

Category –Short Story

Title – Blood, O my Blood

Stories build a foundation of life. In every second of our life, we are encompassed by the stories rolling around us in diverse patterns and we are never aware of how we are characters of our own story. One slip and the whole plot switches, and we come to another point. We breathe stories, we live the stories, and sometimes, we write our own stories.

And sometimes, we are mere puppets of the already laid down stories.

Stories could slaughter you in tiny little pieces if you strive to unravel them before time. Each story has a twist, a hidden part, a different and metaphysical meaning. Each character makes a story, fabricates the entire world and the functions of it. Each minor or major detail has the power to twist the plot of the story.

Stories were a funny thing.

Stories could slay me I didn't know.

"Ahana put down the gun," The harsh tone didn't spin my mind or exhibit the shivering hands clutched around the black hard pistol. "Nothing will happen."

"You don't get it!" I tried to put forth my arguments. "I need to kill her. This is my part of the story."

"She is your mother!" He tried to reason out but it didn't work. My mind was worked up, and my story was written down ages ago.

Crazy, crazy little hearts, munch on it to make it hard.

"I am doing this for us." My finger pulled the trigger back. "Crazy, crazy little hearts, munch on it to make it hard." A giggle mimicked in the darkest of the alley. "Blood, o my blood, run down my body and turn it holy. Blood, o my blood, run down my body and turn it sacred. Blood, o my blood—"

The lines repeated after me.

My story.

And I let the trigger go.

My motive of the story.

Blood, o my blood, run down her body and turn her good.

Little, little, sweet child, come to me and turn me dark to the windiest of the trumping night. Little, little, sweet child, relish this knife and plunge into your heart.

And a lifeless body laid down on the pavement, a mouth gaped open in surprise, two black eyes glanced back in question but no answer escaped her tied lips.

At last, she was silent.

With shivering hands, the gun slid down my hands, joined the grey pavement, and the life had been turned to mere nothing. His words swirled around my head, his hands grabbed me by the shoulders and his questions awoke a part of the darkest soul.

Why did I do it?

Why would I kill my own mother?

And that's how the story begun.

“What are you doing?” Hearing the sudden tone of disappointment, I turned to confront a wrinkled face with sneered lips and greyish hair. “Get away from him. Go to Uthkarsh!”

“But Sister The—“ Seething her wild teeth, she shoved my hand out of the crib, pushing me to the end of the door and went on to cradle the lifeless child in her weak boned arms. “He is dead.” But my words heard no response other than the two strange arms that gathered my shoulders and dragged me out of the room.

With a heavy fist, I pounded against the door, waiting for a single response, but nothing came, and with a disappointed sigh, I walked back to my room.

I wish that remained for the rest of the life, but nothing changed as the same events followed every single day.

Why would anyone keep dead babies in a room?

A bright flash of light covered my face.

With a groan, I twisted my head and squeezed my eyes shut to remove the remnants of the shock. However, after a minute, I fluttered them open to assess the blackened room highlighted by the LED lights.

“Miss?” The voice rattled. “Ahana?” Why was he taking my name? “Why did you kill her?”

“Who?”

“Sister Theresa aka your mother,” the voice repeated. “Why did you kill her on Friday the 13th?” He paused. “Do you confess it?” I tried to move my hands, but the heavy metal strapped them on the arms of the chair. I tried to look around the strange room, but the darkness permitted no vision. I tried to glare at the unknown voice, but the face remained motionless. “Ahana, did you kill Sister Theresa?”

I could hear the water dripping down the ceiling, I could feel the tension in the air, and most of all, I could drown in the guilt of the next words. “Yes, I did.” I paused. “Why am I here?”

He chuckled, leaned back in his chair and drummed his fingers on the table. “Why did you kill her?”

“Why am I here?” I seethed, curling my hands in a tight fist. “Where is Uthkarsh? How did I reach here?”

“Two nights back, your friend turned you in, Ms. Ahana.” What? “Tell me why did you kill her?”

“I killed her in self-defense,” I tried to argue my point, but his stone-face revealed no emotion and his tightened lip depicted no sign of empathy. “She was going to kill Uthkarsh. I did it for us.” I wriggled under my seat, the chair screeched on the floor, and the screams of my mouth echoed in the room. “Leave me. I told you the truth.”

“Entire truth,” the CBI officer forced. “We need the entire truth here. Why would she kill anyone? What is your relationship with her?”

With those defeated words and sentences, I sat back in my chair and peered at my hands as if the gun was still present in them. As the tears stung at the back of my eyes, I closed them shut and wove the words of the forgotten night.

*Lay it all down, Ahana.
It doesn't matter anymore.*

And I became the puppet of the long-forgotten story.

“Ever heard of a ritual sacrifice?” After a beat, he nodded. “I am an orphan, as you must have known.” His dry look revealed nothing. “For a few years, everything was fine. But later, I saw and heard eerie things around the corners—the hidden rooms, the hushed conversations, the white robes roaming around the house in the middle of the night, and the hidden blood in the refrigerators.” I gulped the bitter feelings present at the back of my throat. “There used to be a room full of dead babies and she used to sing them a rhyme. *‘Crazy, crazy little hearts, munch on it to make it hard.’*” Gasping, I tried to form coherent sentences, and to not dive into the harsh memories of the past. “One night, I followed them. I walked down the corridors to a secret room at the top of the house, and I discovered a fire with people circling it. One minute, the baby was in her hands and the next, he had been thrown into the fire.” I curled a bony arm around my stomach. “She would have taken my baby as well.”

“You are not pregnant.”

