

Sample Chapter 1
Title- Shades of Shadows
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Dark! was it?

Dark indeed it was when I had first opened my eyes...I...remember clearly.

Opened...eyes..?

Yes, with the roll of curtains, my eyes from the comfortable corridors of my sockets, sighted an ambience; a bit of ordinary and a little extra, an illimitable stretch of monotonousness and homogenization. Silence was monotonized and darkness was homogenized. Black was artfully crafted into the ambience of the place and the precision of every cut incorporated was worth admiration and applause but I didn't know how to feel those feelings, back then.

First encounter with consciousness and I found myself standing in a vast dark hall, blindfolded, with not even a ray of light ready to intervene between me and darkness. Silence, an excellent alter ego, was acting as an abettor and an accomplice to darkness, in that vast hall, jettisoning all the dots of encouragement. With cold eyes, I looked for them in that homogenized space but couldn't spot a single dot; not a thing my eyes could climb up to or jump down from, not a thing my eyes could swim in or walk on, not a thing my eyes could talk to or listen to.

That was the place of my birth. That was the moment of my birth. Though it's been a long journey, I can still breathe the first impression of that desolated place; shabbily treated scratched wallpapers, holding loosely, onto the surrounding walls. Even now its details exist in my heart, not as faint-line memory but as solid-bitter cubes, which, at the slightest of my poke, will get dissolved and add bitterness to the sip of the sipper.

What could I say to add to the sweetness of the sip?

No matter what I said, sweetness would still be a distant dream.

It was an envelope of darkness surrounded by merciless cloud of surprise and chilled smoke of unrest, I was born into. It was dead air, I was breathing. It was dead air, I was breeding. Standing on the edge of my existence, holding onto weak balustrades, which could rip off any moment, I was looking for a light. I was standing on the edge, knowing I could be tossed into deep-chilled-merciless existence of ordinariness, where hope, also, was only a disguise.

When action stumbles hope sinks and when hope stumbles, everything sinks. Such was the condition of my heart at that moment that I felt I would sink. I hardly knew how to proceed and where to proceed. But I knew where hope ends, wait begins.

And then, dots of encouragement appeared.

Dots of encouragement...?

Yes, in that monotonousness of silence and darkness, my eyes spotted tiny white dots.

Mirage...?

A dot, as pure as white, appeared in the middle of hemisphere. It was a treat to watch, a sudden soundless blob in the black hemisphere. Invisible waves out of that creation touched my cheeks like soft hands of a dark angel. It appeared tiny and unimpressive in the beginning but with lot of focusing and refocusing, it became prominent and looked like white living sapling, planted on the inner side of black bowl. Soon the black bowl sprouted with soundless blobs and filled the whole hemisphere with white saplings. That was the first most beautiful sight I had seen. I can still recall the freshness of that moment, when I had first spotted those tiny specks.

This perfect unison of two ordinary existences formed the most extraordinary blend in the heart of dark sky. It was exhilarating to see white asterisks twinkling and murmuring in the backdrop of black drape. The white saplings were so salient in their outlook that I felt like plucking few and hiding them safe in my secret pockets, but I forgot that I was the Gardener of this lovely Garden and those were my flowers. Like any other mind, I was sure about few things and not so sure about few.

Though I was sure it was dark, I wasn't quite sure why? Though I was sure I was awake, I wasn't sure if I was lying down with bowl on my top or standing with bowl standing upright against my face. Though I was sure I was breathing, I wasn't sure why? Though I was sure I was seeing, I wasn't sure why?

In midst of all these, whats and whys, I didn't realize, I had embraced the black inverted bowl sprouted with white saplings but again I wasn't sure, why?

Answer to these, I guess, lies in our limitation to decide upon all the choices we make.

Like a new born, I too had no choice about my place and timing of birth. Like a new born, I too had no choice about my companions and benefactors.

But like a new born, I couldn't protest, I couldn't cry, I couldn't be angry and I couldn't seek attention.

Why feel sad about something you don't control? Why feel proud about something you don't control?

Having accepted the silent spell of dark sky and my limitations in that shade of existence, I stood motionless and waited for the spell to end.

The spell was finally broken, when a lightning of curiosity struck me and I got curious. I got curious about my existence. I got curious about the glitter of the extravagant union. I got curious about the precision of black cut. But as I thrived to quench the thirst of my curiosity, the hackneyed pattern disappointed me again.

