

# Prologue

Once more she looked over at her mark sheet. How it can be possible? She thought. She had always been a brilliant student, but now she felt as if she left behind.

*How can they even think to flunk me almost in every subject? Did I not deserve to pass the exam?*

And suddenly the wordings of her favourite professor Dr. Kurmi hit her sense,

“Think once more Akshada, you are going to take the dean of your college head on. Do you know how the system works here?” He had said.

“No, sir,” she'd nodded unbelievably.

“This is a jungle Akshada. This is one of the most corrupted systems. Here, mostly admissions happen on a donation-basis, papers leak before the exams and you can always fetch everything like good marks, grades and performance certificates by paying an amount. This is goddamn money making fucking institution. For them, producing good doctors for future don't matter. The only thing that does matter here is money. More than half of students of here get admission by paying a huge bribe. And knowingly you

made the mistake. You simply can't walk into the lion's den freely after taking him head on." She remembered his wordings.

She felt as if her world was crumbling down and immense pain was washing her over. She was badly accompanied by the biting taste of failure. She buried her head in her arms and cried hard- hot tears flowed down her face.

Suddenly she felt the presence of someone. She realized he was there standing just next to her wearing a very fascinating smile and once more she felt suffocation.

*Just get off! You know how badly it hurts me? Your face haunts me like a scary movie. I have always dreamt that you will be the sunshine of my life, but you don't deserve a bit of space in my heart.*

*Just get lost. I goddamn hate you because you became the reason of my existence and disappearance. I can't tell you how cruel you are to me. I hate your name, your shadow, your smile, your affection, your caring nature- in fact I hate everything in you. You are worse than any silently killing drug.*

*You know what is the most painful thing in this world? It's getting forgotten by someone whom you can't ever forget. I always knew that love is full of prickles, but I was ready to hug it as I knew that in between those prickles, there is a beautiful flower that's worth all the bother. Alas! I was wrong. I hate you because no matter how hard I try, I won't be able to forget you for a moment. Hot tears always keep running down my cheeks, and they now look unstoppable.*

*You know, I am tired of being just me. Trust me, I always wanted to be yours, but now I think I need to liberate myself from you. My fake smile may fool this world, but it can't lessen my unbearable pain. I will*

*never, ever stop loving you. You are the first thing I think of every morning and the last thing that stays on my mind every night.*

*We never get what we want; we never want what we get. Love never leaves, just we people do. That's the true mantra of life and I need to accept it at the end. You only want to be my best friend, but my heart cannot afford to be just best friends. I wish I could give you my pain for a moment, not to hurt you, but to make you realize how much it hurts to be left alone.*

"Di, I'm dying."

She suddenly heard the hissing voice of Musaib and it once more brought her back to the reality. She dementedly swivelled her neck back.

"Oh god, no," she yelped in pain and almost jumped over to him. He was struggling hard against the bed and the blood was oozing out from his nostrils and spreading out everywhere. She horrifically put her hand on his nostrils, but it only slipped faster through her lanky fingers and it stained like red rose in her hand. She stared up at him and felt he would just speak. There was a fading grin on his face.

"No, Musaib you will be okay."

"I know di, now no one can save me. How long you will fight for me. I really don't want to make you worry this way. I simply want to get rid of this crap life."

"Please don't say like this."

"Di, it really hurts too much. It has now spread all over my body." He hissed, pointing finger to his chest, "I really don't want to live anymore. It's too much of pain and struggle."

She gently held her hand on his head, "you will be all right. You are my angel."

He pulled a weak smile, blood still oozing out his nostrils. "But angel needs to be in heaven." He murmured.

"If ever heaven calls to take you away, I would cut off your wings to stay with me." She snuggled against his chest.

"*Di*, you are so good. I really don't want to go away, but I have to."

She slowly patted her forehead, "do you hate me?"

"Nope"

"Please say you hate me Musaib. I really couldn't do anything for you." she voiced gruff.

"No *di*, you are just best. I know you are doing too much for me. It's okay *di*, sometimes life sucks."

The maturity in his words was too much for a kid of eight. His world famous tomato like cheeks made him look cute even in that horrifying state.

"How can I see even the slightest pain in your eyes Musaib? I am so very, very sorry. I have talked to doctors in Delhi." She consoled.

"You know what *di*," he pulled a warm grin, "when we feel close to death, life just flashes before our eyes but we are left with no other choices."

His voice just trailed off and she could notice that he felt desperately for a pulse as his chest slowly stopped rising and falling. The only sound in the room was the whistling of wind through the window. Her tears released with more intensity.

She just cried and cried and cried. She was repressed and depressed beyond belief. Every day she found him getting fainted off and she just wished that the time could have stopped. She knew she was losing him- Slowly, inexorably. Every day she felt the guilt haunting her for not doing anything for him after being a medical student.

She found him struggling hard to breath. She hurriedly ran to catch her phone and dialled the number of Dr. Kurmi.

“Sir, please help me. His condition is worsening every jiffy.” “I told you not to raise your voice against him. I knew something like this would happen. We can't do anything now. Just pray to God. . .” before he could say anything, she disconnected the call.

She felt as if someone had stabbed into her back. The searing pain of hundred of broken bones stroke her consciousness. Her sense began to fail. Her hands traversed over his face. She held her fingers around his mouth cleaning the stain of blood. She kissed his damp forehead and helped him to stand gently.

She lit a candle and both knelt down in front of a small altar. Musaib wore his small *namaj* cap. Candlelight bathed their soft faces in an amber glow. She whispered prayers. The light caught off of her bracelet and it glittered like little stars.

*Hey god, you are my light in the darkness, you are my strength and imagination. You are the destroyer and protector. You're my sight when I'm blind. I know you can change everything. Especially now when you know everything which I know. Please grant me strength to*

*fight for him. I'm just too damn tired. Please god, please show me a way out.'*

And she wondered if her prayer would really be heard.