

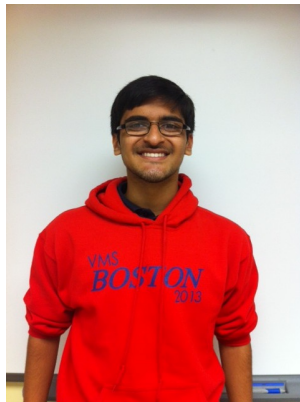
Shariq Mallick

The Village School, 8th grade

1st Prize Winner of TSH MS Tagore Project

Introduction:

This story is written from the perspective of a child who has grown up without “real” parents. The child is not able to relate to anyone, and is constantly getting scolded by his “big ones”. He can only listen as his “big ones” fight extremely loudly, loud enough for the neighbor to hear. Word gets around quickly, and the child’s life is soon taken over by constant judgment from not only his peers, but everyone around him. His only salvations are the television and his imagination, and not even those hold up for long.



SHARIQ MALLICK

The Eternal and Omniscient

I closed my eyes and entered a new world. A world with silence and solitude. A world that was an endless black, but the only place where I could look for light. A world where I could block out the sounds of the people around me. The shouts filled with anger, the sobs swelled with anguish, and screams ridden with terror. I left that place and entered a new one. It was a large, open void containing only a couch and a television. The television played my favorite cartoons, and the couch felt as if I was floating on nothing. The only light I could see was from the screen. And there I sat, waiting for the fear to leave the other world, my home-world.

Then, the fire spread. I saw it in the distance, a blaze of red chasing after me as if I were a gazelle and it was a lion. Waves of whispers and secrets roaring towards their target: me. All of the voices trying to get me to “fulfill my destiny” or “complete my quest”; however, I knew that there was no escaping them. So I waited; waited for the time to pass. Waited for the time when I could find a place without them; without the screams, the shouts, the whispers, the secrets, the temptations. I focused on the television, the sound of Bugs Bunny sarcastically speaking to the clueless Elmer Fudd.

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“Wow! I can’t believe it! You actually caught me!” He shook Elmer’s hand vigorously, but with a large smile on his face.

“Here have a medal! Now you’ve got what you want. So why don’t you go? You’re tired aren’t you? Back home there’s a bed waiting for you, so what are you waiting for? Go on. Leave.” Bugs slowly lost his usual charm, but kept speaking to me. Not Elmer, but me. Then the sound disappeared, and the first whispers began to slip into my ears, almost like a long, lost “friend”.

What are you waiting for? Go on. Leave.

But where will he go. He has no home. No place to rest in. At least nowhere safe.

Ah, you’re right. Whatever shall he do. I wonder.

You know there’s always a way.

Yes there always is. Always **that** way.

But that way is hard. I don’t think he has the guts to go **that** way.

Well, it is the only way to be safe. He can do it, but will he do it? I don’t think that many people will care.

He has nothing to lose. I wonder why he doesn’t do it. He obviously knows that he can do it. I mean, **everyone** can do it, but only the determined can follow through.

Or the crazy.

Yes, they were right. There was always that way. They always want me to go that way. I wonder what happens after going that way. Will I be safe? If I go that way, will I finally get to be happy? Will I finally be able to get away from all of those things? Those expectations? Those standards? Those responsibilities? It was painful. There was nothing more painful than seeing those disappointments. Well, maybe one thing.

There is a rumor going around. A rumor that I think might be true. The little ones say that the big ones are saying things about my big ones. Saying things like I may lose them. I knew that already, though. If you listen to their conversations, and it is almost impossible not to, then you would know straight away. The others didn’t make fun of me, but they were not very nice either. I could tell that they were being mean to me in their heads. That hurt, too.

I just want to go to a world where I don’t have to hear any of these voices. Not the people, not the ones in my head, not even the television. I just wanted to be alone.

Then the fire reached me. Voices whispered around me like the wind.

Then do it!

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What are you waiting for!

Do it!

You'll never be bothered again

Go! Now! You know you want to!

The voices became a mush of sound and anger. The fire whisked around me, and the heat drenched me in sweat. The smoke carried the words and pooled together above my head, threatening to rain down on me at any second. I knelt down and shut my eyes as tight as I could. They scare me. I don't want to be scared. I just want to go. I want to go to the place without fear. They were right. I guess I'll go that way. Maybe then the voices will stop.