



To be  
*or*  
not to be

*A tryst with destiny*

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# Midlife

## *A messed-up life*

Melissa walked to the fridge and looked at the to-do list. There was no task ticked off. No walking the dog, no cleaning the dishes, no charging the laptop, no feeding the fishes, no helping the kids with their homework, nothing!

She sighed and went to get the fish food, the charger, the leash, and called the kids down. As usual, they were too busy outlasting those 150,000 other opponents to complete the 1000<sup>th</sup> challenge of Fortnite on their PlayStation. She started cleaning the dishes, after putting the laptop on charge, feeding the fishes, and finding the kid's homework, all at the same time.

Just then the door opened, and a man in a black suit with black shoes, a black tie, black socks and a black belt came in looking dejected.

Melissa, as usual, did not look up and just pointed towards the to-do list.

He too looked at it and sighed, “Oh, not again. How can I forget every time? I even set my alarms. I, I mean, I did everything.”

Melissa blurted out in an angry and frustrated tone, “You say that every day! All the time! I am the one running the house, not you. I have to walk the dog. I have to do all the chores

because you don't earn enough money to get a helper. I have to help the kids. I have to make the food. I have to even give your clothes. I have to do every single thing in this house! And what do you do? Just sit there in your office and play with your own stuff, not earning any money.”

Adolf got agitated with his wife's words, yet again. “Ohh, so you think you're the only person doing something in this house. Well, only with the money I earn do you live! All the household chores, all the maintenance, everything is done only because of me!”

And just when Melissa was about to shoot something back in this never-ending argument, Andrew and Lerner, her children cried out together. As if it was a sermon that they said every day, “Mommy, we're not getting sleep. Can you tuck us in?” Melissa started walking upstairs to the children, not before turning back and giving a furious look at Adolf.

Adolf stopped her midway. “Look, I am really sorry. You know I don't do this on purpose. It's just, I have all these things at work happening, and it's just getting so overwhelming. I will really try to complete the tasks. Just please forgive me.”

Melissa put her hand on Adolf's cheek, “Hey, I get it. Even I get overwhelmed and need someone to help me. I guess it's just natural, and a part of who we are. I am sorry I blurted all those things out. Today was not the best of days for me either”  
“Thanks Melissa!”

Melissa smiled, before continuing on her way to the kid's bedroom.

Adolf thought for a moment, and then started climbing the stairs up as well. Today was kid night. Yet as he was climbing, he noticed loud sounds coming in the distance.

Adolf called back to the noise, “Hey, what's all that noise. Don't the kids have to sleep now. How many times have I told you, no TV after 8.”

An old man sitting on a couch, shouted, while watching TV, “I'm trying to watch a football match here. Can't an old man even do that?”

Adolf replied in an annoyed voice, “Hey dad, you mind trying to keep the volume low. The kids really need to sleep for school tomorrow.”

Ben muttered, as he reduced the volume, “Fine. There's no passion and zeal in this house for football. What an incredible game.”

Melissa overheard the conversation and smiled.

Her Adolf was back.



# Youth

## *The test*

**M**ath equations flying in the air. Is it N or X? Which class did we learn this stuff in again?

The bell rings. “Time's up kids!”

My paper? Filled.

Yet all those questions? Just my mind working with me.

After two all-nighters, that is the only thing your mind would do. I place my paper on the teacher's desk. I walk back home.

I enter and see my mom and dad with a frown on their face.

They say in a serious voice, “Salvatore, we would like to talk to you about something. Something important. Your application for the course ...”

“What about it?” I inquire, preparing for the worst. That course – the one I had been preparing for so hard all these years. If I didn't get it, I don't know how I'd console myself.

They start smiling now, “You got it.”

For a second, I just stand still, then I start jumping in joy. I had finally gotten what I had been waiting for. I was a part of the summer program for gifted children.

That night, I dreamed about the course. As if I was a celebrity, and on the final day, everybody started cheering my name, as I walked onto the stage.



Old

# *Celebrations*

Lorenzo was smiling, resting on his favorite armchair in the small garden next to his house. Around him were 30 odd members, smiling too as he lifted a blue, decorated, shiny metal knife, and slit open one side of the cake. He then blew the numerous candles surrounding the cake at the thin borders, all revolving around and coming to the center, where a bold '90' was written.

The date was September 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2011 – Lorenzo's 90<sup>th</sup> birthday.

It was a gooey chocolate cake with a beautiful white icing on top. Emma had helped set up three tables, with twelve chairs all around, kissing the table legs. Surrounding Lorenzo were friends, family and well-wishers. There was a bounty of food and drink, as everyone indulged in the lovely preparations, again made by Emma.

As the event was wrapping up, it was time, as always, for Lorenzo to speak up.

“Firstly, I would like to thank all of you for coming on my birthday. It was truly a lovely surprise, and tonight has been a treat long sought by me. Thank you, Emma, for organizing everything to such delicacy and beauty that I would finally

taste the lovely food you make, apart from raw lettuce salads.” The ripples of everyone's laughter echoed in Lorenzo's ears.

“Each one of you, in your own way, have made my life so much more cherished. Your undying support, unextinguished love, and never-ending care for me, when I needed it most. You all have helped me live up to my 90<sup>th</sup> birthday.”

Lorenzo continued in a nostalgic voice, “Today also marks the end of World War 2, exactly 66 years ago. Today, on my 90<sup>th</sup> birthday, I don't want gifts or presents, though I thank all those of you who thoughtfully brought them for me.

I would only like forgiveness from all those souls who suffered and died because of my doing. I have everything else but forgiveness. I only have regret and wholesome sorrow for those souls, and on this occasion, all I wish is for my soul to rest in peace, when it is time.

I don't want to leave this beautiful planet without knowing that my sins, my mistakes, and all those who I have hurt, have my wholesome forgiveness and my deepest sorrow.

That is all I want on my birthday. That is all I want. And that is all I will ever need to live my last days, in happiness and grace.”



*Ayan Dharod, loves to explore and experience the world in all its beauty and splendor. He pursues a wide gamut of creative interests across dance, music, arts and theatre. He is a voracious reader and enjoys all genres of fiction. He is an active sports person and loves any physical activity. He is passionate about movies, old and new alike, as long as it is an interesting script and well directed.*

*Ayan, age 11, studies in Grade 7 in Indus International School Hyderabad, India. He cherishes his family bonding, with parents and grandparents, over meals and board games. He has a special bond with his elder brother Arya, and they engage in almost every endeavor together, whilst also sharing their mutual fondness of books and writing.*

*'To be or not to be', his first book, is his attempt to share his worldview and life perspective, as seen from his young mind and soul. It is the life journey of three people, representing youth, midlife and old age. Their triumphs and turbulations in everyday life, and how their paths meet over something beyond normal human perception. The destinies as they unravel through the choices they make, and the eventual unimaginable consequences.*

*Ayan welcomes you to join him on a roller-coaster of a ride with destiny :  
'To be or not to be'!*

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