

MY HAPPILY EVER AFTER

by solo

WHAT'S IN A NAME, REALLY?


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

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

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...

A person with dark hair is sleeping in a bed, covered by a blue patterned blanket. The background shows a red and white patterned curtain.

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...

The same person is now awake, looking towards the viewer with a concerned expression. The blue patterned blanket is pulled up to their chest.

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.

The person is lying in bed, looking down at a red book that is open on the bed next to them. The blue patterned blanket is partially pulled away.

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.

CAPTURED

IMPRISONED

BEATEN

I SPENT THREE LONG DAYS COVERED IN BLOOD AND TEARS WAITING FOR A CHANCE TO ESCAPE...



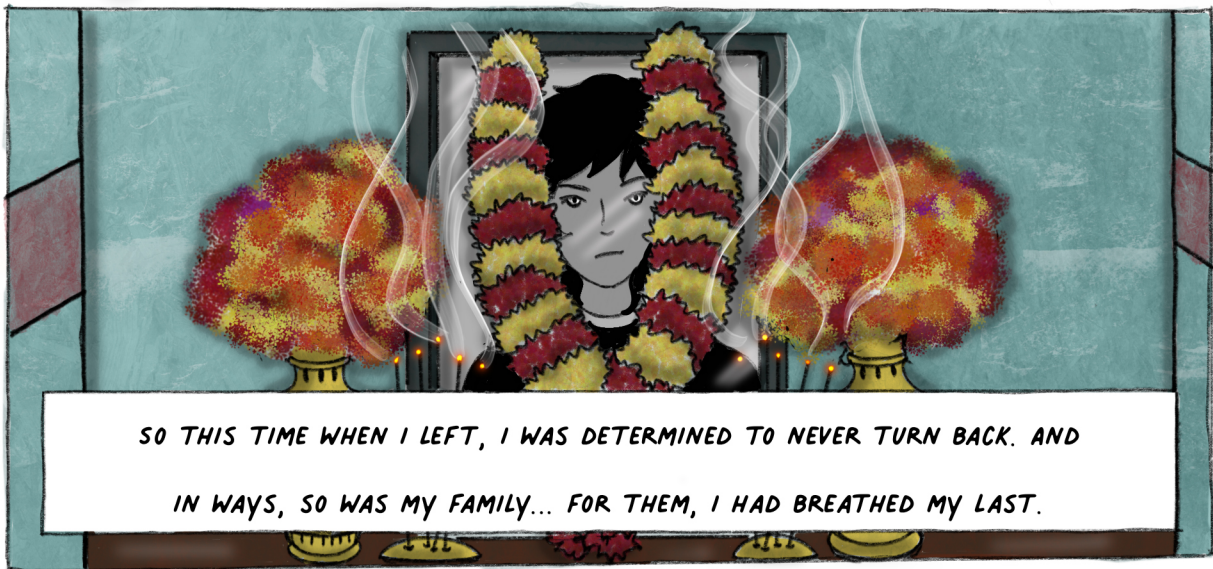
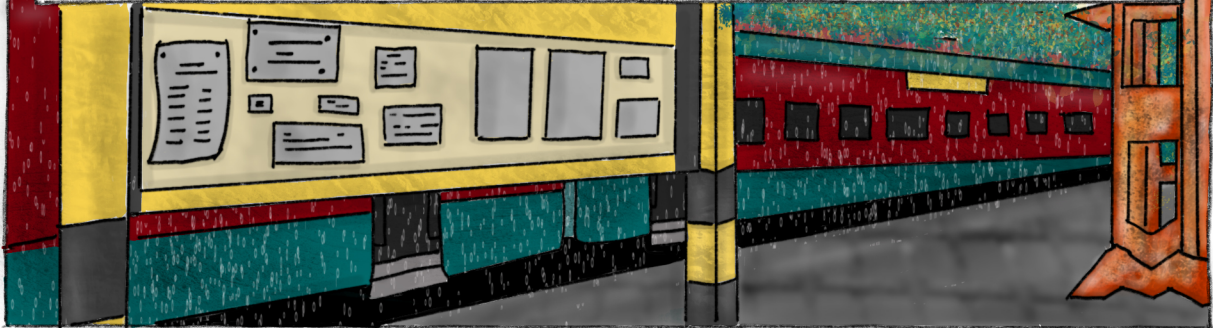
THOUGH I MANAGED TO GET TO HELP, I KNEW THE ESCAPE WASN'T PERMANENT. BUT WHAT I DIDN'T KNOW WAS HOW TERRIFYING MY CONSEQUENT RETURN WOULD BE.



