

# TUESDAY'S LEFT SHOE

Tales of Hoot

A Short Story by Pranitabh Roy



*The Buried Compass Series #1*

## Book Cover



# About

Some mysteries don't scream.

They don't begin with blood, or end in tears.

They just... exist.

Like a single school shoe-always the left one-left behind a vending machine every Tuesday.

Because not all supernatural beings haunt.

Some are simply waiting to be noticed.

To be remembered.

To be returned to the story they forgot they were part of.

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# 001 – Only One Shoe

There's a kind of mystery that doesn't introduce itself with thunder or suspenseful music. No dramatic lighting. No murder weapon. Just a quiet repetition. The kind of repetition that becomes too deliberate to be a coincidence, too subtle to be paranoia.

I believe in vending machines that eat coins. I also believe in cafeteria milk that expires two days early, and in exam scores that defy logic. But I didn't believe a person could lose the same shoe—only the left one—in the exact same spot every week.

Every Tuesday at 4:45 PM behind the vending machine, beside the west wall of the school library, there was a shoe. Always the same: pale blue, schoolgirl-style, left-foot loafer. Like it had belonged to someone too gentle to leave a footprint.

I'm not the kind of guy who chases urban legends or writes diary entries in blood-red ink. I don't believe that I'll meet a supernatural being, or that I'm somehow in the world of a fairy tale like Cinderella. After all, I barely believe in morning classes. But when something appears exactly the same way for three weeks straight, in a place where no one ever claims it—

—You start to wonder if it's claiming you.

Week one: I ignored it.

Week two: I assumed it was a prank.

Week three: I crouched to have a closer look.

Week four: I finally touched it.

Curiosity won.

As I crouched down and touched it, I noticed that the shoe was dry, but cold—and heavier than it should've been. Like it remembered walking through more than just hallways. And then—just as I stood back up—

She was there.

A girl—maybe my age, maybe older, maybe none of the above—wearing the right shoe, just the right one. The other foot was bare. She just stood there and her uniform was spotless. Her hair was as immaculate as a church nun's vow.

But her presence? Off. Like a photograph someone accidentally captured through a time machine.

She stood beside the vending machine like she'd been waiting. Like she'd always been there, smiling. The kind of smile that doesn't ask for anything—but still expects everything in return. I didn't say anything because nothing came to my mind that sounded right.

Ghost etiquette isn't something they teach you, even in cram school. But maybe this wasn't the beginning of a ghost story. Maybe it was the end of a long-forgotten one.

Or maybe—

It was the first Tuesday I was finally worth haunting.

## 002 – When Tuesday Spoke First

We stood behind the vending machine like we were sharing a secret that no one else even knew existed. She didn't float. Didn't flicker. Wasn't even see-through. She was just... there. Existing in the small cozy space.

"Did you bring it?" she asked.

I looked down at the shoe still in my hand. I hadn't even realized I was still holding it—like a fool, a thief, or a boy who was about to make the worst trade of his life.

"I wasn't expecting this interaction to go both ways," I muttered.

She laughed.

A laugh with no tragic violin beneath it. It wasn't an eerie, hollow echo destined to rattle through an eternity. No, she laughed like a teenage girl. A little nasal, a little wild and a little broken in the middle-like she'd forgotten how to breathe between laughter.

"I'm not here to curse you," she said casually, which is exactly what someone would say if they were here to curse you.

"If I were," she added, "you'd be cursed already."

"I wasn't thinking about that," I lied.

She sat down on the curb next to the machine. Crossed her arms behind her and leaned back like this was a routine. Like this was our routine. She patted the concrete beside her but I hesitated.

Because of course I did! Sitting beside ghosts wasn't on my to-do list for the day. I had my math homework and a lukewarm appreciation for survival.

To get over my curiosity, I asked, "Why only Tuesdays?"

She didn't answer right away. But she pulled her knees up and rested her chin on them like she was trying to shrink into a thought. She then tilted her head like a sunflower chasing confusion instead of sunlight.

