

## ‘The Police Post’

I was on curfew duty that day. The lockdown had forced everyone in, so I was standing on the usually busy MG Road in broad daylight, all alone. There was not a single person on the road, and that was the way it was supposed to be.

That’s when I saw her. For a split second, I thought it was my colleague coming over to take her turn on that road. However, when she took a left into one of the streets, I realised it wasn’t my fellow policewoman, but a civilian.

Running fast, I caught up with her, only to discover that my curfew-breaker was an old lady in a shawl. Tottering along the street feebly, she looked surprised to see me towering over her with a bit of a stern look in my eyes.

“*Dadi*<sup>1</sup>, what are you doing?” I demanded, with anger in my tone. “Don’t you know you’re not supposed to be out these days?”

“I was just going to post a letter,” she said innocently, speaking in Hindi. “I haven’t seen my husband in so long.” “Why?” I asked, already repenting for my initial angry outburst. “*Beta*<sup>2</sup>, they put him in some isolation ward and since then I’ve not been allowed to visit him. It’s been a week!”

I had to explain to the old lady that this was exactly what was going on in the entire world. I further had to tell her that there was nothing we could do until the doctors found a cure for the virus. I saw her eyes fill with sadness when I told her that the post offices were not functioning due to the lockdown, and that her letter would not be delivered.

“*Dadi*, why don’t you just call him? Don’t you have a phone?”

“The isolation ward doesn’t get a good signal, *beta*.”

We police officers had been instructed to heavily penalise anyone who broke the lockdown rules, but I decided against it. Thinking quickly, I asked the old lady for her address and the location of the isolation ward. I walked back with her to her house, and, taking the letter from her, I went off to the location she had given.

I gained entry into the isolation ward easily enough. It was a converted government office, and my khaki uniform helped.

It took me some time to find the old lady’s husband. He looked perfectly healthy, but

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<sup>1</sup> Grandmother; used in India to call an old woman with respect

<sup>2</sup> An endearing way of calling somebody much younger

his face had a sad, lonely look which touched me.

I gave him the letter. He looked so surprised to see it at first, then his face lit up in so much excitement that I started smiling in delight.

“I will,” I told him, “come tomorrow for your letter.”

The anticipation with which he was waiting for me the next day was fun to see. With an almost child-like haste, he thrust the letter into my hand.

Over the next few days, I kept carrying letters back and forth for the couple. When the old man was discharged a week later, I went to visit them. Seeing the two of them together filled my heart with joy.

One day, when I was off duty, I got a call. From the top cop of Bangalore.

It turned out that my small act of kindness for that old couple had done rounds on social media and inspired people around the city! The police force was starting a movement, ‘The Police Post’, which aimed to help people who got separated due to the lockdown, communicate with each other. Doctors and teachers were encouraging this movement too, so as to involve students in writing cheerful letters and hopefully reduce their screen time.

The entire police force of Bangalore participated in this. Every day, we travelled all over Bangalore, spreading smiles and happiness wherever we went.

Being a police officer means giving hope to the people. We did this.

A small act started a huge movement, in which the entire city of Bangalore was united, in an act of love.

*This story is written to express gratitude from ordinary citizens to all the frontline workers for their selfless acts of kindness during the darkest days of the pandemic.*

*This story is a work of fiction.*