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***1. SAMAYRA'S POV***

***She was broken, with scars that told her story****.*

The rain poured down, matching my gloomy mood. The usual energy of Mumbai was hidden behind the grey sky. I stood at my window, lost in the sound of the raindrops.

Ishanya's call interrupted my reverie. "Hey Sam!! Did you get the parcel?"

"Parcel? Ishanya, my birthday is still far away," I said, laughing.

"Arre, I know yaar, but I sent it early. I'm busy with my cousin's wedding here in New York. I wanted to ensure it reaches you on time," Ishanya explained.

She sent me a gift for my so-called birthday, which is still many days away, but she gets more excited about my birthday than I do.

"Okay, I'll check. But you shouldn't have sent it so early," I teased.

"I had to! Besides, I'll be back before your birthday. We can celebrate then," Ishanya said enthusiastically.

Just as I was about to ask, "How's Vivaan and little Rehan?" Ishanya interrupted the conversation.

"Sorry, I'm getting called for a function. Catch you later!"

The line went dead.

I smiled, missing my friend already.

I decided to freshen up. Wrapped in a plush towel, I stood before my closet, a haven of colors and textures. Racks of intricately embroidered kurtas and sarees lined one side, while Western wear filled the other. A shelf displayed my favorite accessories - statement jewellery and scarves.

"Something cheerful," I thought, choosing a vibrant yellow kurta with delicate floral patterns pairing it with distressed denim jeans and slip-on sneakers. Matching earrings completed the outfit. The brightness lifted my mood.

I styled my hair, letting loose waves cascade down my back. A light dusting of makeup enhanced my features - a subtle blush, defined eyebrows, and a soft lip gloss.

Before leaving, I paused at my puja room, seeking comfort in the familiar ritual. I lit a diya, said a silent prayer, and applied a kumkum bindi.

I started my car, opting to drive instead of walk due to the rain. The courier office was nearby, and I arrived quickly.

The familiar staff greeted me warmly as I approached the counter.

"Ma'am, please sign here with your full name," the clerk asked, his eyes fixed on me.

I hesitated, my pen hovering over the paper. Full name? The question cut deep, a painful reminder of all I'd lost. My father, my sole source of love and support, was gone. His warmth, his kindness, his guiding hand - all silenced forever.

My mind recoiled from memories of my mother's indifference, her coldness that still lingered like an open wound. And my surname? A constant reminder of the family that never truly accepted me.

The staff's gentle prompt broke the spell: "Ma'am, hurry up, it's almost lunchtime." I checked my watch; it was 1 pm.

With a shaking hand, I scribbled "Samayra." The loneliness echoed through me like a hollow whisper. I took my parcel and walked away.

Outside, the rain had stopped, and the atmosphere was pleasant. I drove with the windows open, inhaling the scent of rain-soaked earth - hayee ye mitti di khushboo.

Everything looked vibrant, as if the plants had just taken a refreshing shower. Even the air was clean, a rare respite from Mumbai's usual car exhaust fumes.

At the traffic signal, I noticed a couple heading to college, hand in hand, tears pricked at the corners of my eyes as I recalled his gentle guidance. My heart twisted, memories of him resurfacing.

Why was I thinking of Arnav? Had I forgotten that fateful night, the pain he caused? Five years had passed, but the wounds still lingered.

My heart aches, remembering those moments.

My phone rang, breaking the silence. "Rohan speaking." My PA's crisp voice cut through.

"Ma'am, I've sent you the book signing details. Please review and let me know if any changes are required."

"Thank you, Rohan. I'll check and get back to you."

As I ended the call, pride swelled within me. I wished my father were here to see this - I had become an author, fulfilling his dream.

But before I could savour the moment, my phone buzzed again, shattering the silence.

"Samayra, we need to talk..." The voice sent a shiver down my spine.

IT'S HER....

My mother.

"Samayra, are you there?" her voice had cut through my thoughts earlier, demanding and impatient, just like always.

It took everything in me to respond, to stop myself from hanging up and pretending I hadn't heard her. "Yes... I'm here," I'd whispered, my voice weak and trembling, a far cry from the confident woman I'd become. The woman who had survived without her mother's love. Who had made a life-despite her.

My chest tightened as she continued. "We need to talk. It's important."

Important. Now it was important. After all these years of silence, of pretending we didn't exist to each other, now she suddenly had something important to say.

I'd waited my whole life for her to tell me something was important-me, maybe, that I was important to her. But of course, that wasn't what this was about. It never had been.

"What's so important now?" I had asked, my voice small, the words trembling on my lips. "After all this time, what could possibly be so important?"

I didn't expect an answer, not really. And even if she had one, I didn't want to hear it. Not from her. Not after everything.

But I knew better. I should have known better.

Her voice returned, colder than ever. "It's not just about you, Samayra. There are things you need to know about the family."

Family. The word twisted in my chest, a cruel joke. Family meant love, support, safety-everything my mother had never given me. Family had been my father, the one person who had made me feel like I mattered. And now, even he was gone.

"Can you meet me tomorrow at home?"

HOME??????

That word hit me like a punch to the gut. Home. The house I grew up in but never truly belonged to. The house that held all the cold memories, the silences, the looks that said I wasn't wanted. That house was never mine.

I could feel the familiar knot tightening in my chest. I closed my eyes, trying to keep my voice steady as I spoke. "I'll meet you," I said, my voice cracking despite my efforts to keep it together. "But not there. Not at that place. We can meet somewhere else... outside. A resort, maybe."

She paused for a moment, long enough that I wondered if she was even listening. Then, as casually as she'd started the conversation, she said, "Okay."

And just like that, she hung up, without a goodbye, without a second thought. The silence on the other end felt colder than the rain outside.

I stared at my phone, my fingers trembling, the weight of her words pressing down on me like a boulder. All these years, I had tried to distance myself from her, from that house, from everything it represented. But here she was, barging back into my life as if nothing had changed, as if I hadn't walked away from that suffocating place all those years ago. My breath hitched, and suddenly, I felt the tears welling up. My vision blurred as the dam I'd been holding back started to crack. I was done pretending to be strong. I was done holding it all in.

I parked my car at the corner of the road, unable to drive any further. The pressure in my chest built, and the tears I had been fighting spilled over. I gripped the steering wheel, my knuckles white, as sobs wracked my body.

I wanted to scream. I wanted to cry until there was nothing left. All the hurt, all the rejection, all the love I never got-everything came crashing down at once.Why now? Why did she come back into my life just when I had finally started to feel like I was moving forward?

I cried like I hadn't in years, my body shaking with the force of it, the rain outside merging with the storm inside me. I cried for the little girl who never got her mother's love, for the woman I had become who still carried the weight of that loss, and for the strength it would take to face her again.

I wasn't ready. I wasn't ready. Not after so many years.

***2. SAMAYRA'S POV***

***Blood ties can bind, but they can also suffocate.***

I drove home, my mother's words echoing in my mind. "We need to talk." Just four words, yet they had thrown everything into chaos. Something so small shouldn't hurt this much, but it did.

As I entered the building, Harish Kaka, the watchman, noticed my tear-streaked face. "Kya hua, Samayra beta? You look upset," he asked softly.

I forced a weak smile, trying to hide the pain. "It's nothing, Kaka. Just a lot on my mind today, "I murmured softly.

His expression softened, though I could see the doubt in his eyes. "Take care, beta. If you need anything, I'm here."

I nodded and hurried to the lift, needing the peace and quiet of my apartment. As soon as I got in, I went straight to the bathroom. I turned on the shower and let the cold water hit me, hoping it would make the pain go away. But it didn't. The pain stayed with me, no matter how long I stood there.

I finally got out and wrapped myself in a towel. My eyes were puffy and my skin felt cold, but that was nothing compared to the chaos inside me. As I walked into the living room, I saw the package from Ishanya. For a moment I was distracted by curiosity.

I opened the parcel and found a stunning silver necklace. The pendant was shaped like a delicate flower, with tiny sparkling stones in the centre. The thin chain was elegant, making the necklace look both simple and beautiful. Alongside it was a note in her familiar handwriting:

"To my dearest Sam, can't wait to celebrate your birthday together! Love, Ishanya."

Tears welled up again, but this time, they were tears of bittersweet memories-of the late-night talks, the endless jokes, and the unwavering friendship. I quickly pulled out my phone and messaged Ishanya, "Thank you so much for the beautiful necklace! miss you girl!"

The rest of the evening went by in a blur, my mind filled with questions that wouldn't let me rest. The next morning, I woke up with a sense of unease. I arrived at the cafe, seeking a moment of clarity.

I stepped into the cafe, surrounded by its cozy atmosphere. Soft morning light poured in through big windows, shining warmly on wooden tables. The scent of fresh coffee and baked goods filled the air.

By the window, my mother sat poised, sipping her favourite masala chai. She wore a stunning navy blue kurta that flowed gracefully with a matching churidar and dupatta, exuding elegance. The sunlight caught her silver jewellery, making it sparkle like tiny stars, while her hair was neatly styled in a bun. As I walked closer, my anxiety heightened, when I saw him.

Varun, my elder brother standing behind her, his eyes met mine. They were filled with guilt and desperation.

I hadn't seen him for years.

Memories of the boy he used to be flooded back, but now, he looked different-older, burdened.

I sat down slowly, bracing myself. "You wanted to talk?" I asked cautiously, looking at my mother.

"You have to help your brother."

"What kind of help?" I pressed.

"You're the only one who can save him."

"What is it?" I asked, my voice soft, though my heart was racing.

My brother stepped forward, clearing his throat nervously. "It's about my company..."

I cut him off. "Father's company!!"

"Yes, Father's company," he said quietly. "Mother managed it after he passed, but... now it's in trouble."

The words struck me hard, bringing back memories of my father's legacy-Malhotra Media, a renowned publishing house known for its magazines, articles, and online content. It had been founded by my grandfather, and expanded by my father. It was a symbol of our family's success and pride.

But now, it was struggling?

His's voice pulled me back to the present. "It started after we published an article about Siddhanth Oberoi's mother."

My eyes snapped to his. "What article?"

He looked away, shame washing over his face. "We reported that she's alive and in rehab for drug addiction."

A wave of disbelief crashed over me. "Why would you allow such a publication? Don't you know who the Oberois are?"

"My brother's words echoed in my mind: 'Siddhanth Oberoi, the business tycoon-his empire spanned real estate, tech, and finance." He was involved in everything, and his influence was everywhere. But behind the headlines, his personal life was a mystery. There were rumors about his family, suggesting he had a sister, but no one knew the truth about his parents. Were they alive or dead? No one knows.

His shoulders slumped under the weight of his decision. "I thought it was sensational news. It would attract readers and boost our revenue. But when Siddhanth found out, he exploded. He ordered us to take it down, and we did"

The gravity of his words settled like lead in my stomach. "And what happened after that?"

"Siddhanth was furious. He threatened me, saying the only way to save me and Malhotra Media was if..." He hesitated, dread creeping into his eyes.

"If what, Varun bhai..." I started, the words slipping out automatically, but I quickly caught myself, hesitating. "No, I mean... if what, Mr. Malhotra?"

His voice trembled. "If you marry him."

For a moment, I was paralyzed by shock. The absurdity of it felt unreal. "Marry him? Are you serious?" I struggled to comprehend the implications. Siddhanth Oberoi-the very man whose family secrets had triggered this chaos-was being offered as a solution to our problems?

I scoffed, trying to process. "Why would he want to marry me? I have nothing to do with Father's company."

His shoulders slumped. "I... I don't know," he mumbled, his voice barely above a whisper.

