

Hide-and-Seek

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“Baby, you go play with other kids. They are waiting for you.”

My mother knew I liked playing hide-and-peek. I was always keen on being the one finding. When my other playmates hid, I felt like I had a mission to find them as fast as I could. But I was never really looking for any of them. Being the finder gave me time alone to find something new and special. I looked around the park and the recreational area in a wide sweep. And I believed I could find something else, something so special that I did not yet discover. I would go farther than we usually play, in the hopes that there would be something I could find. I looked around at the flowers and plants that had grown as I did. Under their exquisite appearance were the muddy roots. I leaned my head over and peeked into the seemingly ugly and dirty brown dirt. A creature I had not known was there. It looked very much like the turtle in my kindergarten textbook. But interestingly, it was moving very slowly. I wondered if it had been injured. And on its back was a round-shaped hard shell, which might have been the burden that hurt it. This discovery was what I was really looking for in the games of hide-and-peek, even though I lost the real game. It had given me a strange feeling. It's not just a physical new discovery, but something deep. I did not know what it was called, I just knew it was the “feeling”.

When I was a child, I ran into the playground and found a small yet beautiful light on the metal light stand. It was the sunlight reflected on the red shiny metal. I felt, happy. I was sure that it was him. I hurried my way and thought I had finally found it. But as I approached, he disappeared from my sight. The cloud had appeared and shrouded him from my glimpse. The angle had changed, and the perspective became different, so he left to somewhere else.

Even when I was only two years old, I knew what my hider was called. The “feeling” always played hide and seek with me. Sometimes I caught him. But still, he always found his way to slip away. I called it the “feeling” because whenever I tried to find it, I felt happy and excited.

In this vast, endless universe, where does this “feeling” hide?

Over time, my bond with “feeling” weakened, and I forsook him. I did not play this game with him anymore. I no longer tried to find him, forgetting my pursuit.

But I still enjoyed playing the game with my playmates, even though I wasn't playing the finder role I wanted. I was the one hiding. When I was the one hiding in the game, I became hysterical. I tried so hard to prevent any jump scare from the finder. The possibility of being found suffocated me. The rush of adrenaline and the trembling of my hands felt like I was a criminal ready to be caught in prison. I wonder if that's what the "feeling" felt when I was playing with him.

The game vanished when our playmates and I became older. But some part of me still felt like I was in for the game. But all these times, I was no longer the one finding. I was the one hiding. Even when I did not play with "feeling", of course, there were other types of nonhuman players there to play with me. Some of them were malicious. They were bad. In this game, I did not play the role of the finder as well. I was the one hiding. And I made my biggest effort yet to steer away from being touched. But it so happened I usually failed hard in this game.

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"Baby, you should start thinking about your future, your career, and your dream," her voice was the same as before. I entered university but my path was even clouded as before. The future was looming.

But standing at the cusp of adulthood, I tried to find something else. When I started working at the burger shop, I believed I was downgrading myself to work at a tedious low-ranking job. I loved burgers. The layers of meat and vegetables just paired well together. But I had never made one myself. It was always someone else who made it for me. The adults who raised and taught me gave me the impression that I should never strive to be the one making the burger. I should be the one eating.

Even so, I wanted to join this curious task, maybe because I wanted to play hide and seek with the "feeling". And I believed I could find him here. At first, I did not believe I would be moving into the kitchen so soon. Other than the occasional small talk or squabbles between colleagues, I assume we work in our own realm and pace because we have a clear division of labor. That remained true before I moved to the kitchen. Just as with other customer services, you delivered orders to dine-in customers like you are nobody. You are an agent between their food and the production in the kitchen.

