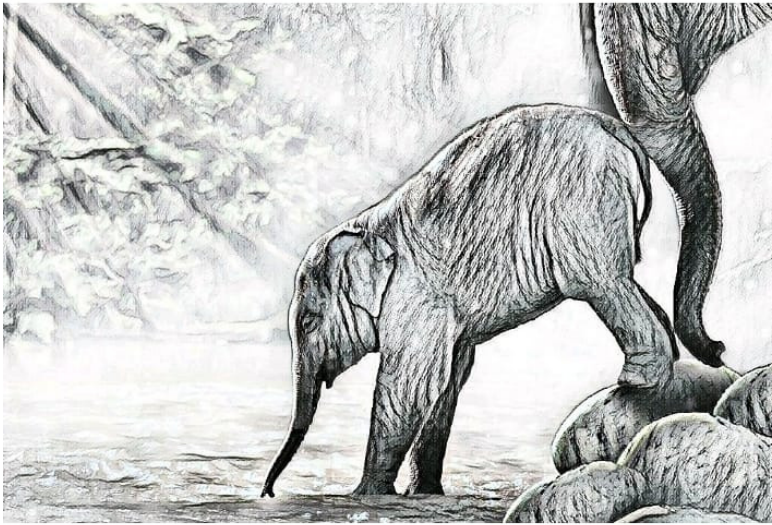


# MEDIOCRE WRITING CRAPPY FLOW



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# FOR KIDS

# The Snake Charmer

You'll experience something for the first time in a little while; you'll reel under it till a stage in life when you stop being fragile. Right now, you are not even fragile because the notion of it doesn't exist for you. You are as carefree as a kitchen-cockroach when the lights go out. You'll acquire fragility later on. Maybe you'll be able to shake it off if you allow yourself.

Presently, you are going to the family farm to see the nightingale-babies. The first time you laid your eyes on them, the eggs had just hatched. From then on, it has become a ritual of sorts for you to collect worms from the kitchen garden and go to the farm to feed the nestlings.

The farm is not far away. You don't mind the sun. But your Grandpa feels otherwise.

'It's a marathon for you, kiddo', he says picking you up.

He puts you on his shoulders with your legs dangling on either side of his neck. You want to run to the farm thinking you are faster than Grandpa. Trying to get down, you behave like a jump jockey. The reigns are holding your hands, instead of the other way around, so you settle down on the coat saddle with puffed cheeks and protruded lips.

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‘While you walk beside me’, Grandpa says, ‘you can only see the hedges on the boundaries of the farms’. He starts walking. ‘Or you can see, up and down the road or the sky. But, when you ride this horse, you get to peek beyond the hedges. You can see the road much further and you are nearer to the sky. Don’t you like that’?

Your pout gives way to a smile and colour returns to your cheeks. You see people at work beyond the hedges on both sides. Some women are opening lunch-boxes for their men. You see kids—bathing on the farm wells, playing under tree shades, and enjoying the swings with their heads stretched backwards and legs trying to touch the sky.

‘Um . . . yes, I like it from up here. Just be fast, horsie’. You laugh. ‘I like the weather today’!

‘It’s October. Best month of the year after March’.

‘March is even better’? The reigns let your hands, free. You put your hands on Grandpa’s head now. ‘What is there in March’?

‘I feel March is better—same temperature but a different vibe. You will also have your favourite month when you grow up’.

He keeps talking about this and that. The sonority of the words tickles your legs, long before they come out

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of his mouth. You like how he accepts greetings from the passersby and you try to imitate him by unclasping your hands. Only for a moment, you do it, before getting a hold of one of your supports. Plenty in there: his ears, his head, and around his neck. He minds nothing you hold on to.

Grandpa takes a turn and there it is—green—on the brink of yellow. Workers are on it and your Grandpa gives them instructions to complete the harvesting fast, with you still on his shoulder.

‘It always rains when the crop is ready and the gold is turned to dust’, he says. ‘One cannot take a chance during the ultimate phase of the year’s crop-cycle’.

‘Let me down’, you cry, looking at the serpentine track between standing millets that leads to the nest.

Grandpa sits to let you off his shoulders. The way your body sways, grownups’ do too, when they alight from a camel. They lean forward at an angle when the camel folds its front-legs and they are half-way down to the ground. When it bends the hind-legs, they lean again but in an opposing direction. When you are near the ground, you jump off and run. Run so fast that the crops resemble green curtains on both sides.