"I don't know," she said finally. "I think... I think I died on a Tuesday. Or maybe that's when I stopped mattering."

She said it with the same tone you'd use to describe missing a train—annoyed, detached, and just a little too used to it. I glanced down at the shoe, still pale, soft-edged and almost forgettable.

"And the shoe?" I asked.

She didn't look at me but at her own bare foot, swinging slightly and then replied,

"I thought if someone brought it back enough times, I'd remember why I left it behind."

That made me quiet and suddenly, I realized—

Death isn't the absence of life.

It's the presence of irrelevance.

And I was beginning to suspect that maybe this girl... was becoming the most relevant thing in my life.

She looked at me and gave a grateful smile.

Like, just for this Tuesday, she'd remembered how to exist.



## 003 – The Tuesday That Stayed

We met every Tuesday after that and it soon became a ritual—not out of obligation, like brushing your teeth or apologizing after stepping on someone's foot. Not even like a habit, like checking your phone in the middle of conversations.

It was more like gravity. I didn't decide to go behind the vending machine—my legs did. Like they had already voted and left my brain out of the loop.

She never said she'd be there. I never asked. But 4:45 arrived—like clockwork.

Or fate-work.

She was always already there, sitting, smiling, like waiting wasn't sad but a sport she happened to be good at.

She never offered her name. As per her, names were like stickers—you peel them off too many times and the glue gives out.

We talked about nothing. And by "nothing," I mean everything you'd never think to discuss with a ghost.

"Do ghosts sleep?"

"Not unless we want to waste eternity."

"Do ghosts feel cold?"

"We are cold."

"Do ghosts fall in love?"

"Only with people who forget us later."

Those were her answers. I don't know if they were true, but they were consistent—and somehow consistency is more comforting than truth when you're talking to a dead girl with good posture. She didn't talk like a ghost or like a girl. She talked like a Tuesday that didn't want to end.

Once, I brought her a book. A novel about time travel. She read it quickly, skipping pages like skipping stones, but she never turned the last one. "Endings are dangerous," she said. "They turn stories into conclusions. I'm not done being a draft."

Some days, we sat in silence and on others, she asked me weird questions.

Sometimes it would be deep, like: "Do you think memories taste different once you forget the bad parts?"

Or sometimes it was random, like: "Do vending machines dream of expired tea?"

And once: "Do you think it's better to be remembered wrong than not at all?"

I didn't have answers to those and she didn't want them. One time, I asked her why she was stuck here.

Why this place? Why this machine? Why this one lousy shoe?

"I guess... I just left something behind. Something that remembered me."

"Your shoe?" I asked.

She blinked. "No. Maybe."

"Then what?"

She paused for so long I thought the scene would end. And then she said:

"Actually, I do remember falling."

"From where?"

She looked up. Not with fear or with nostalgia but with detachment.

"From being remembered."

Indeed, ghosts don't haunt places. They haunt unfinished thoughts.

## 004 – The Tuesday That Stopped

I've learned that absence has a texture.

It's not just the lack of a thing—it's the negative space left behind. The way your eyes keep filling in what isn't there.

The seventh Tuesday came like every other: uninvited and on time. I arrived early this time, with the foolish hope that punctuality might summon the supernatural—but the vending machine buzzed alone and her shoe wasn't there.

Neither was she.

I walked around the corner like a desperate child looking for a lost cat. Three times. Four. I even looked inside the machine's delivery tray, as if she might be hiding inside it.

Nothing.

I looked behind the vending machine. I don't know why. As if maybe, she'd been misplaced like a receipt you swore was in your other pocket.

Still nothing.

It was the first Tuesday since our accidental arrangement that I didn't see her or her shoe. Or that slightly off-kilter smile that looked like it belonged in a photo album that no one kept anymore.

I waited. Because hope is stubborn like that.

5:00.

5:20.

5:45.

Nothing.

