

Inheritance of Dreams

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A gentle flick, with a slight twitch of the agile wrists, and the ball tickled down the ground to the square leg boundary. A seemly face with tender touches of adolescence and unkempt hair emerged out of the sweaty Helmet. He reluctantly raised his bat at the scattered crowd down the sideline, pumped up with joy.

Warm sunshine of the setting sun glistened down his weary forehead, and melted on his cheeks. The face reflected expressions of imposed solemnity. Yet, the ears were accustomed to such applause now.

“Good Gracious! You accomplished the impossible!”,

“We are into the finals”,

the cries flowed in from all around as his teammates flocked to him from all corners of the ground.

“You are a special find of mine, Mark these words.”, the coach hunkered before Rajib, as they headed towards the Pavilion.

An hour later he was strolling down the streets to home, exhausted by the fussy post match celebrations. Father would be rather upset with his conduct for sure. He had sneaked out of the house early in the morning, Father was out for his office.

Now, the streets were cold and desolate. Lights were scarce, save those of the flickering lampposts. Houses and office buildings lay enveloped in darkness. Rajib has always liked this hometown of his, however of eclipsed importance against the casting shadows of proximal metropolis. The closet in which the city encapsulates its people, the places, the serpentine congested lanes, and the pale patch of sky remotely peeping in from above the sky kissing concretes, like a blue water droplet on a grey canvas.

His thoughts strayed incessantly. He cringed, as his father's disapproving stare crossed his mind. Cricket had always been his field of keen interest; mostly because he savored the flavour of the game, partly because of the spontaneous batting skills that he had honed. Nothing had ever enamored him as much as the elegant drives of Dravid, as the ball skimmed past the lush green outfield. There was restrained support too, from the family since his childhood. Family meant his mother, father and grandparents, a small one indeed. To them, the game was the cherry on the top, that merely adds to the sheen that supplements his academic success. In the end, "You're no Tendulkar!". As conscious guardians, his parents had ensured that prodigality didn't stain the blood. From the kindergartens to the 12th now, he had scarcely lingered at the second position. That, however, didn't overwhelm his conscience, nor did it let insolence creep into his veins. He was always the amicable guy, 'easy-to-go-with', affable.

The wintry wind rustled through his hairs. The breeze seemed to carry a sinister chill, as a premonition of the imminent troubles. The twilight had long faded into the lengthy winter night. Though he'd skipped most of the extended post match chaos and hollerings, it seemed unlikely that the sacrifice would suffice to save the axe.

He trudged his way into their backyard, by whose side flanked the main entrance of their three storey house.

He noticed father from a distance, in the balcony, reclining in his armchair, puffing a cigar.

"Is that you, Rajib?", father's voice sounded.

“Yes, Dad”, he moved in through the balcony gate.

Father measured him with an eye of reproach.

“Couldn’t you manage to squeeze some time to take a note of the watch!”, he enquired, with the characteristic cold glint in his eyes.

“Err... Dad, it was just that we had an important...”, he fumbled, shivers rippling down his spine.

“Listen Son, I know you harbour a soft corner in your heart for the game. But Son, the medical joints are approaching. You shouldn’t idle away time like this.” Thus, slumping in his chair, the Father tried to counsel the ‘wayward’ son.

“Yes dad”, he muttered.

“In my younger days, I had aspired to become a doctor. Every father longs to witness his abandoned dreams get fulfilled through his son’s perseverance. I am no exception!”, mumbled his father, gazing out of the scaffolding window grids.

“I will... I will try to keep up dad...”, he stammered, plodding out of the room.

That night, crouching under the blanket in his room, the last words of his father kept ringing in Rajib’s ears. The words were certainly imbued with recondite feelings of regret. They seemed to objectify an abstract sense of anguish, lurking in a fumbled clot underneath, on the verge of an overwhelming outflow at the slightest poking. The passion that he had secretly nurtured in his heart for years, began to dwindle. Is the Willow at the corner of the room still visible?

Twenty years later, a white Audi drove past an array of concrete settlements that had cropped up by the side of the lane, in all these years. The car emerged out of the plushly mansion that sprawled at the end of the lane.

The car moved swiftly past the thinning holiday traffic in the roads. It slowly made its way into the giant stadium, which once used to be the hub of a thousand boyhood fantasies.

Dr. Rajib stepped out of his car. He walked up to the sideline. A plethora of emotions and memories curling up, seeking an outburst. There he stood, intently watching the game. Some of the spectators exchanged curious glances, and whispered among themselves. It's not everyday that a cardiologist of such national repute pays a visit to such places. Unruffled, the eyes focussed on the match in the middle, precisely, on the puny figure on strike, desperately trying to steer his team to victory. The eyes lit up with every stroke that fledged past the green grass to the fences. They sparkled as the winning stroke had the ball sailing over the long on fielder and landed in the strands.

A giggling face peeped out of the helmet, and he flung the bat in a half circle, at his teammates on the opposite end of the ground. The fading sunlight washed his weary face. The tickling sweat drops glistened in that light. Soon, he was on their shoulders, soaking in the approbation.

Catching sight of the man down the sideline, he scuttled to him and embraced him. A fond pat on the back. A few scattered tears.

“I am proud of you son. I'm very proud of you. Keep going.”, the father mumbled.

Dream come true; was it indeed?