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It was the Dragonfly

Yuvraj Gawra

They didn't see the dragonfly buzz inside. The same way they wouldn't see it leave.

Viraj scribbled away, oblivious to the world around him, absorbed into the sheet of paper drawn taut across his hand into which he now jotted down words and sentences as quickly as they came to him. His fingers pressed against the body of his pen. The sides of his fingers had turned into an odd shade of bluish-purple, after being labored for the last one and half hours. He didn't care. He needed to finish this essay as soon as possible-no, he *had* to. His pet beagle, Lucy, snored comfortably in its cot, wrapped cozily in a blanket up to its front paws.

Until it was woken up by the dragonfly.

It buzzed frivolously into its snout, which made it twitch, but didn't wake it up instantly. It beat its wings noisily in front of the puppy's ears, and it only shifted with a soft whimper, still asleep. As if the dragonfly had taken up a challenge, it darted into its ear, and the puppy scrambled awake in a jolt.

It barked unceremoniously and shook its head in a desperate effort to cast the nosy insect out. The dragonfly flew out of its ear and buzzed across the room, before settling on Viraj's shelf, who didn't even turn to see how his pet had woken up.

It was six-thirty a.m. in the morning, his parents were asleep, and he had to finish an essay in another half hour. The beagle didn't give up. It pranced towards the shelf in slow, soft steps with its tiny paws and uttered a low, guttural growl, hoping to threaten the intruder away.

The dragonfly only hummed its wings in reply.

Lucy barked at the dragonfly and pounced upon the shelf to get at the insect. It whined and barked, growled and yelped. Suddenly, the still, warm morning was filled with the harsh sounds of the puppy's barking. The unpleasant noise rang through the room, and across into the hall.

“Shut up, Lucy!” Viraj hissed in anger.

Lucy quieted down a little, her invocations reduced to occasional barks and shrieks.

The dragonfly finally flew away from the shelf, and bolted onto the ceiling. Lucy’s keen, seed-like eyes followed its path and now its neck was cast up onto the ceiling, observing the dragonfly with ferocious intensity.

Viraj was at his last paragraph, scribbling away. He was on the verge of experiencing literary ecstasy, as the rushed emotions of gleeful surprise and relief flooded through him, whereas behind him, there was a different scenario playing out.

“Yess!” Viraj flung his arms out into air, the notebook tightly clasped into his fist. This had helped in taking away the attention of his pet, who glanced at its master when the dragonfly swooped in with its droning wings right onto Lucy’s right eye.

Lucy whined in pain and clawed at its eye, while Viraj stumbled onto his bag to assimilate the books and copies for the day, *Miss Manjula, wait till you see this*, he thought, grinning. Lucy sprung around the room in the search of the annoying bug, and broke into hysterical shrieking and barking.

“Yeah, Lucy I know, I know, I’m excited too!” Viraj addressed to his pet who was in search of its most recent adversary. Finally, she spotted it. The dragonfly was nestled on the cover of Viraj’s english notebook, the one he was to submit today. Lucy stretched her paws, ready to prance.

The dragonfly stayed put. Its great oblong eyes glinted menacingly.

Lucy sprang with a yelp just as Viraj held the copy by its covers. The dragonfly shot out of its position right when the razor sharp canines of the pup buried themselves on the notebook, barely missing Viraj’s fist. Lucy yanked it away from his grasp, and shook it with manic frenzy in her tightly enclosed jaws. The pages ripped apart, and Viraj saw, mouth agape in horror as all his two and a half hour hard work tattered to shreds and fell onto the floor.

Lucy dropped the damaged, wrecked notebook. Now looking around absently, still in search of the damned dragonfly, when she felt a hard kick in her abdomen, and flew to the corner with

a painful whimper. The beagle saw Viraj coming down to his knees , holding up his done-for-good homework. Panic and frustration flared across his face, his hands clawing at his hair.

“Shit, shit, shit, Miss Manjula’s gonna kill me, just cause’ of your bloody mess. *SHIT!*” he wailed. The bus would arrive in another ten minutes and the essay would take a good half hour to be finished even roughly, even if not as well as he had written the earlier one. Meanwhile his puppy cried and moaned in pity-evoking whimpers, and cast sad eyes onto the boy who stood perplexed in front of his shredded homework.

Lucy kept squealing in pain, when she saw Viraj lock eyes with her

“Oh cut that out, Lucy, you know you deserved that” he rebuked.

Lucy tried to stand fell and back onto the floor, when Viraj stormed out of the room . He had to figure out something, he couldn’t bear the mind numbing insults again, they would be too much to take in.

The door shut tight, and Lucy kept whining. Any other human who held pity inside his heart would immediately melt when he would have witnessed this tiny puppy whining in soft, low, calls, but that wasn’t the case in the room, was it?

