Sootputra: The Unsung Hero

Chapter 33: Son of Sun

Will this last my whole life?

Will no one will acknowledge me based on my talents and skills?

Will I be devoid of every deserving right?

Will everything be taken away from me just because of my birth?

I had the bow, I had the means, I had the skills. I was worthy.

I am worthy.

For Once I thought that, This time.........

Maybe this time will be different. This time the recognition will be based on talent not birth. This time my worth will shine….

The Girl.........

The Only woman I fell for in my life, was sitting in front of me.

Was I too selfish? Was it too much to ask for, just once.......

Just once......Something, ……..someone for me.

But still, she rejected me. She only saw me for what I was born with not what I had. What I have become.

Is this fate? Is this how my every moment of life is going to be?

Longing for something.......for someone, and denied the right to even try?

Is this how it's going to be? If it is then I better stop. This scorching agony has become unbearable now. If my life is just a constant pain then I better end it.

No more pain.......No more suffering.......No more longing......

I manifested a divine dagger within my hand moved it closer to my throat. The snake fang shaped dagger was only a few inches away when he spoke.

"Stop, son"

A voice, An heavenly echoing voice,

looked back, left, right

No one was there.........

"Where are you looking, Son?"

I looked up.

A chariot was pulled only a few meters above me. It was pulled by Seven Horses. All of which were on a standstill. The chariot was all white like the divine horses. But it didn't had any wheels. It was still in the space, as if it was hovering in air. The chariot shone so brightly that it made difficult for anyone to see the one riding it. I felt an instant attraction towards it. It was calling me. My Armor had just materialized on in its own. It had never moved an inch from my body but now had started slowly vibrating. As if it wanted to leave me for the man above.

The Brightness from the chariot subsided a little and the One Riding it came through. It was Surya Deva. I've have only visualized him through the illustrated paintings and stories. But seeing him in person, I was not very off with my imagination, As if I have seen him before.

The Suryadeva was intently looking down towards me. He was wearing his traditional white cream scarf that blown towards the sun and was wearing a Kavach(Armor) very similar to mine. It intrigued me at first. But then I realized that there was no Kundal on his ears.

Could it be?

"Oh Great Lord, You have blessed me with your presence.

How can I ever repay you? What can a puny devotee like me do to earn your blessing?"

I said, happy with the fact that I have finally seen a divine immortal being in my life.

"Stop, with all this gibberish.

I just want a hug from my son."

The God said slowly descending from his chariot and coming closer to me.

"Your..... your son!?" I was stumped. I didn't know what the god meant?

Which son? Whose son? Is it a test of some kind?

The god now stood beside me. "Forgive me , Oh Lord.

But I don't-------"

But before I could complete my sentence, I was already being embraced by the divine being. Not just being embraced, he was also sobbing. Though no tears were there to prove it.

He was so warm, but still shone only a little. For some reason I felt an urge to return the hug. His embrace was a little tight but also comforting. In that moment I realized that His armor was same as mine and the vibration in mine from before has also stopped.

"Forgive me, I've never been much of a friend with those few drops of water.

But man, sometimes I just miss them so much." The God said Loosening his grip.

"Karna, What you were just going to do ?" He hit my head “Don’t even think about it again."

I was still a log. I didn't know what was happening. Why this immortal one was calling me his son. Why is he, being a god acting so casually and carefree towards me?

"Karna, I know there are many questions and confusion in your head right now.

So Let me clear most of it by answering the most important one.

It's true Karna.

You are My Son."

The god said with a proud voice. He had such a happy face that day, It's as if his burden has been lifted. A joy so great that not even an eclipse could hide his brightness that day.

"Surya Deva, What are you saying?

The names of my mother and father are Adhirath and Radha.

I am a Sootputra, Always have been, Always called one, Always rejected as one.

How can a mere man like me be your Son. I am Nothing." I knew the god was lying. He has to be. It was some kind of test or a joke on my miserable existence.

"You are wrong, son.

You may have been called, remembered and been rejected as a Sootputra.

But you've always been, are and will be my Son.

A SuryaPutra (The Son of Sun).

SuryaPutra Karna."

The god said in a high tone with his head held high looking towards the sky.

"This is a joke, this has to be.” I said frustrated.

“All my life I have been treated as nothing more than a piece of coal.

But now you tell me that I’ve always been a diamond.

Don't play with me god." My mouth spouted hot embers.

