

## **Is blood thicker than water?**

Daisy walked into a corner and crouched down to tie her shoelaces. She had been working behind the counter since morning. It was lunchtime now. The store was the busiest at lunchtime. Today it was particularly very busy despite the fact that it was a Sunday. Not many people came to Southern Cross on Sundays, as the nearby cooperate offices were closed.

Then again, the Southern Cross station was always busy. Working at a fast food store located in one of the main stations in Melbourne City was not easy. Daisy looked up towards the entrance of the store. The line of customers now extended beyond the door.

“Service TEN! Everyone on service, guys!” the manager yelled. “Where is Desha? Desha c’mon service please.”

“It’s Daisy,” Daisy muttered under her breath as she went back to her counter. Daisy hated when people called her ‘Desha.’ ‘Desha’ was her Sri Lankan name, a name she was not particularly fond of. Her friends had nicknamed her “Daisy” when she first moved to Melbourne and she had immediately liked that name. To her mind, “Daisy” was a normal name that suited an Australian girl like her. People didn’t usually call her ‘Desha’ but when they did, it really annoyed her.

“Next waiting please!” Daisy called out to the line of impatient customers waiting to order their lunch and mustered the best smile she could as a customer approached her.

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Vishaka hurriedly got out of the train, and turned around swiftly to ensure that her daughter got off the train safely. She clasped her hand firmly around the little girl’s wrist and started walking towards the escalators. People swarmed all around them. Vishaka wondered why it was so busy in the station, especially on a Sunday. The fact that it was 27 degrees outside wasn’t helping either. She could feel the sweat on her daughter’s hand. The girl was unusually quiet. But Vishaka knew her daughters very well and right now she could tell the little girl was hungry. And so was she. It was nearly lunchtime now.

Taking the girl’s hand, Vishaka hurried towards the Hungry Jack’s store, which had a line of people waiting outside the entrance. Vishaka sighed; It would take at least another half-hour for them to get food. But the thought of seeing her older daughter was too appealing. So she went on and stood at the end of the line, trying to ignore her younger daughter’s impatient muttering.

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Daisy swept the sweat off her forehead. It was the third complaint she had received in the past hour. One man was missing one bag of fries in his order, but

the way he was acting you would have thought that someone had stolen his wallet or something. The line of customers was still past the door. Daisy sighed. She was waiting for at least another seven orders to arrive. Although the kitchen staff was obviously failing to keep on top of all the orders, the manager was insisting that they take on more orders. So Daisy called out to the next customer, praying that it would be a short order, two meals maximum.

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Vishaka watched proudly as her elder daughter greeted customers with a polite smile and took their order. Vishaka loved hearing her daughter speak. Although Vishaka herself wasn't lucky enough to receive an English education, she made sure that both her daughters did. She made sure that when they moved to Melbourne, the language barrier wouldn't separate her daughters from the rest of the society. And she had succeeded. Both her daughters could speak English perfectly and she took pleasure in watching them do so everyday. However, for Vishaka, speaking English was still a challenge. Which is why she was beyond glad that after twenty minutes of waiting she was finally called to place her order by none other than her own daughter.

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"Next waiting, please," Daisy called out to the next customer and was annoyed to see her mom approaching with her sister. Daisy's smile left her face even before her mom approached her. Her mom didn't even like burgers.

*What is she doing here?* Daisy thought. But her mom, Vishaka, seemed very excited. Her smile was so wide, it was practically reaching her ears. Her eyes were filled with love and pride. Daisy on the other hand, couldn't wait until this moment was over. Her mom approached the counter and to Daisy's utter horror, greeted Daisy and started ordering in Sinhala, which was their mother tongue. But to Daisy, talking in Sinhala was something shameful. She felt, it made her look stupid and uneducated.

Daisy quickly glanced around. She was relieved to see that no one was really paying any attention to her conversation. Her coworkers were all busy taking orders. She turned back to her mother. "English, please," she said in a flat voice.

She watched as the smile on her mom's face slowly vanished. Her eyebrows creased as she bit her lip and struggled to find words. The right words. English words. Daisy's mom continued to look expectantly at her.

*Oh god! This is going to take bloody forever!* Daisy thought, and quickly took down what her mother had ordered before in Sinhala.

"Six dollars and 30 cents, thank you," Daisy said. And her mom looked lost. Daisy rolled her eyes. Finally, her mom handed Daisy a 10 dollar bill, still looking lost. Daisy handed back the change. Without even giving her mom a second glance,

Daisy called out to the next customer. Her mom, having finally realised that their encounter was over, moved to the side, looking subdued.

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Vishaka was still in a state of shock. She could still remember the first time she held Desha. She was no more than the length of her arm. Over the years, Vishaka had watched her little baby girl grow into an independent young woman. But there was something missing. The affection the little girl showed Vishaka was nowhere to be found; nor were the words that Vishaka had taught her. And now that Vishaka thought about it, Desha didn't exist anymore. In her place was Daisy – a girl that Vishaka barely knew. Actually, she didn't know Daisy at all. And with this realisation came a sinking feeling. She looked at Daisy again. Her Desha had long wavy black hair, this girl didn't. Desha's smile was warm and welcoming, but this girl's smile was cold as ice. Suddenly, Vishaka found herself longing for her Desha – the girl who couldn't even go to sleep without her. Vishaka's mind went many years back to an evening where she was taking a walk along the beach with four-year-old Desha. The sky had been a glowing orange and the sun was setting in the horizon. The cool breeze blew Desha's wavy hair onto her face as she laughed and chatted with Vishaka. Desha had wanted to run along the beach, but Vishaka had refused to let go of her hand. After much begging and pleading from Desha, Vishaka had finally let go. But standing there in the city of a foreign country holding the hand of her younger daughter, Vishaka wished she had never let go of Desha's hand that day.