My anger flared. "You don't know? You're asking me to marry someone to save the company, but you don't even know why he wants this?"

My brother averted his gaze, his silence louder than any words he could have spoken.

I stood up abruptly, my chair scraping against the floor. My heart pounded in my chest, fury mixing with confusion. How could they even ask me that?

"I can't marry him," I said, my voice firm. "Never." I picked up my bag and walked away, but my mother grasped my hand, her grip tightening. Her touch sent shivers down my spine, but it wasn't gentle. It was forced.

"I don't want to lose my beta," she pleaded, her voice trembling. "I already lost my husband, that too, because of..." She hesitated.

I looked back, shaking off her grip. "Why did you stop?" I asked angrily. "Just say what you think. Call me by the same name you always do-murderer." I turned to my brother, my voice rising. "Why would I even help you? Have you ever considered me your sister after Father died? Did you both ever see me as family? But now, suddenly, you're asking me to marry someone just to save yourself?"

His gaze dropped, the weight of my words settling between us like a thick fog. "I... I know things have been difficult since..."

"Since he died?" I snapped, cutting him off. "You both made it clear I was no longer part of this family. So why now?

"Please, Samayra, consider this proposal. Not for me, but for the company that Father built."

The mention of my father's name hit me hard. Memories flooded back, and a lump formed in my throat. Saving his legacy suddenly seemed important.

Yet, uncertainty crept in. Was I being selfish by refusing? Was I really considering my family's well-being?

I shook off the doubts and picked up my bag. "I have to go," I muttered, avoiding eye contact. Without another word, I turned and walked away, leaving my brother and mother staring after me.

I stepped out of the cafe, my mind reeling with thoughts. I pulled out my phone and dialed Rohan, my PA.

"Rohan, book an appointment for me with...," I hesitated, "with Mr. Oberoi."

"Mr. Siddhanth Oberoi, ma'am?" Rohan's voice was laced with curiosity.

"Yes, that's the one. And gather all the information you can about him. I want to know everything."

"It won't be easy, ma'am," Rohan said. "Just try," I pressed.

"What's the purpose of the meeting ma'am?" he asked.

"I need to discuss the proposal he made through my family," I replied.

"Understood, ma'am. I'll also gather information about him for you."

I cut the call. I had to meet him, no matter what. The proposal, my family's legacy, and my own future hung in the balance. I needed answers, and only Mr. Oberoi could provide them.

***3. SIDDHANT'S POV***

***He's not here to forgive, nor to forget. He's here to take control.***

I gripped the steering wheel tighter, the leather creaking under the pressure as I sped down the road. Malhotra Media had crossed a line by publishing that article about my mother—about that woman. I didn't care what they said about her.

 She had made her choices a long time ago, and I had stopped caring about her the day—well, that's not important now. But my sister, she still thought of her as our mother. And because of that woman, my sister's life had been nothing but pain. I had protected her, shielded her from the mess that woman had left behind. She already lived through a childhood full of hell.

The engine roared louder as I pressed harder on the gas. Trees and buildings blurred by, but I barely noticed. All I could think about was my sister—her tears, her panic, her fear. The road stretched ahead, empty and dark, but it didn't calm the storm raging inside me. The tires screeched as I took sharp turns, the car jolting with every twist. I didn't care. My pulse pounded, matching the thrum of the engine.

But now, because of Malhotra Media, it was worse. They had dragged my sister through it all over again. My hands tightened on the wheel until I thought it might snap. The thought of my sister, shaking and crying because of that article, made my blood boil. I could feel the rage surging, hot and uncontrollable. I slammed my foot on the accelerator, the engine roaring in protest, but I didn't care. The city lights flickered by like ghosts, disappearing in my rear- view mirror. I needed to do something-anything.

I wanted to smash something, to hurt someone. They had hurt my sister, and that was something I couldn't let go. Not this time. Malhotra Media would pay, one way or another.

 The wind whipped through the small crack in the window, cold and sharp against my skin, but it did nothing to cool the heat rising in my chest. I could feel the steering wheel tremble under my grip, the whole car vibrating as I pushed it to its limit. The world outside was a blur, but inside the car, everything was crystal clear—rage, burning and relentless.

The phone buzzed in my pocket, dragging me out of my boiling thoughts. I didn't have to look to know who it was—Dadaji. He always knew, always sensed when I was about to lose control. I hesitated before answering.

"Where are you?" His voice was steady, but I could hear the warning in it.

"Handling business," I said, my voice tense.

"Come home. Now."

There was no arguing with him. Dadaji didn't ask; he commanded. But I wasn't scared of him. Since that terrible day when me and my sister lost everything, I had become emotionally distant from everyone. The day we buried our past, I buried my faith in God along with it.

I exhaled sharply, pushing down my anger just long enough to turn the car around. The fury surged within me, a restless beast clawing at my insides, desperate to break free. Each heartbeat hammered a relentless reminder: I was done feeling powerless.

The drive home was a blur, and by the time I walked into Dadaji's study, the storm inside me hadn't calmed down. He was waiting, sitting in his leather chair, surrounded by shelves filled with books that towered like ancient fortresses. Dadaji had a vast collection—classic literature, history, philosophy—each tome a testament to his wisdom. He watched me with piercing eyes, as if he already knew what I was planning.

"I know you're thinking of going after Malhotra Media," he said, his tone calm but firm.

I didn't bother hiding it. "They deserve it," I shot back. "They came after us. After my family."

Dadaji leaned back, his gaze unwavering. His grandfather was a good man. So was his father. You can't destroy everything they built because of one person's mistake."

I clenched my fists, my chest tightening with anger. "One person's mistake?" I repeated, my voice low and dangerous. "That mistake nearly destroyed my sister, Dadaji. She saw the article, and it broke her. She couldn't even breathe, couldn't stop crying." The memory of my sister's panic attack made my blood boil all over again. I could still hear her gasping for air, see the fear in her eyes.

"That woman ruined us once," I continued, my voice shaking with rage. "I won't let them do it again."

Dadaji sighed, his expression softening, but I could see the disappointment there too. "I know you want to protect her, Siddhanth. But revenge won't bring you peace. Destroying their company won't make your sister any safer."

I gritted my teeth, fighting back the urge to argue. I couldn't defy Dadaji, not openly. His word was law. But I couldn't let it go, not after what they did.

That night, I barely slept. The rage kept me awake, twisting in my gut, demanding action. Destroying Malhotra Media wasn't an option anymore—not with Dadaji standing in my way—but control... control was different. If I could control the company, I wouldn't need to destroy it. They'd be under my thumb, and they'd answer to me.

I reached for the bottle on my nightstand, a bottle of aged whiskey. I poured myself a glass, the amber liquid swirling as I downed it in one go, the burn barely registering. The whiskey wasn't enough to calm the storm in my head, but as I poured another, and then it hit me.

Yes... she was the key.

The one piece that would give me everything I needed.

I sat up, my mind racing. This was how I'd win. I didn't need to tear down the company.

I just needed the right leverage—her.

The next day, I stormed into Varun Malhotra's office, my jaw clenched and my fists itching to throw a punch. I saw the motherfucker sitting behind his desk, looking every bit the spineless coward I expected him to be. My blood boiled just watching him. Pathetic. I wanted to punch him right then and there, but not yet. No, I would do worse than that. I would crush everything he had.

I threw a file across the desk. It slid right in front of him, and I could see the panic flash in his eyes. "You want to save this company, Mr. fucking Malhotra?" I spat, my voice low and venomous. "Save yourself? Then sign the damn papers and do what I want."

He swallowed, his hands trembling as he reached for the file. I stood still, watching him in cold silence as he flipped through the papers. His eyes darted over the pages, panic setting in as he slowly grasped just how deep he was in. My anger simmered beneath the surface, but I held it in check, choosing to let him squirm a little longer.

Without a word, I turned and dropped onto the leather couch in his office, my movements deliberate, confident. I stretched out, taking my time, letting him see that I was in no rush. This was my moment, and I wanted him to feel every second of it. My arms rested along the back of the couch as I watched him fumble with the papers, knowing that he had no way out.

His breath hitched, his fingers shaking as he reached the part I was waiting for. His head snapped up, confusion and fear etched into his face. "This... but why this? What does this have to do with saving the company?" His voice was shaking, desperate for answers.

I tilted my head slightly, my eyes locked on his.

"I don't owe you an explanation, bastard. You don't get to ask questions here." My tone was sharp, cutting. "You have no choice but to sign those papers if you want to live through this. If you want Malhotra Media to survive. Either you sign, or everything burns."

"But... she won't agree. She will never go along with this," he stammered, his voice weak.

I leaned forward, my eyes narrowing. "I don't care if she agrees. That's your problem, not mine. And if you don't make this happen..." I stood up slowly, towering over him. "I'll destroy your company. But not before I destroy you."

His eyes widened in terror. He knew I wasn't bluffing. I took a slow step toward him, my voice dropping to a deadly whisper. "You won't just lose everything you've built. I'll make sure you have nothing left. You won't even be able to walk down the street without wondering if it's your last day alive."

I watched him break, his hands shaking as he stared down at the contract. I didn't need to hear his answer. I'd already won.

I turned and walked out without another word, ignoring his desperate calls behind me. His pleading meant nothing.

As I left the office, my phone buzzed. I pulled it out, glancing at the screen. A message from Vikram, my trusted PA. The photo loaded first—a headshot of her.

Samayra Malhotra. With it came the details I needed.

My lips curled into a smirk. This was it. My sister had suffered enough because of this mess, but now it was their turn. I would make it worse for them. Much worse. They thought they knew pain? I was about to show them what real suffering looked like. And I wouldn't stop until they begged for mercy.

But mercy wasn't something I gave.

***4. SAMAYRA’S POV***

***Sometimes, the hardest choices lead to the most meaningful journeys***

"Hello," I answered the call. "Kya hua tum dono ko itni subah subah call, vo bhi video call?" I asked, my hair messy and eyes still half-asleep.

"Hello, babe! We called to check if you're ready for your big day—it's your book signing event!" Isha said enthusiastically.

"Yes, darling, I'm so happy for you!" Prisha added with a big smile.

"And today, Prisha madam ji actually picked up the call! Otherwise, you know na, she's usually lost with her jaanwars," Isha teased.

"Excuse me! It's called wildlife photography, and that's my profession, okay? Not like you, just chilling and running a café from a comfy chair!" Prisha shot back.

My besties, Isha and Prisha. Isha owns a café in Bandra, and Prisha is a wildlife photographer, who starts snapping wherever she goes. They both wanted to attend my event but Isha is still in New York and Prisha is in Himachal Pradesh for her work.

"Alright, bas karo, haan!" I laughed, cutting in. "Now, do you have anything else to say, or was this just a morning dose of nok-jhok?"

"Actually, yes," Isha replied. "So, tell us—what are you planning to wear? Decided anything yet?"

"No, I'm still confused," I admitted, turning my phone's camera to show my closet. "Since you both called, help me pick, na!"

"Hi, Maasi!" Little Rehan suddenly appeared in the background. Isha turned to him and said, "Wish Maasi good luck! Today is her big day!"

His innocent excitement made me smile. "Good luck, Maasi!" he said in his baby voice.

"Thank you, Rehan bacha! You're the best!" I replied with a smile.

"Hello! Another Maasi is also here," Prisha chimed in with a grin.

"Hello, my cutie!" Prisha added, waving at Rehan.

Rehan's eyes lit up, waving back at Prisha. "Hi, Prishu Maasi !" he said with a shy smile.