Today, I was delivering my orders during the busy lunch hour as usual. I witnessed my other colleagues' method of holding two orders at a time to maximize our time and speed. I tried using the same method. It worked most of the time. But this time, I was tripped by a slippery floor, and all of the food and hot drinks were spilled onto the back of a female customer. "What the heck?" The

customer reaction was real and understandable. But what I really heard wasn't the victim's word. I heard, "Ta-da, I caught you." A voice said to me. It was the malicious player, the bad thing caught me again. And there I was being scolded by the customer and her family. But as sorry as I was, I wasn't here to apologize. Her back was hurt, and her clothes were wet. Apologizing would solve nothing at all. I switched off something in my brain I believed. I became mechanical; all my attention and concern were on how to redeem this debacle. You could laugh at me however you wanted, you malicious player. But screw you, I needed to clean up the mess first. Even after I did every salvation I could think of, still, the customer did not forgive me. She left with her family in sheer hatred. The thing I switched off in my brain turned on again. And the malicious player came to claim victory. I felt like I was hitting rock bottom. I thought I was downgrading myself working here, but I couldn't even do this job justly. I blamed myself for causing such an experience for all of us. His victory laugh lasted the whole day. The busy colleagues in the kitchen heard the shouting. They asked me if something was wrong. I lied to them.

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I could never reverse this mistake. I couldn't forgive myself for what I did the next morning. And some parts of me believed I deserved to be found by the malicious finder. I chose to be. But I could brainwash myself. I did not care. This low-ranking job was beneath me. I still have my studies at the university. This was my main task. Today was the first day of this semester. I traveled an hour to the university. After taking the school bus, I arrived at my first classroom.

But just as I was about to open the lecture door, something sudden was happening to my body. My vision blacked out. I couldn't see anything. And subsequently, I couldn't even breathe normally. I tried to rush to the restroom that I knew was just next to the lecture hall. I came inside the room. And I collapsed on the floor, my head lying on the toilet. But I wasn't unconscious. Just somehow, I couldn't physically function. It was a panic attack.

I knew the malicious seeker had caught me. And memories and thoughts started to collide and eclipse each other.

My mother ran like a mouse hiding in the toilet from the predator. My father chased her from the living room to the toilet. He grabbed the spittoon on the floor with my baby's piss inside and, with all his might, splashed those piss on my mother. I was three. And at that very instant, I knew the seeker from the game had gotten to me, nearly. But I switched it off again somehow. My body was filled with fire and energy. I was so clear on what I needed to do. I raised the red chair next to me and with all my strength, I struck it as hard as I could on my father's back. He only moved a bit. Looking back at me, he was stunned. He never thought I would have such a reaction in the three years of

existence in this house. My mother yelled, “Ka Mei!”, referring to my sister. In mere seconds, my eldest sister and my second sister immediately grabbed me by my arm and rushed me inside our bedroom, and locked the door. My brother held onto the door just in case. I was struggling to get out. I wanted to kill him. I really did. I wanted to tear him apart into million pieces for all the things he inflicted on us for no reason. I yelled, and too hard I yelled that I could no longer make any sound. He hurt my mother. And he was my father...And now I stood there and did nothing. The four of us held onto together, discombobulated, and tears shed all over the cold hard stone. But those tears meant nothing at all to the stone floor. There was no door afterwards. My father took doors off hinges, all so we couldn't be able to hide.

Another past memory also involved a man. He was...a friend? A brother? A potential lover? He was the opposite of what my father was and represented. But somehow, “you deserve goodness. Just maybe not from me.” He wanted me to live a full and happy life, without him.

When the memories from the past did not involve men, they became hypothetical future possibilities.

How could the billions of dead lives succeed it? The 31,556,926 seconds in a year one has to bear since birth, 52,594,800 minutes in a century of a lifetime that one has to face, the never-ending cycle of success and failure.

My future was looming; my path was undecided. And up until now, I had no dreams, no paths, no one. My future is doomed.

And now I was laying on a bed. It has a window, which could see airplanes come and go in the sky. I would wonder about the probability of a sudden airplane crashing directly into my house.

Then, I became the first one to line up in front of the University station—the first one. I was reminded of the incident where once a random person was pushed by a complete stranger behind and fell into the train trail, instantly decimated. I felt broken bones before it even happened.

The seeker that found me was here, in disguise, and his name was Anxiety.

