

***Mother***

***A Single Parent***

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## CHAPTER 1

### Soil of Eyes

Somebody, a male of age around 24 years, looked like spending a hard time thinking of something. He wrote something on a notebook and ripped out many of those pages in anger. Every day he marked something on a calendar pinned on the wall over his desk. His room was getting untidier every day. He used to open the door of his room twice a day to take the package of food.

In the end, he used to forget lights On before he sleeps, sometimes he used to put alarm sometimes not, he used to left the tap water On. Many times he found his laptop On in the morning. Once in the evening after he crossed another date in the calendar, he saw that screen of his laptop went off.

After a long night, next morning, somebody was sitting with papers in his hand in front of three people sharing the same table. One of those three guys stood up and went behind in the dark. A sound, like a wooden door closed, came right before that guy walked back towards the person sitting with the documents. He said something in his ear and went back to his seat.

Then the person with documents started reading...

He came back from school and, went inside the house 'mysteriously'. This apartment is on the second floor of a building facing west. It has two rooms facing the main door of the apartment. Between the main

door and two rooms there is a lobby. On the left corner of the lobby, there is a kitchen and bathroom, and toilet on the left. “I am going to the terrace to bring the dried laundry back”, his mom said while he entered the bedroom (room on the left side) [silence remained].

She went to the terrace through those metallic stairs climbing the roof through a square hole in the ceiling. Few clothes were hanging on a rope tied on diagonal corners of the terrace. The boundary of the terrace was made of reddish brown bricks and was painted half way.

Green fields were visible on the left where a grass road was entering to a jungle (long birch trees). She collected all the clothes one after another and went down. While coming down she asked, “Had you finished your lunch box?” Still, there was no reply from Alex.

She went to the bedroom and saw that he is not there. “Are you in kitchen Alex?”, she asked and started folding up the clothes. After she finished with the clothes, as usual, she went towards his school bag to take the lunch box out. She was silent for five minutes after she opened Alex's lunchbox.

Alex said from the balcony, “Have you seen it? Are you angry?” [While mysteriously looking inside the bedroom over the edge of the balcony door] “History 3.7, English 4.0, German 3.3, Social Science 2.7, Science 3.0, and Maths 2.3”, she read his 5<sup>th</sup> class report card.

Then she said, “It is not what defines your future, so I am not angry with you at all”. “Come, I will give you something to eat, you might be

hungry”, she said [brushed his head with her fingers and started walking towards the kitchen with the lunchbox in one hand].

Now Alex was not that afraid as before, but he was not happy and started walking towards the kitchen slowly. “What was your score last year?”, she asked while she was pouring food on his plate [silence remained]. Alex has started eating slowly [sad face and dull expressions]. She set down next to him, she smiled and said: “Just try to get a higher score than you got last year”. Quickly he looked into his Mom's eyes and said: “I got better in math this time”. She smiled at him and said, “That's my son, good job!”

Alex said, “But Mom, every friend was teasing me that I got lowest grades”. “My son, they don't know that you got better grades than last year”.

Before she went to the bedroom she also said...

*In order to improve the skills*

*one should compete with herself or himself not with anybody else,*

*one should try to do better than herself or himself everyday.*

Although she was able to convey to Alex what she wanted but she kept thinking about his grades and thought to arrange some external tutor for him.

She herself is not enough educated to teach him at home. The fact is that being in a medium size Indian town she was not able to hire any private tutor for him.

Alex was four years old when she lost her husband 'Lohmann' in an accident. She always feels thankful to Lohmann about his 'life insurance' from which she got some money [equivalent to 8,000 Euros]. Only because of this money she was able to run a small business of flowers and now able to run house expenses and pay Alex's school fees.

At the time of such situations, her emotions pull her mentally and physically in front of the wall on which the picture of Lohmann is surmounted. She stands there and talks to his picture [in mind]. '*Why you left me alone?*' first wording she used to say in such situations.

Meanwhile, Alex heard some noise from some boys screaming and laughing [somewhere nearby in the cricket ground]. Then Alex said, "Mom, I will reach back before you start cooking dinner". She quickly moved opposite of the door [in order to hide her eyes full of water] and said: "Listen, don't fight with anybody", before he left the house.

After a while she looked herself in mirror for ten seconds and left the house. She went to milkman and paid the money for the last month. Then she went to the market for the grocery. She was walking back from the market with some neighbour. She opened the lock of the main door after she checked the letterbox.

