

Gharry Goes to the Hospital

He trod to the kitchen intending to have his morning coffee. Just at the right moment he remembered: No Coffee for you Garry this morning. The magnetic calendar over the fridge told him that it is the 9th of September, the scheduled day for his hospitalisation, and it is also the Father's day, a made-up he never liked even when he used to have a daughter that comes with a bunch of flower. Slowly and as professionally as possible he did the shaving and felt content regardless of the tiny injuries that the machine left on his skin. He stuffed, in a bag, few personal things needed in similar cases. He still have plenty of time before departing. He turned on the TV. The first thing to meet his eyes was the Tampa ship, which carries refugees denied landing in the country. He didn't like what he had seen, he doesn't care too much about politics and economy but he hates seeing fathers and mothers seeking with despair a refuge to their children and find merciless ruthless treatment. He remembered the big waves of immigration that rushed to the country after the Second World War. He was only a boy and was happy seeing the streets and the shopping centres full with pretty girls from different colours and races and the takeaway shops displaying different kinds of food and varieties of condiments, he changed the channel. Ian Thorpe, the pride of Australia cheered him up and erased the bitterness left from before. He liked this boy since his early ascendance in the ninety's and he used to say to his wife "he is a digger Linda!" he felt sorry for the villages hit by the hurricane in West Australia, but he was more sorry because the insurance companies refused to compensate their loss. His heart was broken when seeing the pine trees blackened after the fires that erupted in Canberra. When the pictures of the prime minister appeared he shouted: "Shame on you John, to hell with you! I will not have my voice any more!"

At the last moment, he decided to call his granddaughter who lives few kilometres away. It is true that he is still harbouring bitterness towards her due to the confrontation they had few years ago, and still the remembrance of her words makes the wrinkles of his forehead go deeper, but this is a critical moment in his life. A heart surgery is not an easy thing in his age, who knows where he might end up? To a dark cabinet in Rockwood may be. He shock his head wondering the hastiness of youth. If she was slightly patient, the house will be hers smoothly and simply pretty soon. Were you wrong Gharry when you refused her demand and didn't agree on giving away your home? (He whispered to himself). God knows how much he loved her; she was a compensation for the daughter who left early due to over dose. But like most youth in these days, she preferred a Rock star maniac over him...he didn't refuse her demand because he is selfish or spiky, but because it was difficult to him to leave the place that nests all his memories for another with no memories and emotions. The last time he visited his cousin Grant in Warroona village was unhappy with the smells that erupt from the place. It was death like smell. He felt as if all residents there are queuing in the last stop waiting to be transferred to their dark crypts in Rockwood. For many times he dialled her number but stopped before the last number. It was the same silly technique which he always despises when seeing in a movie. At last he overcame his hesitation and dialled the full number. A voice came up saying:
- Hi, you have reached Gloria, since I am unavailable now, please leave your name and contact number and I will ring you back as soon as possible.

He hanged down and walked with heavy lazy steps towards the bedroom uttering
A.D. Hope poem: The Wondering Islands
_ Yes Alex! You knew it; we are like wondering islands, with no roots or bridges (he murmured)

He checked his back-bag for the tenth time. The Medicare, the pension card, the admission letter, all there, nothing missed. He found it more appropriate to add his credit card. Who knows! You might need some money unexpectedly Gharry. The clock over the wall didn't reach six yet. The apple tree that appears from the window like a proud bride seduced him to go down to the backyard. He likes this tree at this time of the year; he likes it when blazes with white flowers conceited like a virgin who suddenly discovered her femininity. He likes the flowers and their smell more than he likes the small green fruits that he competes with the bats over them. The memory of his wife jumped to the surface. He remembered when he used to stand to the window full of enchantment asking her to look and share him this amazing wonderful panorama while she used to only turn her head for a moment saying precisely "pretty" and goes back to her readings. The memory of that decent considerate lady brought tears to his eyes, she passed away few years ago without letting him knowing if she really loved him or lived all her life with him out of duty and morality. He wished if she weren't perfect, if she was to lose her nerves, to get jealous, to swear on him, to rebuke him... he even wished if she had an affair with another man. At least, he would be able to see through, an answer to his puzzlement.

From over the fence he noticed the almond tree in his neighbour's backyard. It was calm, humble like a smile of an angel. He felt her a Bella smiles back to him. He bent and pulled of the weeds from among the parsley bed that he sowed last month. After my return, I will cut them and give them to the Lebanese neighbour who lives few metres away to make Tabouli to her family (he whispered to himself).

He doesn't know enough about his neighbour. He knows only the shouts of her two, near in age children and the stunning whiteness of her washing hung on the line. He will be sad if she refused to take the parsley ...no he will not risk it, he will leave them at the doorstep. He felt empty when no dog came to welcome him. There were no other choice but to let him go, there was no one to look after him

The clock declared seven. He decided not to order a taxi as he planned last night. He will commute by bus. The bus takes longer and who knows, he might meet up a friendly commuter who could make the journey shorter and provide his memory with stuff good enough to engage his mind before surrendering to the mercy of the doctors' scissors and knives.

- This time I will not hesitate as I normally do. I will offer my friendship and will give him/her my contact number. I'll be lucky if it happened to be a woman. (he said to himself)

He wore the bag to his back, through a glance over the place, switched off the energy power, checked the keys in his pocket and locked the door. To his left was his neighbour bending down over the lawn. He waited till he straightened up

Hello ...Good morning

The man answered with the same plastic mystified smile...ten years, and no more than that hello and good morning. The man does not understand English and Garry does not understand Chinese. He hunched over the fence and faced the man, he joint his fingers in a bunch like and pointed them to his chest and said:

I.....go....hospital.....

A stupid look appeared over the man's face. Garry repeated his phrase slower this time, after the third trial the puzzled face cheered up and shock his head saying

-Yes, yes. Hospital

Mixing syllables with mimics, Garry got his neighbour to understand that he is going to stay six weeks in the hospital and he wants him to water his plants, the gardenias and the roses in particular

He was relaxed, the impressions over the man's face told him that he understood and will do. He felt relieved knowing that his gardenias and camellias will be taken care of

He continued his way to the bus station, got into the bus, to be exactly after 35 minutes at Bankstown hospital

Sydney
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