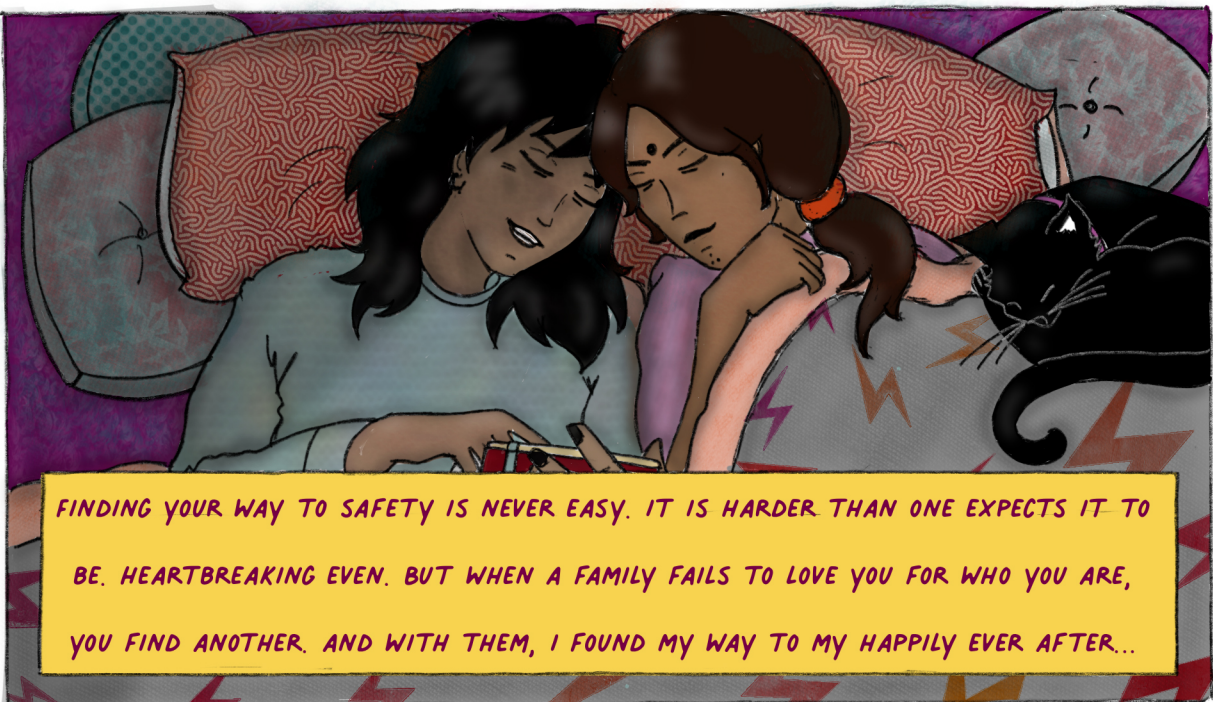
BUT WHEN YOU REALISE THAT YOUR FAMILY RELIES ON RELIGIOUS CEREMONIES AND RAPE TO CURE YOUR LESBIANISM, THERE'S LITTLE YOU CAN DO APART FROM LIE TO SAVE YOURSELF.

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...