

RUNAWAY

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Typically, girls aren't supposed to go out on their own (analogy #1). I am a girl so, I am not supposed to go out with my friends, or attend any of our school programs because ours is a co-ed school (analogy #2). I don't remember the last time I saw the bare sky above my head. Wherever I look there are grey walls and ceilings. The car is too suffocating for me. Now, I have lost the intrigue of glancing at any handsome youth passing by me. I feel like no one can save me. It's an over statement but unfortunately, I cannot disregard it.

There are only a few events aside from familial functions that I have attended in my entire life. Apparently, attending family programs make me a diligent and social person (analogy #3). I am not allowed to wear a *saree*. According to the elders, I am too young to be wearing it (analogy #4). In my defence, I would like to state that this makes no sense to me. If I am too old to be wearing denims (analogy #5), how could I be too young for a *saree*?

I don't get the analogy of how wearing 4 inches high heels is inappropriate for my age and wearing sneakers with *salwar kameez* is suitable (analogy #6). Then again, I cannot appear to be boyish. I am supposed to be acting like my age. Wearing sneakers with *salwar kameez* is not boyish; wearing *saree* will make me excessively mature. I am seventeen years old, a glass half empty kind of person. My tutor tells me that it is scary how my insight to life is negative already. I tell her; the higher the expectation, the greater the fall. It scared her more than before for some reason.

Then, one day something went wrong with me. I ran away and no one knows that I stole one hour from life. I haven't had any revolutionary changes so far. It wasn't something that will leave a grave mark in my life. But I love how no one will ever know that the day happened. It's nice to own something in your life even if it is a memory.

It was a cold winter day, and we were sweating buckets despite that. Me and my friends stayed back after school, waiting for our coaching lessons to commence. It was supposed to start one and half an hour later, but most of our residences were too far from school. Most of us brought badminton kits and the game was rousing with time. I had been getting famous for my talents with the racket. I played for a solid 30 minutes before joining my pack on the abandoned benches in the playground. All of us laid back and gossiped as if we were at some party. We didn't have the privilege of throwing a party on our own so, we pretended the part.

Nancy had bought *bhelpuri* from outside by begging the guard to accompany her.

"I hate the guard," Rita rolled her eyes as she popped a *bhelpuri* in her mouth.

"No one likes him, actually not my parents even. He is sort of rude," Farina scrunched her nose; the reason maybe because the *puri* was spicy.

Far in the middle of the yard, the girls cheered.

"She plays really well," Nancy said enviously, eyeing Rosa who had been swinging about her racket in pride.

"You don't play any worse than her," Rita poked Nancy's shoulder with her elbow.

"Sana is crazy good as well," Farina said staring at me. "You should play Rosa some time. That brat needs a beating."

I was eating silently until I felt all their

eyes trained on me.

sellers outside," Nancy asked with *puri* stuffed inside her mouth. She was smiling sarcastically.

Farina sighed, "Yes, I am feeling rebellious today. Aren't you too, Sana?" Her eyes were dead set on me.

I didn't dare look back at her, "Let's do it." Nancy laughed out loud for no particular reason.

"Right, we are going out. Rita, darling,

I did that," I stepped down now trailing beside her.

"I am trying to live fearlessly here. You are welcome in my quest," she hopped to an ice cream seller and ordered a mixed scoop of every flavour he had.

I paid for the ice cream and groaned, "I do not feel welcomed."

"You have forgotten how to live, my child," she stated as dramatically as possi-



eyes trained on me.

"I can do that too," Nancy said furrowing her brows accusingly. I nod. We liked Rosa but, at times we couldn't tolerate her. She was a bit full of herself.

"Hmm," Farina focused back on her food. I thanked God quietly.

"You know what? This is too boring. Let's go out. I want to eat *bhutta*," Farina stood up huffing because the spice hadn't left her lips yet. She was a dramatic person, a bit wild. Nevertheless, I was caught by surprise at her demand.

"All of a sudden, without any reason?" Rita asked, bewildered as the rest of us.

"Do I need to have a reason to eat *bhutta*? It's winter," Farina snapped.

"Dream on. Bet you'll receive *bhutta* marks on your back when you return," Rita boomed.

"I can take a *bhutta* or two," Farina shrugged.

"Yes, and you will buy them by breaking out of the school? There are no *bhutta*

pass me the bottle, my lips are on fire," Farina said as tears leaked from the corner of her eyes.

And like that, I was walking along the lake of Dhanmondi, in my school uniform as Farina savoured her hot *bhutta*. The day was windy. Farina had her sweater around her waist and I kept mine on. The water didn't appeal much to me yet, it was nice to have a change of scenery. After all, I hadn't gone to many places.

I carefully walked on the brick blockade whereas she accompanied me from the walk way.

"This is so weird. Why are we here?" I asked staring at the lake once in a while.

"You don't like it?" she kept sniffing; her taste buds were on fire. She wasn't a savoury type of person. I wondered what had gotten into her that day.

"It doesn't matter. If my family gets a gist of my whereabouts, I don't think they will let me in tonight. Plus, the guard is going to report me for fooling him. I can't believe

ble, "I am attempting to revive you. Why don't you help me already?"

"Sure," I laughed.

"I am planning on exploring the entire world and my journey starts here from the lake," she waved her hand to put emphasis on her words, "When you're tired of the world, always return to nature. No one should stop you from reaching here. Not even yourself."

I nodded my head to signify that I got her even though I actually didn't. But I didn't tell her that I knew what she meant. Because she knew it as much as me.

"I think I am going to get an ice cream as well. Just one scoop, one flavour but, it's worth it for today," I stepped up on the blockade again.

Farina smiled and we finished the rest of the ice cream and *bhutta* and anything else our money could buy.

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