MY HAPPILY EVER AFTER

WHAT'S IN A NAME, REALLY?

WE KNOW THAT GROWING UP QUEER IN INDIA ISN'T EASY.

NO MATTER WHAT YOUR NAME IS, THERE'S ONE THING COMMON BETWEEN US ALL...

GROWING UP IN A SMALL TOWN, I HAD ALWAYS ASSUMED THINGS COULD NOT GET WORSE...

BUT DURING THE COVID 19 PANDEMIC... THEY ACTUALLY DID.

ESPECIALLY WHEN YOU HAVE TO NAVIGATE YOUR WAY THROUGH CONSERVATIVE CULTURES, RELIGIOUS FUNDAMENTALISM, LOW LEVELS OF ANONYMITY, GEOGRAPHICAL ISOLATION, MYTHS OF LESBIAN UTOPIA, A HETEROSEXIST LEGAL SYSTEM, AND A LACK OF LESBIAN-FRIENDLY HELPING RESOURCES...
It is always in the dead of the night that whispers sound louder... When I heard the whispers for the first time, I thought it was a nightmare.

After all, it is in the dead of the night that all your nightmares tend to come to life...

But as the days passed, the whispers grew louder and more vile. I realised that real life, at times, could be more terrifying than the realm of dreams.

Marriage had indeed become a rather cheap affair in the light of the pandemic. Had it been any other year, the dowry would have been hefty... but who had the choice to be choosers during a lockdown? My family certainly didn’t think I did.

For most, home is where they feel safe. For me, home was where I learned that the value of two Jersey cows sealed my fate...

In a moment of utter frustration and desperation I came out to my family. Perhaps it was my faith in them that prevented me from predicting what was about to happen next.
I spent three long days covered in blood and tears waiting for a chance to escape...

Though I managed to get to help, I knew the escape wasn’t permanent. But what I didn’t know was how terrifying my consequent return would be.

But when you realise that your family relies on religious ceremonies and rape to cure your lesbianism, there’s little you can do apart from lie to save yourself.

And so I did.
Have you ever had to lie to save your life? It is never as easy as you think it will be... There are excuses to birth and alibis to nurture and there are obstacles to deal with. But once in a while, luck smiles at you and the doors that lead to your escape edge open to offer you a peek at the rainbow that lies ahead.

So this time when I left, I was determined to never turn back. And in ways, so was my family... For them, I had breathed my last.

Finding your way to safety is never easy. It is harder than one expects it to be. Heartbreaking even. But when a family fails to love you for who you are, you find another. And with them, I found my way to my happily ever after...