All, my eyes could see was tiny glitter on black canvas. Shades of feelings changed inside me again and everything looked hollow and superficial. It was then that a sense of compunction hit me and I closed my eyes with a very heavy heart. Such was the weight of that moment that I was almost touching the floor of ordinariness, filled with chilly inimical fluid. Soon I found myself wrapped in blanket of fear.

I got afraid. I got afraid of the situation, and I got afraid of the ticking moments which I assumed would stop anytime, soon, to destroy my beingness.

Fear is a weak force. It reverses the ripening effect of any soul

Unfortunately at that moment, I was holding the finger of fear, trying to negotiate with the wavy patch instead of enjoying the crests and troughs of the wave. Instead of enjoying the beauty of black canvas and white glitter, I was looking for an escape route.

Escape route...?

I closed my eyes out of fear. I closed my eyes to escape the frisson of unfriendly fluid and to escape the imaginary wrath of ticking moments, but opened it in a flash as soon as I sensed, sound of another wave approaching me. I opened my eyes, as my heart experienced a change in the shade of shadow.

Two waves, ordinary and extra, communed once again, to form a perfect union of colors. With change in the shade of shadow my inner self cheered, applauded and exclaimed in joy.

Dark glass of night had broken. The shattered pieces collapsed then regrouped instantaneously to form a new shade of glass. Transparent and vivid this time, with all the possible shades of a lively spirit.

The new glass reflected a red-face, peeping out, from below the line of demarcation. He had a beguiling gloriole around his face. It was that romantic aurora that gave me the first hazy glimpse of my beautiful kingdom.

The moment froze in my heart as he extended his red hands to infinity and shook hands with every soul looking in his direction. He animated every particle he touched. He injected a new breath in every soul he kissed. His magnetic touch opened hearts of every soul like an unfolding flower. Every animized soul stretched their arms to embrace the visitor cheerfully.

Every soul smiled, to acknowledge his efforts. He was a magician, vivifying every soul magically, painting every soul magically and giving a new shade to the kingdom.

The red-face, who was peeping till now, from behind the line of demarcation, started easing himself, out of the azimuth glass. With a brush in his hand and smile on his face, he started painting the dark bowl in benevolent shades of blue, green, yellow, orange, red, white and purple, beginning from the eastern corridor.

A patch of white cloud, floating in the middle of sky, turned silvery. A pool of water, on the floor, turned golden. All the souls gracefully welcomed the introduction of fresh colors into their dark lives. His magical brush soon left its impactful taste all over the bowl and translated my company from asterisk saplings to bluish curtains.

By now darkness was swept off the floor, silence was broken and red-face had taken a comfortable position. A new humble life, ready to be introduced, waited at the door. I could hear its desperate knock. This transition from smoky black bowl to romantic aurora, melodious andante and satiny whispers amazed me. I felt an adrenaline rush of excitement and curiosity within my boundary and saw my cells peeping out of my secret windows with curious eyes, to explore the beautiful beauty. Just like a baffled infant, surrounded by mysteries and trying hard to understand the ongoing, I too was caught in that web trying hard to connect each thread to its origin but was getting entangled each time. I didn't want to give up so soon but I suppose the web just had too many threads.

Journey from the deepest ridge to the highest cliff was so quick and prompt that it left me speechless and spellbound. I had never expected such a turnaround in such short span. And I had never witnessed anything so divinely pleasurable. Hence my heart decided to emboss it on its papyrus background as I couldn't afford to lose such panoramic landscapes and beauteous sceneries.

My beautiful beauty was a heavenly paradise, unparallel was her blessed contour and incomparable was her attire. She was seated in the cradle of nature, surrounded by majestic peaks sparkling at the onset of golden beams, tall trees whispering in each other's ears and colorful butterflies aromatizing the whole space with colorful source of sweetness.

Heart of my beauty was occupied by a silent water body, beset on all sides by tall shrubs, cheerful leaves and green grass. It was tranquil azure, and carried image of blue sky and was the official broadcaster of all the grayish transitions moving in the sky. Cool breeze caused low waves on the chest of Lake and aroused the hearts of tiny creatures floating inside.

