was told later in life that if I didn’t say anything in response to my elders it would mean I was a good child. If I didn’t show my emotions, it was considered even better.

Despite my father’s efforts, I begin to think. Maybe, that is how we learn to follow authority. That is how we are taught to behave in a certain way. Later, all these early authorities transfer to some more profound ones: the cleric, the pope, the priest, the boss, and the father of your wife and then the mother of your children.

I had always been reluctant when others tried to tell me what to do. Why couldn’t I live alone if I chose to. Why I couldn’t grow my hair longer. I think It is primarily because the people who live around me have a firm belief that after reaching a certain age I must be with a fellow human with, preferably, an opposite physical gender. Or

because I am a man so I had to fashion my hair according to the way men do.

I also think humans cannot live in peace. All the talk about peace and love is nonsense. If they had intentions to live peacefully, they would not have developed the civilization in the way it is. The human culture works under the postulation of threat. They make hospitals and also they make bombs. Their bombs are far more deadly than the hospitals could save.

It was an early morning of a fine Sunday. I had nothing to do. I woke up late. Felt hungry; went out of the room to see if there was something to eat in the kitchen. I could see a saucepan with dried tealeaves around its edges suggesting that the tea had been finished. I checked the fridge, nothing to eat there. I came back to my room waiting for someone to cook something for me.

I tried to find something to keep myself busy until the food comes but my stomach curled. My only focus was on the anticipation of the food. Without knowing, I started to feel angry. Nobody even bothered to think that I needed some food. After all I was a human not a rug, I needed to eat. So I left the bed and went inside the kitchen, took the bread out, put it on the stove to warm it. Suddenly my sister entered the kitchen saying:

“Wow you can warm the bread!” while rotating her oddly hazel eyes.

I felt the sarcasm and it burned me. Where did she get her eyes? We never had bluish-hazel- green something eyes here.

“Leave it. Let me do it for you.” She added, as if she felt sorry over my inhibition.

“No. I’ll do it myself. You could have done it a little earlier”. I replied with piercing anger.

She looked at me as if she was waiting for me to say something. “You would die of hunger if there would not be a women around you.

I ate the bread and went about running my chores for a normal Sunday. A few hours passed. I had already forgotten the episode of my morning argument.

They were playing a very nice film on the TV. It seemed very interesting. The main character was some hippie looking guy, who always smoked pot. My interest in the film increased.

Somewhere in the middle of the film, I saw, from the corner of my eye, my mom biting her lips. I instantly knew something was terribly wrong. She always bit her lips when angry. My interest in everything lost because I was taught to feel sad because she had been feeling something. She is my mom after all. She came near, “why have you spoken to your sister like that”.

Confused on the question I replied, “what did I do wrong?”

“Don’t you ever dare to talk to her like that”. I knew she was talking about the morning.

“I was hungry and wanted to eat some thing. You told me that men don’t go in the kitchen. It is not their domain. I had to eat something”. After saying this I felt sad again because I was not supposed to say anything in response. But then again my anger took over:

“If I was not supposed to cook for myself, I should have been provided with the food I required so desperately”. I retorted.

“You are selfish just like your father. It’s in your blood to be annoying. You will never understand. Maybe when you’d have your own children then you’d know”. She looked at me with hopelessness.

Even though she compared me with my father I did not like it. I didn’t know what made me angrier, the fact that I was like my father or the possibility that I would have children who’d behave just like me. I started to seriously consider a possibility of getting vasectomy, because I knew I could not say no to getting married.

My father was a man of very poor taste. I know this because he married my mom; this fact alone is sufficient enough to prove his poor taste. But then I know he had been as docile against authority as anyone, as any other mother fucking scumbag, so he had no say in the matters of his wedding. And for that I feel sorry for him.

I was certain now that this has not ended. In my house, things don't end so soon. Sometimes days passed before these tensions ended. I had been observing these since my childhood. So, I knew there was another round of scolding still to go. Most probably from my father.

