

**RESEARCH ARTICLE**

**THE LEFT-HANDER**

**A Short Story by Bhagya Shree Nadamala**

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Exam bell rings. All the students standing at the lawns of St. John's College enter into the exam halls hurriedly. St. John's College is surrounded by five hills and is located in the town of Petersburg. The gentle wind blowing from the hills makes the campus more pleasant. It is the oldest and the best college in the town. And is also known for its top-class teaching faculty. It stands for discipline in academics and for strictness at examinations. So far, in the history of St. John's College, there are no incidents of copying or any other malpractice and nobody has been debarred in the examination. Owing to the goodwill of the college, till today, university exam squad never stepped into the exam halls.

Matthew entered the examination hall and sat on the bench. He wrote the past five papers extremely well and today he is ready to write the final exam paper. He looks fair and has heart shaped face with hazel eyes and has long blonde hair, always combing it with his hand. He is a left-hander and is kind hearted. He is sitting in the exam room to write his elder Brother Henry's exam as a proxy writer. Matthew and Henry are identical twin brothers. Both of them are studying the same course but in different colleges affiliated to different universities.

Matthew's elder brother, Henry is an alcoholic and an indisciplined college student. He met with an accident just the day before the commencement of examinations and his right hand got fractured. Hence, he cannot write the examination, being a right-hander. At this juncture; Henry requested Matthew, "As we are lookalike no one can identify as who is Henry and who is Matthew at the exam hall. As your exams have completed, kindly write my exams as a proxy writer." At first, Matthew did not agree to this unfair idea of Henry but Henry's begging attitude changed Matthew's thoughts and finally Matthew himself agreed whole heartedly to write Henry's exams as a proxy writer with more confidence that no one will catch him at the exam hall. Now the only difference between them is, Henry is a right-hander and Matthew is a left-hander.

Dr. Richards, an invigilator of the college walks into the same examination hall where the left-hander is writing the exam. Dr. Richards carries a bundle of answer scripts and drops them at once over the table to grab the attention of the students. He is around five and a half feet but

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walks as if he is six feet tall. He is 52 years old, with a toothbrush moustache, wearing round architect glasses, adjusting them always! He has been working as a zoology lecturer for the past twenty-five years. He is too strict at examination and ensures that nobody copies and no one debars from his college.

There are thirty-five students in the invigilating room of Dr. Richards. Because of the jumbling system in the examination, all the students are from other colleges. Therefore, neither the invigilator nor the students know each other. The invigilator asked all the students to sign in the attendance sheet. Here, the left-hander signed as 'Henry'. The invigilator checked all the students' pockets, and also checked the students' faces with their hall ticket photographs meticulously, as he came to know by the news that some students are being proxy writers to others. He also checked the left-hander's face twice with the hall ticket's photograph, tallied his signature in the attendance sheet and finds nothing suspicious. The left-hander felt very happy that his brother's wise plan is working out well, as even today's strict invigilator thought that Henry is writing the exam. Dr. Richards told to the students that whoever wants an additional paper, just raise hands, he would come and provide them.

Today's exam is the last and the most difficult of all the exams. Therefore, Dr. Richards assured himself that the students will not take any additional papers. He sat over his chair on the dais, observing all students meticulously, even though nobody is copying.

As today's question paper is too difficult, all students in the room are unable to finish first few pages of the booklet itself. But suddenly and surprisingly, a hand rose from the corner of the room for additional. Dr. Richards is almost stumbled and asked gently, by adjusting his glasses, "Additional?" That left-hander who asked additional nodded his head gently.

"All right," said Dr. Richard. Then he walked to the left-hander and gave an additional, glancing at him doubtfully.

All the remaining students in the exam hall looked at left-hander, at once, and thought that, "How did he finish the main answer booklet of 24 pages within 2 hours? The exam is too difficult for us to finish the first few pages of the booklet itself!"

After sometime, the left-hander again raised his hand for an additional. Dr. Richards asked, "Do you need one more additional?" seeing the raised hand at the corner. All the remaining students in the room started to feel jealous of the left-hander. Dr. Richards walked slowly to the

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left-hander and checked his earlier answer scripts thoroughly to know if he is really writing or mocking. He then asked the left-hander to stand, checked his pockets carefully and handed over the additional.

While Dr. Richards is checking his pockets, the left-hander thought, “Sir, you cannot catch me. In an hour, I am successfully going to complete the final exam and make my brother Henry pass the exam in first class.”

