A DIFFERENT KIND OF HAPPINESS

By Jonathan Hsieh

So after she died and Greg danced with their lawyers and came out tragically rich, the changes were easy to notice.

Let me start and say that Greg was the kind of guy that when we saw an insanely fat or morbidly ugly person while hanging out, and I would say something cruel and hilarious, he wouldn’t say anything. He’s not stupid. He would have that look in his eye and a half-smile and you would know he had some flash of nasty wit, but he wouldn’t say. He wasn’t the kind of guy to say anything about things like that, and he wasn’t the kind of guy to feign coyness to build up an audience.

He just said, “You’re fucked up,” with a grin on his face that would make the devil nervous.

But she as gone, and like he said cynically so many times afterwards, she had been proof that being a decent person was worthwhile.

But she was gone, and apparently it wasn’t so worthwhile after all.

I began to subscribe to that theory of life, not through the experience of pain and hopelessness like Greg did, but because I admired him and I saw him lose the only important thing in his life. I planned on being a fast learner. There was nothing I could earn in life that would not be torn away from me, and I had no intention of experiencing that first hand.

Anyways, the first time we went down in the city, before we knew where to buy anything of quality, hell anything at all, we were simply drunk idiots. We were looking for anything that satisfied so many people who had never had that kind of happiness like she gave, but still made it through. For him it was never to replace her. For me, well, I found out later that I was in it for less idealistic reasons than I had convinced myself.

The search for a different kind of happiness took us to our generation’s usual suspects. We started where we thought other people started. We went to some club with a cute sexy name like Disco 69 or Candy Show and threw hundred dollar bills at the bartender.

You can’t go to a club with an idiot name like Candy Shop and
toss hundred dollar bills at the bartender. Half the girls think they’ve won the lottery or gotten into a car accident with an obscenely rich asshole and came out ok with whiplash.

And I’m there smiling and drinking and feeling just a tiny bit guilty, but for me there has rarely been any guilt a half naked woman doesn’t suppress. Greg is sitting in a big easy chair with a blond on his lap and a white-knuckled grip on a glass of whiskey and a smile that was somewhere between Where’s the Fucking Exit and Agonizing Death.

I don’t remember much after that. I was easy to please if she wasn’t. I know Greg made it to the bed, I don’t know if he made it with the girl. I can just remember seeing him naked in the bathroom, vomiting into the bathtub, tears plinking onto the tiles.

It got easier after that though.

MY FATHER
By Tahla Abdul-Aziz

My father’s appearance is always neat and organized. As I approach him I smell a smooth sent of musk surrounding his person. His head is shaved so perfectly that it appears to be glowing. His face looks soft and ageless, but you see the wisdom and strength in his eyes. His goatee is edged flawlessly as if professionally done. The shirt is ironed to a crisp, not one crease or thread out of place. The crease in his pants is as if it will easily cut through any material. Also his shoes are spotless, the leather looks soft and smoother than a baby’s skin. He speaks with a loud thunderous and commanding voice, and he says, “Son a man should always take pride in everything he does”.