

Out there in the cold, while I am in here doing nothing.

And at ten, the one with the curvy handlebar moustache and a smile that suggests that he knows everything that there is to know about Fate, or that she is his big sister says, 'We are trying as hard as we can, when we hear anything, we will be sure to call you.' And then my legs give way and I fall and have to be caught by the armpits, by Adi. 'You need to rest,' says the one with the curvy moustache, quite redundantly and I instinctively raise my hands to slap him, only, to his luck it doesn't rise and I am dragged by Adi onto a chair next to a fan. I don't think the whole thing has hit Adi as yet.

He tells me, being pragmatic and thinking that there will be comfort in sharing, to call mother and inform her. Mother, like every other time, will say that she wants to be with me at this time of need. But, I know it will not be as much to help me as it will be just to get away from her boring life with father and be around some commotion, that she will get onto the next flight here. The last time she did that, she was so exhausted she recovered only after five days and then it was time to go back again. Father loathes flights and cannot miss his Monday-Wednesday-Friday bridge games. He may come for this though. However, they both are too old to travel unplanned now, so I don't tell them.

'We will find him,' Adi says.

I don't know why at times like this only useless things like prayer and poetry fill my head.

I feel an urge to scour the whole city and walk on every by-lane and shout his name out till he says, Momma, again and rushes into my hands and I cry and we forget this ever happened. But how will that work? How can we be better than the entire police force - the man with the handle bar moustache and his band, some with moustaches and some without?

'Let's go,' I say.

'Where?' Adi replies.

'Anywhere, lets just try. My baby is frightened and scared and hungry, out there in the cold, alone, and I can't just sit here and wait and rot. I need to do something.'

So we scour, with no plan, or idea, or purpose. We drive and drive till midnight. Sometimes I'd say, 'Take that road again.' And Adi will say, 'But, we just took it. And I'd say, It doesn't matter, just take it, he may be there now.' Adi nearly dozes off from the exhaustion of the day behind the wheel. But not me, I am as alert as a barn-owl, so I take the wheel and drive till the little yellow low-fuel lamp starts flashing, and when I too feel too tired. So we go home and sleep and easily forget.

At three the phone rings, it's from an unknown number. I pick it up. For some reason the sleep rests me and I am ready even for the worst. It's the handlebar-moustache policeman. 'We found your child,' he says. 'He's at the General hospital. Come there and call me.'

Before leaving Adi goes to his drawer and takes the whole wad of notes there and stuffs it into his jeans pocket. He always keeps five thousand rupees ready for an emergency. And today there will be a lot of people to thank with the cash, including god.

'Sorry it took us some time. He fell into an open drain while walking on the street alone after school. He had a concussion and was unconscious till a few hours ago. The people around called an ambulance and he was brought to General Hospital, like how all unidentified persons are. Why didn't he have any identification on him? It is exactly for situations like this that he is supposed to have some identification on him. And what kind of school is this that has no uniform?' The moustachioed police man is happy to have a reason to reprimand. 'As soon as he identified himself, they called us and the missing persons team connected the two cases and informed me. And I called you as early as I could in the morning. He is fine, he will recover completely in a week or two, I suppose. I am happy for you two, umm, three.'

Adi takes out two thousand from his wad and gives it to the policeman and he accepts it, grinning, as if he were more than happy to bribe his sister, Fate, for us.

'Tomorrow, sir, I am going to write a special report to the mayor's office, using this incident as testimony that something has to be done about the open drains in this city,' he says.

'Yes, yes, please do that. I think I will also,' says Adi. And the moustachioed police man grins and walks away as if he can't wait to get back to his just-another-day at work, as I walk in to see my baby again.