Dr. Richards sat on the dais. Placing a hand under his chin, he started staring at the left-hander, thinking about his only son. Last year, his son failed in Dr. Richards paper itself, which makes Dr. Richards unhappy. Adding to this is a great amount of disrespect towards him by his college and town. Dr. Richards contemplates deeply, “If my son is this left-hander how nice will it be? I might be praised and respected by everyone. He is writing so eloquently, even though it is a difficult exam. Is it true that the left-handers are intelligent? Definitely, this left-hander has a bright future,” by seeing him with more affection as if his own son is writing the exam. When so ever the left-hander raises the hand, Dr. Richards gives additional as if he is giving to his son, proudly. While the left-hander continued taking so many additional papers, the rest of the students have become envious of the left-hander, but they are also not able to stop praising him as “How intelligent he is!”

Dr. Richards suddenly hears the honking sound of a car and throws a look at the door, at once. Then a college attender walks hurriedly to Dr. Richards and whispers, “Sir, Sir, first time in our college history, a university exam squad has come.” Dr. Richards shockingly asks, “Squad? To our college?” On hearing this news, Dr. Richards who earlier was sitting pleasantly on the chair now started to walk in between the rows of the benches seriously.

A black jaguar beast-like long car enters the college campus. The Principal of the college, Dr. Louis rushed towards the car to receive the university exam squad. Prof. Edward Brown opens the back door and steps outside the car in his brown shoes. While stepping out of the car, Prof. Edward Brown puffed on his cigar thrice and crushed it under his foot. Prof. Edward Brown is Six feet tall, around sixty-two years of age, bald- headed but looks like a British Army Major General, wearing Ray-ban black glasses and a Rolex gold watch. Dr. Louis smiled pleasantly and said, “Welcome Sir.”

Then by twisting his imperial moustache, “Thank You, Dr. Louis. Where are the exam halls?” he asked having a glance at the entire college campus.

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Dr. Louis said, “Sir. Come with me, I will take you to the exam halls. In total there are eighteen exam rooms and there are thirty-five students in each room, writing the exam. We are strictly following the jumbling system and our invigilators have carefully checked all the students’ pockets just before the exam.”

“Really? Exclaims Prof. Brown, removing his glasses. He stopped for a second and looks at Dr. Louis and continues, “Okay. Let us see.”

Then Dr. Louis told “Sir, so far in the history of our college nobody has come from the University for inspecting and surprisingly you are the first person.”

“Of course,” said Prof. Brown casually as he stepped into the exam hall like a lion hunting for its prey. Prof. Brown started checking every exam room. Even after vigorous checking of 17 exam rooms, he did not find any student committing malpractice. Prof. Brown is the Chemical Sciences subject expert at the university and he has prepared today’s question paper for the graduate students. The paper is so difficult to answer unless a pile of subject books is referred. Apart from inspecting, Prof. Brown is also observing as how the students are answering the questions prepared by him. He is delighted to find that none of the students is unable to finish the main answer booklet itself and thought to himself, “Who will take an additional,” sarcastically.

Prof. Brown is about to retire next month and this is his last exam as a university exam squad. As a university squad, he never failed in debarring a student, in his every visit. And today he is still hopeful to debar a student in room number 18<sup>th</sup>, at the least. While Dr. Brown is checking every exam hall; Dr. Louis, the college principal on the other side kept his head up and is walking with more confidence that it is impossible to put a black mark on the college history. Thirty minutes is left. The left-hander is so gleeful that his brother’s wise plan is going to be triumphant. The left-hander said to himself “I have heard the squad’s car horn long before but why did not he come to this room yet? Even if he comes, will he be able to catch me? No, it’s impossible.” Ruminating on this thought, the left-hander resumes writing with much more confidence.

Prof. Brown enters into 18<sup>th</sup> exam room. Dr. Richards is seen walking between the benches and wishes Dr. Brown “Good Morning, Sir.” Prof. Brown nodded his head and asked, “How are the students writing the exam? Dr. Richards”, with a more particular voice. Dr. Richards answers, “Sir, today’s exam is the most difficult one and no one in my class has finished the main

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booklet. I suppose it is your paper today.” He then asked Prof. Brown gently, “Sir, why are you preparing such a difficult question paper?” Prof. Brown listened to the question but posed as if he did not listen. He felt very happy that no one is writing the exam well, self-appreciating his question paper.

