

My 50th birthday

by Gyanban

The last few hours of my 49th year of existence were quite exciting. Let me take you through the beginning of the day till the end.

At the stroke of 6 in the morning, my wife of 25 years woke me up with a gentle kiss on my cheek. A far cry from the heady 30's when waking up in the morning meant making love till we fell asleep again. Nevertheless, man learns to deal with situations in life over time, and I guess mine was going to be no different.

The breakfast table was as usual crowded with brown bread toasts, orange juice, fruits and some muesli. Quite different from the dutiful 40's when our kids were screaming their way to grow up. My daughter first let me know of her new found love. I didn't know whether to feel happy for the trust she had in me or sad to know of her ignorance of my predicament.

I reached office on time, sharp at 9. Well-creased shirt, gelled hair or whatever that was left on my head. The tie knot was just perfect and shoes were shining bright even though I had not polished it two days in a row. Unlike my good old struggling days where a white collar was a luxury and a shoe polish was a necessary ritual every single day.

Lunch at work was over colleagues and customers talking business. Or as they say a working lunch. We got the deal. High fives

and white wine testified the success. The excitement was short-lived, for no reason at all. Somehow Old Monk and Thumbs Up bore greater relevance to the fax of a signed purchase order. Big deal indeed.

Back at office late afternoon, one of my directs came into the office. He wanted to talk about his promotion. Long over due or so he thought. I gave him his promotion to his shock and disbelief. I had already worked at approvals a few weeks back. The look on his face was perhaps a Kodak moment. Every instance of me not getting promoted flashed before my eyes. After all 2 years in the company was a long time indeed or so I thought at the time.

A customary phone call from home. What are you doing she says? Playing football I retort — what else. The usual sigh and a faint giggle followed. Much unlike how it backfired back in the late 20's and we were going to make it the reason to break up! The passion in belief that we had about us leading different lives there on was quite unbelievable. Turns out rightly so after 25 years of marriage.

At about 5PM I was thinking of wrapping up work when my son called and announced he had cracked the best job in the world. I took it literally and checked if he'd got fired. He hung up the phone. This was perhaps a better reaction than my father-asking Ma to switch off the microwave oven 30feet away, when I shared the biggest success of my juvenile life. After all electricity bills were always important.

7PM and I am still stuck in traffic. I see the big 5 star hotel by the road side and I think to myself what wonderful buffet layout they have, although the dessert selection could have been better. Maybe the kebabs as well. I know they were much better 15 years ago at KFC — Kerla Fried Chicken stall. A dimly lit lantern, awesome recycled oil, and what a beautifully charred frying pan. They just added to the taste so much. Miss you Gerogeanna.

Got home just in time before my wife re-dialed my number. I scored. The wash and change was just as refreshing as it was yesterday. A stark difference from the shout I gave the landlord to switch on the pump. But that was 30 years ago. Food was neatly laid on the dining table, some light lounge music played in the background. I wish I could gift this CD to Bhallaji, who played loud Bollywood numbers late in the night jarring from his two-in-one. Oh wait. It would have to be a cassette not a CD.

Finally it's time for bed. The hospital bed. A little different bed than my bedroom. A lot different from the one room set we moved into after our marriage. A mattress is all we had to sleep on.

It's 11.45PM now, unlike yesterday's 11.45PM when my family was alive and had not met with an accident. But that changed at the stroke of 12 en-route to our home from a concert. None of them survived. I couldn't make it too...

It's 12.00AM. Happy birthday.

