

SOHINI MAITRA

THE
ODD ONE

&

OTHER SHORT STORIES



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Published in India by Prowess Publishing,
YRK Towers, Thadikara Swamy Koil St, Alandur,
Chennai, Tamil Nadu 600016

ISBN: 978-93-89097-54-2
ePUB ISBN: 978-1-5457-4754-4
Mobi ISBN: 978-1-5457-4755-1

Library of Congress Cataloging in Publication

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CHAPTER ONE

The day could not be more miserable for Mohini. Everything started with the alarm not going off. So instead of 5:00 am she woke up at 8:00 am when her cat Bruce Wayne clawed her face as he wanted food.

She woke up with a yawn and bad hair and looked at her phone. “Fuuuuuuck” and all hell broke loose. “Oh My God!!! Oh My God!!!! I had to reach work by 9:00! What would I do Bruce?” She had a habit of talking to her cat and the cat meowed back at times as if to say “I don’t understand you but go on dear food-giver”.

She ran to the washroom and to her horror there was no water. “Fuck fuck fuck fuckity fuck! Just kill me already”, she howled as she tries to take a minimal bath with half a bucket of water.

“Hopefully I get a cab today” she said to the cat while she gave Bruce his meal and filled up his water bowl. “It is a good thing Batman that you don’t have to be taken out for a walk, coz you have your litter box... don’t you”. She would use her baby voice when she spoke with Bruce Wayne.



CHAPTER TWO

Things were NOT going smooth at all for Mohini today. Just because she was delayed, everyone had to call today only. After waiting for two cancelled and one delayed cab she reached work almost 2 hours late.

Her boss Manorama did not have a pleasant disposition. Her resting expression was that of a pressure cooker about to burst. “Wonder why her parents named her Manorama”, she told her friend Sujata once she sat herself in her work cubicle. Sujata chimed, “may be because they knew that one day, she would grow up to look like the yester year’s actress”. They laughed so loudly that the pressure Cooker saw them and started walking towards them.

“Uh! Looks like she’s gonna explode babe”, Sujata quipped and ran off to the pantry area with an excuse of filling up her bottle.

And surely the cooker went BOOM!!!!!!!!!!

Everything from Mohini’s tardiness to back answering a lethargic client was brought on. Things spewed out of proportion. The entire office had gone silent and Manorama was waving her hands dramatically, “you are the worst and the rudest employee I’ve ever seen! Mohini thought that her boss’s arms were going to fly off the handle at any point. Manorama wailed, “you idiot! You can only think of yourself and the company does not matter to you”. Manorama was not done yet, she went on screaming, lacing her dialogues with cuss words in between. The entire floor was gawking and some were making a video of it. Mohini thought, someday I will see a Youtube video of this bitch gone mad at work!

Mohini was tired and she could not argue with anyone when extremely angry as her eyes would tear up! Even though she was not a damsel in distress or a cry baby, that’s the impression everyone got and she hated that about herself.

So, she did what she considered was most appropriate at that time. She got up calmly, adjusted her duppatta on her shoulder and swung her hand so hard that

when it landed on the pressure cooker's cheek and made a loud 'THWAK' noise. The entire floor fell silent. You could actually hear a pin fall on the ground. Manorama was stunned beyond her wildest imagination. Before she resumed with her litany of abuses, Mohini put in her measured words "I QUIT BITCH". She did not wait for any response but picked up her bag and walked out hoping no one sees her free-flowing tears.

She was so miffed that she wanted to go back and punch that woman again.



CHAPTER THREE

Mohini sat in a coffee shop right opposite her office. Umm—her ex-office, because no way she was getting back there to work again. Not with that woman still working there. She made some quick phone calls to see if any of her friends were available for a heart-to-heart chat. But being a Monday afternoon, everyone was at work. “Give me a cup to go please” she said to the barista at the counter after she ordered for her favourite Mango milkshake.

Sitting outside the cafe with her milkshake she took a large and a satisfying puff of her cigarette. Mohini was looking at her phone and still deciding whether she should call Mom or not; Clichéd as it sounds, but mom was her best friend. However, that does not mean that she was spared from the occasional mommy-lectures and today was inevitable. “Hello Maa!” Mohini said tried to sound upbeat. Mother knew something was up. They always know.

“What’s wrong beta? You never call this time? All OK hopefully?” On cue Mohini started sobbing. After 30 minutes or so of weeping and one packet of tissues, Mohini managed to explain her horrid day to Mum. “It’s the worst day ever Mommy” she said.

Mum was a picture of calmness. Being an understanding person, she was not mad that Mohini quit. She has always taught Mohini to be happy with whatever she does. However, she did not condone the slap and that she made it amply clear.

“Anyways, Thanks Mom, I feel better already. Such a pathetic day though”. She told mum truly feeling a bit better. “It will get better beta, trust me” Mum said before hanging up.

Mohini gulped the last bit of her milkshake and lit another cigarette. Now she was in a planning mode. She wanted to come up with a list of where all she would apply, when she heard a commotion and looked up. She was intrigued by the sudden gathering of people when she heard the word puppy. Dogs and cats

were her favourite beings.

Imagining the worst possible situations, she jumped up from her seat and ran to the milieu of crowd.

Some jackass had dumped a puppy off the car and has sped off. People had surrounded the puppy and were looking at the poor whimpering thing but nobody was willing to take responsibility. She waded through the crowd and reached the puppy; it was a white coloured mixed breed pup that was maybe 3 to 4 months old. “Poor kid”, she thought, “someone must have bought her thinking it was a Labrador puppy but when the poor thing grew and started looking like an Indian dog, she was discarded like a disposable toy”. Mohini was so angry that her eyes started watering and the puppy looked up to her and sat on her feet.

She was disgusted with people who abandon their pets, you wouldn't do that to your child, and it is alright to do so because this one is an animal and cannot protest?

“Oh, Dear I am taking her home”, was the first thing she said after wiping her tears and picking the puppy up in her arms. Money was not a problem for her so unemployment did not strike her into poverty. She could afford another mouth to feed. She hugged the puppy and collected her things from the coffee shop and walked to the nearest pet supplies store.

Her happiness was blooming as she and the puppy bonded over their walk to the pet store. There they bought her a pretty collar and a leash, along came food bowls and treats and toys. She bought some toys and food for Bruce Wayne too.

They came home in an auto rickshaw. Throughout the way Mohini thought and thought, and then thought some more. But she could not find a single reason as to why her day was ever bad. Albeit she quit in urgency, she would have liked it better if she had followed the proper channel, but what the hell, and it needed to be done.

She reached her floor and opened the door. There was Bruce Wayne sitting on his cat tree and licking his non-existent balls. Bruce was visibly surprised that his human was back so soon and that too with a white “thing” in her arms. He did not like surprises much.

Mohini squealed in happiness, “Bruce come here and meet your new sister Diana Prince, she put the puppy on the ground and cat hissed. Diana waddled happily and licked the extremely alarmed cat.

“This is the best day ever” Mohini sighed as she opened her Bira and sat on the couch looking at the cat and puppy play.



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