"Baby, go to Daadi; she was calling you," Isha said, trying to shoo him away.

As Rehan ran off, I heard Vivaan's voice in the background. "Good luck with your event, Sam," he called out. I could see him behind Isha, phone in hand, looking busy as usual.

"Ahh, look at Mr. Businessman, always on a call," Prisha teased.

"Don't say anything about my husband!" Isha shot back, rolling her eyes dramatically.

I couldn't help but laugh, feeling grateful for the little chaos they always brought into my life.

"Okay, now tell me what I should wear. I'm confused between the red and black dress," I said, glancing at both options hanging in my closet.

Prisha smiled, "Black one! It'll definitely grab attention."

Sam, this is a book signing, not a hike in the hills! Wear the red dress! You look fab in red."

I glanced at Prisha, who was already shaking her head. "No, not the red—it's too predictable. Go with the black one—it's classy and suits your vibe better."

"Okay, okay, bs karo ab tum dono! I'll go with... black one," I declared, putting an end to the debate.

Isha made a dramatic pout. "Fine, black it is. But you owe me dinner for this betrayal."

Laughing, I ended the call, wishing I could tell them all about the proposal, but I couldn't, not before I met Siddhanth.

I wore my black dress, pairing it with golden earrings and a small, cute pendant. I clicked a mirror selfie and sent it to my So-Called-Bitches whatsapp group.

Isha's message popped up: "Ooh, my hottie! Looking fab!" Just then, Prisha replied, "Yes, my choice is always fab!" I smiled at their compliments.

Next, I paused in front of my father's photograph and reached out for his aashirvaad. A tear trickled down my cheek, and I brushed it away, whispering a quiet thank you. Then, I went to the pooja room, lit a diya, and took a moment to ask for God's blessings.

"Aur Samayra beta, all the best! Aaj aapka bada din hai, na?" said Sunita aunty with a warm smile, handing me my breakfast.

 I hugged her and said, "Thank you, aunty."

I took my BMW and drove to the venue. The restaurant looked beautiful for the event. Soft lights hung from the ceiling, and tables were decorated with fresh flowers. Guests started to arrive, many holding copies of my latest novel, filling the space with excitement.

The event coordinator greeted me with a smile. "It's a pleasure to have you here. We're expecting a great turnout!"

I nodded, pushing away my thoughts. "Thanks! I can't wait."

At the signing table, I introduced myself and thanked everyone for coming, sinking into the rhythm of signing book after book and adding personal notes for each reader. But soon, a strange sensation crept over me, like a prickling awareness that someone was watching.

I glanced up, scanning the crowd, and that's when I saw him. Standing in the back, dressed in a formal suit, his face mostly covered by a black mask. Our eyes met for a moment before he looked away. Just a fan, maybe? I told myself, trying to ignore the unease. But something about him felt off.

After the event, I slipped into the restroom, needing a moment to breathe. Leaning against the sink, I pulled out my phone and called my assistant Rohan.

"Any update Rohan? Did you reach Siddhanth?" I asked, impatience slipping into my tone.

"No, ma'am. He's still unreachable, but I'm trying," he replied.

I sighed in frustration and ran a hand through my hair. Then a strong hand grabbed my elbow and pulled me back. Before I could react, he had me pinned against the cold wall, knocking the air out of me. My heart raced as I struggled to make sense of what was happening.

"I looked up and met the cold, dark eyes of the man from earlier. He stood over me,  his gaze intense and unyielding."

"W-What—" I began, but my voice faltered.

He leaned in close, his breath warm against my ear as he whispered, "You don't need an appointment, my would-be wife." His lips barely brushed my skin, sending a shiver down my spine.

*Siddhanth Oberoi.*

I pushed him, but he stood there like a fictional character straight out of a book, arms folded across his chest. No, I couldn't admire him like that.

"How did you get here? It's an exclusive event. How did you even get the tickets?" I asked, my frustration bubbling to the surface.

He smirked, as if I had made a joke. "tickets? This is my family restaurant," he replied, his tone casual.

Ignoring his words, I pressed on. "I want to talk to you regarding the proposal.......

He cut me off. —the marriage proposal that I made to your brother!!"

"Yes, I pressed on, why do you want to marry me? I'm not even involved in my family's business." I crossed my arms defensively.

"You ask so many questions, Ms. Malhotra, he said, raising an eyebrow. "Shall we step outside? We are standing in the restroom."

We walked out toward a room, perhaps a cabin in the restaurant. He gestured for me to sit, and I obliged, taking a seat across from him. Before I could start, he tossed a file in front of me, and signalled for me to open it.

I hesitated but eventually opened the file, my heart sinking. Inside was a marriage contract. "What is this?" I exclaimed. "I'm here to ask you why you want this marriage, and you're giving me marriage contract papers?"

He leaned forward, testing my patience. "I'm not here to answer your questions. If you want to save your family's legacy—the company that your grandfather started, and your brother—just do as written here. You have only one option: marry me."

Before he could open the cabin door, I stepped in between us, leaving no space and increasing the heat of the moment. "Fine, if it's the only way to save my family, I'm ready to marry you, but I have some conditions too."

He stood there, listening to me intently. I grabbed the paper from the table, quickly jotting down my terms before handing it to him. "If you get the time, just read these. And never try to act like my husband. You are my husband in front of the world, but..."

"...but?" he prompted, his tone almost teasing as he leaned back slightly, clearly enjoying my hesitation.

"But this doesn't mean you get to dictate my life," I replied, trying to keep my voice steady. "We'll have a marriage in name only. I won't be part of your life."

He raised an eyebrow, teasingly. "So you want the benefits of marriage without the commitment? Interesting."

I didn't bother to respond to that. "We'll be a couple for others, but in front of each other, we'll act like strangers."

"Don't worry, Miss. Malhotra. I'm not interested in you," he replied, a hint of amusement in his voice.

"Good," I said, feeling a sense of relief wash over me. "And one more thing: just call me Samayra."

"How about my would-be wife?" he asked, his tone playful yet probing.

"Let's not jump to titles just yet," I shot back, crossing my arms defiantly. "This arrangement is strictly business."

He leaned forward, his gaze locked onto mine. "Business or not, it still comes with its own set of challenges. Are you really prepared for that, Miss. Samayra?"

I took a deep breath, holding his stare. "I've faced challenges before. I can handle whatever comes my way Mr. Oberoi.

We had an unspoken agreement, a balance of power between us. As we left the cabin, I knew this was just the beginning of a complicated journey that would test us both.

***5. SIDDHANT’S POV***

**Aankh unki ladi yu meri aankh se,**

**Dekh kar yeh ladai maza aa gya......**

****

***I was there for revenge, but there was something about her that caught my attention.***

I put the contract papers - the ones she gave me with her conditions - on the seat beside me as I drove my Porsche, concentrating on unfinished business.

My phone rang. "Hello?"

A pause, then my informant's steady voice: "He's here."

"Good," I replied coldly. "I'll be there in ten minutes. Don't let him leave."

I hung up, my grip tightening on the wheel. No one had ever dared to leak information about my family—until today. They would regret it.

I parked my Porsche and walked to the outhouse where all my... less official business took place. My men were outside, alert and waiting.

"He's inside, sir," one of them said in a low voice.

I walked in and saw the man - the assistant to the doctor who's treating my mother. He looked terrified, slumped in a chair with his hands tied. His eyes were wide open, and he was sweating, clearly afraid of what was coming.

I moved closer and grabbed his chin, forcing him to look up at me. "So, you thought you could cross me?" I said, my voice low and threatening.

He trembled, unable to respond.

"You leaked my family's information," I said, leaning closer, my voice cold. "Did you really think I wouldn't find out?"

He shook his head, fear written all over his face.

My bodyguard returned quickly, carrying a small metal box that held my tools. I could see the fear deepening in his eyes.

I opened the box slowly, the sound of metal clinking filling the dim room. "You think you can leak my family's information and walk away from it?" I asked, my tone hard. "You have no idea who you're dealing with."

I leaned in closer, my voice a mere whisper, "You'll wish you never crossed paths with me."

He said nervously, "I-I didn't mean to... It was an accident!" His voice trembled, and I could see he was desperately trying to find a way out.

"Accidents don't happen in my world," I replied, stepping back to give him a moment to process his impending fate. "You made a choice, and now you'll pay the price."

I picked up a sharp instrument from the box, letting it glint under the weak light. "Now, let's start with a simple question: was it Varun who asked you for the details?"

He swallowed hard, his eyes darting around as if looking for an escape. "Y-yes, it was Varun. He wanted the information to boost the revenue and TRPs for Malhotra Media."

"Of course he did," I sneered, my grip on the instrument tightening. I ordered my men to tie him up until he understood who Siddhant Oberoi is and never to cross me again.

I stepped out of the outhouse and headed back to my penthouse. Once inside my room, I went straight for the shower, wanting to wash away the blood on my hands. My mind was a mess, swirling with thoughts and images.

Suddenly, her face appeared in my mind—how she had been sitting at her book signing event, talking and smiling, giving autographs to her fans. She was the most beautiful woman I had ever seen. I had already seen her picture sent by my assistant, but seeing her in person, wearing a tight black bodycon dress that perfectly hugged her slim figure, took my breath away.

But when I called her 'Miss Malhotra,' there was something in her eyes that suggested she hated being addressed that way. The same look appeared when I mentioned saving her brother. It was clear she was hiding something behind her smile.

What the fuck was wrong with me? This is not you Siddhant. Why was I thinking about her? She was just a business deal. I was marrying her for the sake of my revenge—nothing else. Nothing was going to happen between us. Never.

Suddenly, my gaze fell on the paper she had handed me, stating her conditions for our marriage. I picked it up and started reading:-

1. Don't expect anything from this marriage.

2. Separate rooms after the wedding.

3. We will never get involved in each other's business.

4. I want a mini-library and a study area where I can write my books without disturbance in the house where we'll live after the marriage.

The last condition was marked with a star. As I read it, a small smile crept onto my face.

No, no—what was this girl doing to me? I had never smiled like that before, but here I was, grinning at a list of demands.

She was something different. It frustrated me how easily she caught my attention. I shook my head, reminding myself that I was marrying her for revenge, not to get distracted by her.

It's all about revenge—nothing else, just revenge.

***6. SAMAYRA’S POV***

******

***When fate knocks, will you answer?***

"I couldn't believe I'd agreed to this marriage. I wasn't sure why I did it. Maybe it was guilt, maybe... maybe my mother was right; that accident happened because of me. She lost her husband because of me."

Mr. Malhotra—my brother—had called me on the way back from the event.

**Flashback**

I answered up the call. It was my brother.

"Thank you, Sam. Thank you for agreeing to this marriage..."

"For Dad's reputation and his company," I interrupted, ending the call before he could say more.

**Flashback Ended**

I knew I was doing this for my dad, not my brother. I lay on my bed, staring at the ceiling, lost in thought... thinking of those intense dark eyes... that sharp face... his strong, stiff posture—Siddhant Oberoi. The man was like a shadow haunting my mind.

Suddenly, a message pulled me back. It was from Isha and Prish.

Isha: "I'm coming back to Mumbai tomorrow!"

Prish: "I'll be there on Friday morning! My work is almost done."

Isha: "Gentle Reminder—girls's night at my place on Friday!"

I smiled. I had to tell them about the marriage and everything. Maybe Friday night would be the right time.

**Time skip... Friday Night**

"Prish, I'm outside your apartment come fast," I told her over the phone.

"I'm coming, just give me a minute. I forgot my camera," she replied.

"Hurry up, or Isha will kill us both," I warned.

