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THE SHORT STORY

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Let's Call a Plumber

I am walking down the boulevard. My broken umbrella can provide some temporary protection against the rain, but the wind wrestling with it warns me that sooner or later I may be soaked to the skin. In the distance, I can hear the traffic lights beeping. They seem to be fulfilling their duties just like a train driver who has to stop at every station in case someone might want to get on or off. I want to look at the raging sea because it always makes me feel good. In those waves, I seek solace. to robe the naked fears of tomorrow that have wound themselves around my feet.

The rain falling on my umbrella don't let me hear the waves crashing. I actually want to go to the beach, but I am afraid that the pebbly, uneven ground will be difficult to walk on. There is a policeman patrolling the area. There's a man with a huge hound tied to his hand. He is shortening the leash for fear that the dog might attack me. I bet he didn't expect to see anyone out in this weather. The wet benches look like people who lost their purpose in life but who will soon rediscover it once it clears up. There are a lot of glittering toy vending machines, making it difficult for parents to stroll peacefully on the boulevard.

My cup of coffee falls onto the ground and burns my hand. I don't care about the burn; I am just sad that I spilled my Americano because the nearest coffee shop is two kilometers away. The cup fell dramatically to the ground. It would have been a great slow-motion scene.

The coffee merged with the dirt on the wet surface. The styrofoam cup is the only sign of coffee on the ground… and nothing else. Tomorrow, no one will know that someone spilled coffee here. No! I take that back. Someone may notice it, but they will take no notice of it, and there's a big difference. We often say that we shouldn't worry about trivial things in life, but sometimes, among those trivial things, we mindlessly turn a blind eye to the beauty of triviality ... the unconventional beauty of someone dropping a cup of coffee.

Now I am leaving the green of the boulevard and making my way to the city center, where I live. I know that my stream of thoughts will abandon my head once I cross the street. They will disappear … I have to take a shower when I get home.

On the opposite side of the street, we have delivery guys hurrying to their destinations. They are trying to make sure the food doesn't get cold before they deliver it, or else the customer will complain.

Some people are wearing raincoats, but for me, an umbrella provides a more secure form of protection. If I were to wear a raincoat, I'd still feel I was getting wet. Even when you are not getting wet, you will still hurry; you will walk faster because the sensation on your head reminds you that you are vulnerable. The human mind is the most treacherous thing in the world. If the reins of your mind suddenly slip from your hands, everything will change. You'll end up like a child duped into sucking a glassy dummy, still believing it to be food.

In the morning, my wife told me to buy a loaf of bread. The shop is across the street, but I don't feel like crossing the street. I know she'll be mad, I know… My left leg's trying to go back, but I'm pulling it by force. She put a sign on my hand to remind me that I had to buy some bread. But wait… why are there two signs? Oh! The formula for the baby. I totally forgot. (My wife doesn't breastfeed him.) We've gone to bed on empty stomachs many times, not because we are cheap or don't have any money. We have enough to get by. It's just that if we don't feel like eating, even when

we are hungry, we don't eat. But it's a bit more challenging to make a baby understand that. I've come a long way, but I have to turn back anyway.

I go back, only to find that there is no formula in the shop. And the nearest pharmacy is kilometers away. I can't walk there, and I hate taking buses. Since I am at the shop, I might as well buy some bread.

So, this means that this time, it's going to be a baby who will have to sleep on an empty stomach. Tonight, the boy will be mad. I am used to my wife being mad. She at least stops nagging when she gets tired, but the baby doesn't. The baby will keep crying all night.

My feet are wet. My new leather shoes aren't waterproof, as the seller claimed. He was like, "If water penetrates these boots, bring them here and hit me on the head with them." I'd love to.

I'm trying to put the bread in my pocket, but it won't fit. So I tuck it under my arm. I'm going to the shop where I bought the boots. But then I remember that it's Sunday, almost 8 p.m., and no one will be there.

I've finally arrived home. It's a detached house. We live on the first floor. There are two cats mating on the doormat. They keep me awake all night. I kick them. I hate cats.

The door is locked. I don't have a key. I knock. I can hear the baby crying. I knock again. No response. The window is open, so I climb in through it. My wife is fast asleep in the bedroom, and the boy is crying at the top of his lungs.

I toss the bread into the cupboard and start looking for the expensive soap prescribed by the doctor for my skin condition. I try to keep it away from my wife because she uses it from time to time. I can't find the soap.

The room is extremely hot. The heating is on, and the window is open. The baby is probably sweating. I take my shirt off. I run my fingers through my chest, and the hair falls out. Weird!

I leave the boiling water tap running in the bathroom. Near the drain, I can see a tiny white piece of ... that is ... that was my soap. She used it all up. Of course!

I can't find my rubber slide sandals. And there is my wife's hair all over the bathroom floor, giving it the fancy kind of décor she's been raving about lately. In the water, foamed by the death rattle of my precious soap, there are clumps of long, straight hair floating on the surface. I can feel the hot water reaching my ankles. The drain isn't working.

I wish the little boy could walk; he'd fetch me a towel. I forgot to bring one.

Author's Note

Tedo Sharadenidze is a 26-year-old scholar, teacher, and published author of poetry and prose from Batumi in western Georgia. He obtained a Bachelor's degree in Humanities (English Studies) from Batumi Shota Rustaveli State University. During his undergraduate program, he studied for a year at the University of Alcala de Henares in Madrid, Spain, in the Faculty of Philosophy and Letters. After finishing his BA degree, he continued at Batumi State University in the Faculty of Education and Exact Sciences completing the Teacher Certification Program. He then received a Master's degree in Humanities (English Linguistics) at Batumi State University.

As an IELTS instructor, Tedo teaches English as a Second Language (AP Language and AP U.S. History) to high school students at the American Nike School in Batumi. He is also an Affiliated Lecturer at BAU International University in Batumi, teaching Modern Teaching Methods and Research Methods.

Tedo's writings mainly address the themes of alienation, indifference, eccentricity, internal conflict, childhood mirth, and the inability "*to defy what fate has thrown at you."*

He is motivated to write by the desire "to *turn simple, day-to-day occurrences into something magical... something that would inspire others to put pen to paper."*