

## JOYS THAT ARE LARGER THAN LIFE

"Aahh", came the sound of her quivering voice. Loud enough for her feeble body to almost tire just from the expulsion of energy. Amma was overjoyed by the small, sharp piece of metal she held so preciously in her bony hand. In the abandonment of old-age, Amma enjoyed a few but whole pleasures. One of them was carefully collecting the coca-cola bottle lids that could bring her the chance to win the town lottery. Organised by the company, they were to announce the winner that day and rumour was that this year's prize was a glistening sewing machine.

"93..94...95. I have 95 caps this year. I'm telling you this is the winning number!" She said as she took a celebratory swig of the cold black liquid and placed the cap in the box where her other victories were stored.

"The rule was only once a week", said Tracy, snatching the bottle away from Amma's hands. "This is your third bottle this week. What is wrong with you amma? You know what sugar does to your body. And what do you need a sewing machine for, anyway? You're too old to spend time doing that". But Amma wasn't one to give up smaller joys for larger wisdom. Afterall, her life was only lived to relive her past. Her only joys were born from breathing life to any sensations that brought back memories.

Amma smiled. She had never misplaced Tracy's brashness for cruelty. That was one of the secrets to their successful cohabitation all these years.

"Silly girl. What do you know about the world?", Amma retorted. "People still remember the dresses I made, Tracy! They come and tell me how talented I used to be. But my hands just aren't as still as they used to be. The machine will help. I have so many patterns swimming in my mind, Tracy. I just need to get them out of here and on a beautiful, clean piece of fabric".

Tracy laughed. She looked at the cold glass bottle mumbling, "These guys sure know to create a hunger for things when they can't quench the thirst around here", taking a small sip of the flat, sweet cola.\*

It was only 2 days later, and the sewing machine sat grandly in Amma's tiny home. Amma looked at it adoringly. The shiny machine

stuck out like a sore thumb, among the muted, aged colors that formed the aesthetic of the house.

"Amma", Tracy called out.

"What is it?", Amma said, not taking her eyes off her prized possession.

"The doctor called", she said, sniffing under a soft voice. "The test didn't show so well. I had told you about this. He said we need to begin treatment now or you won't have much time. We need to leave now. I've got Chandu to get us a ride to the hospital. I have it all sorted out. There's not much cash in hand, but Chandu said he will sort us out if we give him the machine. He'll take care of it. We have to leave now, I've got a bag ready for you with your things.

But although Amma's eyes were still glued to her beloved machine, her small smile was wiped away. "I'm not going anywhere", she said, indignantly. "I'm staying here with my machine and making that purple rose pattern I told you about". She already motioned towards the basket of fabric and slowly began to pick out her material".

"What do you mean? We have to go, Amma", she said, as patiently as she could. "Come on. You can come back and do this. But right now, we need to move".

"I'm not going anywhere", composed as usual, Amma had already begun slipping the cloth inside the machine. "They poke and prod me. And I will lie there for weeks on end. I've done this too many times before. I'm staying here with my machine. I'm going to make that purple pattern and then we can both have chicken for dinner, together. We'll cook it together", she took her eyes off the machine and looked up at Tracy, the small smile lighting up her face.

That night, Tracy and Amma sat together and made the most colourful patterns with their shiny sewing machine. They had a simple chicken dinner with cold and sweet coca-cola. That night, Amma's spry soul left her body as she slept, her bright small smile still there.

\*The piece is meant to fit into a larger narrative. The narrative will be based in the civil background during the Palakkad protests against the coca cola factories, where farmers