Alex came back before the sun set. His mom was preparing the stove. He was swatting, while removing his shoe he said: “Mom although my right shoe is broken from the side, I made the highest score today [pause] he found out that he just broke the laces of left shoe”.

In this age of 10 years he had grown good gross motor skills; actions that utilize the body's gross, or large, muscles of arms, legs, and core. These skills made him to have fun from sports such as cricket, volleyball, cycling etc. He also had grown coordination, balance, riding bicycle and other physical skills.

He became self-conscious about physiological differences. He had started taking on more responsibility for his own routine and self-care (such as homework, grooming, chores) and was able to handle many tasks on his own with little supervision. By now, his central and lateral incisors had already been replaced with permanent teeth, and permanent molars continued to erupt.

His mom asked, “After you wash your hands bring me one onion from the store”.

He helped her in cooking for a while and then he took the shower. They both talked about his school, friends, and sport activities [while they had dinner].

Both were in the bedroom. She asked him to complete his homework. Alex set on the bed besides her and started doing his homework. She still kept thinking about how she can arrange a tutor for him. After

Alex slept, she covered him with blanket till his chest. She kissed him slightly on his forehead before she switched off the light.

Somehow she couldn't sleep and kept thinking about those days when she was spending happily life with Lohmann. She went into thoughts turning one side to another. She reminds those things they decided to do together. She imagines about those dreams they show together. Whenever she reminded his dream, he spoke about one day before he left her, 'to building his own house', she was about to cry.

She reminded his wordings about making a good father; providing Alex all the possible help to choose his career and profession. She reminded how eagerly he always tried to spend time with her even the lunch time. She also reminded, how he was upset from her when once unknowingly she went to take shower when he came home in lunch time [she smiles slightly].

After she reminded all this, she spontaneously looked at Alex. She put her hand on him and looked at the wall clock right before she closed the eyes to prepare her to sleep.

She always tries to support Alex in all aspects both as mother and father. She always kept giving him advice related to studies and kept motivating him to find his talent his own. She used to tell him stories from her own childhood, stories about her parents, and sometimes about Alex's father. Alex always liked listening stories from her.



After Alex turned 9 years old she used to take him with for grocery shopping. She always told him to remind what they have to buy [she always had 'To Buy' list in her grocery bag]. Sometimes she asked him to calculate the bills, to count the items they bought etc. She thought him, how to choose healthy food? While they coming back from the market he used to ask her about different stores and shops on the way he saw.

Once she took Alex out for dinner. They both were walking through the market. Road construction was going on. She looked left and right and left again before she crossed the road while holding his hand. Horns were blowing at distance. Motor-bike just passed by when they crossed the road. She shared the greetings with few know people she met in the market.

Loud music in a media and electronic shop [music testing was going on]. Alex was asking her about text written on boards of different shops, about road signs and symbols. They just passed a GuruDwara (Sikh Temple) before they entered the restaurant.

Alex was very happy. Just after they enter the restaurant he ran to the corner seat which was near a very large fridge. She let an old couple go out of the restaurant before she entered. Then she asked the shopkeeper, "Could you bring me the menu, please?" [while smiling]. Then she walked towards Alex. This restaurant was long but not wide enough.

Every table had a lamp of different color hanging on it. Alex set facing the main door of the restaurant and was looking at the colored smoke rising from the fragrance sticks at the front desk.

Two couples were there on last tables. One old man was eating funnel cake (Jalabi) with his granddaughter. Two or three people were waiting to carry away the food. Home delivery boy was complaining about the scooter to the owner of the restaurant [in background].

Just after she got the menu, while looking into the menu page she asked, “What you would like to eat today?” “Dinner is of your choice, can I eat ‘Pani-Puri’ after dinner, please?” Alex requested. [Pani-Puri is fried puff-pastry balls filled with spiced mashed potato, spiced water, and tamarind juice]

“It is Sunday tomorrow, are you going with me to the shop Alex?”, she asked while having dinner. They both were standing in a long queue for Pani-Puri and Alex asked, “Mom why this queue is so long?” “Because of his talent my son”, she said while pointing out the finger towards ‘Pani-Puri maker’. She looked at Alex and smiled before she said, “Have patience, seems your mouth is watering”.

While walking back home with his mom Alex holding the polybag of grapes asked, “Every time reason of a long queue is a talent of someone?” She looked at him [smiled] and said...

*It is due to limited supply of good talent.*

*Everybody has their own talent to do something that good,*

*one should never give up finding that talent.*

They reached back home and she prepared the bed.

One year later...

Same routine was going on; preparing Alex for school, going to shop until he comes back, then into the bed after having dinner.

