



Da

by **Arathi Menon**

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I have never called her 'Mama' loudly. The word only floats around my head. Over the years, it has become big. It is almost living in me, like another bone or an organ. In my mind she doesn't feel like a ghost or someone dead. She feels like Mama.

My room is a bit kiddish but I love it. Da designed it for me when I was three and hasn't bothered remodelling it. Alok says Da hasn't realised I'm not 6 anymore.

A model Roussel R-30 hangs from the ceiling. It's a French fighter-bomber made in the 1930s. It is the most beautiful plane Da has ever seen. He got a carpenter friend to make an exact replica from some drawings he downloaded off an open source design site. The plane has large propellers that move in the wind and is deep blue in colour. Its tail lights are neon solar stickers and glow in the dark. That's my night light, which doesn't consume electricity and is forever on.

My bunk bed is shaped like a double decker bus. It is a bright red with three cut-out windows. I have to enter the bed through a tiny door. I can choose to sleep either up or down.

I mostly sleep down. From there, through the first window, I can see my writing table. On it

is a photograph of Mama, wearing an aquamarine (not green) top and jeans. She has a fringe and a nice smile. I am told I have her eyes but I can't tell. When I look at her eyes staring at me, they look like hers and not mine.

I sometimes speak to her. Not out loud (that would be weird) but in my head. Today I tell her I'm sorry. Sorry for hurting her.

I am swimming in blood between the uterine wall and the placenta. I am kicking furiously and moving upwards in Mama's body. She has no bones under her skin, only a river of red with floating organs. When I bump into her left kidney, it's soft. I squeeze it. The blood suddenly begins swirling faster around me. I begin swimming higher and higher, my hands push her heart out of the way. The blood starts bubbling. It's hot like lava. I am burning.

I thrash my legs some more and I shoot up. My head crashes into the top of her skull. I stretch out my hands, they push past her eyes, curve towards her neck and strangle her. I start screaming though she is the one being murdered. I can hear my screams and wonder why the blood isn't rushing into my mouth, choking me.

Da rushes in and shakes me awake. I can't tell him I have seen Mama's report. I ask him if it's okay to sleep with him, just for tonight. He shakes his head. Alok is spending the night, there is no space. Da smiles, pushes back the sweaty hair from my forehead and climbs the little ladder, which leads to the upper bunk of my bed. He asks me whether I need the table lamp on. I say no, now that he is here, the plane lights are enough.

Very soon, I can hear him snore lightly. A soft sound you would miss if you didn't know it was there. I look at Mama, she looks the same. Her smile hasn't changed though I killed her.