

## Short Story

### The Red Scarf

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It was a dark night. Only a street lamp lighted the narrow street. Beneath that lamp post four young men were sitting in a semi-circle way. Two half empty chilled liquor bottles are carefully placed on the ground. Water vapours were still dropping from them. An empty card box, a match box, a big packet of potato chips and five mobile phones are lying on one side of them. On the other side, little far from them three bicycles and four pairs of chappals were silently watching their game like every other night.

Without lifting his eyes from the cards holding in his hand Sudip asked "Why did you bring two mobiles tonight?" Mohan answered in his usual grave manner, "My mother's phone. You know how irritating she is! Today she called me thrice when I was working in the garage".Tanmay looked at Mohan and said,"Not a bad idea.I will do the same".

"Before that you do what you are asked to do" Mohan replied while scratching his half grown beard.

"What?"

"Mosquito coil!"

"Oh shit! I ll bring it tomorrow. God promise"

"If you forget I will rape you. God promise! "

"If you are serious then I will never bring it. I promise!"

Everyone started laughing except Mohan. To continue the mood Tanmay started imitating a contemporary porn actress and in a mischievous tone he took his face to Mohan and said, "Oh baby! Let's do it na!" This time Mohan also started laughing and to answer Tanmay he kicked him hard. Tanmay fell on the ground and started laughing. Slowly his smile disappeared and his eyes started glittering with the light of the lamp. After a sigh he said "Life has become very boring now! Such a long time passed and we didn't do anything." After a pause he suddenly woke up and said, "Let's go to the brothel tonight". Sudip took his mobile, checked the time and said "You go. I am not interested. I have tasted all of them". "Yes! and they don't even taste good" said Chintu and again they started laughing. "Hmm. That's true. Even this place has also become more secluded than before. People normally avoid to pass this lane. Oh! Such a sorrow!" Tanmay uttered the last words in a dramatic way to make his friends laugh. But no one paid any attention and he came back to his cards silently.

Half an hour passed. The street dogs also stopped barking. Only the cricket's cry made the night more silent. Suddenly they heard something, a sound, panting very hard.

"Did you hear that?" asked Mohan in a hushed voice.

"Yes yes! Jangling sound of bangles!" Sudip said.

"A lady? This time?" said Chintu astonishingly.

"Is she alone?" Tanmay asked Chintu who was trying hard to look into the dark. They couldn't understand who the lady was or what she was doing there. They could only understand that she was alone and helpless.

Suddenly Mohan said "Turn the light off".

"What?" Sudip asked back.

"Turn off the light you idiot! Can't you see she is alone."

The light went off. The lane became darker. The footsteps stopped. Nothing was heard but a whisper. After few seconds Mohan said "okay! I'll be the last. Let me finish my drink. You guys go on and remember, keep her quiet first. I don't want any trouble".

They did what he said. After almost an hour Sudip and Chintu came back. Sudip chuckled and said "Tanmay is still not done. Go and join him before he kills her with his excessive passion!" Mohan left. After half an hour they came back, collected their things, took their cycles and left the place hurriedly without turning the light on.

After some time when they came to light Chintu noticed Mohan was holding something in his hand. He asked him "hey! Is it her dupatta? Why did you take that? I tied her hands with it!

"No use!" replied Mohan. Pointing toward Tanmay he said "because this bastard already made her unconscious before I got there. I couldn't find anything but this in the utter darkness and took this to spend my rest of the night"

After ten minutes of ride they drove Mohan and left. Mohan entered into his old, worn out house. The door was open. He turned to lock the door. Suddenly he heard something and looked at his right. It was his mother. She was running toward him. She looked strange. Her eyes were red. She came to him and in a trembling voice she asked, " why did you take so much time? Couldn't you manage any ambulance?"

"Why? What happened?"

"What happened?" She turned white." Your father is dying Mohan! He has become worst tonight. Didn't she tell you?"

Mohan didn't listen to her last words. He rushed to his father and stopped by the threshold.He turned back to his mother and asked, " why didn't you call me?"

"You took both the phones. I couldn't understand anything and sent your sister to call you."She paused and then said" Didn't you meet her?"

"No!"

She broke down on the dirty floor. She looked puzzled. She was trying to say something, but she stopped by the red scarf Mohan was still holding in his hand. She gathered courage to speak and finally asked, "if you didn't meet her then where did you find her dupatta?"

Night was truly dark and silent. Nothing but a sound of panting was heard inside. It was not the panting of a dying man, but the panting of a dying night.