

Humiliation in teenage life - from all angles

He could have been here today!

Unlike all other 'teenage couples', Sidney and I could not afford to hold hands, hug, go out to movies and all the like. Ours was inhibited, inhibited by our contrast in family backgrounds that only came to light when it was too late. Sidney came from a very rich family and I came from a 'striving family', not striving to reach up to his status, but comfortable in my family's modest village life. With our restricted teenage love affair, we both knew it might never be, yet our hearts knew better in that there was something inside so strong. The country mice and the town mice hardly see eye to eye, which helped our little secret flourish. Both our parents were never to find out. As for our classmates, we knew better not to make any tying expressions, "we just enjoyed each other's company".

When we were done with our "O" levels, we had a chat at the leavers' party. Sid had a forlorn look as he said, "If I don't get a straight "A" like my dad, you'll never see me again." And I said jokingly, "Is that what your dad required of your mom in their days?" To which he replied, "You just don't know the beast in my dad, when we got our mock results, he was home for tea for this once, just to see my results. I was lucky, that A saved my life." And we continued with the party.

When Kathy (another one from Sidney's social society) phoned a few weeks later, I thought it was all about her "O" level results. Those in that society larder had a way of getting results well in advance before they were announced nationally. She said, "Just as well you didn't commit yourself to Sid, Laura, have a look at today's paper' and she hang up. Our newspaper was not delivered at the gate; I had to wait till dad came back in the evening. Being the office messenger, he would inherit the office paper at the end of the day. That wait was long enough; news headlines for the day were: "O level results out". Disregarding my own results, I hoped that my secret Sidney had made it as top student countrywide! But he was not on the front page, rather, in the orbit to heaven. I found the most handsome man in my life's picture in the obituary pages. Sidney had succumbed to kidney complications. Thoughts run in my mind; I could have donated both my kidneys to him, the least he could have done is to have sent the usual love note through his butler – my fellow villager – just to say he was unwell. No, sorry my Sid, may be you were too ill to write. May be for that week that you never sent a note you were badly off in hospital. Despite our empty dream future, life would never be the same again for me. This I knew very well.

And I made it to the funeral, and the eulogy was sad. The priest observed that kidney transplants were readily available but it could have been too late for this particular young lad. And I met Sidney's parents, this time not with jelly feet as a possible future daughter-in-law, but in my dignity as a villager. Death knows no class; and we wept together and they said that on his death bed, Sid had wished me well and thanked me for all my love.

That evening my private postman the butler knocked and delivered the very last note, only this timea note from the dead:

"The love of my life Laura, I don't know where I am going to, but I am taking with me those lovely memories of our secret love affair. I will tell them all about it (who? angels? fairies? great-grandma?) I don't know, but you just know that I loved you beyond words and I know that you loved me twice as much. You must go on without me and have a normal love life and I will be one bright star up yonder, lighting up your path for you. The only days I loved you more, were those ending in 'y'. Please be proud of me." Signed on the day Sid died but received on his burial date as the butler had to be on night duty throughout the mourning period.

But the note handed over to the police by Sidney's mother, just before she took her own life a month on, read like this:

"Darling Mom, I am sorry to do this to you but you will understand. Tell my Laura I always loved her and I know that she loved me enough as my only pillar in a troubled sea. I know it will be hard, but you must go on without me. You both loved me best, but I have failed dad and I could never face him with this A-.

Sidney fell short of his father's expectation by attaining a minus sign after the A, such a heinous crime! Rather than face his father's renowned wrath, he took his own life, thus saving himself and his father that hideous humiliation.

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