Tree-of-Love stood confidently on the western edge of Lake. He was home to swarm of dragonflies, horde of parrots, drove of sparrows, group of mynahs and flock of crown birds.

A band of oscines performed melodiously from their seats on top of these branches and skipped down later on wet glittering green carpet. Their hopping on the wet floor left behind an appreciable design, although complex in nature.

The lovely Garden, along the Lake, had exotic bouquets of flowers arranged benignantly in the backdrop of green leaves. The reds of roses, whites of lilies, yellows of marigolds, violets of tulips and pinks of dahlias had perfected the art of beautiful pattern. Stripped violet, twiny pink, white missy, shady blue, dotted red heart, greeny bells and curvy yellow had formed a comely garland of flowers around her neck. Apart from comely flowers, she was also the nursery of rare trees. Yellow grooved tree, mountain blue berry tree, tapering rose maple tree, white flossy tree, green bubbling tree, rainbow tree, violet shower tree, orange cloak tree and butterfly wing tree had formed a perfect mesh on the chest of her tapering hill.

The band of colors, drawn out in the form of arcs, in the sky looked like bandanna bespangled in belle's hair. The glowing rainbow added glamour to the beauty of the place. A tiny stream took an arterial route and trickled down to the heart. It was the life line for every soul there.

Air was rich in fragrance, ambience was romantic and red-face looked handsome.

Whole space looked benign; fresh and full of life. Every soul in that infinity looked extremely happy.

Shades of blue and green dominated the joyous canvas. Small birds fluttered their way through Garden, Lake, stream, flowers and trees. Breeze found their way behind these small birds. Overall she was a picturesque portrayal of a wonderland.

I named my beautiful beauty, Kausar. Such was the charm of Kausar that everyone including me was completely absorbed in her. The air was blowing to attract her, the Sun was glowing to charm her, birds were flying to capture her, flowers were blooming to ravish her and sky was dressing to enchant her. Every animated soul was trying to please her, to find a place in her heart and why not? After all she was truly a peach.

The red-glory celebration which transformed the mood of shadow, in Kausar, was a real delight to watch. Midway through the celebration, all the souls could be seen dancing to the tunes of songs of nature. Song of Nature, a beautifully rhymed tune, was entrapping the attention of all the Souls of Nature. Everyone got deeply involved in the red-glory celebration. For every tune, there was a tap, there was a clap and there was a rap. Each rap was followed by an explosion of red color infusing millions of pigments of enjoyment into atmosphere, further deepening the color of rabidness between the Souls of Nature. I too enjoyed that flavor of rabidity in the company of jovial Sun, lofty peaks, tall trees, green leaves, lush grass, exotic flowers, still water, bubbly stream, sweet birds, rich air and lovely rainbow. I was grateful for the company of such benign friends. They all looked mad in the red-glory celebration. They all looked happy in each other's company. It certainly was a wondrous existence. Then must have been mysterious...?

I know every wondrous existence automatically assumes a mysterious tag and every mysterious tag is misunderstood for its complexity, when as a matter of fact it could be the simplest form of existence. All it takes is diligent reading and patient listening to understand the thought process behind that simple-looking, complex arrangement. Such was the case when I began my journey sometime back in the lap of black bowl.

After the grand conclusion of red-glory celebration, things looked bright and promising. I found myself in the company of a comfortable red boat, sailing smoothly and assured of no other surprises. But just when things looked sunny, I sensed the presence of an alien wave. The alien wave, along with it, carried an image. The solidified image looked different from everyone I had seen till now.

While every soul in Kausar looked red, he was colorless.

Air was red so was mountain, Lake was red so was earth, birds were red so were butterflies, trees were red so were rays. While everyone was rejoicing the germination of life after the divine shower, he stood upstage. There was something unusual about him, which kept him distant from everyone; I named him human.

I am an excellent teller but poor helper, excellent observer but poor influencer, excellent recorder but poor decoder, excellent thinker but poor interferer. Like everyone else I am also an excellent poor.

I know. I know

The merry-making in Kausar continued whole day. Everyone was so deeply involved with each other that they didn't notice the presence of this alien image in the middle of their arena. With each passing moment the jubilation turned emotionally intense; thumping music, loud roars, tenor voices, bright lights and grand stage, sent such intensified wavelengths that it created a resonance of red, red, the colour of love, care and affection.

