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Fidoic  
J&K,India

### “Liesfidoic”

A bouquet of tulips and a light milk chocolate is what he bought for her, though he wanted to bring lilies. Today she was going home after a month. He came along with his son to take her back. She loved chocolate when she was young. Though diabetic, she still used to nibble a corner off whenever she bought one for her grandson. And in the backyard she had grown these lilies. On her favourite days she used to wear lilac coloured dresses. An obsession with lilies! She was a colourful black lady. Fat and chubby with big red lips she was. She was! She used to!

Not that it was all white now! The bright crimson just turned to faint turquoise. She was on insulin. Chocolates were strictly prohibited. Lilac disgusted her, bringing back to her the memories of past.

Back at home her daughter-in-law was cleaning the dishes for the barbeque which was due on her arrival. Guests were inbound; mostly relatives. It was a welcome as well as a farewell party. Welcome to her. Farewell to her.

‘Take out your shoes and go inside quietly’ he said to *Kayne* handing him over the bouquet and the chocolate. There were a lot of shoes outside the ward. ‘Shoes are not allowed inside the Special Care ward’ a placard reminded people. It was not an ICU but a ward where the patients were kept after being discharged from the ICU. The hospital would discharge her in a few hours after the said formalities will be completed. *Kayne* was happy that her grandmother was coming back home. He loved her a lot. She too did.

She was already waiting. Her black face was in complete contrast to her white dress. Doctor had told *Mr McKurtzny* that his mother stopped responding to the chemotherapy. Her body was unable to take any more of it. She was past any recovery, in her last stage of leukaemia, now all she could do is to stick a morphine patch over her breast to die a painless death. She was wasted. She was to die soon. It was one thing that she feared the most; to live in pain and to die in pain.

*McKurtzny* was preparing himself to face his mother, without any tears, without letting her know her fate. He practiced it over and over. He would give her the bouquet and a chocolate and hug her and say, ‘*hay mama, lets roll home, yagonna live a loong and healthy lief.*’ ‘*the doctor aintkeepin you `ere nomore, they sayin the big lady’s won over and gotta getoutta `ere and enjoy `erdaeys*’. ‘*theygonna fix a white packet ova yovacheest and it’ll keep yarollin*’. He had tried some different combinations of these sentences to sound realistic and lively. He wanted her to be lively and live the remaining few days in peace without any stress and distress.

Mackie and his wife had decided to throw a party, a welcome to the old lady, so that she can remember how much she was loved by everyone around her. They had called up every relative and friend to welcome her back home. Mackie knew she was not going to live long. So he thought of this party as a farewell rather than a welcome one.

Some of them had prepared a toast to her, a speech where they would share how much they have missed her and congratulate her on her successful recovery from the dreaded disease. *Aloha*, her daughter-in-law would tell her how much she and kids missed her absence at the home. Everybody was going to participate in Mackie's lie. They were equal party to the fake party. All of them! It was their expression of love for the Old Mama; a true love with a lie.

Kayne entered the special ward. McKurtzny followed, rewinding and re-practicing his dialogues. He phoned his wife to make everything ready and assure they will be home in an hour or so. He was distressed inside, but outside he pretended happy and lively. He went as planned. She was sitting on her bed, facing the window, looking the beautiful colourful world outside. He presented to her the bouquet and then Kayne gave her the chocolate.

'Hey lil Kay-nee, yow come ta take yowr gramma ome', she hugged him and said.

He nodded pressing his upper lip by the lower one.

'Hey Mackie, come 'ere, yow big boy, lemme hug yow one more time'.

He was going to play all those sentences this time out loud. She held him close to her breast and whispered in his ears. 'Mackie, you ain'ttelling no one home that the old lady's gonna die soon, It better be `tween you and me'

All his words seemed to evaporate. All his practise vanished. All his pretending melted. He was left naked with his thoughts. He knew she knew. She knew he knew. He could just muster a nod. Words were not at his disposal.

'Kayne, you gotta wait ere, while gramma goes with yer' poppy for a minute.' She handed the chocolate to the little kid.

'I aintgonna make em people think what gonna be before it gonna be' she said to Mackie. 'If `ese people gonna sing this old lady some songs of welcome, let `em do it happy, let `em be merry. Until I live, I'll take `ose memories to ma coffin as farewell merry memories. And `ese doctors, they gonna put some morph on my chest, `ese people know I scared of pain' she added.

She had her own set of lie! He had his own! And the people back home had their own!

McKurtzny stood still. Agape. Amazed. Astonished.