It's all about this game, wasn't it? Chasing me from first to finish. And he won every time. In all of these memories, there was only this one time, that I had somehow switched off the brain from the game away from the seeker, the one that my mother was abused.

I puked in the toilet now. Those ugly monsters of things from the past reacted to me and combined my source of living with dreadful memories. But it didn't allow me to see them. My vision was still blacked out. I had to feel it. I believe it was the ultimate form of being found by the malicious seeker.

When that was over, I tried once again. I entered the classroom late and all eyes landed on me as I opened the door. I screened through the different statuses of eyes. Some eyes opened wide and serious, some retreated with tension, and some blinked with casual indifference. Every different status of eyes, to my thought, was representative of judgment of all sorts. Inside these eyes were connected with thoughts, opinions, ridicule, and detestation. I could not refrain from these, but I was stuck, I was trembling, and my stomach was aching. Landed on one seat, and my physical discomfort was traded for sweat. I looked at the front side of the classroom, but my eyes were not and could not focus on the lecture. I took no control of my body which gradually translated into non-existence and absence in the physical realm of reality.

I received an email that suddenly caught my attention. My grades. Just like the blunder I made in the burger shop, was unworthy of mentioning.

A flashback of a voice, of a man. "Your future is no more."

The body was there. But inside the façade of a young healthy outer appearance, it was all empty from the inside. I wasn't trying to play hide and seek anymore. But why did the seeker keep trying to catch me surprised? There's only one way: either I took the initiative to become the seeker to find the good feeling myself, or I became one being found by the malicious seeker.

I wanted you, the "feeling". But you slipped away, like everything.

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The next day, I continued working in the burger shop. They still moved you into the kitchen, and everything changed after. Inside the kitchen, you are assigned to your specific position of the day. There are three main sectors: the frying division, responsible for frying everything and grilling the patties, the "setter" who fixes thousands of buns each day, and the "control" who organizes and packs everything in order. The first day I worked in the kitchen, I noticed something. I was assigned to fry. And when I was in position, the position was in my hands alone. The fryer and the grill were mine to manage, and the realm of frying was in my possession.

I started to scour through the fridge to find the chicken and chips. When I picked up the bag of chips, someone yelled. “Three bigs, two smalls,” the other part-time in the “control” position said. Surely, I understand he meant three large fries and two small fries. But there is a translation of power in his voice. He was giving me orders because I worked for him. I replied, “got it!” and the procedure went on smoothly. When I turned around and looked at other crew members in different positions, there was this line of power. It started from my position and ascended to beverage, and then the bun-maker, and lastly ended in convergent on the “control organizer”. We were organized. And as part of the organization, we weren’t truly ourselves. We were to serve and produce. Even though I knew I was downgrading myself in this low-ranking job, and now became the bottom feeder in their line of power, what I focused on was how and why the malicious seeker didn’t try to catch me there. What’s more, for just a brief moment as I answered the boss “got it” with strength and vigor, I felt I was getting closer to what I had been finding, that feeling and all.

It became the billboard as I climbed from one position to another. Nowadays, I was dead set on the position of the setter. I fixed my buns as quickly as humanly possible because any delay would mean the upper level in the line of power had to wait for me. For some reason, I despised that feeling. I was degrading myself. I had been working for two years, and lagging behind meant disgrace to my entire working profile. An invisible competition that I knew I could still win, that the malicious seeker would not find me here. But instead, the one I was finding in the game was here, briefly and almost invisible, in disguise, and his name was Pride.

I started to think as much as I dreaded the idea of being caught by the malicious seeker, I desired to continue this game of hide-and-seek, as a finder searching for the “good feeling”. I had to find it before the seeker found me. Winner took all.

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But I had another commitment in my life. Working at the burger shop was only a part-time job for a taste of the real world. But I was also a full-time student. When you entered university, all assignments and tasks were graded, and they made up the GPA that defined you. I juggled my work at the shop with my studies. But neither of them seemed to be able to find what I had been finding in the game. I had no idea what I was hoping to look for.