Five minutes later, Prisha rushed down, dressed in her favorite night shorts and a pink top for our pj party.

"Sorry, I got a bit late," she apologized, sliding into my car.

"Just a bit?" I asked, rolling my eyes.

"Arey ok baba, let's go. Isha's waiting."

As we arrived at the Shekhawat Mansion, I parked the car. Ishanya, Vivaan and his parents had recently moved in, and it was a stunning place—grand architecture with elegant details, designed by Vivaan's younger brother, Karan.

"You're late! I knew it was because of Prisha," Isha said as we entered.

"No, no! Sam was the one who got us late," Prisha defended with a laugh.

"Fine, it was me. I'm sorry, ladies," I confessed, laughing.

"Forget it. Let me show you the beauty of the Himachal valleys, "I took a ton of photos. I'll show you," Prisha, pulling out her camera.

"It's a pj party, Prisha, not a slideshow night!" Isha groaned.

"Oh come on. By the way, where's Rehan, Vivaan and aunty, uncle?" I asked, changing the topic.

"Rehan's asleep, and Vivaan's at the office for an important meeting. Mum and Dad decided to stay in New York; Dad's working with Shekhawat's New York branch," Isha replied.

"Well, then this is a full-on girls' night, just us!" I cheered, high-fiving Prisha.

"Yes! I did so much shopping for you guys. Let me show you!" Isha exclaimed.

Prisha and Isha were busy chatting about the cute outfits and accessories Isha had bought, including the latest Gucci collection and a Dior dress, while I tried to find the right moment to share my news.

Finally, I mustered the courage to speak up. "I'm getting married next week," I blurted out, silencing them both.

The room went quiet, and they both turned to me, shock etched on their faces.

"What?!" Isha finally exclaimed, her eyes wide with disbelief. "Married? To whom?"

Prisha leaned in closer, a look of confusion mixed with curiosity. "You can't be serious! Who is he?"

This was it—the moment I had been dreading but knew I had to face. "It's Siddhant Oberoi.

***7. SAMAYRA x SIDDHANT OBEROI***

******

***What if the right one is the one we least expect?***

**Samayra' Pov**

We heard a voice—"What?"—but it wasn't any of us. We turned toward the doorway, and there stood Vivaan, shock written all over his face. "You're marrying Siddhant Oberoi?"

My heart raced as I nodded. "Y-yes. Siddhant Oberoi. The CEO of Oberoi Enterprises".

Vivaan shook his head, clearly in disbelief. "Are you serious, Sam? Do you even know him? Why on earth are you marrying him? Are you guys... dating?"

Before I could respond, Isha interrupted with a raised eyebrow. "Vivaan, shouldn't we be the ones asking her that? Also... who is Siddhant Oberoi anyway? Do you know him?"

Vivaan sighed, glancing at her. "Yes, sweetheart, you know him too. Remember the business party two months ago? I introduced you to my childhood friend, Sidd?"

Isha's eyes widened as it clicked. "Wait... that guy? The one who practically threatened his own client just for looking at his sister the wrong way?"

Vivaan nodded, and Prisha groaned in frustration. "Would someone please explain what's happening here?"

Vivaan's phone suddenly buzzed, and he glanced down, his expression tightening. "Sorry, ladies. Emergency call—got to go" he said, slipping out of the room with a nod.

As soon as he was gone, Isha and Prisha turned back to me, their eyes intense.

Prisha spoke up first, curiosity lacing her voice. "Sam, I've heard of this Siddhant guy. Didn't your brother's publication publish out that article about his mother? A friend told me it caused a huge bawaal before it was taken down within half an hour."

Isha's gaze softened as she looked at me. "Sam, are you marrying him to save your brother or something?"

"It's... it's not like that," I said, trying to gather my thoughts.

"Then why, Sam? Why Siddhant Oberoi, of all people?" Prisha pressed, her expression full of worry.

I took a deep breath. "It's for my father's reputation and the company, that's all. It's mutual—we both agreed to this."

Isha sighed, reaching out to squeeze my hand. "Well, just know we're here for you, Sam. But please, don't do this for anyone else—especially not for your mother or brother. Do it only if it's what you want."

Prisha spoke up, her tone soft. "Exactly. You don't owe this to anyone."

"And let's be honest, he's not that bad; he's just thoda zyada protective of his family, especially his sister. Plus, he's super sexy, Sam," Isha said with a playful grin. "He's the kind of guy who's all trouble—but the best kind of trouble."

"Stop it, Isha!" Prisha said with a laugh. "If Vivaan heard you saying that about his childhood friend, bichara Siddhant will be fucking dead!"

Isha laughed, rolling her eyes. "Fine, fine! I'm just saying Sam's lucky. And... well, I can imagine their chemistry—especially in bedroom."

"Guys, stop!" I interrupted, cheeks burning. "This is just a marriage, nothing more!"

They both shared a mischievous look. "Okay, we'll see," they said, bursting into laughter.

**Siddhant's Pov**

"Kaha hai tu? Mere office aa, kaam hai!" I barked into the phone, irritation bubbling beneath the surface. Vivaan's response was quick, "haa, aata hu. Mujhe bhi kuch kaam hai tere se." But before I could say another word, he cut the call.

I was buried in files in my cabin, trying to focus when suddenly someone banged the door open. It was Vivaan, his energy filling the room. I got up, ready to exchange the usual banter. "Bhai, kaisa rha NYC ka trip? Chal ab thoda business ki tarf dhyaan de le.

But then he got straight to the point, "Are you marrying Sam? I mean Samayra? But why?"

I smirked, knowing it wasn't what he expected. "Because I fell for her at first sight."

"Stop it, Sidd!" he shot back.

"Don't call me by that FUCKING name!", I shouted.

"I'm the one who should be shouting" he continued, "You are not the guy who falls for any girl easily. Tell me the damn reason. Is it because of the article?"

I threw a file in front of him. "Read this".

He opened it, his eyes widening as he processed the information. "FORTY FUCKING PERCENT? She owns that many shares of Malhotra's? Does she even know about this?"

I shook my head. "No, she doesn't know. Not even her brother is aware. "Daadji ordered not to destroy Malhotras because of his fucking friendship with Samayra's grandfather. But that won't stop me from taking control of Malhotra Media, I said with a smirk.

"Arey, Ye to tu aise bhi kr skta hai ! Use your damn power!" he urged.

"Haan, kr skta hu, but my family's reputation is more important," I replied.

"I know this is business, but don't ever try to hurt Sam. She is like sister to me," he warned.

"Aur meri hone vali biwi," I shot back.

My phone buzzed, interrupting the moment. It was Avani, "Bhai, daadu wants to meet you abhi. Aur bhai, vo shyd gusse mein hai. Chachi, Chachu aur Riaa bhi aaye hain. Please come fast!" The call ended before I could respond.

"Kya hua?" Vivaan asked, noticing my sudden change in mood.

"Kuch na, Avani called. You know na daadaji and meri shaadi ki news," I replied, sharing a laugh with him.

As I entered the Oberoi Mansion, I could feel the atmosphere shift. Everyone was gathered in the hall, and Riaa and Avani came running to hug me. "Bhai, we missed you!" Avani exclaimed. She lived in Delhi with my Chachi, Chachu, and our cousin Riaa for her studies.

"What is this?" my grandfather asked, holding up his phone. "Yeh media ko kaafi zyada interest hai meri shaadi mein, jaise kisi film ka scene ho raha ho!" I muttered". He read the headline aloud. "CEO OF OBEROI ENTERPRISES GETTING MARRIED? IS IT A BUSINESS DEAL OR SOMETHING ELSE?".

"Wow, Bhai, You are getting married!" Avani and Riaa cheered excitedly.

"Avani, Riaa, go to your room!" Chachi intervened.

"But—" Avani started to protest.

"Go to your room, bacha," I said, leading them upstairs before turning my attention back to Daadaji.

"Daadaji, You told me not to destroy them, but at least I can own it," I said, trying to reason with him.

"This is not a way to do this," he responded.

"Marriages like this is common in business world, daadaji," I insisted.

He stepped closer, his expression softening. "I can't stop you from doing what you think is right, but remember this: don't ever take out your frustrations on Samayra for her brother's mistakes. She deserves your respect. If I catch you disrespecting her even once, you'll see that your Daadji budhe nhi hue hai ," he said with a small smile, a hint of warning in his eyes.

"Congrats, Siddhant beta!" Chachi and Chachu chimed in.

I smiled back, thinking about **her**.

***8. SAMAYRA’S POV***

***She was light, and he was shadow***

"Hello, Bhabhi! Avani here—apke hone wale pati ki chhoti behen," a cheerful voice bubbled through the phone. "I got your number from Bhai!"

"Amm... hi, Avani. How are you?" I replied, still a bit confused.

"Super excited for the wedding, Bhabhi! I called you because we're going to our family's dress designer for your wedding outfit aur Bhai bhi aa rahe hain!" she announced.

"Actually... woh..., zaroori nahi hai," I said, trying to avoid it. Isha and Prisha shook their heads, clearly thinking I shouldn't say no.

"Nahi, Bhabhi! Aapko aana hi padega. It's your wedding!" Avani insisted. "Daadu, boliye na Bhabhi ko ke woh mana nahi kar sakti!" she added, hinting that her grandfather was with her.

"Hello, beta," came a warm voice on the line—undoubtedly her Daadu.

"Ji... namaste," I said, unsure of how to address him.

"Beta, it's your wedding, aur aap Oberoi family ki bahu ban rahi ho. You are bride-to-be you should go," he said kindly but firmly.

I knew I couldn't deny him. "Okay... okay, Mr. Ob—"

"Call me Daadu, bacha," he interrupted with a chuckle.

"Ji, Daadu," I replied with a smile as he handed the phone back to Avani.

"Bhabhi, ye mera number save kar lijiye. I'll text you. Bhai is in important meeting, but we'll pick you up soon!" she said cheerfully.

As soon as I hung up, Isha and Prisha jumped with excitement and started going through my wardrobe.

"You should go for a desi look!" Isha declared with a grin.

"Okay, how about a kurti with denim?" Prisha suggested, trying to find the perfect balance.

"Nope! Complete Indian look," Isha insisted, pulling out a bright yellow Anarkali suit from my closet. It was simple and lightweight—just right for the occasion. I changed into the outfit and slipped on a pair of delicate earrings, glancing at myself in the mirror, a mix of excitement and nerves building.

"Arey, nazar utaro hone wali dulhan ki!" Prisha teased.

"Thu thu thu!" Isha added, and we all burst into laughter.

Avani texted that they would be here in ten minutes. I felt a bit nervous, but Isha and Prisha were jumping with excitement as if today was my wedding.

We went downstairs from my flat, and a girl, maybe 18 or 19, rushed out of a G-wagon towards me.

"Hi, Bhabhi!" she exclaimed, hugging me. She was super cute, with curly hair and a chubby face. I hugged her back. "Hello, Avani!"

She greeted Isha and Prisha as well. Behind her stood Mr. Oberoi, arms folded across his chest, wearing a black shirt with the sleeves rolled up, showing his veiny hands. Even though he looked a bit tired, he still looked very handsome. His dark eyes were focused and serious, making him hard to ignore. It felt like he had come straight from work.I noticed a tattoo on his arm, but I couldn't get a good look at it. It looked intense, but before I could see more, he moved, and it was hidden again. It made me curious.

Prisha leaned over and whispered, "Stop staring at him," making me feel embarrassed. I quickly looked away, trying to hide my shyness.