The sun didn't care, it set anyway and eventually, I bought a drink. Calpis soda. Her favourite.

Drinking the soda, I thought:

Was she gone? Had I remembered her enough to set her free? Or forgotten her just enough for her to fade?

I kept showing up the next few Tuesdays. Call it foolish or romantic or emotionally masochistic. It didn't matter what it was called and it didn't change the fact that she wasn't there and I wasn't angry, or sad. I was just... empty.

From then on, Tuesdays stopped being sacred. They became just days with slightly more disappointment in them.

Maybe she moved on. Or maybe... I was the one who forgot the right way.

They say ghosts disappear when they're forgotten. But what if they disappear when they're remembered wrong?

Maybe the Tuesdays had ended. Not because she disappeared but because her chapter had.

And mine was still being written.

## 005 – The Tuesday's Left Shoe

It had been eight Tuesdays.

I'd stopped keeping count after six, but it turns out that absence has a calendar of its own, and it never misses a date.

Then, on a humid afternoon that didn't smell like ghosts or goodbyes, I noticed her.

Except—it wasn't her.

Wrong face, wrong height, no ironic half-grin and no Tuesday aura.

But the shoe. The left one, pale blue and familiar. Out of place but perfect.

She—this junior girl with earbuds in and no clue about metaphysical footprints—was wearing the shoe. Mismatched, without concern. A black sneaker on the right foot and the historical loafer on the left.

I pointed, "Where'd you get that?"

She blinked like I'd just asked what day it was in another language.

"Oh this? Found it by the library. Weird, right? But it didn't feel right to throw it away."

I nodded and smiled. I didn't explain and I didn't need to.

"Do you believe in ghosts?" I asked.

She laughed. Not the same but not different enough to ignore.

"Only on Tuesdays," she said as she ran away in a hurry. One shoe in the past. One in the present. And I stood still, watching until she rounded the corner and vanished—not like a ghost, but like someone late for something entirely alive.

I didn't follow her. Instead, I walked to the vending machine. Bought a drink. Of course, the Calpis soda. And sat where we used to sit. On the ground that had held both of us, and now held neither.

She wasn't haunting a vending machine. She was haunting the idea that someone might remember her kindly.

The shoe?

The shoe wasn't a signal. It was a seed and it had sprouted. Not into tragedy, but into a girl who saw something strange and decided to keep it. Because it felt worth keeping.

Sitting there with my Calpis soda, I wondered that you don't move on by forgetting, you move forward by walking with one shoe in the present, and one still echoing in the past.

And now someone else was walking forward—with one ghost fewer behind her.

Or maybe—just maybe—that's what moving on means.

You don't forget the ghost.

You wear their left shoe on a Tuesday and walk anyway.

---The End---

# Author's Afterword

I'm genuinely proud of what this story became—more accurately, what I shaped it into. This is one of the first projects I've written entirely from scratch, without leaning on any prior reference.

Writing this made me happy in a way I hadn't felt before—as though I was finally stepping into the world I always wanted to be in.

The narrative style I used is a blend of prose-like introspective monologue and metafiction. Because of that, I had to make sure everything meant something. Descriptions had to carry weight, and emotions needed to be felt even without using conventional words.

This style is entirely inspired by NISIOISIN. I find it an extraordinary way of storytelling—where every pause, misdirection, or digression becomes part of the meaning itself.

As for the story itself, it's an open book. You, the reader, are free to conclude it however you like. Just like how the ghost didn't believe in endings, I've left this story open too.

Finally, I want to thank each and every one of you who made it to the end and supported this short story. Thank you for motivating me.

I hope to see you again in another story.

Until then, stay safe... and maybe take a second look behind that vending machine.

After all—Tuesdays have a funny way of finding you.

# The Buried Compass Series

## **1. Tuesday's Left Shoe**

2. So... What Are We Blaming Today?

3. The Sidelined Shadow

4. The Voice Amongst the Noise

5. TBD