As Lucy settled into herself, her ears caught onto a familiar drone right beside her. She jerked her head to find the dragonfly flutter and settle onto the heap of pages and papers in front of her.

It flapped it’s wings in a reedy hum, as if to mock her.

*

Who was I kidding , Viraj thought to himself, my dog ate my homework?, huh, no wonder she kicked me out of the class.

He stood in the hallway of the classrooms, Miss Manjula’s voice, high and fast, yammering away in the class, along with the faint murmurs and occasional lectures that blew into the corridor. He sighed, exhausted, and a little apprehensive, hoping that the Principal wouldn’t come around in his rounds. He looked to his right, and saw the vast , dangling leaves of the palm?...or coconut, or whatever he didn’t know, but it sure looked serene in this lazy, buttery afternoon. He heard the drone of flies hum nearby, and it gave him a weird, profound sense of

déjà vu. He wondered where that had come from and felt it dissipate almost instantly , the subtle feeling vaporizing into thin air.

He had kicked his pup earlier this afternoon, he had hurt Lucy, and though his reason was justifiable, what he had done was not. There were other ways in which he could have expressed his irritation, other more polite ways. He shouldn't have done that. A deep, unsettling longing crept into his heart.

The guilt settled like rubble, hard and unforgiving. Among the debris of his recklessness and his regret, he found a ray of hope. A little ray which if executed properly would earn him forgiveness. Afterall, his only true friend had been Lucy, and they had been through some rough waters together.

They sure had.

Smiling to himself, he formulated his plan. It wasn't anything great and glamorous , just a token of love to express his care.

He decided he would get some of Lucy's favorite forbidden treats, such as a meatball sub and a bucket of KFC, along with that he would get him a new rubber toy of Pennywise the Dancing clown, for whom they held a similar amount of hate(if they still gave them away at the store though). Yep, maybe that would suffice.

Lucy's going to drool a pool, he thought.

That brought a wide smile to his face.

*

Contradictory situations played out on both the sides when the smiling boy's puppy scampered around the house in a wild chase behind a dragonfly , causing destruction in its wake.

Picture frames shattered on the floor, utensils clanged one another, the puppy barked in rage, and the cook, the poor, pathetic fellow ran around him, trying to settle as many things on the way all the while reaching out with an open arm in a desperate attempt to catch the troublesome pet.

Pure domestic chaos, I tell you.

Lucy was enraged after her mockery by the petty insect, which had set her on her path to vendetta right when Viraj's mother had left the house for work. The cook had been left alone with an aggravated puppy for company, which was seldom a company anyone ever desired.

Lucy was on the table now, growling in the same, distinguishable *grrrrr* of hers, while the dragonfly swopped in and out of sight of the dog. It hummed and bobbed in mid-air as Lucy swung a paw at it, missing it by a huge difference and set off after it again. The frail, middle-aged cook gasped with exhaustion and staggered with heavy, long, buckling steps after the damn dog.

The cook took in long, quivering drags of air into his bony chest and rubbed the underside of his legs with a wince on his lips. There was a tiny cut down there from when he had been collecting the glass that had splintered around the room after the frame had come down.

Madam will not be pleased, he thought and shivered, and realized to his horror that she wouldn't only not be pleased, she would be horrified after seeing the condition of her dear home, when he heard another crash resonating across the house.

The alarm clock and the T.V remote lay on the cold floor, as the obvious dog still barked away madly into thin air, not that she could notice anything, it really was pretty hard to spot the insect when so many things had happened and were happening and nothing even made sense. He collected this too and set them up on the shelf, out of Lucy's reach again.

"Lucy, stop, please, stop before you cause any more trouble!" he half requested and half-ordered, only to watch as Lucy jumped on the mattress of the bed and tore away at it with her claws, trying to dig out her arch-rival to no success.

The cook wailed in disgust and heard a whistle swoop down the hall. It was the pressure cooker's call that made him haul himself in desperate urgency into the kitchen.

Whereas Lucy chased the fleeing dragonfly to Viraj's room which overlooked the backyard and eventually led out into the street. The dragonfly buzzed to the half-opened window and stuck to the glass. It flapped its wings in quick, short bursts, and swooped out the gap. Lucy yowled and lunged up onto the chair first, and then the table eventually, and tried to squirm past the half-opened glass window which dropped down to the backyard. Her head poked out

first, then she folded her paws underneath her belly, and nudged forward, causing her to squeeze herself up to her belly, and slowly, up to her hind legs, and then she jumped down.

Lucy had lost the dragonfly now, and swung her head back and forth, trying to get a hold. She sprinted a few steps and heard the striking drone of the dragonfly as it zipped past her eye once again, missing it barely by an inch. Lucy swerved right and gave chase, once again to the dragonfly, which led her, quite inevitably right into the street.

