

## The Pigeon and the Kite

by Smita RK

D was not worthy. This was the cross which he carried most days. On the days he felt worthy, it was because his family was around him, the gentle banter and consideration for each other restoring his equilibrium. Their quarrels did not last, dissolving into good natured banter. He had the good sense to see his fault and she had the grace to back off when he saw it.

It was when he was left to himself, travelling around the country that the dark thoughts came back and he felt heavy. He was not worthy. He had done something wrong, been naughty perhaps back in his childhood that had turned his mother against him. She did not like him and made no pretence to cover it. She preferred his sister and at times, the two of them would mock and scold him, trying to make him a better person. He had not risen to their expectations. And now his mother had been diagnosed with cancer, incurable stages. He felt guilt for whatever it is he had done to incur her lasting disapproval.

He had been lucky to be blessed with his wife and children. He knew they were too good for him. Little did they know, he thought at times, that he was not a worthy man.

As he stood this morning looking at himself in the mirror, he anticipated what his mother would say to him when she saw him. She was slim and tall and prided herself on this. He on the other hand, was the opposite, wanting to lose weight but not having the time to do anything about it. He had not felt his mother looked forward to meeting him at all. Since she was diagnosed with cancer, he wanted to spend time with her, one last attempt to make peace. There might still be a chance that she would confess how much she had loved him and that she had always known he would do well in life and so, he had reached out to her with hope.

There was no warm response to his overtures. Instead she had said, 'come and visit if you must but I do have to visit some friends later.' They were to meet for an hour. He would be driving to hers in Derbyshire for nearly three hours for this precious hour of her company. Her opening comment on seeing him was, 'goodness, you were not the best looking of men but now you are unbearable to look at'. His sister S sat there sipping tea and watching this exchange. 'oh mother, he suits the place he lives in, plenty of fat men there.' Mother and daughter laughed. This is how they had always spent time with D, by making fun of him. His early struggles with language had set this course of being belittled and mocked. It was only after he left home that he had become a success in his own right but his mother and sister always saw him as a man to be made fun of.

The dreary hour with them crept on till it was time to leave. D had tried to remain charming and unoffended but by the end of it, it had got him down. Of course he felt unworthy. These were the two women who had been in his life all along and they had not missed an opportunity today to bring him down. Perhaps, his success was not much to go on about, he thought. It certainly did not show in his weight.

After he left, S turned to her mother and said, 'did you ever think D might have had a disorder? these days his behaviour could be diagnosed.' Her mother scorched this idea. 'He was a lazy child and look what's come of that! He still is lazy.'

On his way back to the car, D saw a kite bearing down on a pigeon on his mother's driveway. He could not bear to see the pigeon struggling and shooed the kite away. The kite flew around and returned to the pigeon which was now struggling with a damaged wing but the latter made its way quickly to the nearby bushes, thwarting the kite.

D had an epiphany. It was in the nature of the kite to damage the pigeon and the latter did not have the means to fight back. All it could do was seek cover in the bushes. Sitting in the car he waited to see what happened. The kite saw that the pigeon could not be found and flew away. The pigeon groomed its wing and waited. He began to look better, the wing was mending and he was cautiously making his way out of the bush.

As D got back into his car he thought, 'I won't have to do this again. It's over. I cannot do it. I won't be leaving my bush to come here again.'

He felt great relief when he thought this. He could go to his safe little family and groom his wings with the happiness they had created. He may always feel unworthy but that made him aspire to a better life. At last D had realised that he did not need to turn over a new leaf by forgiving his mother or trying to make her happy. She would spoil it. She would try to damage his wings. It was in her nature to do so. And he, a pigeon, needed to learn not to try to befriend a kite.