I went back home from work and was prepared to do an assignment. But as I was walking home, I thought someone had already found me. I couldn’t hide this time. I tried to hurry back home and hide. But they were coming so fast they were bound to have touched me. When I entered the train station, I submitted. They caught me yet again.

A pressing in my heart that resembled much of death. The finder of malicious intents again. I took the initiative to shake it off. I started to find something else. I found Vodka. The increasing hyperactivity was promising at first, but it did not last. I knew it was a fool's errand.

Still, I drank a bottle of it. When it entered the bloodstream, it held my hand, moved my body, and controlled one's being. Spring in the step, one plugged the earphone and the Vodka guided me back into reality as an imposter casually treading on the street like everyone else. The day surely did not click with me. So I stopped. I had to find something to recalibrate.

Finding.....searching.....looking.....thinking.....ultimately it was all just tinkering and licking.....

All I did, was to write ugly stuff and unpleasant messages. I was supposed to be doing creative pieces of writing. But the academic result and bad grades told me it was all a futile attempt. Everyone experienced trauma and their own stories of tragedy. It so happened I did not have the strength to endure any of it. I was trashy.

The seeker that once again found me was here, in disguise, and this time his name was Depression.

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Monday's work was always the most tedious to bear. I was sober when I woke up. Eleven hours in counting. I punched in just in time not to miss the showdown. The swarm of customers was flooding our floors with bellies to be fed. Inside the kitchen, I was assigned as the setter of the burgers. The orders were literally oozing from the machine to the floor. None of us was panicking. Instead, speed was the only thing we were concerned about right now. I had this idea that I wasn't myself. I was this burger-making machine defaulted to be unrested, with no concept of physical tiredness. In some ways, I kind of love this feeling of absence. When you are concerned only about the task at hand, you have no desire to ponder over the trivial meaninglessness of the task itself. But I did pay attention to something else. As the burger-making machine, I was so fast. It was perhaps the fastest movement, reaction, and manoeuvre I had ever performed. There were so many unexpected incidents that would happen when you were making burgers. The orders might be messed up. And some of the customer's requests could be confusing. And your stock on the table must be refilled before many more orders came in. All of that requires improvisation and fast thinking. I knew exactly what to do first so that the next thing I did would not hold back the so many more things to come in a broader picture.

Because of this, time teleported again to lunch hour, three o'clock in the afternoon, where I found myself served a feast across the street. After making the order, I sat near the kitchen and waited for them to serve me drinks. When I gazed into their restaurant kitchen, their hands were perpetually latching onto something with operating purpose. It was, by default, a reflection of my work and my colleagues. Just like them, we were professionals. And professionals did not think too much. They thought only of the most imminent problems that could arise within the task at hand. I was wrong. I did not downgrade myself. They were never lesser than anyone of us in society.

But sitting down here and then, it dawned on me that today was just another normal Monday. And the week didn't end until this Saturday for me as a student, Sunday for some people, typically high-ranking jobs. But for them, it was none of the above. There were times when full-timers had to work seven days a week because part-timers like myself weren't able to fill in. I had this feeling that meals for them weren't so much an experience of enjoyment as simply an energy refill. But instead, three o'clock was the first meal of our day, and there would be no more breaks until off work at eleven.

After 30 minutes of fast input, I returned to the restaurant. My gaze on the manager was too immersed that I almost ignored the man next to him. He wore a white suit that was tugged under his pants, an uncanny rip-off to those white collars. When he left, the unyielding sense of authority haunted us, even my manager. I stared at my manager who hadn't shoved anything inside his stomach yet.

