

She Who Remembers

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I saw her scavenging the streets lined with shops, bustling with vehicles, complemented by smokes crawling up the air. The sun had set, and the gloom was cut by the yellow rays emerging from the light poles. Her clumsy pace drew gypsies to form a lump around her, following her wherever her heavy body heaved along. I managed to glance at her eyes welled with reluctance and fear. She hadn't chosen the busy city. The mahout sitting above her was dangling his legs in the air between his leg and the concrete road. He reminded me of an unruly king sitting on his throne. His big hands held a thick bamboo stick and jute rope intricately tied to the insides of her mouth, stretching along her milk white ivory. He must've been a multitasking pundit. His left hand pulled the rope while the right one brandished the stick as she advanced towards the jewelry shop exploded with gold. He demanded her to stop before the glass door while he let out a small scream — as if a signal. Someone from the inside rushed to him with an agreeable amount of cash as she trumpeted waving her trunk.

If the shop keeper hadn't rushed to the mahout with the money, the glass door would have lost its grandeur

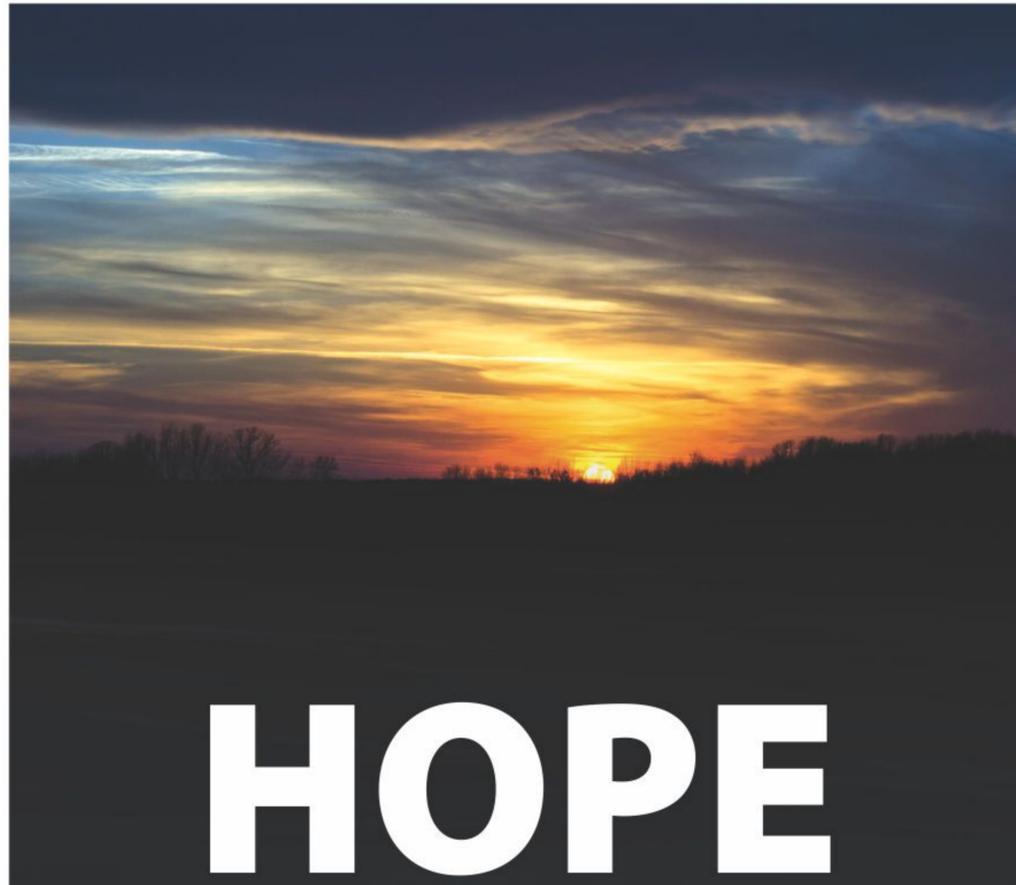
probably. It would've turned into shards flying in all directions. And all that glittery gold would've turned into dust and specks under her mud-coating colored feet.

As I pulled myself back from the thought, I studied her eyes again. I had the sudden urge to dive into the dark pool that her eyes were and witness whatever she had to go through. I wanted to witness how she was snatched from her mother's clutch and made accustomed to sticks in some corner of this mammoth concrete land far away from the ever-green. I wanted to reach the deep end of the unending pool of her minutest memories- her kind is known for remembering everything. I wanted to open the cap of the pool bed and drain all the darkness she bore so that I didn't have to come up gasping for air before I even executed the purpose.

A car honk exploded into my sense and my thoughts turned into fumes, dissipating along the vehicle smokes. I watched her lug herself with a reluctant pace into the distance. The mahout had a stomach to fill while she had memories to never forget.

She heaved along. The mahout dangled his legs.

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HOPE

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Kitara started walking faster as the first streaks of sunlight illuminated the sky. She stopped abruptly, the magnificent view filling her entire field of vision. To say that the sunrise was beautiful would be a grave understatement. The rays reached out, and slowly touched the horizon facing her; the streams, the hills and the forest, casting a soft golden glow.

Kitara could feel the rays wash over her own skin now; filling her with a bit more hope. The path before her was illuminated by the sun itself. What other encouragement did she need?

Her few belongings were enclosed into the backpack slung across her back and her silver moon pendant; her only memory of her sister, swayed back and forth as she picked up pace.

Although she knew that the grass wasn't always greener on the other side, she adamantly refused to believe that this would be the case for her. Her destination *would* become her safe haven.

Unable to prevent herself, she cast a glance backwards, past the desolate woods and towards the valley. The sunlight hadn't reached it yet and the sleeping village was swathed in a shroud of darkness.

It was eerily fitting and Kitara found a wry smile forming on her face, for it was the same village that had once provided her with refuge, only to scar her profoundly and eternally.

The childhood she knew of was of mockery and ridicule; of scars of agony, grief and self-loathing. The children's taunting jeers still rang in her ears even after so long, and she could distinctly recall the adults shot her, whispering from time to time.

She hadn't been born with the curse, no, but seemed to have acquired it unknowingly somewhere in time. It was as if it had chosen her specifically. Alas, no one seemed to pay any heed to that so-called 'trifling' fact. It was as if her difference was the only thing they noticed; everything else seemed to be obscured completely.

Now she had escaped from a world of solely derision and condemnation. She didn't know why she hadn't attempted this before. It wasn't like anyone would care anyway. And now that she had finally built up the courage to accomplish that, she was ready to explore the world before her; a world where she knew that no one would judge her for her differences.

The sun was high above her head now, the light beating down on the path, as if tracing a route for her. It seemed to be the first time that the world was choosing to be kind to her. It was almost as if it was beckoning her to come and explore all its nooks and crannies; all the wonder she had yet to see.

Initially, Kitara thought it was the sunlight that was causing the pleasant warmth that was growing within her. But then she knew. It was hope.