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The Kindled Tales {1.Interview} – Karoor Soman || Translated by Sachin John Thomas

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1.Interview

Central London was shining bright as ever on that blissful morning, a touch of breeze held the place. Dr. Benny stood at the bus stop waiting for the bus to Romford. He could see a flock of birds flying over his head, and thought to himself if they were flying away in pity of him. He wondered if even those birds could sense his unemployment from a distance. He stood lost in thought. As he looked on with a sense of uneasiness, a two floored bright coloured bus came around, and he jumped on. He had seen a lot of things in this country which had managed to shock him, yet the one thing that he couldn't wrap his head around, was how the interviews were conducted. He couldn't get over the fact that his doctorate in English literature was merely glanced over by the interviewers. He realised soon enough that Indian certificates were pretty much worthless in that country. Not only were these people rich in monetary resources, but they could also back that up with education. If it was India, the good old bribing mechanism would have gotten the job done but it was not that easy here. He got off at Manor Park and walked towards his house at Eastham.

It's been seven months since Dr. Benny has come from India, and in that time, he's been to 4 or 5 interviews. The only thing that keeps him going is his wife's supportive words which keep repeating itself time and time again in his head. On several occasions, he has felt that interviews were nothing but an act. But even then, he still found comfort in the little things like the sweet words and the coffee offered, which always seemed to boost his self-confidence. Then when the interview gets over, there's this period of anticipation, filled with hope, but it all comes down crashing when the letter arrives wishing for better luck in the future.

If he was in India, then he could've hired some people by paying them money and a few drinks, to cause a riot against the system, and if that didn't give the desired result, there was always the good old fashioned bribing mechanism. But none of that was going to work here. Here they have steel bars to make people stick to the right paths. Benny feels that all his dreams were vanishing in thin air.

Even during times when things got rough, never before has his dreams ever taken a beating, but this time, it was different. The more and more he tried to hold on to them, the faster it was running away from him.

What really Kick-started his dream of securing achievements in the field of medicine was the big advertisement he got from Beena's parents, when they arranged to marry Beena to Dr. Benny.

"It was as if I had reached the land of the fairies, but every time I tried to enjoy the beauty of London, what always seemed to hold me back was the burden I felt for not finding a job. Hospitals were lacking in job opportunities, and doctors who came here paid hefty amounts to fund their education, and now to even make ends meet, they have to take whatever job they could find even if it meant working in factories or shops".

Benny tried to get a job somewhere using his knowledge in computers. He excelled at the exams, although when it came to the vigorous questions, he struggled to hold his own.

"How long have you been working in London?"

"What kinds of jobs can you do?"

"Can you get a 5-year personality certificate from the place you work at?"

"Are there any records proving you studied in this country?"

Do you have any proof to prove that you don't have any criminal records?"

When faced with these kinds of questions, Benny couldn't find an answer. The ethnic whites fill all their job positions with people from the inside. They look at anyone from the outside as the enemy. They advertise that they are hiring, to hold their honour among other countries but when somebody- especially an Indian, takes bait and approaches, these whites seem disinterested. Benny feels it is almost like a prison, the whites sitting in their horseback and people who came looking for jobs are nothing but donkeys who carry stuff around without complaining.

Benny suddenly came out of his thoughts when the bus stopped, and he started looking around, and saw that to his next seat was sitting two Indians who may have been born here in England, and Benny overheard that they were talking about the Bollywood actress who had come from India and was racially abused.

Benny got off the bus at his stop and reached home. He pressed the doorbell, and a few seconds later, his wife Beena opened the door with a big smile on her face. Seeing his wife's smiling face really calmed him down. His wife has always supported him, and her love towards Malayalam language even though she was born in England, always made him feel like his motherland hadn't completely forgotten about him. She asked him as to why he got so late. Benny made a joke that it wasn't his fault that it gets dark in this country at 4. Beena reacted to that with a sarcastic comment that it wasn't at all his fault but the fault of the one who created darkness.

"What do you want to drink?"

"

How do you feel?"- Beena asked. Benny sarcastically pointed out that he got coffee and biscuits from the interview. Benny had some tension in his face, and he couldn't help but ask Beena if it bothered her that he was going to all these interviews and coming back empty-handed. She casually replied that it didn't bother her at the slightest, and that she herself had attended a lot of interviews and it did her nothing but good as she got to visit a lot of places.

"Yes, nice trip and all, but you don't know how boring it was for me" -Benny complained. Beena instantly reassured him to not be upset and that she will always be there to ease off his boringness. Then she told him to take a bath and come eat something. Benny, like an obedient child obliged and went off upstairs to bath. Beena knew Benny all too well to know that his heart was aching, and she remembers telling him that he should go on his job search after them having a kid, but his dream of getting a job was too engraved on that he couldn't wait any longer. Beena feels hard-done as her dream of becoming a mother was put on hold.

After the bath, Benny felt a surge of energy flowing through him. He understood that all he needed to succeed in life was courage and self- belief. He felt that any type of jobs commands a certain kind of respect of its own in this country. Benny decided that he was going to take any job he could find and let go of the assumption in his head that he would be seen as inferior for taking a job that's below his educational qualifications. Snow was falling outside, and Benny felt like he just got the Re-start that he desperately needed and nothing was going to stop him now.

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