After few weeks he got the result of 6<sup>th</sup> class. This time he wasn't afraid to tell his grades of this year to his Mom. Just after he came back home he told, "History 3.0, English 4.0, German 3.0, Social Science 2.3, Science 3.0, and Maths 2.0". "Apart from English and Science I have improved in four subjects", he said with smiling towards her. "Wao!! my son unbelievable", she said [while she left the chair]. Came to him with a big smile and kissed him on cheeks. She took his school bag off from his shoulders right before she brushed his hair with fingers.

When he has entered in 7<sup>th</sup> class he had an interest in sports like cricket, volleyball, cycling and yoga also. She was very happy with his yearly improvements in his studies. She was also happy to see that he is no more afraid of teasing from friends on his grades.

When Alex showed a bit strain on his face related no improvements in English and Science subjects she suggested him to try group studies for these subjects. "It is April now, you have six months before internal exams", she told. She asked him to collect few friends and start studying together. Sometimes on weekends, she used to take him to the

flower shop to get some help. At the shop, whenever she got a chance she used to tell him one story.

She bought the shop after her husband died. It was 15 minutes away (walking distance) from her house. It was on the outskirts area of that small town. It was on a link road before entering the town. There was a small park in front of the shop. The circular boundary of this park was covered by Birch trees. There was a Java plum tree in the middle of the park.

In evening people used to come with children and spend some time under the shadow of Jawa plum tree, some used to do jogging. There was a spot for children to play with playing equipments such as; playground swings, seesaw, spiral slide, and mini slide. There were some flowers too on the boundary.

There were a few more shops; motorbike mechanic and hair salon on the left side. On the back side, there were few houses and plots with boundary made up of bricks. Few empty plots and a petrol station (around 200 meters away) were on the right side of the shop. The link road passing between the park and the shop used to be busy in early mornings and late evenings.

The shop has a glass door under the metallic shutter. There was a wooden wall separating the counter cabin from the store. There was a small door on the right side, right behind the cash counter, on that wooden wall. Every morning a pickup used to bring the stock to her

store. There was a place in the cabin where the customer could sit, parallel to cash counter, with the capacity of maximum five.

There was a wooden chair for her to sit behind the counter. She had a couple of sets of square, round, triangular boxes in which she used to decorate different flowers outside her shop. She made these boxes herself by using cardboard.

This was the time when Alex was always with her because he had school holidays and school would start from mid May again. One day when both of them were at the shop she told him a story about an incident happened when she was of his age.

“After school, I and my small sister used to go with my mom to the field where she was working”, she told. She continued...

There was a river passing through the fields. There were so many bushes of different berries all over on the bank of that river. Apart from helping my mom, we loved to pick the berries from those bushes. Alex was listening to pin drop silence and asked his mom to continue after she finished talking to a customer.

We used to pick so many berries from there that when we were back to the village we used share with children from a neighbour and also with classmates in school next day. These berries were so tasty that every year all of us waiting for this season. “But during the rainy season it was always scary to go to that river”, she said. “Why it was scary in rainy season Mom?”, he asked.

An old lady (Mrs. Ulrich) came to the shop with the drowsy wilting walk. Her hair was smoky-grey, aged blood-flecked eyes and she said with the friendly pleasant smile, “I love these flowers, please make me a Bouquet of those Abloom Roses”.

Alex brought those pink roses that lady pointed out, to his mother. The width of her smile became double when she hold that Bouquet of roses which were nodding in the delicate breeze. She thanked Alex’s Mom and left the shop. Mrs. Ulrich kept saying: “These flowers are so real” with a feeble flimsy voice [while she left the shop].

Alex asked while preparing flowers for another customer, “For whom Mrs. Ulrich buys the flowers every week?” “She started buy flowers from our shop five years ago”, she said while putting money in cash counter. Then she told, “Last year her husband (cancer patient) who was in hostile from four years died, but she did not stop buying the flower for him, every Sunday she summits the flowers to his tomb”.

Alex asked to continue the story. She continued again and told him, “One day of spring when the river was full of water, and water was running so fast; snoring like a giant snake, we were scared the hell out of it”.

She told, “That was the day when we thought about that river, which used to make us happy always by giving sweet berries all over the year, is turned into a devil”. We have seen one young boy who was trying to catch some berries right in front of us but on opposite bank of the river.

She said, “Your aunt show him slipped in that roaring snake-like water”. First, your aunt told me, “OOO!! Look somebody swimming”. But when he started shaking his hands in the air and yelled out for help we realized it was by an accident.