

My prompt/theme: Happiness can be found in the simplest things

Roses are Red

It all started with the bombs.

My grandmother always said to look for the good in others, and that no matter how much evil there was, there would always be purity in some form. After all, grandmother isn't with us anymore, and it seems fitting that her words of wisdom don't apply either.

But no matter how much I squinted up at the jet-black choppers and into the opaque smoke, I couldn't help but see anything but the bad right now. Debris rained over me, buildings collapsed, and the local villagers screamed and rushed around to try and find shelter in any sturdy-looking area they could find, but the imminent danger loomed like a shadow over the entire village, threatening to destroy anything in its path. My mother and I were crammed into the musty place to the point I felt I couldn't breathe. But if the world was ending, I'd rather be surrounded by people I loved.

We clung to each other, just the two of us, as the house above us crumbled and we braced ourselves, hoping for the best. Wet, sticky trails slowly made their way down my face as the situation dawned on me. Hastin, one of the poorest and least developed areas of the entire country had just been destroyed in a careful, well-planned attack. *This was war.*

Now, with the pungent smell of something rotting burning our noses and flies feasting on us, I prayed for my brother, Kamran, and my father, who were out there after a rushed decision to defend our hometown. They were the best fighters in all of Hastin, but I sadly didn't get the warrior gene. At eleven years old, I was 4'4" and all skin and bones, with two left feet and terrible coordination. Besides that, I was the typical boy, with dark, short-cropped curly hair, golden-tan skin, and a wiry frame. But not my eyes. Though a large chunk of the Hastin's eyes were a shade of brown, mine were green, supposedly like my father's. Or so Mother says. He left with Kamran when I was three, and all I have left of him were black and white images.

"Grandma?"

"Yes, Kami?"

"Are you happy?"

"Of course. What's there not to be happy about?"

"Well you're sick and you're in a hospital bed but you're still smiling."

"It's just my time. What's the point in frowning? All it does is give me wrinkles." She chuckled heartily, enhancing the plethora of wrinkles that graced her face at the age of 70.

That was one of the last times I spoke to her. The second last was when she told me to take care of her dog, Lanie, who was already chubby from lack of an active caretaker. The very last was when she told me about herself as a little girl, even younger than I was.

"When I was little, I loved bees. I even got stung by a bee 3 times in one instance."

"I'm allergic to bees!"

“Yes, well, I suppose it’s a good thing you didn’t get stung then. My hand swelled up but all I could think was that the bees finally liked me enough to sting me. I couldn’t really go to the doctor because it was during the peak of the Covid-19 pandemic. So what I did instead was be even more of an idiot.” This elicited a giggle from me.

“I began my own garden so that I could see more bees. It sounds stupid, but I was fascinated by them. I grew the rosebush from when it was a baby and nursed it to the lush, red flowers you see every day now.

“I was called an idiot by my mother, rightfully so may I add. But I saw the bees every day once the flowers bloomed, and this made me happy. I wasn’t happy because of the bee sting, but then again maybe I was. Everything made me happy. People hate you when you’re openly happy, but appreciate you in secret. After I began my floral business, I saw my customers roll their eyes at me when I chirped a compliment. But I saw their little smirks of satisfaction too. And the smiles were enough to keep me going.”

Grandma sent me off with a quick wave as she fell into a coughing fit. She didn’t wake up the next morning.

We could feel it coming, although none of us like to admit it. After all, having a section of the ceiling fall on your chest does a toll on your internal organs. I stayed with her until the end, and even when it came, she smiled through the pain. I’ll never forget her last words to me that day, “Remember.” Her eyes closed, as if she was sleeping, and drifted off, looking more peaceful than ever.

I became a changed man after she died.

My friends liked making fun of people, but I didn’t. I liked it when someone laughed after I told them a joke. It made me happy. My dad liked making promises that he would stop drinking, but he didn’t. I hated broken promises. Nothing made me happier than having someone’s trust in me.

It’s been two hours and ten minutes since the last bomb, so we both leave the basement. I make a beeline for my backyard, where I breathe a sigh of relief. Debris was littered everywhere, but one vivid red burst of color survived- the rose bush.

The rose bush is alive, and so am I. How much happier can I get?