"Hello, hone wale jiju!" Isha and Prisha said together. He gave a small smile and replied, "You can call me Siddhant."

"Arey na baba, humein jeena hai! Sam to hamara murder hi kar degi agar humne aapko aapke naam se bulaya!" Prisha joked, looking at me.

"Stop it, girls," I said. "We're getting late. Shall we go, Mr. Oberoi?" I asked, glancing at him, and he nodded.

As I opened the back door of the car, Avani said, "Bhabhi, you sit in front."

"It's okay, Avani. You sit with your bhai," I said. But she wouldn't listen, so I ended up sitting in the front seat next to him.

The rest of the drive was filled with Avani asking about my likes and dislikes, my writing, my current read, and even my wishlist—telling me how much she loved my work. She didn't ask about my family or that article; maybe her brother had told her not to.

I didn't know how far we had to go, but as long as Avani was talking to me, I was okay. Once she got busy on the phone with her friend, though, I began to feel uneasy. It started again... my hands got sweaty, and warmth spread through my body. I rubbed my hands together, feeling restless. I really needed some fresh air.

Are you okay, Miss Samayra, Mr. Oberoi asked?" I nodded, but then I said, "Mr. Oberoi, if you don't mind, could you please open the windows?"

"Sure," he replied.

I took a deep breath and closed my eyes, letting the cool air wash over me.

After some time, we reached our destination. Just as I was about to open the car door, Mr. Oberoi stepped forward and opened it for me. I didn't know why, but it felt good.

As we entered the showroom, I saw that it was big and empty, except for a few sales staff. One lady came over and said, "Oh, is she Siddhant's wife? So pretty!" She gently placed her hand on my head.

"Avani and Mr. Oberoi greeted her. 'This is Vinita Aunty, our family friend,' Mr. Oberoi said to me."

"Aunty, meri Bhabhi best lagni chahiye! Aap inhe sabse best outfit dikhao," Avani said excitedly.

"Of course, Avani beta! Why not?" Vinita Aunty replied.

"After a few minutes, many options were laid out in front of me for my wedding lehenga. I felt a bit confused. Then, I saw a stunning red lehenga. It had beautiful embroidery, with intricate designs sparkling in the light. I picked it up."

"Wow, bhabhi! Nice choice! Actually, red is Bhai's favorite color!" Avani exclaimed. I glanced at Mr. Oberoi, who was busy on his laptop and didn't even look up.

"Samayra beta, go try it on and let me know if you need any changes," Vinita Aunty said. I went to the changing room and put on the lehenga. I felt so pretty, lost in admiring the dress.

"Bhabhi, come out! We want to see!" Avani called.

"As I walked out, Avani gasped. 'Wow, bhabhi! So, so pretty! Bhai, look! Bhabhi is looking gorgeous!' she cheered. Suddenly, I felt Mr. Oberoi's gaze on me. At first, he had been busy, but now he was looking at me like I was something important".

"Beta, do you need any changes?" Vinita Aunty asked.

"No, it's perfectly fine," I replied. As I turned to go back, Avani said, "Bhabhi, wait! Bhai, give me your phone! I'll click pictures for Isha and Prisha di."

"You have your phone, na, Avani?" Mr. Oberoi replied.

"It doesn't have charge! Please, just give me yours," she insisted. Before I could offer my phone, she snatched her brother's phone and started taking pictures of me.

"Bhabhi, smile!" she said. I tried to pose for the camera, but I couldn't help but notice Mr. Oberoi watching me intently, as if I'd taken something important from him.

After I selected a few other outfits for other functions, I thanked Vinita Aunty before stepping out.

"Bhabhi, are you hungry? Because I'm super hungry!" Avani said to her brother. "Bhai, chalo na, kuch khate hain!"

As we stood in front of McDonald's, Avani looked at me excitedly. "Bhabhi, what do you want to eat?"

I smiled and replied, "Just order anything you like, Avani."

She smiled . "Great! I'll get some chicken burgers!"

I hesitated for a moment and said, "Actually, I don't eat non-veg."

Avani laughed. "Wow, you two are so different! Bhai loves chicken!" she teased, pointing at Siddhant, who was leaning against the car with his arms crossed.

"Bhai, what do you want to eat?" Avani called to him.

Siddhant shrugged, looking uninterested. "Nothing. You eat. I have an important call to take, so I'll be in the car".

"Okay," Avani replied and went inside to place the order.

As I waited outside, I felt a bit anxious about Siddhant. He always seemed so serious. I wondered what he thought of me, but I pushed those thoughts away as Avani came back with a tray of food.

"Here you go, Bhabhi! I hope you like fries!" she said, handing me a pack.

I smiled and took them from her. "Thanks, Avani! I love fries!".

I looked at Mr. Oberoi, who was now on the phone, looking angry.

"Bhabhi, he's always like this. I rarely see him smile," Avani said, glancing at her brother. "I don't think I've ever seen him laugh, even as a kid." And bhabhi....... She was about to say something when Mr. Oberoi interrupted us.

"Shall we go?" he asked, his tone serious.

"Uh, yeah," I replied.

Avani nudged me playfully. "See? He's always in a hurry!".

Then they dropped me off. Avani jumped out of the car and hugged me tight. "Bhabhi, I can't wait for you to come home after the wedding!".

I glanced at Mr. Oberoi one last time, but he was still busy. So, I waved goodbye to Avani and left.

***9. SIDDHANT’S POV***

***Aisaa Dekhaa Nahi Khubsoorat Koi,***

***jisme jaise hai Ajanta Kee Moorat Koi***

***Some stains never wash off, no matter how hard you try***

"Bhai, listen! Humein shopping pe jaana hai Bhabhi ke saath aaj!" Avani said excitedly.

I looked up from my laptop, not really interested. "Not today, Avani. You go, I'll tell the driver to drop you."

"Nahi Bhai, please! Aap aajao na, please, please!" she begged, her voice turning into a whine.

I sighed, rubbing my forehead. "Fine, I'll come, but only after my meeting."

"Thank you, Bhai! You're the best!" Avani jumped up and hugged me.

She is my little princess. I had always promised myself that I would protect her from everything—from any problems or troubles that came her way.

I was sitting in my office cabin, doing my work when my phone buzzed. It was Daksh Rundhawa. I have two best friends: Vivaan Shekhawat and Daksh Rundhawa. Both of them are my childhood friends, and I don't consider anyone else a friend. But they're exceptions. Woh mere liye jaan de bhi sakte hain, aur kisi ki jaan le bhi sakte hain.

Vivaan is like my business partner. He runs some businesses of his own too, and Daksh is involved in his family's fashion designing business, which is one of the top in the country— I think it ranks in the top five recently. But there's more to him. He's also into some other... not-so-legal stuff, hidden from the world. Only a few know about it.

"Aur bhai, shaadi kar raha hai!" he laughed.

"Fuck, Vivaan must've told him," I muttered under my breath.

"Yes, unlike you... fucking any girl you meet," I shot back.

"Haan haan, tu to sant aadmi hai na," he replied casually.

"Now, come to the point. Why did you call?" I said, impatient.

"I found him," he said.

"Okay, let's meet at the same spot inform Vivaan too," I said, already feeling the adrenaline rush.

I can't tolerate betrayal in my life. And if anyone tries to do that to me, I show them who the fuck Siddhant Oberoi is.

"Bhai! Where are you? Come fast na! Avani message popped up. I completely forgot we have to go to Daksh's mom, Vinita Aunty's store for Samayra's wedding dress.

I quickly typed back: *"Fine, I'm on my way. But we're not spending more than an hour there. Got work to do."*

I didn't waste time getting to the car. Samayra and her friends were already standing in front of the house.

As I pulled up, I saw Avani hugging Samayra and calling her "Bhabhi" in that cheerful voice of hers. And for some reason, the word sounded... good.*Bhabhi*.

Samayra stood there in a yellow suit that looked beautiful on her. The fabric fit her perfectly, with the delicate details catching the light. Her long hair was loose, falling softly around her face, with a few strands framing it, giving her a casual, effortless beauty. She didn't have to try—she just was.

She turned to look at me as I stepped out of the car. Her eyes met mine for a split second, and I quickly shifted my gaze. *What the hell am I doing?* I couldn't stand there, just *looking at her* like that. I'd made a rule long ago: *Don't get attached. Don't get distracted.*

Once Samayra slid into the car, I took the wheel and started driving. Avani, of course, didn't stop talking for a second. She was asking Samayra all sorts of questions about her work, her favorite books, how she spent her weekends. I wasn't really paying attention, though.

But then I glanced at Samayra, something was... wrong. Her hands were shaking. She kept wiping her forehead like she was sweating. She'd been talking non-stop with Avani earlier, but now? She seemed distant. *Why the hell is she acting like this?*There was a tension in her that I couldn't ignore, even though I didn't know her well enough to figure out what was going on.

I couldn't let it go. "Are you okay, Miss Samayra?" I asked before I could stop myself.

She nodded quickly, almost too quickly, and I could tell she was lying.

But then, without saying anything else, she said "Mr. Oberoi, if you don't mind, could you please open the windows?"

I didn't think much of it. *Sure,* I replied, opening the window for her.

I couldn't shake the feeling that something was off. Maybe it was none of my business, but that quiet, nervous energy she was giving off made me wonder what was really going on with her.

We arrived at Vinita Aunty's store soon after. I stepped out of the car, holding the door open for Samayra. At least I could be a gentleman when it mattered—especially for Avani.

While Avani and Samayra went off to pick the wedding lehenga, I didn't care much about the fabric or the designs. That wasn't my priority today.

I pulled out my phone and began typing furiously to Vikram, demanding every possible detail on the person Daksh had mentioned *I already knew him but still*—his family, his associates, his background. I needed the information, fast.

But then I heard it.

Bhai, look! Bhabhi is looking gorgeous!

I barely glanced up, but when I did, I saw Samayra standing there in front of me, wearing a red lehenga.

The moment I laid eyes on her, I felt something shift.

*Damn*. She was stunning. The rich, deep red fabric clung to her curves, the golden threads woven into the fabric shimmering under the store lights. Her hair was done in soft waves, the traditional style enhancing the elegance of the outfit. She looked like something straight out of a fairytale.

I didn't know what happened to me in that moment, but I felt a jolt in my chest. *What the hell is this?* Maybe I hadn't slept well last night, maybe I was just tired, but that wasn't supposed to be happening.

But I couldn't look away. She looked... perfect.

Avani grabbed my phone and snatched a picture of Samayra before I even had a chance to process what was going on. "She started clicking.

I didn't know what to do with the way I was feeling. *It's nothing,* I kept telling myself. But deep down, I knew it wasn't that simple.

After we left the store, we stopped by McDonald's. Avani was already hungry and chattering away, asking me if I wanted anything. . I wasn't in the mood "No," I said. I was more focused on the details I needed, still barking orders at Vikram on the phone to dig deeper into his life.

But then my gaze shifted. Samayra was sitting there , eating her fries like a little kid. She was laughing at something Avani said, and the sound made me look at her.

There was something about her—*something* I couldn't quite put my finger on. It wasn't just her beauty—it was the way she was so... genuine. So unaffected by everything around her.

I couldn't take my eyes off her. And that was the problem.

When we dropped Samayra off, I caught a glimpse of her from my window. Her eyes were locked on me. And for a moment, I could feel the weight of her stare, even though I didn't turn my head.

I could've looked at her, could've said something, but I didn't. So she just turned back to Avani, said goodbye, and sped off.

After dropping Avani at home, I headed straight to the outhouse. Vivaan and Daksh were waiting for me, as expected, their faces hard as stone. This wasn't going to be a casual meeting.