You let out a cry when you reach, startling the bird. It flies away to sit on a nearby plant of milkweed. From

## The Snake Charmer

there, it chirps as a warning for you to stay away from its babies. You pay no heed. You don't know it's a warning. You feel it is an ode to your forthcoming deed.

You take out the packet of worms. To save it from losing you had kept it in the pocket of your pants. Now you put it in your shirt pocket for easy retrieval, after you are up the tree. As careful as a crow, you climb. The nest is there and so are the babies, with their beaks opening and closing, revealing the insides of their mouths. Their uvulas throb in and out of their gullets. The three featherless birds create a ruckus when they feel your presence.

*They will learn to sing like their mum when they grow up*, you think. You take out the worms and drop them, one by one, inside their mouths. They gobble them up and open their mouths again—for more. You keep on feeding them while the mother-bird keeps on swooping over you.

*Grandpa knows how much to feed them*, you think, finishing the assigned quota of the worms.

You begin climbing down. *Much easier to climb up than down*, you think. Before your feet touch the ground, a hand touches the small of your back and helps you on the ground.

‘Who are you’? You say, squirming away.



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You reach up to his waist. A bag, round from the base, is hanging on to his right shoulder.

‘I am the snake charmer’, he says, showing his set of the pearly whites.

‘What are you doing on my farm’?

‘I am on my way to meet your grandfather. He has called me to show you a snake. I hear you want one as a pet!’ He raises his left eyebrow. ‘Aren’t you afraid of snakes’?

‘No’, you say looking at his bag.

The snake charmer sits on his knees and takes out a cane basket from his bag. He motions you to get a little further and lifts the lid of the basket. A Black snake is lying inside—limp.

‘Is it’—you take a step forward.—‘sleeping’?

‘Yes. You want to wake him up’? The snake charmer strokes the snake. ‘Touch the snake, like I am doing, and it will wake up’.

‘Doesn’t it bite’?

‘No, it’s not venomous’.

You touch the snake. It moves, lifting its head, little by little.

## The Snake Charmer

‘What does it eat?’

‘It likes to eat birdies. Just like the ones you were feeding. Do you want to see how a snake eats them?’

‘No!’

The snake is fully awake now, and you pull your hand back.

‘But the snake is hungry. Get out of its way and let it get to the birds’, says the snake charmer.

He takes the snake in his hand and walks towards the tree. You embrace the tree and try to cover its whole girth. You can’t.

‘Don’t do this, they are so small. They can’t even fly. Feed it something else but birds’.

‘The snake likes its food young’. You feel pain. A pain so powerful, that you shriek but your voice is as feeble as the babies. ‘I told you not to come in the snake’s way. Shh . . . Shh . . . Let me pull it out . . . No . . . Going inside again’.

And the snake goes in and out. The bird looks from the nest and you hear the babies crying.

When it comes out for the final time, you fall. Out of the corner of your eye, you see the snake charmer putting the snake back in the basket, and it goes to sleep

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again. The lid is back on, and the basket goes into the bag. You roll over in pain. The snake charmer sits beside you and takes your head in his lap.

‘Don’t tell your Grandpa. Otherwise, he won’t let you keep the snake. In that case, I will have to release it, and it will eat your babies’.

‘I will keep it’.

‘I am so proud of you. Everyone is proud of you’.

‘What about its food’?

‘Mice babies! You don’t love mice babies as much as you love these birdies. Do you’? The snake charmer says, smoothing your hair and wiping the perspiration off your forehead.

He makes you stand; you want to sit again. The place where the snake entered burns like an ember that once fell on your hand from Grandpa’s smoking pipe.

\* \* \*

Grandpa is doing something in the backyard. You can tell from the sound of his hammer, as you wake up the next morning.

You touch the blight. You feel clotting right there. Your pain is now slight. You start to walk over. Walk over the

## The Snake Charmer

plants, walk over the ants, walk over the pot, walk over the cot.

He lifts his head and says, ‘The snake charmer brought you to me. He said you fell from the tree. Are you all right now?’

‘Yes, Grandpa. Where is the snake charmer?’ You say, taking a furtive glance on everything inside the backyard.

‘He died right after we saw his snake.’ He lifts you, embraces you, and puts you on a box. ‘He was not a good snake charmer, didn’t know how to keep his snake under control’. He pats your head. ‘The snake bit him. After all, it was of the venomous kind’.

