

The Big Red Dot

The brisk silence of the crawling dawn weighed upon the thick coat of the floating moonlight around the lazy shrubs. Even the noble red-crowned cock was hard asleep in his own warm bundle of hay.

Clocks didn't whistle, windows didn't creek, clouds didn't complain. The night remained still, in stealth and silence; like a calm predator stalking its game. The stalking shadows of the vague objects pierced into the spirit of the night.

It looked as if dawn had neglected to wake up, and the celestial moon was still pursuing her divine lover at the hilltop. There was no proof of another warm morning at all in that vicinity.

Every life inside those four walls was tight asleep, devouring into different dreams. Unlike them all, even at the early hours, a set of eyes breathed into the wintry breath of nature.

She pushed herself up from the stale mat, mended here and there with her old saree or some other portion of the useless cloth. She knotted up her mane, yawning silently, and woke up into the dawn.

As she whispered some hymns of old Vedas during the shower, the old rusty bucket along with the tap water danced in cadence to her mumble.

She tended not to shudder at the chill drizzle that brimmed down her worn-out grace, on its path to the clogged drain at the corner. Drops of water dripped onto the concrete floor from the soggy wad of her dark overlong hair.

Without even drying, she turned on the kitchen lights and lit up the stove, tying up the white towel around her head. She stood like a goddess, a halo around her head, and a pan and a tin of tea in each palm. It was like a low-cost cosplay of *Mahalakshmi*.

Drying up her hair and keeping the tea to simmer on its own, she dashed outside to the backyard.

The wooden gate screeched on its rusted hinges as she opened it in a hustle. She dragged out some dry twigs to set up a fire for cooking rice over a mud stove.

She pulled a stool near the stove and squatted well down to hatch a fire with the crushed dry twigs.

Her battle with the stove seemed working after a few blows through the hollow iron cylinder. Something has eclipsed her tender cheeks. It must have been the stifling smoke from the stove. Still, she blew hard into the heat without regretting a bit.

As the fire rose around the pan, she poured some water and rice into it and rushed inside in time to seize the tea, trying to flee away from the container.

For a moment, the ingenious stove had the fire off his head, but she cast another pan over it. “Oh, breakfast.” the stove would have whined.

The sun was almost out by then. Her sharp eyes caught the rays peeking inside her kitchen. As she switched the first dosa out of the stove and established the second one to cook, she hurried to wake up her children.

By the time she was back, it was burnt on one side; but she just kept it separately to have it later and take one for the team. She just doesn’t take one, she takes all for the team; she is the ‘team’.

Her mother-in-law walked into the morning venture before she could lose her mind with all the surrounding fuzz. Handling over the breakfast work to the old woman, she trotted towards her kids.

Still, she had to bathe the little one to get ready for school, who was running around the house in small blue underwear. She was as adorable as she could be, fluttering around like a free bird.

Drying up the little one after her warm bath, she dashed to fill up all the Tiffin boxes and likewise to serve the breakfast hot onto the dining table.

At the feasting table, the elder son had his mobile on one hand and a piece of dosa half soaked in chutney on the other.

The father was struggling between his shoes and his bulging belly; and the small kid was running around him like a colorless butterfly.

The big boy was taking off for college and she ran towards him to hand him the lunch packet along with some money that she seldom took from her spouse’s pocket.

He picked them both from her hands and strolled away in silence, with his eyes hooked on the screen. If only he realized that there was a vast world outside the five-inch screen.

She knew he loved her, even though all the hugs and kisses she got when he was at school had faded into mere thoughts; along with his funny bye-bye wave in which he swayed both his head and hand simultaneously.

She knew he had just grown up, that’s all. She loved him, too.

At a distance, amidst a selfless cloud of disturbances, a mind would have voiced the same thoughts. “Love you too, Amma”.

She was sweating heavily, and the already wet corner piece of her brown saree couldn’t make any difference.

As she passed the shattered mirror hanging by the windowpane, she noticed she didn’t have her *bindi* on. The crimson dot on her forehead symbolized the status of a woman under her second roof.

She rushed to their room and placed a tweak of crimson powder on her forehead exactly in the midst. She adjusted it perfectly in between her eyebrows like she balanced the family each day.

The old scooter rustled up gently in the shed, puffing smoke out of the silencer, like in the kitchen furnace.

Hearing the engine's shriek, she rushed to the door, half visible, and waved her husband and kid, again and again, till she could hear the rattling sound of the engine make its way around the far-away corner of the street.

She stood there and smiled happily. For her, the job had just begun. She took the tail of her saree and secured it into her waist, wiped off the dripping sweat drops, and went inside the house, her home.

She is a wife, a mother, a woman. She is an Indian housewife. Surely Mother is, undoubtedly, the God, the one and only, if there is one.

“matha pitha gurur deivam “

The End.

Dedicated to the unknown superhero of the Indian houses and all Ammas ...hats off to their hard work and dedication and love. To all mothers out there, we love you...we just don't show it, that's all. Thank you.