

Short Story

Whispers of Courage

On a pitch-black night, Abeer was standing on the edge of the Ravi Bridge with the moon beaming above her head and water roaring beneath her. It was a full moon on that day and gushing water was swallowing the shimmering rays of the moon, to her it was a harrowing sight to behold. The blowing wind was screeching cacophonous sounds in her ears as if all the world was conspiring to push her, to bury her in the riverbed. All of a sudden, she looked towards the full moon which, to her, was more like a scorching sun, similar to the sweltering sun of the day on which she met Ammar for the first time when he offered her a cup of chilled latte at the canteen of the university. The naive damsel instantly fell in love with him, getting trapped in his rosy words and chivalrous demeanor. In the subsequent years, the love uncanny love story unfolded, with Ammar always being able to win her back with his rosy words after committing unforgivable mistakes. He has promised to marry her, and often cunningly foretold their life after marriage.

One day, on a romantic wintry night, he duped her into watching a movie with him alone at an apartment. He drugged her drink by mixing sexual hormone stimulators and cocaine in it. She lost control of herself. Even at the height of intoxication, she was conscious enough to resist his sexual advances for half an hour, which she valiantly did. At last, she lost control of her body and gave herself into his arms, half-awoke at first, unconscious after that. The next day, she

woke up to find herself sprawling on the bed with her clothes all over the place, and Ammar was nowhere to be seen. She instantly knew she was raped, deceived, and left on her own. Her phone

showed twenty missed calls from her family. She didn't know what to do, kept lying on the bed, and stared at the ceiling for more than three hours. She had made up her mind about what to do now.

She took a bath, wore her clothes and went straight to her house. She told her family that the last time she went to her friend's birthday party and was drugged by one of her friends.

Because she was feeling ill, she stayed at her friend's house for the night. Her father shouted at her, slapped her face and locked her inside her room. She refrained from telling them the real tragedy just to save their honor. Her only hope was that she was not impregnated by Ammar. Her own honor was lost but her parents' honor was still intact, and it was what she was living for. Nobody talked to her for more than one week. Ammar was back to his normal life, concocting an excuse that he had been addicted to cocaine for the last two months and had mistakenly mixed it in her drink while he intended it only for himself, and promising that he would still marry her and had not impregnated her. He was just spewing more lies and trying to gauge her temper and intentions to know if she was going to tell anybody about what happened that night. Once he was assured that for the sake of her parents' honor, she would refrain from unraveling the mishap to the horror of Abeer, he blocked her number. Not more than ten days have passed after the incident when Abeer started feeling sick, and just to clear doubts in her mind, she took a quick pregnancy test. The stick manifested positive results on the screen. She performed the same test a dozen times, with the same positive results showing up every time.

Now all she wanted was to keep herself locked inside the bathroom, but she knew sooner or later she had to face her parents, so all she was waiting for was the arrival of the night. When it was around midnight, she drove to the Ravi Bridge, and just when she was about to dive into the oblivion of the river, out of nowhere, she heard a bemoaning voice yelling "Maa". This voice was not from the outside but from inside, right from her belly, where an unborn child was lying. An unborn child, which would be labeled as a bastard child and her mother as a whore. She might not have the right to live in the eyes of the world, but this child deserves every right to open his or her eyes in this world. She

thought to herself: "I am not only Abeer anymore, but the mother, father, sister and brother of a child. If I die today, I would take two lives, and not just my own. This child deserves every right to live. She came back to her home, told her parents the real truth and, unsurprisingly, was thrown out of the house by her parents. The next thing she did was to expose Ammar to the whole world, though he beseeched her to marry him to save the honor of both, she declined by saying that how could she put her honor in the hands of a man who had brutally injured it before. After that, she secretly lived in her friend's room at a girl's room only to be found and kicked out by the warden, who cursed her by calling her whore. Nobody was ready to believe that she was drugged by Ammar and that it was a non-consensual rape. By then, she was earning enough through an online job, not more than 20k, to pay for her hostel dues. Time Flies. After eight more months, she gave birth to a baby boy, and by then, she was earning more than 80k per month, by working day at night at an online digital marketing company. After the birth of her fatherless child, her life was a nightmare, but she persevered and lived for the sake of her child. She burnt the midnight oil, and, at the expense of her health, she had saved enough money to move abroad. Five months

after the birth of Hussain, she left for Australia, after scoring an 80% scholarship at Melbourne University. The dean of the university was impressed by her resilience in the face of the savage society and wanted to give her an opportunity to start her new life. Things started getting better, once she moved to Australia. In her university, she was understood and sympathized by her classmates. There she sparked a connection with an Indian man who was able to see the truth and resilience in Abeer's eyes and after a year or two they married and lived happily after.