I asked my manager what was going on with that man. He said he was an examiner from the company. My manager was having an examination, the third time he had in the year, for the promotion to official shop manager. The first two times he failed. This was his chance at redemption. We went on talking about the hierarchical system of the company, which was the only topic we were all interested in as if whatever mystery we uncovered could counter the unwelcomed descending of the white-collar rip-off. When we were chatting, most of us seemed to have shifted from the focusing mechanism of work to a mode of gossip. Although our hands were full and busy, we cared nothing about the things we were actually doing, when there was a topic as captivating as it was; maybe a form of escapism in rejection of the cage we had been confined in. But my manager made no such changes. He was still mechanical while talking to us. His voice had an absence when he muttered, "As long as I become a shop manager, I am satisfied. No need to go up." Inside my little brain, I had some following up questions but decided not to bring them up. I often asked him if being the shop manager was all he wanted out of his life. He would gloss over with tongue-in-cheek remarks that dismissed the gravity of life. How could he be so easily satisfied? Everyone was in on the life game of hide-and-seek. Wouldn't he be scared of getting caught by the malicious seeker with whatever forms he

pretended, say shame and disgrace? Wouldn't he want to be more and more, more significant in comparison to so many others who had seemingly conquered life? However it was, inside my manager's eyes, it was missing something. I simply couldn't put justly what it was.

After the lunch breaks, we had to restock. I looked at the boxes. I noticed that they were the ingredients of the burger. Fresh wagyu beef from Australia. The beef was manufactured from a chain of the commercial process. But for the beef, it was a cow that was slaughtered at its most vulnerable during the process. Inside the hierarchy of the food chain, they were just a means. This was the way of civilization. A sacrifice for a means to an end. And the end was humanity's lust for proteins. I doubt the cow had found its form of "Happiness" in the game of hide and seek. Or had it? I had no idea.

But even when I knew it was an innocent cow who had been slaughtered, did he still exist? Death is the end of free will, or so I had been told. But looking at the burger itself. From the top bun to the cheese and burger meat, and to the greenish vegetable, they were so beautiful. I did that. The cow was dead, the vegetable was removed from its root, and all of that was true. They were technically dead. But I couldn't help but appreciate what their death of them had become. A burger that only I held in my hand, piling them into perfection. I served them to my dine-in customer. When I looked at the perfect burger being swallowed into shreds of nothingness, the beautiful nature was gone. Such a waste. What was the point of all these? Eaten burgers digested by the consumers left their bodies as wastes. And for us workers in the shop, we were also used as a means to make a profit, weren't we? Anyway, I still have to restock them and did exactly what I was told.

After a while, a customer came to us, and said, "that was a really delicious burger I've had, I am so satisfied, and it made my day, thanks for all your hard work."

I was stunned by these statements. The death of every ingredient became the happiness of the consumer. And is the waste still a waste?

When the work slowed down, my colleagues were chit-chatting. They were talking about hiking. One of them said since he couldn't find a toilet, he urinated in the flowers and plants. They all laughed. I pretended to laugh with them. But I was actually enlightened. Urination in nature was a way to give nutrients to the woods to grow and ignite. I learnt that from biology class. And if so, by extension, the waste from the burger consumers was meant to return back to nature. They will degenerate, decomposed, and the molecules will always be part of nature in their own ways. Nothing went away into the nothingness of nothing. They are always a part of this world. They are part of the game. These animals had been hunting and being hunted since the beginning of time. As predators and preys, they played the same game of hide-and-seek. Survival of the fittest. In the growing

civilisation of the humanity, even the fiercest of animals failed in the hands of humans. They were all hunted for food, caught by malicious humans. But that seemed to be the way of things. Even for the malicious humans, there were another side of the story. Just as the cow were slaughtered and boxed inside this stock, so too my manager and us confined in our cage of mechanism. We were incarcerated in the malicious construct of civilisation. We were captives in our routine, tedious work that no matter how high we climbed, the malicious seeker would always find a way to pull us back down. And we fell, in death, physical or mental.

Maybe, everything, everyone, is ultimately, the same, sharing the same solid fate.

Then how come there was beauty in the burger I made? And why was the customer sincerely enjoyed it so much?

