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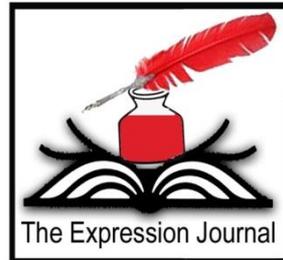


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Story

He walked towards me. He was the Greek God I had always dreamt of. I knew I would marry him. He looked at me...peering through my eyes into my soul. I surrendered myself and he lifted me like a leaf. His touch was so smooth and warm that I shrunk in him. He touched my forehead, my eyes, my nose and my lips...he stayed there, he wanted to suck my nectar and I was waiting to become empty. He embraced and...I fell...

I rolled out of my eight years marital bed. It was drenched with the evidence of consummation of my marriage and I was still thirsty. He had given me a son...but my virginity still awaited the Greek God of my dreams. I looked at him, sleeping in his *baniyaan* and drooling. He was tired after last night's bout and slept sound. It was only me, lost in my adolescent dreams of my Greek God.

The milk boiled and spilled while I stared at some blank space outside the window. I cleaned the mess, woke his son up, prepped him and sent him to school. He came and held me from behind; he relished my aroma and kissed my neck. I turned around only to find the curtains mocking at me.

"I would be late today", my husband informed me while tying his shoe laces and while packing his briefcase he summoned me not to wait for him over the dinner. "Ji" was all I could say and I closed the door.

It happened eight years ago, when one night we discovered we were in love. It was obviously after our families had decided that we should tie the knots. We used to

talk for hours; it felt like I was a teenager again. He asked what... he should have had and I replied what... I should have had. We saw each other for the first time on the day of our wedding, our families did not believe in ring ceremonies then. He was six feet tall and I barely managed five feet tumbling over my three inches wedges. He saw me and retreated. He still thinks that I was busy with my siblings when his sisters advised him to call off the wedding, but I heard them, dressed in my bridal attire. I was stout, dark and my hair were frizzy where he was the epitome of beauty... he was tall, fair and handsome.

He did not call off the wedding. He pitied me. I bore his resents in the bed that night, he punished me for my crime...I was ugly. I had an asthma attack and that is when I discovered my mother had lied...my photograph, my qualifications, my age, my medical condition was all a farce. While I struggled to breathe I noticed the fair, straight hair beauty hanging on the wall. I inhaled deeper and mists cleared to reveal it was the photoshop me. He married a lie and I married an illusion.

We signed an unspoken contract on our honeymoon. He could play around with me at any point and I would just have to unknot my *salwar*. No...this wasn't taught to me by my mother or my school teacher but I guess we are just born with this package of knowledge. I wasn't submissive enough and we would end up throwing utensils at each other... then the walls of that whitewashed room consumed my screams.

His naked room smelt of paint when I entered it...begged me to cover its nudity. I filled its emptiness by the dowry I brought with me...the *gifts* my mother had given. We were married officially, at least that is what the marriage certificate said but only that room could witness our marital bonds.

He started going to my home often. He would take me there so that I could meet my family...and he could meet my sister. My sister was not ugly and they bonded well. Soon they became good friends and started meeting a lot. They would giggle for hours and I would cook for them. And then the nights would fall...

I always thought the nights were romantic. Romeo met Juliet under the same moon. And here I was... looking for my Romeo...quenching the thirst of my better half. I tried hard but I just could not do it well...he would always complaint...but maybe that was because I could not giggle.

I got pregnant on the first night of our marriage and was all swollen in seven months. The doctor said the child was fine but I needed to take care of myself. And I would have to abstain from any sexual activity for a few months now. That was the day his office assigned him late night shifts...and I thought he was working hard for the baby. The night I trembled in pain, he attended an important meeting. I made an emergency call and fainted. I woke up in the maternity home next morning with his son in my arms...he was still at the meeting.

The day the doctor deemed me fit to have sex, the tiger pounced on me...while my son slept on the same bed...or was he awake. 'He is too young' my husband advised and returned to the matter he had postponed since months.

The door bell rang. His son had returned from the school and I got busy with my duty... I fed him, bathed him, helped him with homework and sent him to play outside. I closed the door and curtains found another opportunity of mocking at me.

"You should not have gotten pregnant so early, you are not healthy to bear another delivery" my gynecologist friend rebuked me, when after four months of my first delivery I went to consult her. I fainted vomiting in the bathroom while my husband was busy giggling with my sister. My brother found me and lifted me to the doctor.

"But he won't listen. He needs it every night, every night since the day you deemed me fit." My voice cracked and I looked at her through wet eyes. I was guilty of something I had not done. I could have said no, or could have I? My mother forgot to teach me how to say no. I had never said no, not even to the dance teacher who taught me how to keep my breasts firm by massaging them and this was after all my husband, my identity.

"But you could at least ask him to use a condom." She would not budge.

"He does not like wearing plastic, it hinders his pleasure." I looked at the watch ticking...it ticked the same way in his room, every night.

I could not deliver the second child. The miscarriage occurred in the sixth month. I was at his bed, sleeping next to him and then I screamed, my baby could not survive his bouts and quit. I hope I could have quit with him. But I survived, there was blood in my salwar and he did not unknot it. I fainted and woke up at my mother's home. The clock ticked and he giggled again.

My miscarriage had left me very weak. I could not even stand anymore. He left me at my mother's and left for his important meeting. I remained there for two months and he never had time to meet me. After all my sister was engaged now and he could not giggle anymore. I lied at the bed waiting for him all night but he didn't come. He said he had important meetings at nights.

Nights flew by and the clock ticked. The room no more smelt of paint. I slept alone on the bed now, I was useless, and this was not written in our clause.

The door bell rang, the urchin had returned from the playground. I fed him and tucked him to bed. I went to bed alone and there he was...my Greek God.

I first met him in that room, on my empty bed, when the clock had stopped

ticking. He held my hand and lifted me to the terrace under the moon where Romeo Juliet had met. I lied there on the floor. He touched my cheek and then his fingers swayed through my hair. I was excited and aroused. His fingers travelled through my neck to my breasts and the moon witnessed our love. We embraced through the night and I slept in his arms.

Today I met him again, he was there waiting for me, and I was waiting for him since eternity. My husband was still busy in his meeting. He came close to me and touched me. I was ready to lose myself to him today. He lied down and looked at me. His eyes did not resent my ugliness; I was the prettiest woman to him. The clock stopped ticking. He lifted me and took me to the terrace again. I lost myself and became him. The moon became red. He taught me pleasure, he took me through heavens. The moon peeped and then hid behind the cloud. I was the tide which was controlled by that moon. I rose and fell and flooded. Our union consummated. I lost my virginity. I drowned in him and he rescued me. He embraced me and I fell...I rolled from my eight years marital bed. I was no more his wife but a Greek Goddess.

About the Writer:



Guni Vats

Guni Vats, hailing from Haryana, is currently pursuing her Master's degree in English Literature from the Central University of Rajasthan. Every keen reader and enthusiastic writer always takes immense pleasure in looking at diverse aspects of life from a philosophical bent. She loves to experiment with themes, subject and writing styles. She is keen to research on the Indian women writers and carve a niche for them in the predominantly masculine world. She is currently pursuing a dissertation tracing the advent of modernism in India through Ismat Chughtai. Guni Vats can be reached at E-mail Id: gunivats.20@gmail.com