Prof. Brown asked again, “Dr. Richards, no one writing well?” Dr. Richards said, “Yes, Sir.” looking at all the students. Immediately he stopped over left-hander and told Prof. Brown, “But one student is writing excellently and took so many additional papers as well”, by praising the left-hander.

Listening to this unusual comment, Prof. Brown surprisingly asks Dr. Richards, “One student? Who is that?” Dr. Richards points his index finger and says, “That Left-hander.”

Looking at the left-hander, Prof. Brown felt, “It is impossible to write my exam so well, he must have copied and I can continue my legacy of debarring.” He came close to the left-hander and asked him to stand up. He then, checked his pockets, his hall ticket and read out his college name. It read “King’s College.” “Are you from King’s College”, he asked the left-hander and he nodded. Prof. Brown knows King’s College Principal Dr. Don Wesley very well, as Dr. Wesley was his junior at the university level. Prof. Brown then checked the left-hander’s entire booklet and the additional. He also skimmed through the answers. Prof. Brown was awe-struck at the answer paper. He felt, “Left-handers are more intelligent, indeed!” Then, he said to the left-hander “Very good. Have a bright future.” by patting on his shoulder. On the other side, Prof. Brown thought that the last chance of debarring a student is also lost.

Then the left-hander deeply contemplated, “My brother’s guess is correct, even the university exam squad is not able to catch me.” He smiled, seeing the university squad leaving the exam hall carelessly. Out of nowhere, something stopped the left-hander to continue writing the exam. On one side, he is concerned that, “Despite showering too much affection on me by the invigilator and the squad, I am certainly doing wrong. I am not supposed to do this. Should I go and tell the invigilator that I am the proxy writer? Should I ask the invigilator for forgiveness?” On the other side, “If I reveal the truth to the invigilator what happens to my brother’s future? Is helping brother correct or deceiving teachers is right? In this manner, the left-hander is struggling in his mind with numerous thoughts. He stopped writing and continued to think.

Prof. Brown came out of the corridor by adjusting his imperial moustache down. His moustache itself symbolizes his failure. He took his mobile and dialed King’s College

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principal Dr. Don Wesley to praise his college student, the left-hander as he is writing the toughest exam in a great manner. The call is ringing but there is no response from the other side. Prof. Brown threw his mobile in the back seat and stepped into the car as a failed university squad with so much contempt and uneasiness. The college principal, Dr. Louis, closing the car door, waved goodbye at Prof. Brown with so much pride.

Prof. Edward Brown bends his head down and closes the car door rashly, as he failed and the college won. Principal and the other college members are beaming with joy as Prof. Brown leaves. This scene is indigestible to Prof. Brown. He takes one more cigar and starts smoking. The car is slowly moving out of the campus of St. John's College. Prof. Brown starts reflecting, "Why did I fail today, why did I choose to come to this college? I shouldn't have come. I should have chosen some other college. I failed miserably in front of the college principal. My last effort failed... But that boy, the left-hander really impressed me a lot. He is a knowledgeable student. He is great. In near future, he will be one of the best professors." Prof. Brown is jealous of the young left-hander's immense subject knowledge, that too being his junior Dr. Wesley's student. With this stress of failure, Prof. Brown kept on smoking. The car went far away from the college. All of a sudden, Prof. Brown's mobile started ringing. With so much of recklessness, Prof. Brown lifts the call. It's Dr. Don Wesley. "Hello Prof. Edward Brown! How are you?" Prof. Brown replies with low voice, "Yeah fine."

"Sorry I couldn't take your call when you called me, what's the matter?" asked Dr. Don Wesley. Prof. Brown said, "Today, I went as a university exam squad to St. John's College, I saw one of your college students there. Dr. Wesley, you know that I always give difficult question paper. But to my surprise, your college student was writing exceptionally well and I called you to appreciate."

"Really?" exclaimed Dr. Don Wesley.

"Yes," said Prof. Brown.

"But, Prof. Brown I deal that subject to the graduates. The boys are regularly irregular to my class and what will they write? Are you kidding me and my college?" Dr. Don Wesley questions.

"No. No. Not at all. I am speaking the truth. Apart from all of your college students only one student is writing exam beautifully, to be frank even I cannot write that well."

"Who is that boy?" asked Dr. Wesley.