I pulled up to the familiar gates, parked the car, and made my way inside. The air was thick with tension. As I entered, I saw the man lying on the floor—Rajiv, Vivaan's assistant. His body was crumpled, face pale, his eyes wide with fear.

This was the man who had been leaking our plans to our rivals, all for a handful of cash. It wasn't the first time someone had betrayed us, but this one stung more than usual. Rajiv wasn't just some low-level guy. He was trusted. He was supposed to be loyal.

"So, this is the piece of shit who thought he could cross me," I muttered under my breath.

Vivaan stood up and stepped forward, his eyes burning with anger. "I fucking trusted him. He was my right hand. He knew everything... and now he's gone and sold us out."

Daksh, always the silent observer, didn't even flinch. He leaned back on the couch, his gaze fixed on Rajiv, a smirk tugging at the corner of his lips. He enjoyed this part—the justice, the punishment. It was a reminder to everyone: no one could fuck with us and get away with it.

Rajiv tried to speak, but his voice cracked as he begged. "Please, sir... I'm sorry. I... I didn't mean to... I was just desperate... I needed the money. Please, don't..."

I didn't even acknowledge him at first. Instead, I looked over at Vivaan, who was pacing in a tight circle. "You really thought you could leak our plans and get away with it, Rajiv?" I asked, my voice cold, every word laced with venom.

Rajiv's face twisted with fear, his eyes darting around, looking for an escape that didn't exist. But there was nowhere to run. He'd made a choice. And now, he'd pay for it.

I stepped closer, my face just inches from his. "You should've thought about your loyalty before you betrayed me."

He was shaking. I could hear his breath quickening, the panic setting in. "I... I'm sorry. Please... I didn't... I didn't mean for things to go this far."

I stared at him for a long moment before turning to Michael my bodyguard, who was standing by the door, ready with the tools. No more talking. No more begging.

"Get me the tools," I said, my tone clipped.

Michael immediately went to work, pulling a black box.

Rajiv's eyes followed the movements with increasing panic. His breathing quickened, and his body trembled uncontrollably as if the very sight of the tools had shattered any hope he had left. He tried again, his voice desperate, barely a whisper.

"Please... please, sir. I didn't mean it. I was just... I was just desperate. I thought... I thought I had no other choice." His voice cracked, but there was no longer any conviction in his words, only pure fear.

I took a step closer to him, my gaze cold and calculating. "You didn't *think*, Rajiv. You acted. And now, you'll face the consequences of your actions."

His lips trembled as he began to speak, but I raised my hand, silencing him before he could finish. His words didn't matter anymore. They never would.

I reached down to the box picked out the sharp knife. The blade gleamed in the dim light, and I saw Rajiv's face pale. He knew what was coming, and there was nothing he could do to stop it.

I grabbed his right hand—the hand that had been used in the betrayal—and forced it open. Holding him still, I pressed the cold steel against his fingers. His eyes went wide with fear, but he didn't scream, not yet. I cut into the first finger slowly, savoring the look of shock on his face as blood pooled around the wound.

He gasped, his body jerking in pain, but I didn't let go. I moved to the second finger, then the third, taking my time with each cut. Rajiv's breathing quickened, his chest heaving as he struggled to stay conscious through the pain. He kept trying to pull away, but it was no use. I held him in place, my grip tight as I sliced through each finger, one by one.

He whimpered now, the tears streaming down his face, but I didn't care. Each cut was a lesson, a reminder that there were always consequences.

Vivaan stood a few feet away, his arms crossed. He didn't flinch. Didn't show a single emotion. He just watched, cold and silent. He was always like this—no hesitation, no regret. He understood what had to be done.

When I was done with his fingers, I moved in closer. Rajiv's breath was shallow now, his face pale with fear. He was too weak to struggle anymore. His eyes locked onto mine, pleading silently.

Without a word, I pressed the knife against his throat. His body stiffened, and he gasped, but I didn't wait for him to beg. With a single motion, I slit his throat. The blood poured out in thick, hot streams, splashing across the floor and staining my hands.

Rajiv's eyes glazed over, and his body collapsed, lifeless, at my feet.

I didn't look back. Without speaking, "I nodded to Michael, and he let the wild dogs go. They snarled and growled, then attacked Rajiv's dead body.

Vivaan stepped forward, his expression unchanged. "It's done."

I nodded, a small flicker of satisfaction in my chest. The message had been sent. Rajiv's betrayal had been paid for, and there would be no more questions.

I turned away, ignoring the mess, and walked toward the bathroom to take shower.I always did this after... after my sins.

My phone buzzed. I ignored it at first, too lost in my own thoughts. The second buzz was louder. It was a notification from work—a quick update I didn't care about. I dismissed it with a flick of my thumb. But then, my hand seemed to move on its own, sliding across the screen to a message from Avani.

She'd sent Samayra's pictures to herself- Samayra wearing our wedding lehnga. I didn't want to admit it to myself, but the more I tried to ignore Samayra, the more my mind kept drifting back to her. The way she looked. The way she acted. *Something* about her was pulling me in, and I didn't know what to do about it.

Maybe it was nothing, or maybe it was everything.

But one thing was for sure—*this wasn't over*.

***10. SAMAYRA’S POV***

***Teri kudmai ke din aa gaye***



***Not every wedding is filled with love; some are filled with emptiness***

What the hell are you doing, Sam? Leave your work today! Prisha shouted at me.

Just a minute... Yes, Rohan, I—"

"Prisha, give my phone back! It's urgent, I almost yelled, I tried to explain, but she wasn't having any of it.

"No, not today! It's your wedding, yaar!" she retorted, hands firmly gripping the phone.

She was right. As much as I wanted to finish things, my wedding day was not the time for work. But... I still had responsibilities, and Rohan was expecting a quick update about my upcoming book *Forced to Betray*.

"I get it. I can't argue with her. Okay, fine. Let me just drop a text to Rohan at least," I muttered, taking the phone back from her hand.

"Fine, you have exactly one minute," Prisha said.

I quickly typed out a message to Rohan, explaining the final edits I had made to the book. As soon as I hit send, Prisha snatched my phone back again, much faster than I'd expected.

The tension in my chest tightened as I stared at the wedding setup around me. *It's happening,* I thought numbly. My wedding. When I was young, I dreamed of a fairy-tale wedding, where my prince charming would come and take me away to a perfect life. But now, here I stood in a bridal lehenga, about to marry a man I barely knew, a man I don't love. And deep down, I knew I never would.

The wedding was taking place in Delhi. Siddhant's chacha, chachi, Avani, and his cousin Riaa lived here, and his grandfather sometimes stayed with him in Mumbai, where he often traveled for business. But Siddhant mostly lived in Mumbai on his own.

"Sam, Prisha, let's go!" Isha's voice broke my thoughts, and I turned to see her standing by the doorway with a faint smile on her face.

"I can't believe it," Ishanya said, her voice full of emotion as tears filled her eyes. She hugged me tightly, and Prisha joined in, wrapping me in a warm hug.

We walked towards the mandap and I saw Mr. Oberoi sitting there, looking really handsome in an off-white sherwani. The fabric shimmered with gold and silver designs, making him look royal. For a moment, I felt something inside me, but I quickly pushed it away.

As I got closer, Mr. Oberoi held out his hand, and I took it without thinking. He gently pulled me beside him, and we sat in front of the panditji, who began chanting the mantras.

I glanced at Siddhant, I could see his impatience. His eyes flickered with irritation, almost like he felt these rituals were a waste of time, as if his mind was elsewhere.

But then the panditji's voice came , "Aap apni patni ko vachan dijiye, aap unki hamesha rakashaa karenge, unhe ek bhi aanch nahi aane denge."

I wasn't expecting anything from him; maybe he wouldn't say anything at all. But then I heard his voice, "Main vachan deta hoon, main apni patni ki hamesha rakashaa karunga aur unhein ek bhi aanch nahi aane dunga..." He paused, then added in a whisper only I could hear, "And I will destroy everyone who tries to upset my wife." I turned towards him, and he was smirking.

"'Ab kanya ke mata-pita ko bulaiye,' Panditji said.

I glanced around, my heart sinking, but as expected, my mumma and brother weren't there. They didn't come for my wedding. It wasn't that I was expecting them, but in that moment, an unexpected emptiness settled deep within me.

Just then, Vivaan's voice broke through the silence, 'Samayra, tumhara kanya daan mein aur Ishanya karenge.'

A tear slipped out. They were the ones who always stood by me, when no one else did."

After the pheras, we went to take ashirwad from everyone.

"Maasi, congratulations," Rehan's voice came. I quickly wiped away my tears and lifted him  in my arms, kissing his cheeks, "Thank you, bacha," I said.

"Isha, where is Prisha?" I asked.

"Pata nahi, abhi toh yahi thi," Isha replied.

Then we saw her, arguing or talking—I wasn't sure—with someone. It turned out to be none other than Mr. Oberoi's best friend, Daksh Rundhawa. She then walked towards us.

"Kya hua, madam?" Isha asked.

"Nothing, I hate this man," Prisha said, pointing towards Daksh.

"Par bata toh kya hua?" I asked.

"Arey, chhodo na, yeh bata, jijaji kahan hai?" she teased me.

Mr. Oberoi was with his friends. They both grabbed me and led me towards him.

"Congrats, bhabhi," Daksh said, side-hugging me. I saw Mr. Oberoi giving him a sharp look. I don't know what he was thinking. I said bye to everyone as today, we will be staying with Mr. Oberoi's family in Delhi, and tomorrow we would head to Mumbai.

I got into the car, and Mr. Oberoi was busy on his phone, not even glancing at me. He simply told the driver to start the car.

Suddenly, panic attack hit me, and I hated myself for it. It happens whenever I sit in car with someone. I closed my eyes to calm down.

Then, I felt Mr. Oberoi's hand on mine. He was still on his phone, but his touch was gentle.

As soon as we arrived home, I quickly pulled my hand away.

We got out of the car, and as I looked around, I saw Mr. Oberoi's entire family standing outside, waiting for us. His chachi was holding an aarti ki thali. We walked towards them, and she performed the aarti, welcoming us into their home. Then, I kicked the chawal ka kalash before stepping inside. It was a huge house, and I couldn't help but look around in awe.

"Beta, go freshen up. Then, we'll do your pheli rasoi ki rasam," Chachi said.

It was 4 a.m. I was sitting alone in the room. Suddenly, my phone rang, and when I saw my mother's name, my heart dropped. I didn't know why she was calling, but I hoped, just for a moment, that maybe things had changed. Maybe, after my marriage, they would accept me again, overall I did this marriage for the sake of my family's reputation. But when I picked up, her voice shattered all hope.

"You're not my daughter, you're a bloody murderer!" she screamed through the phone. "You killed your father, and now you've made your husband take everything from my son — his company, his everything!"

My breath caught in my throat. I couldn't speak. Before I could say anything, she hung up on me, leaving me in a suffocating silence.

She blamed me. And the worst part? I couldn't deny it. I couldn't even defend myself. I knew why Mr. Oberoi had married me — it was never about love. It was about revenge. I was nothing but a tool. He took his revenge but what about me? What was my fault?

Tears blurred my vision. I cried, not just for the pain of being rejected by my own mother, but for the hollow life I had been pushed into. I should have never been born. Maybe then none of this would've happened.

"Bhabhi, aap abhi tak freshen up nahi hui?" Avani's voice startled me out of my thoughts. She entered the room, pausing when she saw my tear-streaked face. I forced a small, shaky smile.