Hide-and-seek; Give and take. A flip of perspective. And I thought, perhaps, even for the hiders who shared the fatal truth of being hunted by the malicious finder, there were also another side of the story. When the animal was killed, they were traded in for something in return. They themselves found their hiders instead of the seeker, in disguise, from something I had not yet felt or known—called Peace.

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My mother stayed with my father, even for all the things he did to her and us. I always wondered why. But this was not a question that I should be asking. It was her decision, her strength. The strength she found to forgive, was not exclusive to my father, but also to herself. Even when the malicious finder found her, she did not hide away. She submitted and admitted defeat. But that was not the end. It was not the end of everything or anything. It was the start of a new embrace of who she wanted to be in the present. “life does not compose of tragedy; tragedy only comes when you feel like there is. The seeker never found you. It is you who let him find you. It’s your choice.”

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I didn’t have to work today. So I indulged myself, or rather idle myself. But thinking of that excessive alcohol in my system, I threw every bottle of alcohol into bins. I used to want to change. But in nothing flat, I had to, just had to...picked up one bottle. Staring at it, the urge of taking a sip was happiness to me. I opened it and just drank it without a cup. It was a familiar and warm touch I could not deny.

I drank every day, in the morning and at night.

I hated this habit deep down. But I had no discipline.

I texted Karen, my colleague, and friend, and she said, “It doesn’t matter!”

“Why?” I wondered.

“Because that’s what you need right now. There’s no wrong in doing what is helpful in the short term, even though it is seen as harmful long term. But just don’t let it drown you in the nothingness that you fear for so many years. And when you are ready, you can finally get rid of this anchor. I believe you could make the right decision for yourself. And in any case, I am still here.”

She is here? For an alcoholic who had done nothing but hated himself thoroughly, who did not at all love himself?

But I could not deny it as well. It was this line that she casually produced, that reverberated in my heart—a feeling of Embrace and Acceptance.

Did I just find the “feeling”, in disguise?

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Today was a big day. Although I worked full-time yesterday, today was the day. This was the interview assessment that defined where I stood in the future. I knew it was just to prepare us for future job interviews. But it meant to me like it was like life and death, a projection into the future.

I drank some Vodka before going to school. When I greeted my tutors, I smiled. Something, again, switched off my brain from the game. I wasn’t my original self. I was positive throughout, in disguise, though not without the obvious anxiety I exhibited. I paced myself and became talkative and enthusiastic.

The very second my tutor said, “that wrapped up the interview”, I had an influx of strange feelings, something I hadn’t experienced for a long soulless time.

I walked towards the school bus stop. And something had changed. There were no more games. Looking into our campus, it felt like a new sanctuary. And I was surely I was touched. Not by the malicious finder. But by something that I was finding in the game yet again, in disguise, and I believed it’s called Peace and Tranquillity.

This feeling was real. And I could feel my steps moving by myself but not something else, definitely not by Vodka, and definitely not by thoughts. It was now. Everything looked exceptionally brighter and bigger now, in a way, it was as if I had been wearing sunglasses that shrouded my sight. The breezy wind calmed my already stressed-out experience. My wait at the bus stop was patient; it took time. And I had it all now. It was the only moment I blended with the physical realm of existence. I became the world.

That said, it was delusional to think this was the end and resolution of everything.

The feeling of peace lasted no more than an hour.

It did not suffice, for sure.

But just like everything in the law of the world itself, it was not a TV drama of the happily-ever-after story, but a continual hiding and seeking. And what I've been seeking was called Happiness. Sometimes I found him, other times, you endured and waited for it to touch you for just a brief moment. It comes and goes, just like the malicious seeker did. And that might have been just enough. All you have to do, when something unpleasant comes, is to switch it off.

I finally know what switched off my brain immediately after I did the customer service debacle. Switching off was definitely possible. But there was always a pattern. The only times I was able to do that, was when something happened to another person. My Mother, the customer, my burgers. All the times that I failed at switching off were the ones involving only my innate self.

In those moments, I wasn't myself. My body took over. It was not my mind that was in control now.