As I suspected he was standing right in front of the bathroom door later that day. Looking at me furiously when I came back from the local shop after buying a bubblegum stick. He closed the door in a slow and well-rehearsed motion. Opened the basin tap and washed his hands. He was not looking at me. I tried to slip to my room but in vain, because, he had already called me so I had to stop to listen to him.

What happened between you and your sister?

"Nothing father", was my plain response.

Really? He inquired sarcastically.

"Nothing new. We had much greater fights before. It was just like that". I knew I was losing the argument. I never won actually.

On such occasions, my father usually wanted me to apologize. Most of the time, I did not know why I was apologizing. But it minimized the time I had to listen to his obscure statements.

My sister, on the other hand, had mastered the art of apology. When we were young, much young, our fights used to result in expelling us both into the dark lawn. She

would apologize in an instant and would be allowed to go back inside whereas I used to grind my teeth until my father would call me back in. Then his obscure, mind shaking, repetitive and unbelievably long instructions would start. That lasted like ages; I had to listen to his incoherent blabber and pretended to understand, waiting anxiously for it to end sooner than anticipated.

I learned from the prolonged sessions of instructions that I was expected to act in a certain way. My attitude was determined by the place I stood, the hierarchical place in my family. There was a problem with such instructions though. When I tried to argue, point at their inherently confusing nature, Dad resorted to violence. My argument was never accepted. Last night for instance: my father was lecturing me about the responsibilities, I had to fulfill.

“You know you are the eldest son”. He told me as if it were a revelation.

I knew where all this was going. There will be a whole theory about the cosmos’s manipulation over producing me at a certain time for I was predetermined to tackle some responsibilities. I thought and instantly my armpits and hands started to sweat.

“It is like an honor to be in such a place, you must take care of your younger siblings”. My father added. Without telling me what taking care means.

Yes father! My only response. Then a grueling wait for the class to end.

He continued: “there is a whole big world out there; you cannot take the risk of thinking it simple. People are never going to give you any space to move. You must squeeze yourself in”. are you getting me?

He asked me, and then continued without getting my answer.

“Why cant you be like everyone else, look at the son of Jamal, why cant you be more like him”. He looked at me with shame.

Have you even looked at him? I am talking about Ahmed. He is so well behaved. I talked to him the other day. Unlike you, he is the pride of his father.

Whatever he said after this or what unique comparisons did he drew between Ahmed and his own despicable son. I know nothing about it, because after some sentences I stopped paying attention and continued looking at his moving lips, waiting for them to stop.

Why should I listen to this man in front, he’d ever said something that I would actually understand.

“What the fuck! He wants me to behave with him as I do with all the lesser-known people. The people I didn’t know. Such people don’t deserve your built-in emotions, neither they have an important place in your life. How could they want me to not show my emotions? No anger or no sadness, nothing out of ordinary and still they expect me to be extraordinary.

I wished intently that somehow I could make him understand. I wanted to tell him that I am sometimes nervous and sad and curious and irritated and million other things, without any reason.

It's a privilege that he gets to see all the shades of my psyche. It's the frankness of us. It's the purity of my self. But, I never said any if this. I thought about it as usual and looked at his face where I could only see his lips moving that suggested he was speaking.

This charade took some time to end. The moving lips, my sweating armpits and that damn weather.

My oldest memories are blurred and obscure. Life has been like a leaking teacup, for in an effort to minimize the tea loss you burn your mouth by trying to sip it hot, but I don't know why my cup has so many cracks, and I don't even know how can I fill those.

I hated comparisons! Whereas my father loved them. This is the only area where my mother, too, agreed with my father. The emotions on my father's face used to be so intense that I couldn't figure out what he was going through when my mother joined forces in cursing me. I was unlike anyone in this whole darn world. At least I liked to believe so. Why would some wanted me to be like others. Why the monotony, why not diversity? If everyone would be like everyone else, what would be the point of too many humans?

Its nuts to make some one similar to someone else, its crazy! It is stupid!

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