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“Dr. Wesley, I did not notice that boy’s name. I noticed only college name but, he is... he is... I am sure he is a left-hander!”

Then he laughed aloud, “Are you really kidding me? Prof. Brown, you know that I am a left-hander and nobody else in my college is a left-hander. I am the only left-hander in the college. I know all the students.”

By listening this Prof. Brown asked his car driver at once “Stop the car”.

“Dr. Wesley, are you sure no one in your college is a left-hander?” asked again.

“Yes. I am pretty sure, Prof. Brown.”

“But your college name is mentioned in that left-hander’s hall ticket.”

“Prof. Brown that’s not right. We don’t have any left-handers in our college (thinking....) But I know that one of my student’s brother is a left-hander. I am sure that he is studying the same course in some other college.”

Listening to it, immediately Prof. Brown switched off his mobile and started smiling and twisted up his imperial moustache as he is going to win his last hunting for the prey at the exam halls. He asked the driver to turn back to the college. He took another cigar with more confidence and started smoking. The car driver, unable to understand what’s going on thought the professor has gone mad.

This time the car entered into the college with much more louder horn sound. The college principal rushed out to meet Prof. Brown and asked, “Prof. Brown did you miss anything in the college from your last visit?”

“Yes Dr. Louis. I missed to debar one student.”

“What?” shouted Dr. Louis surprisingly?

“Yes, you heard it right,” said Prof. Brown with double the energy. He is now ready to catch the prey and end his exam squad career without a failure scar.

And by order Prof. Brown told the principal, “Get the debar form and come along with me.”

All together marched straightly towards Dr. Richards’s exam room.

Dr. Richards at once is shocked and surprised to see the university squad again, coming to the same room. He asked Prof. Brown, “What’s the news, Sir?”

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Prof. Brown said, “Just follow me, invigilator.” The college principal, the invigilator and Prof. Brown walked towards the left-hander. All remaining students are watching silently and thought, “What is going on in the exam hall? Why are all together moving towards the left-hander?”

Seeing this, the left-hander’s hand, started to fumble like never before and is full of sweat as they are approaching towards him. “Did he really notice me? That I am proxy writer? No, it is not possible. My brother’s college is far away and no one is here to tell about my brother. How can he catch me? Impossible. Because my brother and I are lookalike, and photograph is also same, I kept the same sign as well, then why is the university exam squad coming towards me? But still...”

Prof. Brown came close to the left-hander and took his hall ticket. By seeing the left-hander’s eyes he told to the principal, “Dr. Louis just few minutes back, I called this boy’s principal and enquired about him.” Now the left-hander thought, “I am finally caught.” He slowly stood up by bending his head down. Prof. Brown asked the left-hander to put his signature on the debar form. The left-hander now signed as Matthew instead of Henry. With this, the invigilator shocked, and then the principal surprised and together uttered loudly “Matthew” by looking the left-hander at once. Then, Prof. Brown by seeing all students in the exam hall he told, “Writing others exam is very bad. Mal-practitioners cannot escape from the university exam squad’s eyes. All the students must know this and should not do any kind of malpractice.” Then by looking into the eyes of left-hander he said very politely, “Be kind, and know where to be kind.”

Now, Dr. Louis called the police officer and handed over Matthew for further investigation. Bona fide student Henry is debarred from writing the examinations permanently. While all students are still in shock, the left-hander left the exam hall with police officer by feeling, “Deceiving teachers is wrong. I should be punished for this malpractice.”

This twist and turn at the end made Dr. Richards shameful to think the left-hander as his own son and felt, “Even though my son failed, he did not do any kind of malpractice.” All the remaining students thought, “Why the left-hander did like this? He has to be punished.”

The Principal headed down as his college’s reputation is gone with this debar. And Prof. Brown smiled at the principal by twisting up his imperial moustache. With great joy, Prof. Brown stepped into the car like a victorious lion, lighting his favorite Montecristo cigar.



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With this rare incident, St. John's College for the first time lost its good name and fame. The college requested the university examination cell to kindly introduce one column in the students' hall ticket, "Are you a twin? If yes, write the name of the twin and his writing hand", in order to put full stop to the identical twins malpractice. Later, Bona fide student Henry is debarred from writing the examinations permanently.

Henry's one unfair idea collapsed his education permanently and his twin brother Matthew is sentenced to prison.

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