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She knelt down to pick her keys up. She stood alone in the silence and darkness. The lights of the advertising signs still shone above the darkness over Home Sweet Home Electronics, all the things wanted, were there. Not for her. Pressing her face against the cold surface of the glass doors, she rummaged through her brown, worn out handbag, making too much noise for six o'clock in the morning. Keys in lock. Lights on. She's in. Breathe.

The <sup>rainbow</sup> ~~rainbow~~ of fruits and vegetables almost blinded her in the neon light. The abundance of ice-cream tempted her and ~~the~~ <sup>the</sup> of every variety waited patiently for her approval. Six aisles stood neatly in line, one hundred and twenty seven shopping trolleys were attached ready for action, and eight cash registers were empty in anticipation. But the shop was vacant. She was alone, to be in her own solitude. Always alone. For to them, the ~~beautiful~~ plentiful bounty of the supermarket was expected, everyday even. To her, it was a potent message, a reminder of what India couldn't provide.

bit

She ~~hit~~ back the bitter taste of resentment - in the shelves of the hospital where she

used to work the sight of a lone bandage meant the salvation of one patient. But there were always more ... patients after patients would come in everyday, hoping today they would be treated. They wished everyday. She felt powerless, - she had the skills but not the tools. Even among the general misery, there were those cases. An older man came in, supported heavily by a younger man with the same distinct facial features - the deep set eyes, the sharp jawline and the hollowed cheeks. Everyday, they would ask for morphine to ease the old man's suffering. He was doctor ~~one~~ for surgery, but hope, wishing and belief sustained him. Here he was outside my office tipping his head in greeting. 'Good morning Karaz? You are up a feeling today?'

'Never better, the tomato harvest is good, but you ~~just~~ wait and see till next year! Any new supplies come in?' his voice full of hope.

'Not yet, but tomorrow is a new day!' Morphine, ha, we could never get paradol. The chance to of supplies coming in was about as likely as Karaz seeing his <sup>harvest</sup> next year. But she hated to see the slight slump in his shoulders as a new day's

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disappointment set in. There was a message she needed to make. The world needed to hear this message. ~~It~~ <sup>It</sup> was her duty.

She started to stack the shelves. Box after box of panadol, panadol rapid, panadol tablets, panadol ~~capsules~~ <sup>capsules</sup>, panadol liquid, neuroten... The others started to trickle in. She tried to force a smile to the incoming staff. They smiled back, but still walked along. They were all speaking. It was foreign to her, she didn't know what a 'kimono' was, or how to use chopsticks. However, she could ~~hear~~ <sup>salvage</sup> a little bit of what they were saying. Today, the ~~stutter~~ jibber-jabber ~~about~~ <sup>about</sup> the weather, creating a quiet hum that hit the eardrums. Did the weather really matter when people were dying back home? She looked down at her hands, hands that could once cut someone up and stick them back together. Hands that once held lives, were now holding cereal boxes. Her solitude started to surround. She ~~finished~~ <sup>finished</sup> stacking the shelves. But her message hadn't even been heard.

Back in India, she walked through the hopeless anticipation of

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~~from~~ too many patients. Husbands comforting their ~~in~~ wailing wives, children ~~beled~~ as shouting parents demanded a Hendion, startled looks, scared staves, confused vies. She wished she could do more. She couldn't stand it, the feeling of incompetence. ~~She wished she could do more.~~ The fact that failure was inevitable, no matter how hard she tried. She wished she could do more. It was enough. She burst into his office, upset and worn out. "We need more! This is not enough, can't you hear them outside?" she argued. Defeated, the doctor shrugged. Wishing wasn't going to get her anywhere, or help anyone. She had to send and advocate the message around the world.

The supermarket stood sterile and white. Shadows roamed the aisles and maintenance cleaned up after them. For every customer, there were two assistants with a big smile and "kunitchna" for them. The woman in front of her was slight and neat. ~~Her~~ <sup>Her dark</sup> ~~streaks~~ hair was pulled back into a bun, and her cardigan sat carefully on her shoulders, framing a necklace of pearls. She said he smiled welcome to the customer, ~~she~~ <sup>but</sup> her pearls jingled as she avoided eye contact. Grilled fish check. Pre-cut cellery, check.

San Pellegrino, oops. The bottle smashed and the customer bled. The wound was deep and the customer bled profusely in <sup>agony</sup> and pain. She went to treat the wound. She had done this before. Many times. Perhaps her degree wasn't recognised here in Japan, but she hadn't forgotten what to do. 'Fear You may need stitches if you leave it, but I can bind the wound if you'll let me.' The store manager ran over, ~~fall~~ and ~~sharp~~ in his dark suit, armed with Kleenex, band aids and panadol, his face white with the colour of a low suit. 'Move out of the way he pushed. 'What would you know. I'll see to it you get help'. His English was astoundingly good. She looked up and the Japanese woman's eyes said 'That's right dear, let the professional's deal with it now,' but her mouth said 'Arria'. She tried to pronounce it, but like with most things here she <sup>didn't register</sup> ~~did not~~ thought. There name didn't translate here.

In India, her village was so small everyone knew each other by name. Aalias' seemed to follow her everywhere. Being the only one with medical training in the village, the title Doctor meant more than just the words on the page. People came up to

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her offering their thanks for keeping their hope and wishes alive. But these small blessings only made her feel more guilty than the patients she turned away. It only they knew how much more she could do for them. She wished for more, and her message needed to be heard to fulfill that wish.

It was nine o'clock. Finished. She watched as the other staff went, while packing her bag. They were going to a bar, to celebrate the end of the day with sake and blurry memories. They were all ~~so~~ <sup>smiles</sup> happy and friendly banter. Was this all she had come for - the small pleasures of drinks to numb her discontent. ~~By~~ Tunny, isn't it, she travelled far and wide, from a local village to a global city, and it followed her. Here, like there, she dreamed of more. She wished for more. As the clear doors of the supermarket parted before her, she walked out alone, while biting into a tomato. Rich and red, sizeable, succulent, and sweetless. Genetically engineered and unpalatably tasteless. It promised more than it could provide, for her message, remains only a wish in ~~her~~ <sup>this sea of</sup> ~~solitude~~. foreign Solitude.

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