

A man's Sacrifice for Unity

Ashraf slumped into his office chair and turned on the news channel. He stared at the footage being played repeatedly on the screen. 'Where did we go wrong', his heart sinking as he sink further into his chair. His eyes wandered around the room looking for answers that continued to elude him for many months.

'As the nation's prime minister now, you must remember that every word and action of yours will impact the country's future. Anybody can be a politician but what the country needs is a statesman', lectured Papa Tan on the morning of Day 1 Ashraf started to helm the government after the country's 15th general elections.

'Yes papa.' Ashraf answered as he hurried out to meet the media personnel who have had gathered to broadcast the formation of the new government and the nation's youngest prime minister. Papa Tan gazed at his fast disappearing son, with a mixture of pride and worry as his memories of the past continues to haunt his vision of future for the country he loved.

'Missing papa, sir', a voice startled Ashraf, drawing him back to the present. 'Oh Krishna! I didn't hear you knock', said Ashraf as he sheepishly looked at his younger brother who is also his political advisor.

Krishna and Ashraf were adopted after their parents were killed in the May 13 riot. Papa Tan had by then lost his wife and only son during the riot. He had then found the two wailing infants by the bloodied corpses of their parents.

'If papa was alive, he would know what to do' Ashraf muttered sorrowfully.

'Along, papa was also confident of your capabilities and so should you, remember what he always used to say?'

'Only in darkest nights the.....?'

'Stars will shine brightly'. Ashraf muttered under his breath, finishing papa's favorite quote whenever his sons asked for his advice on their challenges.

The country is now once again being haunted by the nightmares of May 13 with the shadows of racism clouding the minds of the people. Mosques, temples and churches have been vandalized under the guise of patriotism by its misguided citizens claiming superiority over the others. People are fast forgetting all

are ultimately siblings who are bound by the same country who had nurtured many generations over the years.

‘Come Along, let’s have dinner together.’

‘If only food can be used as a tool to unite us all.....the war could be won easily’. Ashraf mumbled as he made his way to the table.

As he and Krishna were enjoying their meal, a sudden loud buzz jolted them. Krishna’s gaze lingered on the screen of his mobile phone, almost mindlessly. Ashraf poked his head out to see the caller.

‘Krishna...! Your phone...’ Ashraf tapped Krishna’s arm while pointing to the phone startling Krishna.

‘Oh yes..... Excuse me Along.’ Krishna said as he hurried out to answer the call.

‘Who was it Krishna.?’ Ashraf asked half-heartedly when Krishna returned.

‘Well, it was just an old friend asking for some favours’ replied Krishna with an equally half-hearted smile.

‘Well, pray that whatever favours he is asking would also help to solve our country’s problem’. Ashraf quipped as he headed to his car.

‘Don’t worry Along, tomorrow will be a new day’, Krishna muttered under his breath as he watched Ashraf’s figure disappears slowly from his sight.

Ashraf sat frozen at the foot of his bed with his hand still grasping his mobile phone.

‘Sir...? Hello sir...?’, an equally panicky voice echoed from the phone speakers.

‘Schedule an emergency meeting with the ministers at my office. Call for a press meet immediately as it concerns our national security’, Ashraf ordered his secretary, Wan.

‘How could you...? I trusted you...’ Ashraf uttered in disbelief as he got ready to deal with a new security threat to the country. A threat masterminded by none other than his own brother..... Krishna.

The news of a hard drive containing the country’s military secrets being stolen swept the nation. Every Malaysian of all ethnicity and religion, came together to nab the traitor. Every man on the street took it as their responsibility to look out for Krishna. It wasn’t long after, Krishna was caught hiding in Perhentian Islands. He was soon charged under the Espionage Act of 1996 and sentenced to life imprisonment. Malaysian rejoiced, and the racial storms faded away.

However, Ashraf who knew Krishna better than anyone else, is still unable to believe that his beloved younger brother had betrayed the country. He was just as patriotic as Papa Tan and would have joined the army if not for his poor vision.

‘Why Krishna?’, Ashraf groaned while peering through the jail glass shield separating them.

‘I only did what was best for the nation Along’ replied Krishna with a calm and soothing voice.

‘I don’t understand’. Ashraf’s voice breaking up unable to contain his overwhelming emotions watching his beloved younger brother behind the bars convicted as a traitor.

Krishna sighed and gazed at his brother forlornly, ‘You also seem to have not known me after all...’

‘People were filled with hatred and killing each other in the name of racial and religion supremacy. The only way I could think to stop this fast was to unite them by creating a common enemy. As we saw Along, when nation was under threat, everyone came together. The dark past is now long gone. The future is now bright, and everything happened as I expected. I couldn’t watch you lose Along; Malaysia deserves you as the Prime Minister and this was the most I could do as a citizen.’ As Krishna narrated the story, tears welled up in Ashraf’s eyes.

‘He is a true statesman’, thought Ashraf to himself as he walked away. His brother sacrificed his future for him and the well-being of the nation when he was feeling most helpless.

Krishna’s tears fell remembering papa’s last words “ Other than sports only catastrophe can form national unity”.