

The Plan

The mercury had soared to 48* Celsius, by noon that day. He sat at the steering in the car and drove the car out of the portico. He turned on the AC, and wiped the sweat off his brows. *How unbearably hot it is!* he sighed. Within a span of just a few seconds, from the front door of his house to the car, he had gauged the extent of heat and humidity outside.

He had arrived in Kuwait, a few months ago, from Sydney. *Strange indeed are the ways of the nature*, he wondered. *While it is so cold in June-July in Australia, here there are intense heat waves at the same time... However, there being no dearth of facilities in Kuwait, people continue to live and survive here with minimum discomfort*, he observed. *After all, every place is air-conditioned here-- office, houses, malls, cars, taxis...* He was lost in a reverie. *And yet, we—the fortunate ones—keep complaining of the heat and the soaring temperatures, which we barely experience for a few seconds.* He was thinking of the plight of the poor immigrant workers, who toiled hard, even in the terrible heat. He could see a spree of construction activity, all around him, throughout the year. The country had large reserves of oil. However, the workers working in the rig and those toiling in constructing towers and skyscrapers were the ones burning their blood and sweat, all day long.

He kept thinking: *These workers here bear such painful drudgery day and night, only so that their families survive well. To ensure that their wives and children did not go hungry, the workers led a rigorous and stern life. They saved every penny from their earnings, so as to send home, all that they could... There is oil in the deserts of Kuwait, and the oil illuminates the hearth in millions of homes in India, but their*

family members did not probably know that the workers burned themselves in the heat, so that their houses back home were not plunged in darkness.

The car had come out on the road, and he was about to swerve right, when he noticed that there were two men standing on the road, in the shade of a tree. They were probably waiting for a bus, he thought. *There is a bus-stand nearby, but in order to avoid the sweltering heat, they are standing a few feet away,* he thought.

He drove towards them, and stopped where the workers stood. Lowering the window glass, he asked: 'Where are you going? Come and sit inside...I will drop you wherever you wish to go'.

They both cast a quick glance at each other, and were visibly reluctant. He insisted however, and they sat inside the car. They looked like workers, but were not as shoddily dressed as the labourers usually were.

'Do you stay in one of the labour camps around here?' he enquired.

'No, Sir... We stay in Fahaheel and work in a shop there. We had come this side in Ahmadi for some work and were returning', one of them spoke.

'Ok... I shall drop you in Fahaheel'.

He reached Fahaheel in a few minutes.

'Where is the shop exactly located? I will drop you right there. It is getting hotter...'

'No Sir, it is fine. We shall get down here at the corner ahead.'

He urged again, but they insisted that they preferred getting down then and there itself. He stopped the car at the sidewalk, and they

got down in such haste that they forgot to even thank him for the lift. They walked a few steps and stopped at a corner. The car had taken a u-turn and was fading away from sight.

‘Hey buddy, are you also thinking on the same lines, as I am?’

‘Yes, I know what is going on in your mind... I too am wondering along similar lines... We are here in Kuwait for several years now. For the first time, someone has given us a lift in his car.’

‘Yes... and I was so worried when he said that he would drop us at the shop’.

‘I was scared too... How could we tell him which shop to stop at, when we are not working in any shop?’

‘So, now, what is the Plan?’

‘The Plan is changed now...’

‘It means that we shall not commit a theft in his house’, they both had spoken in unison.

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