I didn't know if I should have said that or not. But I was very angry that day and didn't care or considered anything. The most disastrous day of my life and he is here to just make it much worse.

"Call me father.” He said while I just shrugged him off.

“Karna, Please.

Call me father.

Just once....... "

The god said averting his gaze from me as if didn't wanted to see me in the eye.

"How can I?

If you truly were my father? Then where were you?

Where were you when I was rejected by Guru Drona?

Where were you when I was cursed my Acharya?

Where were you when I was denied the right to challenge him?

Where were you when I was insulted by the only woman I have ever loved in my life?

Where were you when I was denied the right to her because of my birth?"

The atmosphere fell silent. Nothing can be heard not even our breathing.( If gods breath, that is.)

"Karna you have suffered so much, endured so much.

You have sacrificed your Origin, You have endured all those curses, you have lost the only person you loved.

Yet through all of that I wasn't there for you. Not even when you needed me the most. But I always admired you. How you struggled so much, but never gave up. You have suffered so much that you of all people know the meaning an worth of a single life more than anyone else. I am always proud of you for that.

And when You decided to give up, When you decided to sacrifice your life.

I couldn't hold myself.

I know this isn't enough.I know you won't be able to forgive me, son.

But please if you can.......

Please try to understand.

I was bound by the oath given to someone."

"Oath given to whom?" I said angrily towards the god interrupting him.

"Your Mother."

The God said simply.

I was cracked that instant, my heart broke in two. I couldn't even express what I felt that day. I knew I won't like the answer that was to come but I still wanted to know.

"What kind of a mata(mother) doesn't want her child?

What could be the reason she forsake me?"

My lips shivered as I asked the god with heavy teary eyes. I didn't even knew i had another Mata. How can this be a secret from me?

What was she like? Where was she?

Who was she?

"I can't tell you Karna.

As I told you I have made a promise, a vow to that woman. A promise that I can't break. You know the worth of a promise, right?

But I can assure you Karna, I never abandoned you. I have always watched over you. Always cared for you -----"

"Is she alive?" I asked with a breaking heavy voice, again stopping him in a mid-sentence.

"Can you at least tell me, is she alive?" My eyes were looking in a slightly downward gaze and my lips were starting to dry.

"Yes, she is" the god said now in a grief and with guilt.

"I can't believe it.

My whole life, my parents, my brother, my friends, everything was just a façade, a fat lie.

And I still don't know who my real mother is." Sitting beside the edge of the bath.

"Karna, Is there any way I can-----" god said in an assuring voice while extending his hands towards my head.

"Please, Don't......" I stopped him in his tracks and backed off. "I still need some time to process all this.

Please, Can you give me a moment. "

That day I saw his face turning away. No smile, no warmth, no glow, no gleam. He knew that this was something I had to deal myself. This was something a father can't help his son with.

"Of course, I understand." Raising his right arm.

"If you ever want to see me again just call any time during the day.

I will come to you."

With that he dissolved in powdery sparkles and flew away with the wind. The chariot was also gone. Though I couldn't hear any horse or their galloping.

I didn't knew what to feel, What to say, what to think? The only thing I knew for sure was that, to confirm all of this there was only one way. I stood on my feet and left the bath that instant.

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Crows had started to feats on the dead ones. The hungry vultures had also joined the fray, the echo of their voices vibrated in the air. A foul smell carried by the wind engulfed the two aura emanating men on the field. As Karna continued to tell, Krishna went silent. And not just with words, as if he didn’t wanted to move a muscle.

“Karna, I…. I didn’t know. It took such a toll on you.” Krishna said.

“I thought that my life could not take any more weird turns, but it surprised me at every corner.

There was always a lie, always a secret. And if by some chance there was none, there was always the curses or insults.” Karna chuckled a little.

“Sometimes I yearned for a simple life, like that of a farmer. But they were just one more to the list of unreachable things, by that time.” His smile turned to gurgle.

“Ever since I remember, I just wanted to do the right thing. Just wanted save people, my people.” His voice was slow and soft.

“So why is it that my own forsake me?” Karna stopped.

“I can’t say anything that will make you feel better Karna. You …..

You are the Unsung tragedy in all this…..” Krishna sighed. His eyes went up. His face was emotionless, neither sad or happy. A grim look in his eyes.

“I don’t know how the world will remember you, but they sure won’t call you … a villain.”

“Huh … Your face reminds me of my mother. She was nearing a faint when I asked her about it……”

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Maa’s unconditional love filled smile, that covered her face whenever she saw me suddenly vanished.