"Bhabhi, aap ro kyun rahi ho? Bhai ne kuch bola? Ruko, unhe toh main—"

"No, Avani," I interrupted quickly, wiping my tears. "Vo bas... sab kuch naya naya hai toh..."

"Arey Bhabhi, itni si baat? You just chill. Main hoon na yahaan. Abhi aap rest karo, phir kuch rasmein bhi karni hain," she said.

I took a deep breath, brushing away my tears. First, I needed to change. After slipping out of my heavy bridal attire, I lay down for a while and drifted into an uneasy sleep. When I woke up, it was already 10 a.m.

After a quick bath, I heard a knock. Avani and Riaa walked in, holding out a beautiful saree for today's ritual. I accepted it with a smile. As I attempted to drape it, frustration bubbled up. The pleats wouldn't fall into place no matter how hard I tried, and I struggled, bending awkwardly to fix them.

Suddenly, the door opened. Mr. Oberoi walked in, wearing a deep green kurta. He looked... proper desi munda.

"You should knock before entering a room, basic etiquette, Mr. Oberoi," I said.

"This is my room, Mrs. Oberoi," he shot back.

Mrs. Oberoi. He called me Mrs. Oberoi?

"Well, this is my room too, Mr. Oberoi," I replied. He didn't respond. Instead, he walked to the balcony, pulling out a chair and sitting down, eyes focused on his laptop, already immersed in work. Typical Mr. Akadu.

I sighed, turning back to my saree struggle. "Why is it always me bhagwaan ji?" I muttered under my breath.

Moments later, I felt his presence behind me. Startled, I turned slightly to see him approach. He bent down, his hands adjusting the pleats of my saree. I stood frozen, not knowing how to react. The same man who was ice-cold moments ago now helping me.

As he finished adjusting the pleats, I turned toward the mirror, looking at the perfectly arranged saree. By the time I turned back to thank him, he was already gone.

After getting ready, I took a deep breath and went downstairs to the kitchen, where Chachi was already waiting for me.

"Good morning, Samyra beta," she said with a warm smile.

I bent down to take her ashirwad. "Good morning, Chachi," I replied.

"So beta, this is your pehli rasoi. Make something for the rasam, and if you need any help, just ask one of the servants," she said and left the kitchen.

Make something? I stared at the neatly arranged kitchen. Meri Cooking aesi jaise ki Mr. Akadu ke muh pr smile? Ek dum impossible.

Determined not to fail on my first day, I decided to make kheer—something simple that Ishanya's mother-in-law had once taught me. I carefully measured the ingredients, my hands trembling slightly as I stirred the milk and rice, adding sugar and cardamom. The rich aroma filled the kitchen, giving me a small boost of confidence.

I took a deep breath, arranged the kheer in small bowls on a tray, and stepped outside where the family was gathered, including Mr. Oberoi.

I served everyone, and waited for their reactions.

"Wow, so tasty, bacha!" Chachu said, smiling broadly.

"Haan, Bhabhi, bhaut tasty bani hai!" Avani and Riaa chimed in, their faces lighting up with genuine approval.

I silently thanked the god. At least it was good.

"Idhar aao, Samyra beta," Daadu called out, he handed me shagun. I bent down, taking his ashirwad gratefully.

"Bhai, aap Bhabhi ko kya doge? Itni achi kheer banai hai," Avani teased, glancing at Mr. Oberoi.

He looked at me. "Aapki Bhabhi ko kya hi chahiye, jab unhe itna acha pati mil gaya," he said with a hint of mock seriousness.

The room filled with laughter. I rolled my eyes and whispered, "So full of himself."

***11. SIDDHANT’S POV***

***Aankhon mein teri ajab si ajab si adaayein hain, dil mein teri khataayein hain***

******

"But Dadaji, we can have the wedding in Mumbai," I said, trying hard not to let my frustration show.

"No, it's final, son. The wedding will happen in Delhi," he replied.

I knew he wouldn't change his mind, so I found myself back in Delhi—the city where I was born and the city that haunted me with memories of everything I had lost. On the day of the wedding, all I wanted was for it to be over so I could focus on what I had planned next. I sat in the mandap, my mind elsewhere detached from people.

And then I saw her.

Samayra was walking down the aisle in stunning red lehenga. For a moment, something stirred in my chest, and I couldn't look away until Avani whispered, "Bhai, bhabhi ab aap hi ki hai. You can stare at her later." And I quickly looked away.

When she reached me, I held out my hand, and she took it without hesitation. Panditji started the mantras. To me, they were nothing more than empty sounds. When it was time to vow to protect my wife, I almost scoffed. Why make promises when no one would dare touch what's mine? From today, she is mine—Mrs. Samayra Oberoi.

On the way home, I noticed Samayra seemed tensed, almost as if she was having a panic attack. It reminded me of the day we went for shopping, the same happened that day too. I couldn't bear to see her like this. I gently placed my hand on hers to calm her down. She looked at me for a moment, her eyes meeting mine. I wanted to ask, *What's troubling you, Samayra?* But before I could speak, she turned away and stared out the window, lost in her own thoughts.

When we reached home, the whole family was waiting to welcome us. Everything was going well until I got a call from Vikram. "Sir, it's done. We did what you asked," he said. I hung up, feeling a cold satisfaction. I had promised myself that once Samayra stepped into this house, I would take everything from her brother. I didn't care what the contract said—I couldn't kill him, but I would still have my revenge.

As I walked toward my room, I saw Samayra sitting on the bed, tears streaming down her face. A part of me wanted to go to her, to wipe those tears away, but I forced myself to remember why she was crying. She was crying because of what I did to her brother. Did she even know what he had done to my family? To my sister? The thought made anger rise within me. She had made her choice, and I had done what I needed to do.

I changed and went to the study room, avoid sharing the room with her. Now that the wedding functions were over it was time to focus on my work, I worked non-stop for four hours. Suddenly, there was a knock at the door.

"Siddhant beta, tum abhi bhi yaha ho?" Chachi's voice called.

"Haan, Chachi. Woh thoda kaam tha," I replied.

"Kaam baad mein. First, go and change," she said firmly.

I nodded and went to the guest room to put on a kurta. Chachi mentioned that today was Samayra's *pehli rasoi*—her first cooking ritual. I didn't want to go, but for the sake of the family, I had to. Before heading downstairs, I made my way to my room, thinking she would probably be in the kitchen by now.

"You should knock before entering a room, basic etiquette, Mr. Oberoi," voice came as I enter the room. It was Samayra holding a Saree.

"This is my room, Mrs. Oberoi," I shot back.

"Well, this is my room too, Mr. Oberoi," she countered. I didn't respond and walked straight to the balcony. Then I looked back and saw her struggling with the saree, cursing the damn fabric. A small smile appeared on my face without me realizing it—she looked cute with her wet hair and the vermillion on her forehead.

She was looking into the mirror, still struggling with the saree. I walked up to her, and as I did, she froze, her back pressing against my chest. The smell of her hair surrounded me. She glanced at me through the mirror, then quickly turned to face me. Avoiding her gaze, I bent down to adjust the pleats of her saree.

When I finished, she turned back to the mirror, and a smile appeared on her face. Even if I tried to hate her, I couldn't deny how stunning she looked. But before she could say anything, I left the room.

"Good morning, bhai," Avani and Riaa greeted. I moved towards Dadaji, touched his feet, and sat beside him. After a while, Samayra came out of the kitchen, holding a tray. She served everyone, including me.

As everyone started eating, I glanced at Samayra, who was nervously rubbing her hands. I took a spoonful of the kheer and couldn't deny it tasted good. A thought crossed my mind—*How would she taste?* As sweet as this kheer? I quickly pushed the intrusive thought away just as Chachu exclaimed, "Wow, so tasty, bacha!" while looking at Samayra.

"Haan, Bhabhi, bahut tasty bani hai!" Avani and Riaa joined which made her happy.

"Bhai, aap Bhabhi ko kya doge? Itni achi kheer banayi hai," Avani teased, glancing at me. I looked at Samayra and replied, "Aapki Bhabhi ko kya chahiye, jab unhe itna accha pati mil gaya."

She rolled her eyes and whispered, "So full of himself," just enough for me to hear. That would be the last time she dared roll her eyes at me. Next time, if she even thought about doing it, she'd be moaning my name in a way that would leave her breathless.

***12. SAMAYRA’S POV***



***I thought I had control, but now I'm just figuring it out***

"Bhai, please stay for a day na," Avani said, glancing at Mr. Oberoi, who was busy on his phone. Typical Mr. Akadu.

"No, bacha, I have to take care of business and have some meetings scheduled too," he finally replied.

"Bhai, you can do that from our Delhi office too, right?" Avani pushed again.

"Haan beta, aaj ruk jao," Chachi's voice came in support.

"Yes, bhai, please. We haven't even had a proper chat with Bhabhi, and you know I'm leaving for London next week for my studies," Riaa added.

Before he could refuse, I quickly said, "Ruk jaate hai na, Mr. Oberoi."

He looked at me, paused, and then nodded positively.

"Biwi ke gulaam," Avani whispered with a playful smile.

**TIME SKIPS**

"Avani, can I talk to you?" I asked, standing at her door.

"Bhabhi, come na! Why are you asking? You can come anytime," she replied with a smile. I stepped inside, trying to find the right words, unsure where to start.

"Bhabhi, what happened?" she asked, noticing my hesitation.

"Um, Avani... I'm sorry for what my brother did," I said softly.

"Bhabhi, I know it was not your fault. I also know why Bhai married you and what he did to your brother," she continued. "Bhai has always been protective, especially after our parents left us. He never wanted anything to hurt me."

I nodded, listening but still wondering. I knew about their mother, but where was their father? I hadn't even seen him in any family pictures or at the wedding. And Mr. Oberoi never mentioned him.

"Avani, can I ask you something?" I said.

"Yes, Bhabhi?"

"Why don't you live in Mumbai with your Bhai?"

"Bhabhi, actually—" Before she could finish, a voice interrupted us.

"Samayra, can you come to the room for a minute? It's urgent," Mr. Oberoi called.

I nodded and turned to leave. "Bhabhi," Avani's voice stopped me. "Bhai is not what he shows. He's just..." She stopped, gathering her thoughts, then started again. "Bhabhi, can I ask you a favor?"

"Tell me, Avani," I said.

"Please take care of Bhai. He hides so much pain inside him. He never tells anyone, but the way he is with you, I think you can help him."

I didn't know what to say. Why did she feel that way? "I'll take care of your Bhai," I said and left.

As I entered our room, I saw Mr. Oberoi standing by the window. I walked over and spoke. "You wanted to talk?"

He clenched his fists, turned, and grabbed my wrist, pinning me against the wall. His grip tightened around my wrist.

"Wh-what...?" My voice trembled.

"Stay away from my sister and my family," he said, his tone cold and harsh.

"What?" I managed to say.

"If you've forgotten, let me remind you—this contract says you won't get involved in my matters. My family is my responsibility," he said, tightening his hold even more.

"Leave me, Mr. Oberoi. It's hurting," I whispered.

"Hurting? Do you even understand what your brother did to my sister? No, you don't." Siddhanth said, his voice cold. "If you did, you wouldn't have been crying yesterday after finding out that I took everything from your brother."

He let go of my wrist, and I stepped back, the pain still there. Without saying another word, he walked out taking some file, leaving me standing, confused and hurt.