But all this had no affect on the shell of human. He stood there motionless, gazing curiously at the still water of dusky Lake. He looked out of context, in a way similar to my state of mind few moments ago. His eyes were brimming with questions. Questions, even, unknown to me but I could guess he was looking for something.

May be he was looking for his look alike, for his alter ego

Isn't it worth a thought that no matter where we go, we always look for our own alike, akin and alter-ego in whose company we can be totally comfortable and safe, rather than opening up new channels of communication, which could possibly give our lives a new dimension? Why do we create an artificial boundary around us and filter the entry?

True

My first day, in Kausar, was full of shade transformations. What initially began as black shade full of apprehensions and suspicions had turned into a colourful shade full of vividness and liveliness. What initially began as sad lullaby had tuned into a melodic octave. I was happy to see such shades and hear such tunes. I was happy, as happy as happiness.

Red-face which had been travelling across the heart of the blue sky had reached the line of demarcation once again, but on the opposite side this time. Extrapolating his locus of journey so far I could guess he would be disappearing behind those curtains soon, enforcing a curfew of darkness upon Kausar once again.

Still I prayed.

Spectacular red-glory celebration began once again, this time to bid farewell to mighty Sun, who had guided us throughout the day. His intensity had reduced. He looked dull still he showered his divine love from the horizon. His face had drooped and he looked sad, may be at the thought of leaving this beautiful kingdom. Soon he descended from where he stood, like a red-drop settling down to the bottom of fluid. As he began hiding behind the line of demarcation, silence gripped the air, birds returned to their nests, water settled down and tenor voices turned into bass.

I too joined his farewell ceremony but I was hopeful that this couldn't possibly be the end of his glory. His glory, which had pushed darkness into dungeon couldn't die this sad death.

Just before he drew out his quilt and slept, he waved a final goodbye from behind the line of demarcation. He then extended his hands to infinity, shook hands with every soul and embraced every soul. He greeted Souls of Nature benignly, this time to dab them to bed, this time to bid them farewell. Every soul was sad at losing that lovely friend but still there was merrymaking. Such was the zeal in every heart that they were happily saluting their friend's farewell. No one was sure of meeting each other again yet they clapped, danced and romanced. Even I wasn't sure if I would meet him again; my eyes benumbed at that thought.

I sat dejected and thought "Is it the end?"

Yet another change in shade flavor.

The dark bowl had reappeared and I closed my eyes. I closed my eyes in despair, in hope of disguising the trouble but found myself, only deceiving self.

Next moment I decided to open my eyes and face my dark kingdom. I prepared myself to face a transformed reflection. My mind imagined a picture, for me, of haunted souls, abject plight of picturesque scenery and mashed pride of Kausar under the heavily priced ego of silence, yet I opened my eyes. But the picture, my eyes saw, surprised me. My negative feelings disappeared as soon as I found my wonderland basking in white light. The black bowl, the magical black bowl had hoisted a charming white-face exactly in the place of red-face. She was showering white light on Kausar. My heart cheered at yet another change in shade flavor.

Stage was set once again, around calm waters of Lake this time, for the white-glory celebration. Flickering candles were suspended in air, new set of larks joined in a new formation, slight breeze tickled every participant and white-face glowed, along with her other couturiers in the waters of Lake. The celebration which began with dawn had morphed a little but was still on.

While my heart was glued to the grand stage, where celebration was on, my eyes were constantly watching human. My eyes were closely watching his moves. I was following him from the time he sat beside Lake, gazed at calm waters, threw pebbles to bestir and walked into his emptiness. That was at the time, when, Sun was setting and the whole nature was bidding him farewell. Even at that moment he was not moved by the sound of jubilation of Souls of Nature; instead he preferred to overhear his sounds of silence.

This time again, when the whole world had regrouped to rejoice and celebrate white-glory, he didn't, at all, express his willingness to participate in white-glory celebration and instead sat mum, close to the centre stage with his eyes closed in serenity. He tried to look as calm and serene as he could but beneath he was deeply agitated, beneath he was looking for something, something which would find him peace. At that moment, even I couldn't guess what could that be?

White-glory celebration continued for a long time and dipped Souls of Nature in red ink like the red-glory celebration. During this celebration, whole sphere mystified and coated itself in cherubic taste of love. It

was impossible for anyone to distant herself from this intensified aura. Every soul was hanging onto a part of this cloud, in hope of a shower, of love.