“Maa, Father is it true?

Please tell me it's not, please.” I said pantingly.

Adhirat and Radha were quiet but their teary faces were enough for me to know the truth. Maa left our side and after a few moments came back with a piece of red cloth in her hand.

“This.........This is what you were wrapped in, the morn’ng when we found you on the banks of Ganga. He brought you home. We knew from the cloth that you were of a higher birth but......” Radha stopped as though the next words had wrapped her tongue and didn't wanted to come out.

“But we didn't know who were your parents and what your origin was..........

And .......And we didn't had a child of ours despite being married for so many years. We....we got a little selfish and took you as our own and treated you as our own son. We never told you about your origins fearing that upon learning you will............. leave us.........." Radha Maa said crying and hiding her face with her saree.

“I'm sorry Karna........" Adhiratha spoke. Hiding his face from me. “We betrayed your trust.

Even though we got so much love from you and even when we were so much depended on you.

In the end we were just two selfish beings fulfilling our dreams by trampling our son's.

We know you can't forgive us but please if you can .......

Please don't hate us!...”

I fell to my knees devastated by the things I just heard. A thousand needles were poking my heart. My mind was unable to think anything.

How can a parent do that to their child? How can a person act like that while looking at his child's face?

How can one be so emotionless?

I grabbed both of them as tightly as I could. On that day I couldn't hold my tears no matter how hard I tried.

“You have given me so much.

An abandoned child with no parents, no place, no origins.............

and you took him in!?

Loved him more than their own son.

Protected him from all harms even if it meant putting yourself in danger. Even when it wasn’t your place to do so.”

My sobbing wasn't stopping. I didn't wanted it to stop.

“How will I ever repay you in this life time. I can't do anything for you that even comes close to the things that you have done for this fool.”

My life will always be yours, I thought.

“I will always be your son and Shon will always be my little brother.

I have always been called a Sootputra but now I am proud to call myself one.”

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Maa questioned me about how I came to know about it. I didn’t wanted her scolding by telling her that her eldest son was going to commit suicide. So I just fabricated a story about Surya Deva. And when his name came up, I remembered that I had a duty to fulfill. In that evening I left for my kingdom, travelling head fast in night.

The next morning in the bath………..

I knew what he wanted to hear. I knew the word that would bring smile and familiar warmth on his face.

“Father........

Father, does she know about me? Does she know who I am now or what I have become?” The smile soon vanished.

“Sorry Karna I can't tell you. I am bound by my vow.” He said

“So you can't even tell me that.Huh… Guess, I will never be able to meet her in this lifetime. “

The thumping in my heart turned into aching. In a way I wished I had not known about her. At least this way I would not have woken up every morning thinking about her. Whether she was in the same city or kingdoms apart? Whether she was a goddess or a Rakshas(Demon). Or just a regular old woman. Every old lady in the street, in the palace, were now feeling somewhat more familiar. I Wondered If she felt the same about me? Wondered if she thought about me when she had her second child? Did he even reminded her of me? Did she even cried once for me?

Now I knew who the woman in my dream was. And why I always felt a strong connection to her.

“Still, I thank you father for you have pulled me out of certain darkness that gripped me. Now I know what I am here for and I will not give up until everyone acknowledges me for who I am.

“Of course, now you can tell them that you are my son, a Suryaputra. You will not be denied any right from now on. Your Birth is greater than even those of the Royal Bloods.”

“No father!!” I interjected “ I have already promised mata Radha and Pita Adhirat that Until and unless my real mother comes and accepts me in front of the whole samaajh.

I will continue to live my life as a Sootputra. The title given to me by birth.

“But Karna.......” He was shocked. I had to calm him down.

“Don't worry, I'll always be your son father, but for me My real parents will always be Maa Radha and father Adhirath. “

Surya Deva, though sad tried to smile hiding his true emotions but still proud of his son and his values.

"Karna, I respect your wishes.

Before we part though.

Can you please, If you find it in your heart?

Can you forgive me?" The God was again averting his gaze but this time it looks like not just from me but the whole world.

"Of course, I already have.

Father.” I said finally lifted of the grief that held me that day.

I was content that day. So much so that i wanted to celebrate that moment each upcoming day of my life.

The moment i received so much from my parents and two fathers.

And therefore I announced that whoever came to me asking for daan(Charity) during my bath time, He or she will never go empty handed.