

# Kit Kats in the Sun

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I think I was six or seven when a doctor that resembled Santa Claus told my mother that my father had heart disease. If she had her way, I wouldn't have found out. But her plan of keeping me pre-occupied with Snake on her old Nokia failed. She got a call *right* at that moment. As I handed her the phone, I overheard the most important bits of the doctor's report. I really didn't know what any of that entailed but that revelation seemed to come as a jolt to our till then picturesque life.

The mixed reactions I got from my parents made it confusing. My mother kept telling me that heart disease wasn't anything *that* different from, say, a common cold [but one shouldn't discuss it in school, nonetheless]. My father didn't say much if anything about it. He kept picking me up from school as usual but this time around he started buying me two Kit Kats instead of the one I was used to. This was strange since I was used to being told off whenever I had asked for an extra one before.

I had always had inquisitive eyes. I wouldn't ask questions directly, I would probe people with my eyes. When I looked at him after finishing my second Kit Kat, trying to find out just why my fortunes had seemingly opened up, he would just pat me on the head and tell me to keep working hard in school. I wondered if that common cold had anything to do with it but I was getting more Kit Kats. I couldn't complain.

I had gone against my mother's warning and discussed my father's situation at school. I had to. Shadman had agreed to tell me one of his secrets in return for one of my own. And when he told me about the Nutella he had stolen from his cousin's house, I knew I had to give him something juicy in return. I was sort of relieved to find that he was as confused about the situation as I had been. He scratched his head for a while and offered his opinion on the whole thing. In his well-thought analysis of the situation, he believed that my family was acting like 'a little girl'. "Only girls go to hospital for a cold. It's not even a toothache," he said while struggling through his multiplication tables. *That* crossed a line in my mind. You could call me names but call my family that, of all things?

I got three Kit Kats as my dad picked me up from school after detention that day. It was the first time I had punched someone. But Shadman had literally asked for it.

My father insisted I patch things up with Shadman. I couldn't explain to him why this wasn't a good idea. I wasn't someone for grudges but my former best-friend-forever had gone too far. As I positioned myself for our afternoon game of cricket, I told my dad that he was too soft and that he would get hurt if he didn't toughen up. Dad would bowl and I would bat or just swing my plastic cricket bat in different directions, missing the ball. Dad admitted it was because he threw the ball the wrong way. It was one of the nicer qualities my dad had. He always admitted his mistakes. I liked that thing about him. I liked most things about him. Especially the Kit Kats.

I was still sort of relieved that mom wasn't watching. She used to watch us every day but she stopped ever since we got back from the hospital. Maybe dad should have bought her Kit Kats too. Dad could always save the day. He was sort of like Superman.

# Necrosis

SHREYOSI ENDOW

He scanned the floor for more weak, intoxicated mosquitoes. He took a quick glance at the sole of his cheap, plastic sandals, counted the squashed remains of the ones he had just killed, and then shifted his attention back to the spotless floor. The new can of aerosol had worked quite efficiently, which only meant his boredom was going to engulf him soon enough and in no time, he found himself staring at the ceiling once again. This was the tenth day in a row that had gone with zero patients and minimal sales of cheap antibiotics. He liked to call it a maiden week.

He had changed the signboard twice this month to make it look more reliable, and he couldn't really milk it anymore. This was expected. With all the modernized hospitals that mushroomed everywhere, his pharmacy was bound to be lost in the crowd. The drugs sold out pretty quickly though but every time he asked a customer if he could go along and check the situation out himself before prescribing something, it was always met with a no. It seemed as if everyone held an MBBS degree these days. Everyone knew that the cold was due to change in weather and not a sign of pneumonia, that the ugly wart was just a simple growth and not a tumour, that the oozing infection at the tip of one's grandma's toe was only bacterial, and not a sign of severe diabetes.

He did not know whether it was his dwindling income that was the reason behind the big, black cloud of depression that shrouded his happiness. He did not really have other problems either. With a son and a daughter and a not-so-demanding wife, his middle-class family life was, according to a lot, picture perfect. The girl had just passed college with flying colours. She had always been a brilliant kid and he had planned to send her abroad to his relatives. But they, in turn, questioned his right to dream for how could a father who earned so little even think of educating his daughter who had so much potential in a decent university? And how could he expect them who were so old and weak and retired to help him anyhow?

He did not know if it was the middle-class monotony of his slow paced, uneventful life that gave birth to his depression. All he knew was that he was sad. Just awfully sad. As sad as a kid who did not get his chance at the last ride on a merry-go-round but had to watch the other kids go round and round and squeal with delight. He only needed somebody, a strong hand, to sit him down and look him in the eye and tell him that he didn't have to sulk about his past or worry about his future because that didn't matter. He was perfectly fine wherever he was at the moment.

He hauled the iron shutters down for he was done for the night. Squatting on the ground, he fastened the lock when he heard somebody call out to him. A lanky teenager with a scruffy face stood in front of him with panic-stricken eyes. 'Please don't close. I need some pain pills for my mother. She is having severe chest pains,' the boy urged.

The doctor looked at him solemnly for a while before saying, 'Chest pain could be due to severe heart conditions. Do you want me to go check?'

'Are you a doctor?'

Even in the graveness of the situation, he let out a small chuckle and looked up at the twinkling lights of the signboard and then back at the boy. 'Yes, yes I am.' He noticed a spark in the boy's eyes, something he had truly missed for a while now. 'Yes, please come. We need your help.'

The words were like music to his ears.