When it was over and things settled down in Kausar, a mysterious silence gripped souls of Kausar. Dark sky, in the company of charming Moon and twinkling stars, looked pleasing.

Surely must have been...

Although I can't draw a clear line of division to separate the timings of red and white glory celebration, a slight discoloration in east can be assumed for that.

Shade changed once again, this time on eastern horizon. It was time for dawn's red-glory celebration.

Red-face reappeared from behind the line of demarcation and what followed that, was a maddening and thundery brouhaha, in a rhythmic style.

Life in Kausar was all about red and white glory celebration, rejoicing the gift of benediction, associating closely with Souls of Nature, understanding the language of nature, enjoying the music of nature and singing and dancing to its tunes. I was proud owner of that wonderful kingdom.

In days to come, life in the kingdom of Kausar aggrandized itself and adorned itself with innumerable feats of rarest combination. Everyone was in love with everyone. Sun was in love with earth, stars were in love with Moon, Moon was in love with darkness, air was in love with trees, trees were in love with clouds, birds were in love with sky, sky was in love with Lake, Lake was in love with stream and stream was in love with mountains. Love had stitched them all in such a benign thread that they all loved the flavor of their soused bespoke linen.

But love had not yet been able to impregnate the heart of human. Although he was present all the time, in the arena, at the time of celebrations, it never had an effect on his heart. Possibly, due to his unwillingness, to mingle with Souls of Nature. Possibly, due to his unwillingness, to allow cool breeze inside. Possibly, due to his unwillingness, to breathe fresh smell.

Wish he had allowed it all.

One evening while the red-glory celebration was on, he ignored its presence and instead sat on the rock, watched Sun lay back in his bed and heard giggling waters of Lake.

"Bestow him with a gift" I whispered

Later on, he lied down beside the Lake and looked up with befuddled eyes, like I did on my first day. He looked at tempting Moon and murmuring stars but couldn't much appreciate their presence. After awhile I saw him ambling down his valley of dreams.

Dream valley is a wonderful place for a pleasure trip. It gives, a heart, the freedom to fabricate and consider any combination of colours. It evenly spreads out papyrus surface to paint, with umpteen numbers of colours to choose from. It is a place for fearless expression of desires and often acts as secretive meeting ground. Dream valley is a beauteous place, and most of the time, synonym for love. His subconscious decision was aimed at ploughing unploughed pages of Kausar in hope of finding sparkling stones of memorable memories.

Considering his lonely days, so far, it was a good choice.

But even in that mighty land it was all going quiet and silent for him. He looked troubled even in arms of night seraph.

Was that his singularity or forced exhibition of a borrowed character under immense pressure?

I couldn't know. I decided to follow him silently instead.

Knock, Knock, Knock, a sudden knock and auricular whisper on his door woke him up. He abandoned his moseying and came out of his dream valley at once. He looked bemused. The whisper he heard was unique in its own sense.

Whisper...?

The rich secrets of dream valley opened limitless doors for him with that knock. Key was to build a palace of dreams upon that faint whisper. It cheered him but only for a moment. He turned restless after that short cheer and looked for the origin of that whisper in order to solve his mystery.

Excited and confused after the incident, he searched the sky, the Lake, the Moon and the stars. He even looked into his own heart for a clue but couldn't find a thing. He couldn't solve the mystery of stray whisper. Disappointed he sat down and allowed his heart to think.....

*In the middle of night
when I was busy painting stars
a silent knock on my door woke me up
Tick Tick Tick
the hands were ticking
when a seraph snuggled into my dream valley*

*I woke up moments later
with my eyes wide open
but could only feel warm presence of her fragrance
I looked around for her
but could only find her comforting reverberations*

*I set myself up moments later
to find that mysterious tickle
in the darkness of night
I asked the charming moon and the crawling wind
I asked the twinkling stars and the carting lake
but could only find ignorant faces*

*I closed my eyes moments later
travelled back in time
waited for her to walk into my dreams again
waited for her to knock again
and say 'Hi' this time*

*I opened my doors moments later
laid down red-carpet
lighted candles along
for her to seek my abode
and walk through that*

*But moments later
I am still waiting
for that one glimpse once again
for that one moment once again
seek me, bless me
seek me, bless me*