

He stood up unsteadily 'Thank you doctor' he said. Wildly he thought 'For sentencing me to death.'

Dr Asgarh couldn't meet his eye 'Aids has been known to go into regression you know. And science is still working on the problem. There is hope...'

Jeet stared blindly at him. Problem! What a stupid thing to call the end of his life. Under his blank gaze, Dr Asgarh's words of consolation dried up. Jeet turned towards the door, surprised that he could still walk, talk, while all he could think of was that he soon would be dead.

The Doctor cleared his throat and avoided his eye as he said ' Mr Sahni - if there is someone else you could.. er.. have passed this onto, I think you should tell them.'

Jeet nodded. Pass on the sentence of death. He felt like laughing hysterically.

... Moniya sat so calmly across the table. They could have been discussing the menu for dinner. 'So I should go to the clinic and check if I have it. Tell me' she said, still calm, not shouting. 'Who did you get it from?'

Telling her *that* was the most awful moment of all. He felt so dirty.

'My sister?' said Moniya. She went cold and still. Then she began to laugh. He thought she was hysterical, until she stopped abruptly and said 'Get out of this house and never come back. Get out. *GET OUT!*'

... Sonya was not calm - 'You *sonofabitch* what are you *saying* to me? You must have got it from someone else you slept with. Some stupid careless *irresponsible* one night stand.'

'No' said Jeet calmly 'There's Moniya and there's you. So who have you been sleeping with besides me?'

'My *husband*, you swine' said Sonya 'I only did it with you because you were family. You *sonofabitch!!*'

Sonya screamed a lot. She threw things, slapped him, opened the door and threw him out.

'Twice in one day' he thought, as he walked the four flights to the street. Death sentence and rejection. Goodbye and goodbye.

... 'There's something I have to tell you' said Sonya to her husband later that day.

...'There's something you ought to know..' her husband said to his secretary.

... 'I have to be honest..' her husband said to the receptionist.

... 'Listen, I really don't know how to say this..' he said to his partner's wife.

... 'Er... suppose something had happened on those long business trips of ours.' he said to his partner 'Besides what *did* happen. I mean.. you know..' Unlike Sonya, the husband did not believe in keeping it in the family.

...The Partner wept, begged forgiveness, became almost hysterical in his excess of grief. 'Forgive me! Forgive me!' he kept begging the beautiful boy he had picked up one afternoon at a bus stop and who he was madly and totally in love with. 'I have murdered you. Forgive me.' The boy looked at him uncomfortably, unsure what the fuss was about. He rather thought Aids was like a common cold.

...'Aids' said the boy, eyeing the ink pot thoughtfully 'I'm not too sure what it is - he kept insisting I go to a doctor, but I don't have fever. If you get fever, maybe you should go to a doctor.' The Headmaster knew what Aids was alright. He thrust the boy off the desk in his hurry to get to a thermometer. Of all the times to choose to tell him!

...The Headmaster waited until his wife had had her cup of coffee in the morning. He hoped rather futilely that the coffee might keep her calm.

'Blood transfusion. That's it' he told his wife. 'The transfusion I had two years ago when I was sick.'

His wife put down her glasses. She was the Principal of a girls school and well used to seeing through prevarications. 'You did not have a transfusion. They pricked your finger for two drops of blood to test for malaria.'

'Needles' said the Headmaster 'Reused. Absolutely lethal. Totally fatal.'

'What are you trying to tell me Satyadev?' said his wife, putting on her glasses. Generations of young girls had been

intimidated into the truth by those glasses. Satyadev was made of no sterner stuff. He meekly told her.

'I feel it my duty to tell you' said the Principal 'Even if it was just once. A mere moment of madness, quite forgotten believe me, until this moment.' Forgotten! She remembered every minute. She had been looking forward to the year end performance reports.

The gym master stared at her, aghast. The old bag! The *lethal* old bag. All he had wanted was his bloody promotion from assistant games teacher. Oh *shit!*

...'I could fix you up to go get the test done under another name' he said lamely to Ritu.

'I should tell my father' Ritu hissed at him. 'He's the Additional Commissioner of Police. You ..you bloody bastard!'

He quailed. He still had to tell Meena, Preeti and Kavita. Oh - and Sheena and that girl he only ever remembered as Mango tits. God knows who *their* fathers were. Oh shit! If only he had just stuck to extra drill after hours. But it wasn't humanly possible. No man could have stood what he did - surrounded all day with all kinds of young beautiful bodies. Running and jumping and stretching...And basketball. Why on earth did the school have to choose basketball to excel in? He had been done in by dribbling. Oh *shit!*

...'I'm sorry' said Ritu to her nineteen year old boyfriend. 'Maybe we're young and we won't get it. I don't *know.*'

'You told me you were a virgin.' said Ajay

'Well I *was*. Almost. Twice doesn't count. Oh - I don't want to *die.*'

...Dr Asgar was not having a good day. He loved his wife. He had loved her for sixteen years. He never would have believed it if she hadn't told him herself. Her and the neighbours *nineteen year old son...* My god. My god. How could she sit across the table and laugh and tell him that it was appropriate - after all she had lost him to Aids, since he spent all his time at the clinic, neglected her...? He wiped his sweating brow. She would be here in a while. Her tests...then his... My GOD! He sat there in a fog of despair, not knowing what to do. He thought of all the foolish things he had told Jeet Sahni the day before 'Regression...don't lose hope...science might still find a way...' all of it meant nothing. OH MY GOD!

It was destined to be a worse day. Mid morning he got the news of Jeet Sahni's suicide. An assistant had just come into the

office when the phone rang. He put it down, feeling cold and waved the assistant away 'Not now! Not now. I've had bad news. A patient of mine - Mr Sahni has just killed himself. Whatever it is - not now.'

The Assistant swallowed convulsively, caught midway between relief and horror, the confession he had come to make drying on his lips. Now there would be no need to tell the Doctor that he had made a mistake - Mr Sahni's test results had been confused with those of a commercial sex worker from Grant Road.