The cook didn't know though, oh, he wasn't even in his senses enough to care. He must have in-evidently assumed that Lucy had exhausted herself and settled down. He focused on the cooking. He cut, and tore and fried and oiled. He rinsed and swept, he sprinkled and churned. Lunch had to be delicious, or it wouldn't keep the Madam's mind off the spoils of the house. It had to be appealing enough to make that seem a stupid mistake which would never happen again.

Lucy ran deeper into the street, barking away into it.

The cook didn't care, he loved his job. He did what he could to keep it.

He cooked.

*

Viraj wasn't disappointed, but he wasn't happy either. It was disheartening for him get used to the fact that his pet dog would chew on a Spiderman rubber toy all day long, instead of a Pennywise one. It was stupid, he knew, but it was a big deal to him. They had run out of Pennywise rubber toys back in the mall, and so he had had to settle for a Spiderman one (whom he loved). There was embarrassment in that, yes, surely there was, but the matters of the heart surpass those of shame.

His hands stuffed with food, and a crookedly bent Spiderman, Viraj got into the car and beckoned his driver to start the way back home. He stashed all the goodies and gifts in the back seat, and breathed in a deep puff of air. The engine revved, as his driver yanked the gear and accelerated forward. It moved out of the garage of the store, and out into the road.

As Viraj glanced towards his driver, he noticed heavy, dark pouches under those weary, bloodshot eyes. His hair scrambled into knots and bushels and fell down to his forehead.

“Are you tired, Ajay Da?” a worried Viraj asked.

“Its fine Viru, just a little sleepy, but we will make it back home in no time, your work is all done?” he questioned back, avoiding eye contact and looking at the road ahead with widening eyes.

“Yeah...work’s all done” Viraj said, looking at him once again.

“All right then, let’s go, madam might call to ask if you have reached...” he said and clamped down on the accelerator harder, as the car sped into the road.

Yes, that right there, mother had sent the car early today, and that was odd since she never did that unless absolutely necessary. Viraj ventured a wild guess, as buildings and vehicles blurred past him, that it was probably just Lucy being a miscreant.

He rolled down the window, looking outside as the people who would be strangers to him forever zipped past, their shadows trying to ride the wind. Buildings receded eventually into the swift background, as the rumble of the engine got notched up a bit and he felt the car pick up speed, which made the wind slap into his face and sent his hair in a wild dance.

He glanced towards his driver and was pleased to see those rather red eyes fixed onto the road. He turned back into the fast, zooming world outside the window and settled into the seat comfortably,(its such a pity that people tend not to notice drunk drivers).

He shut his eyes against the *whoosssh* of the air and thought of how the day would end on a sweet note, Lucy curled into his arms, giving him the lick of his life, all slobbery and wet, and wagging her tail in great enthusiasm as he saw her thrash and claw and bite Spiderman until the cotton fluffing inside the toy poured out and how she would relish and chomp down on the meatball sub and KFC.

She sure is going to drool a pool, he thought again, feeling his eyes sink into his sockets, the wind cooling his face. Sleep came to him naturally, like a soft caress across the cheek. He welcomed it with open arms, as the last thing he heard before slipping into a dream was the whirr of the car get louder, as it skimmed through the road and into the street where *sometimes* cars were fast, the street that led into their home ...as it went faster..and faster...and faster...

The world is a rush and he is running. There is no end at the other side. A vast, gray field, that was churning and boiling, as if to swallow him. He hears a bark, and a squeal of pain, he hears the drone of flies and turns to see an angry, puffed cloud of swarming flies come towards him. He doesn't know what to feel, and the sensation he is aware of, is flying, flying across this strange world where he is trapped in, swooshing across the void, running from the flies, or...sticks?, he couldn't really determine what they were, but he knew he didn't want them to get close..they were coming..reaching...for him...suddenly this world swirls into a direction that throws him off his feet, and into the-

dashboard, he hit his head hard. His skull throbbed and the pain jolted him out of his doze , as the car screeched to a tight halt. Something had gone under them, something the car had hit. He didn't turn to see the driver, he threw open the gate and went out into the street.

In his deep, semi-trance like state, where the world still seemed to float he looked down to see his puppy, his dear old Lucy, splattered and bleeding out into the road, her torn, little body still and pumping fresh blood into the black tarmac.

He felt a buzz beside his ear, and the flutter of tiny, slapping wings. He swatted the insect away, disoriented enough to not care what it was.

Well, who could blame him.

Later, some would say it was the damn recklessness of the miserable cook, or the drunken, over speeding, ignorant driver,...maybe even the boy himself for being careless enough to leave the window of his room open, once he left for school.

But I think you and I both know who it was, don't we?