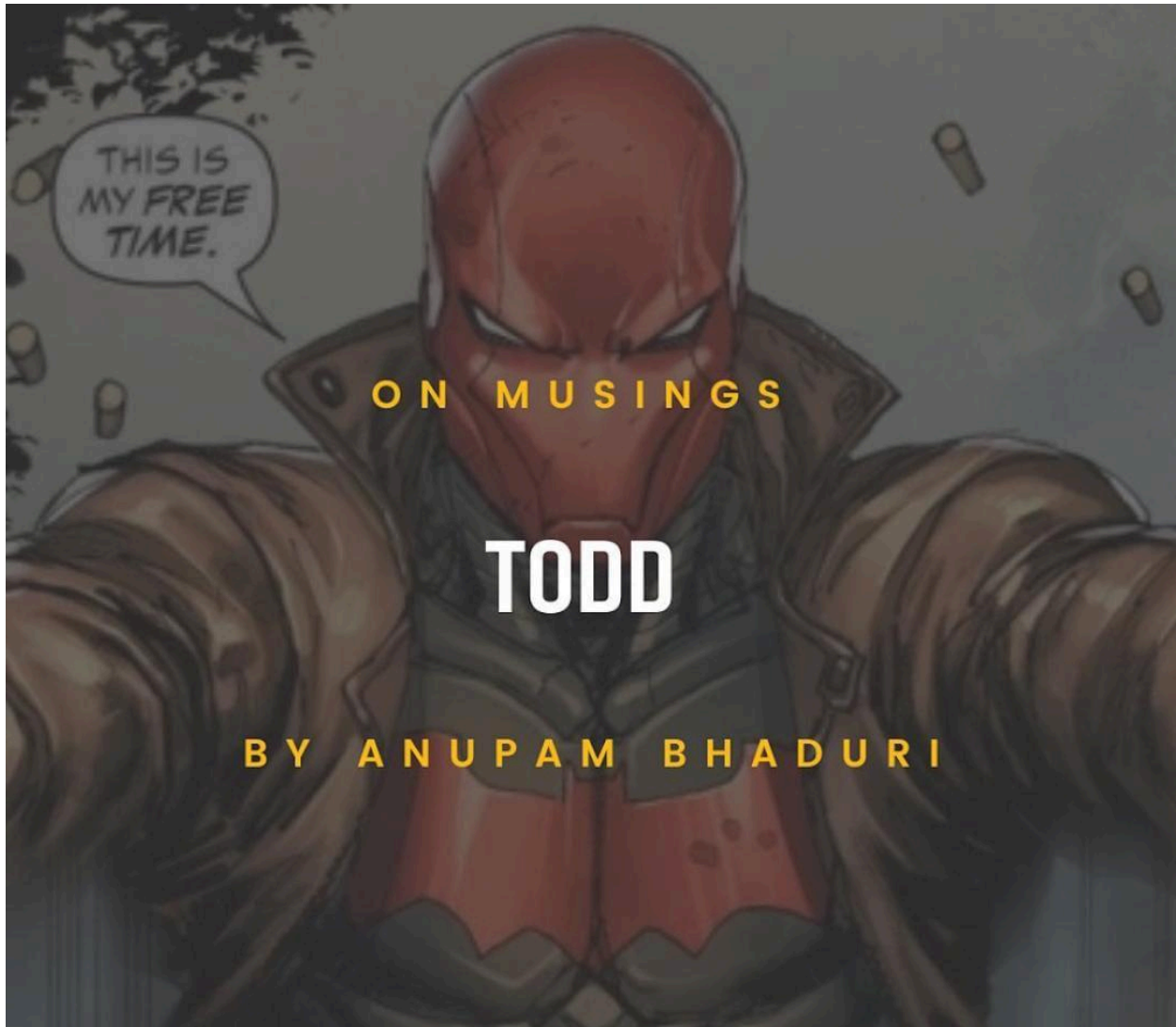


Todd.



“And this is the last question of my school assignment. The question asks to write about anything that inspires me.”