The body took over and tried to save my mother; the body took over and try to redeem himself from the customer; the body took over to make the perfect burgers; the body took over and try to pretend to be the best in the interview.

I wondered if this was where my mother found the strength to fight off the malicious seeker. Looking at the imminent threat from my father, my mother found the strength to protect her children, so she switched off her mind and the malicious seeker instantly vanished.

Our family has the strength to switch that brain off, and when we do, we found that feeling. Or rather, it came for us.

Sometimes there's only so much strength in oneself, you have to borrow it from others. Helping others, saving others. The strength that came from others became yours. When you do, the malicious player that took so many forms, such as anger, sadness, depression, anxiety, and worries, will be gone.

That is how to fight off the malicious seeker, not by hiding, but by walking right through it.

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And finding the “feeling”? When I thought I had stopped being the seeker, I was wrong. I had always been there to find him. But I was so overwhelmed by the malicious seeker that I hid away every time. Where was it then? Why did it always slip away in mere seconds when I wanted it to last forever?

I looked through my phone and found the feedback of my interview. It wasn't good, and supposed to be a disappointment. But somehow, I did not allow the grade to dismiss what I had experienced after the interview. The feeling of peace and sobriety.

The feeling I sought to find came in different names and forms. They are trivial matters that we did not notice happening in the present, because we treated those for granted. It was what I had been looking for in childhood games. The strange, beautiful light reflected on the metal stand. The elegance in its simplicity was just enough. And the bus stop I waited patiently after the interview, was there always. It had been waiting for you to see, witness, appreciate and embrace. Vodka was there with me, and although it had been conventionally seen as detrimental and vile, Karen still loved me when I needed it. The feelings, in disguise—Peace, Tranquillity, Love, Embrace and Acceptance , were there to be found in simple matters.

I am always in this playground playing hide and seek. I kept looking, hoping.

But what I didn't know was, I did not need to find him. He came to me when he was ready. He came to you when you needed him. The only need for you is to make sure you know you could recognize his touch. He never hides. It was I who had been hiding all these times.

He is everywhere. But he is not omnipresent, not a god. He has somewhere else to be sometimes. But he never forgets you. And when he is not around, you just have to wait, although something else malicious would also find you. They could find you because you didn't have a choice. You are the hider, not the chaser. You did not wish to be caught, but you are meant to be found in this

game. And ultimately, you would not find him if you were to indulge yourself into the bad grades and blunders every one of us on earth had been making in every second of the world.

Hide-and-seek; hiding from sadness, and seeking happiness.

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I was not a mommy boy. She had put too much energy into my three elder siblings which exhausted her. When she asked me to play the game of hide and seek, I believed she knew I would be okay on my own. But I played way too much of this game. When she did give me attention, I rejected it. It felt strange and unusual. I had not done everything on my own though. But every time, I hid away. I hated giving her disappointment and sadness that she already had an influx of them through her marriage and childhood. I often wondered how she had managed to thrive in the game of hide and seek all these years. She survived all these times, unimaginably, with four children in her arms. She cleared it off and relinquished the game with an expression, so unwavering and determined, yet teemed with kindness and innocence. Her maturity was fresh and original. Her wisdom guided her through the back-breaking challenges from her insignificant village life to her shattered marriage.

But she had played this game all alone before, so now I have to play it on my own as well.

I would never say those three words in front of her, ever. But please forgive me I have to do this all by myself. I have struck a deal with happiness to find him one day. And when I did, I would introduce him to you, if you care to know what he looks like. And I wish when I do, you are still here to witness.

Now, I think I have some clues on how to find him.

With a thought, I started humming, "Climb up over the top, survey the state of the soul...You've got to find out for yourself, whether or not you're truly trying....Why not give it a shot? Shake it, take control, and inevitably wind up...finding for yourself....all the strengths that you have inside of you..."

Brave yet sacred, he is a baby. He has the power to switch it off, by himself with his gumption. He can be strong and significant. A being of unknown creation. A miracle of natural peace. Born in Hong Kong, on 26th February 2001.