With wild hair covering my face, I glared at him. “She would have done it for her cult! She would have done anything! Where is Uthkarsh?”

But none of my protests were heard. He stood up from his seat, grabbed the recorder from the table and turned it off. Before I could ask anything, he snapped his fingers at the door and within minutes, I was carried out of the room by my shoulders.

Days went by in my mind. Sometimes, those days felt like hours of unknown time, screamed back the reality of the blood on my hands and asked for salvation from everyone. But, those days turned futile when none of them came back.

From day to night, I kept on staring at the steel metal door, waiting for some kind of news other than three times food. Once a week, the voice would come back and ask further questions on the rituals, trying to scavenge the truth from my inner self to lay out the deepest, darkest secrets of my life.

And I told him everything from the start. The cult rituals of burning the babies to ashes, the preservation rooms, and how she followed me to Dehradun for running out of the house at the age of fourteen. In her defense, I was the one at fault and the one to be punished for my cold betrayal, but she never gave a thought about the pain she had inflicted in the name of rituals.

Some days, he would believe my story, while on the other days, he would curl his lips in disgust at either me or her. But never would he speak a word other than the old boring

questions, never would he give another emotion other than work and disgust, never would he allow me to trespass his thoughts and would keep me oblivious from the rest of the world. One of the days, I dared to ask what would happen to me and when would I see Uthkarsh, but in return, all I received had been the shake of his head.

Why would Uthkarsh turn me in?

Didn't he know I had blood on my hands for our story?

The darkest hollow of the corridors sang a rhythm of the unknown source, and like a bug, I trailed to the end of it and peeked at the closed doors of this house. The back of my mind warned me to stay off and to get out of here. However, with silent steps, I trudged to one of the doors, knocked as the Sister had taught me and when no answer greeted me, I pushed the door and peeked inside.

White robes greeted me. The yellow-and-orange-fire-licked wood in the middle of the room and the circle around it called for red alert, but I stood at the back and heard the enchantments that had been running in the air. Curious at the events, I sat cross-legged on the floor and placed my chin on my right hand.

Blood, o my blood, run down her body and turn her good.

Little, little, sweet child, come to me and turn me dark to the windiest of the trumping night. Little, little, sweet child, relish this knife and plunge it into your heart.

I gasped, slapping my palm against my mouth.

When the blood poured down his heart, I stumbled. When he had been thrown in the pit of the fire, I screamed.

“Wake up!”

Gasping, I fluttered my eyes open, ran it rapidly around the room, and halted them at the sight of a familiar man. “Uthkarsh,” Crying at the back of my throat, I curled my arms around his neck and dipped my head in the blade of his left shoulder. “She was here. She killed them again. She will kill us too.” He let me cry on his shoulder, but offered no warmth in return. Confused at his behaviour, I stepped back and stared into the pity in his eyes. “How are you

here?”

The reality sank in.

I was not at home with him beside me.

I was at the unknown place where they kept me locked inside the four walls

“Do you know where you are?” I shook my head in denial. “Mental Hospital.” No words left my mouth. “What have you done to yourself, Ahana?”

“You turned me in. I told you she will take our baby!”

“I did not turn you in,” he said. “Your friend did.” Okay. “Why did you allow her to take your life? She died, but you lived and yet, you are no longer here.”

“I will be out soon. I told them everything.” I clutched his hands tightly in mine. “The officer believes me. It is just a misunderstanding. I did it for our story and love.” Before he could reply, the front door opened and the same officer trudged in, raising his eyebrows at both of us. “Uthkarsh, leave,” I ordered.

“I cannot,” he replied helplessly. “I can only go if you let me.”

“Another session time, but I promise it is our last.” The officer sat on the edge of the bed. “Let’s begin.”

“But Uthkarsh is here. Will it be okay to answer in front of him?”

A frown settled in the middle of his brows, the pen clicked, and he peered at me with pity and sympathy. “It has been three months since you are here, Ahana, and nobody ever answered this but there is no Uthkarsh here.” But he was sitting opposite me. “The friend who turned you is Sukriti.”

“But he was the one present at the crime scene.”

“You were alone there. I asked your friends and none of them know any alive Uthkarsh, except your childhood friend who died in the that orphanage fire. Your mother was not involved in any cult activity and according to the doctors, just like you imagined Uthkarsh in your mind, you imagined the cult activities due to the trauma of his death. You are hallucinating things which doesn’t exist in the first place.”

“You are lying!” I shouted, clutching the bed-sheet tighter to my body. “Uthkarsh, tell him!” But when I snapped my head, there was nobody. “He was here.”

“We will talk some day later.” The officer stood up from his seat. “You killed an

innocent person, Ms. Ahana, I hope you realize the gravity of the situation.”

As he walked out of the room, I remained stuck on my seat, and rolled the past events in my mind. But nothing made sense after his traitors' words. I couldn't imagine my whole childhood of cult activities, I couldn't imagine Uthkarsh's presence next to me because he had survived the night.

What if he didn't?

What if nothing happened and I imagined everything?

The heaviness of the words, the confusion of my mind, and the end of the story of my mind kicked everything apart. The world shattered in a minute, and the story of my life had no road anymore. Screaming, I threw everything on the floor, scratched my nails on the door to let me out of this crazy house, to not damage me further.

My screams were futile.

My cries fell to deaf ears.

“Patient 809.” A strange hand shook my shoulder as I sat on the edge of the room, the curtain of hair covering my face. “Time for your medicines.”

Giggling, I repeated again and again, “Blood, o my blood, run down her body and turn her good.”

Maybe my story had found its path.

Maybe everyone was normal and I was mad among the puppets of the world and lies.