‘What about the snake? Where is it now?’

‘The snake is inside the box’.

You jump from the box and cling to Grandpa. Peeking behind, you see the box is made of glass with just the lid made of wood.

‘Let’s kill it right now. It hurt me, and it will hurt my babies’.

‘No, he won’t, kiddo. He is sleeping. You see how peaceful he is. The snake charmer was at fault, not the snake. Forgive him and learn how to keep yourself safe from it’.

## The Snake Charmer

‘Won’t the glass break’?

‘The snake can’t break it. It’s made of glass so that we can see the snake inside and we don’t accidentally break it’.

You put your hand on the lid, seeing which, Grandpa says, ‘It is for feeding the snake. Don’t worry, the snake won’t come out and hurt you or anyone else. The opening is there to keep it alive—to feed it when needed. Close it and lock it, after you feed it’.

‘Let’s get it some mice babies’.

Grandpa laughs and says, ‘Mice babies? Why not grown-up mice? Much more meaty and thicker than babies, and we won’t have to feed it again and again’.

You now know that the snake charmer was lying. But, there is still a chance that the snake might slither into the bird’s nest, and eat the babies there. So, you keep the box shut with your hand while Grandpa brings a fat mouse for the snake. A piece of the clot is stuck in the nail of your middle finger, red and dry now. You try to get it out. It doesn’t come off.

\* \* \*

# FOR LOVERS

## Bi-Revenge

‘Was that your girlfriend in the hoodie this morning? You know, it’s not allowed for girls to go towards the boys’ dormitories’, said the campus security guard, twirling his moustache.

Bob didn’t mind the banter as everyone at the university was fond of him and Tina.

‘Go hunt some quails with your service rifle in the hills’, Bob said, laughing. ‘Your retired arse has no business spying on punks like us’.

After reaching the girls’ dormitory, he requested the guard on the gate to call Tina, who announced Tina’s name on the mike and she appeared at the gate within ten minutes—as expected. Bob entered the garden next to the dormitory, with Tina trailing behind him.

‘So what’s our weekend plan?’ Tina said as Bob stopped under a tree and turned around.

‘Let’s go watch the film that I mentioned last night. Dwight told me, it has lesbian scenes, a first for a mainstream film.’

‘I told you already, I don’t want to go’, Tina said, sitting on a bench.

Bob looked into Tina’s eyes. Amadeus candy petals.

‘I see white spots on your chin and upper lip. I don’t think you are here’, he said, looking at the rickety building. *Girls aptly call it a pigeonhole.*

‘I am standing in the middle of thousands of pigeons. The air rising with their fluttering wings soothes my Asthma’. Tina wiped the white spots, albeit with little success. ‘Chuck it. Why are you asking again and again’?

‘Because I see no reason for your denial. You once mentioned that you liked that artsy film—Fire. Then why not this one’?

‘I saw Fire long ago. I was not what I am now. Look, it’s hard for straight guys to imagine themselves in a gay position and not throw up. That’s the reason you couldn’t watch Brokeback Mountain. Boys don’t find other boys attractive, at least not in a sexual way’, Tina said in a single breath.

‘And, girls’? Bob adjusted his running shorts. ‘How do girls find other girls’?

‘Girls may not explore it, but there is a little bi side to every straight girl’.

‘I got your point’. *She doesn’t wear this skirt often. I should have asked her before gifting it to her.* ‘I feel women are bi in their mental state too.’



‘You are mad. You know that’? Tina laughed. ‘I have seen the trailer of the film and I can understand that you find it hot and want to see it with me’.

‘What is the problem then’?

‘Did you notice the girl with short hair in it’? Tina said, adjusting the curls of her full head.

Her hair now reached the shoulders as opposed to the Bob-cut, Bob had seen her sporting when hey started dating.

‘I saw the trailer with Dwight and he said that she resembles you’. Bob lighted a cigarette and offered it to Tina after taking the first toke. ‘She looks a little like you, more so in the hair department’.

‘Do you recall the other girl in the trailer’?

They took turns smoking the cigarette. Bob pondered for a while. He remembered that she was lanky and had long hair, and her gait resembled that of a bride walking down the aisle, clasping the hands of her father.

‘Oh yes’, Bob said. ‘I can picture her but what are you trying to arrive at’?

‘I mean, do you see someone in our college who resembles her’?

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