I looked blankly at my student. I am a law student, an atheist and a firm believer in the principles of Seneca. People around me haven't been kind in recent memory. Ever since my dad passed away, all that people around me did was to try and trick us out of everything we had. The bank that he worked at, the relatives that we relied on, even the closest of friends and family. Inspiration is a tough word to define in an age that is punctuated with snakes and betrayals. I looked at my student again. He was a few years younger than me and I provided him with English tuitions for the boards. He knew that in my head I was mostly a very distraught person

due to the recent bereavement and he almost always knew that the last thirty minutes of the three-hour class could be stretched into a storytime if he played his cards right. So when I came back from my reverie of thoughts I found him looking at me as if he could see deep into my soul and the regrets and the wants that lurked there in the deepest darkest corners.

“You do go silent at times.”

I smiled feebly. Picking up another handful of the fried delicacy, I continued with the finer points of his assignment. “Since you are clearly fascinated by KFC, I believe you would do well to go over the life of Colonel Sanders. I will help you out with the basics but do look back into it after I am done.” As he poised with the pen and the long book on which he’d write, I continued, glancing at Google open on my phone screen from time to time.

“His entire name reads Colonel Harland David Sanders and was born in Indiana on 9th September 1890. As is evident from the title in his name, Sanders was listed in the Army of the United States and served in Cuba as a wagoner and then as a fireman, before he was dishonourably discharged for insubordination. Even as a young child, Harland Sanders had tried his hands at odd jobs such as farming and more laborious jobs. However, his entire career was dotted with the yearning to do more and keep on moving. Some years later he moved on from the laborious jobs and started working as a lawyer. It was years later that he came up with the secret recipe for the Kentucky Fried Chicken. Once he had a more concrete version of his dreams, investors started to flock in causing the outburst of KFC. I have forwarded around five links in your WhatsApp by now and I would advise you to read them through before you attempt at writing this. Don’t be lazy. He is your inspiration and the least you can do is read about him.”

He gave a sheepish nod and then groaned an affirmation. Suddenly, he looked up at me and asked, “ You’re such a stoic man, who inspires you?” I deliberated as I looked into his eyes before replying, “ Jason Todd, a.k.a Red Hood.”

“The Batman sidekick? Wasn’t he a thorn in the vigilante’s side?”

I smiled genially. Yes, that is exactly what I had been asked every time I took his name. “No,” I replied. “He wasn’t a thorn. He was a prodigal son and Batman’s costliest mistake. You see he died because the greatest hero in the comic universe had given up on him just like people lose faith in us because of our mistakes and the disappointment we cause them. Some wither once they are ignored for their faults, and some don’t. And those who don’t grow up to be prolific characters who stop at nothing. However, they also grow up bitter. Jason Todd might have been a more effective Robin but he is a broken tin soldier because he chose to disobey the man who had seen more than him, bled more than him and fought more than him. In the end when Jason did pay for his mistakes, he antagonized his mentor and bred unfathomable hate to become someone

better. Every fiber of his existence screamed rebellion only so that he could keep pushing his limits. We are similar. We breed hate and disgust, loathe people who look down on us and never realise our true potential because we are all busy paying people back the disrespect. We never look back into us, stop and retrospect on why and where we went wrong. All we are stuck in is a constant limbo of being a hopeless loner and a gunslinger. We become every bit of the person we grew up disliking. We grow into bitter individual who knows not the peace of flesh or mind. It is just a series of rhetorical blame games that tire and kill our souls from the very within. And that, my dear *estudiante*, is why I adore Jason Todd. It was not because he hated Batman for the miseries that he himself had caused, but it was because Jason finally understood that without Batman he would never have known that you can always be outnumbered, you can always be faced with insurmountable odds, but you can never be outmatched if you think things through. Todd wakes up everyday to remind me that the energy I consume in ranting against the system could be used better to find ways to tackle the adversities I face. Todd is the living embodiment of the idea that you can either be a scorpion in the ground, wriggling and complaining about your misfortunes, or you can reflect on your past, learn, rehabilitate and then be the best version of yourself. We remember winners because they won by effort and not by fluke.”

My student returned a bright, satisfactory smile, like the things I live for.

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