Why did he say that? Did he see me crying last night? But he doesn't know the real reason I was crying. Was I crying for my brother? No, I wasn't. What Mr. Oberoi did to him, he deserved it. But my mother thinks I'm responsible, and that hurts. I don't know why, but it hurts. Since yesterday, I've decided not to get involved in their matters anymore. The last thing I did for them was this marriage. From now on, this is my family. I know the contract says I shouldn't get involved, but the love and respect they give me is real. Avani knows my brother hurt her, yet she never blamed me.

My thoughts raced. Avani believed her brother was good. Maybe he was, but not to me. A tear rolled down my cheek.

**TIME SKIPS**

It was evening now. Mr. Oberoi had gone to the office with Chachu and Dadaji after a peaceful conversation with me in the morning, while Avani and Riaa had left for a friend's birthday party. They insisted I come along, but I declined, saying I had work. But the truth was, I had social anxiety and couldn't handle crowds, except for the people close to me. That's why I always kept my presence brief at events.

I walked to the kitchen, my mind still filled with the events of the morning. Chachi was busy preparing dinner.

"Arey, Samayra beta, what are you doing here?" she asked.

"Nothing, Chachi. I was just a little bored, so I came to help," I replied.

"Oh, everything is done, beta. You should rest; you must be tired from the wedding," she said.

"I've rested enough, Chachi. Let me help, please," I insisted.

"Okay, you can arrange the dining table. Your Chachu and Papaji will be here soon, and Riaa called to say they'll be a bit late."

"What about Siddhanth?" The question slipped out before I could stop it.

"He'll be late too. Whenever he comes to Delhi, he stays at the office. He usually doesn't like eating with others," she said.

I wanted to ask why he was like that but held back. I started setting the dining table.

"Beta," Chachi called.

"Yes, Chachi?" I replied.

"Siddhanth is not a bad person. I know he doesn't talk much, but he has a good heart," she said.

"Does he even have a heart? No, he doesn't," I muttered under my breath.

"He had a tough childhood. He never knew peace, but he made sure Avani had everything he didn't," she continued.

I nodded, not sure how to respond. Just then, the house servant walked in.

"Ma'am, Sir is here," he said to Chachi.

"Okay," Chachi replied.

I saw Chachu and Dadaji enter, but Mr. Oberoi wasn't with them. Maybe Chachi was right—he didn't like joining others for meals.

"Beta, come," Chachi said.

"Umm, Chachi, I'll eat later," I said.

"Don't wait too long. He always comes late," she replied.

I nodded and went to my room, opening my laptop and answering emails. When I looked at the clock, it was already 9 p.m. I went downstairs, hoping he might have come back, but he wasn't there. I sat at the dining table, continuing my work.

The door finally opened. He came in with messy hair falling over his forehead. His dark eyes looked serious. He wore a loose T-shirt that showed his strong chest and arms and had on simple trousers. Maybe he came from the gym—but gym at this hour? Before I could process it, he moved toward the guest room.

"Mr. Oberoi," I called out.

He stopped and turned. Our eyes met, and I felt a strange reaction in my body, something I couldn't explain.

"Umm... dinner?" I started, but he walked toward me, and I took a step back until my back hit the fridge. He leaned close, his eyes intense.

"Don't act like my wife," he whispered, his breath brushing against my ear, making me feel something strange. Then he pulled back, my heart beating fast.

"I am your fucking wife," I said, my voice barely steady.

"I think you need to see a doctor," he said.

"Excuse me?" I asked, confused.

"Because you seem to forget this is just a contract. You're my wife only on paper," he said and walked to the guest room, leaving me standing there.

I too went straight to the room, not feeling like eating. I sat on the bed, my mind swirling with thoughts. What was I even waiting for? Maybe he was right; I am just his wife on paper. I opened my phone and saw texts from Prish and Ishanya.

Isha: *Someone seems so busy...*

Prish: *Of course, busy with her husband...*

Isha: *Already jealous? @Prish*

Prish: *Hahaha, I'm okay like this... forever single.*

I sighed and switched off my phone. I wasn't in the mood to talk, so I lay down, trying to sleep. But it was already 1 AM, and sleep wouldn't come. I got up and went to the lawn, grabbing my book, *Haunting Adeline*. It was a gift from Prish, and I knew it was her choice—just the thought made me smile a little. Maybe reading would calm my racing mind. There was a swing out there, so I sat down put my glasses and started reading.

Before I knew it, I had dozzed off. When I opened my eyes, I realized I had fallen asleep on the swing. A soft blanket was draped over me. I wondered who covered me, maybe Chachi or Avani. I checked my Apple Watch—it was already 8:30 AM. I quickly got up, went to my room, took a shower, and packed my things since we were leaving for Mumbai today.

During breakfast, I ignored Mr. Oberoi's presence. It wasn't just his words that hurt me—they did—but today, I was frustrated, and I knew what I could do in my frustration. After breakfast we said our goodbyes to everyone and headed to the airport. Mr. Oberoi had informed me that we would be flying on his private jet. I sat in the car, purposely ignoring him, but I could feel his gaze on me. I closed my eyes, trying to block him out, not sure what was going through his mind or mine.

As the car moved toward the airport, I couldn't help but think about how my life would be in Mumbai now, after this marriage. Everything had changed so fast, and I wasn't sure how to feel.

After landing in Mumbai, we moved toward his penthouse.

"Mr. Oberoi," I said softly, breaking the silence.

"Yes?" His eyes met mine, unreadable as always.

"Can you drop me at my apartment? I'll come back after some time," I requested, trying to keep my voice steady.

"Your stuff is already at the penthouse," he said.

"I know. I just need to visit," I insisted, a hint of desperation slipping through.

He nodded and dropped me off. I stepped out and looked back; He stared straight ahead, unmoving.

As the car drove away, I opened the door of my apartment and then.......

***7. SIDDHANT’S POV***



**Sometimes silence hides the loudest fears**

I am on my way to the office. "I'll attend the meeting from here and will be back to tomorrow," I said on the call to Vivaan while starting my car.

"Okay, but did you take the file I gave you?" he asked.

I realized I had left it at home. I stopped the car and headed back. As I entered, I heard Samayra's voice. She was talking to Avani.

"Why don't you live in Mumbai with your Bhai?" she asked.

My blood boiled. I had warned her not to interfere in my family matters, and here she was, crossing the line. Before Avani could respond, I interrupted, "Samayra, can you come to the room for a minute? It's urgent."

She nodded, and I walked ahead to the room. A moment later, she stepped inside. I grabbed her wrist and pinned her against the wall, my eyes narrowing.

"I told you to stay away from my family, especially my sister," I said, voice low and sharp. "Your brother has caused enough suffering. I don't want my family hurt because of you."

"Leave me, Mr. Oberoi. It's hurting," she whispered.

"Hurting? Do you even understand what your brother did to my sister? No, you don't." I said. "If you did, you wouldn't have been crying yesterday after finding out that I took everything from your brother."

Before she could react or speak, I let go, picked up the file, and stormed out. I got back in the car, started the engine, and sped to the office.

"Arrange for someone to keep an eye on my wife," I ordered Michael, my trusted bodyguard.

"Yes, sir," he replied and left.

From now on, I would keep track of her every move. I couldn't trust her, not when my family was involved. Avani was already close to her, and I couldn't stop that. She had a habit of caring for others without a second thought, but I would protect her, even if it meant guarding her from Samayra.

After wrapping up all my meetings, I headed straight to the gym. Normally, I'd go home, but today was different. I set the treadmill to its highest speed and began running. Just then, my phone buzzed—it was Daksh. Fuck this man, he always called at the worst times. I sighed and connected my Bluetooth.

"Speak fast, I don't have time for your nonsense," I said.

"Why, Bhai? Already busy with Bhabhi?" he laughed.

"I'm hanging up," I snapped.

"Wait! It's done. Varun Malhotra has nothing left. He moved to New York with his mother, but we have guards watching him," he said.

"Good," I replied and ended the call.

I had taken control of Malhotra Media and ruined him. Now, I didn't care where he went or what he did, but I still had to be vigilant.

After a shower, I headed back to the Oberoi mansion. Inside, I saw her sitting at the dining table with her laptop, wearing a loose sweatshirt and trousers, her hair tied in a messy bun. She looked up at me, but I ignored her and walked straight to the guest room.

"Mr. Oberoi," she called.

I stopped and turned. Our eyes met.

"Umm... dinner?" she began.

Before she could finish speaking, I stepped closer, forcing her to back up until her back hit the fridge. Her eyes grew wide, and I could see her hands beginning to tremble. Was she afraid of me? If so, she should be.

"Don't act like my wife," I whispered close to her ear, my breath warm against her skin. She froze, a shiver running down her back. I stepped back slowly, but my eyes stayed on hers. Her wide eyes were full of confusion. Does she fear me? If she does, then she should. The air between us felt tense, and I could almost hear her heart racing.

"I am your wife," she shouted, her eyes full of defiance. The anger in her voice made me pause.

"I think you need to see a doctor," I said coldly.

"Excuse me?" she asked, confusion in her voice.

"Because you seem to forget this is just a contract. You're my wife only on paper," I replied, walking to the guest room and leaving her standing there.

I opened my laptop, starting my work as usual. I only sleep for 3 to 4 hours a night, always staying up late to finish everything. After a while, I started feeling tired, so I decided to make myself a cup of black coffee to keep me awake. I went to the kitchen to make it.

After that, I stepped outside to the lawn, hoping the cool air would help me feel more awake. That's when I saw her. She was sitting on the swing with a book in her lap, but she had fallen asleep, her head tilted to one side. I could see her body shivering from the cold.

I quickly went back inside, grabbed a blanket, and carefully draped it over her. I sat down beside her, feeling calm and quiet. I gently took her glasses off her face and pushed a strand of hair behind her ear. Her cheeks were a soft pink, even though it was night.

Then, I noticed a small mark on her shoulder. I reached out to touch it, but something stopped me. I quickly pulled my hand back. It felt like I was about to cross a line that I had set for myself, so I decided to leave it alone and quietly went back inside.

In the morning, after a quick shower, I went downstairs.

"Come Siddhant beta eat breakfast with us," Chachi called out.

I sat down as Samayra emerged from the kitchen, wearing a full-sleeve tee and baggy pants. She served me without making eye contact.

"How was your dinner date last night, bhai?" Riaa asked, teasing, while Avani stared at me in surprise.

"Dinner date?" I glanced at Samayra, confused.

"Yes, beta, Samayra didn't eat last night. She said she'd wait for you," Chachi added.

I looked at Samayra. She didn't eat, waiting for me? Had she eaten afterward?

"Um, good," I replied.

After breakfast, we prepared to leave for Mumbai. As the others were busy talking to Samayra, Avani came to me.

"Bhai," she said softly.

"Yes, bacha," I replied.

"Please take care of Bhabhi. She's nothing like her family. Yesterday, she came to me, really upset, just to apologize for what her brother did. Bhai, please don't blame her for it."

So, she went to apologize for something she didn't even do? What is going on with this girl? I thought. I had said so much to her, yet there she was, not even arguing back.

I nodded and said goodbye to everyone before getting into the car and signaling to the driver. Samayra sat quietly beside me, not saying a word the entire drive. Her silence was driving me crazy. We got on my private jet, and after we landed, the driver took us toward my penthouse. Today would be her first day here with me..

"Mr. Oberoi," her voice called.

"Yes?" I replied.

"Can you drop me at my apartment? I'll be back after a while," she asked, her eyes meeting mine. There was something in them, a hint of tears. Maybe she was about to cry, and it made me feel pathetic. Was this because of me? Had I made her cry?

"Your stuff is already at the penthouse," I said.

"Thank you, but I still need to visit," she said, her voice soft.

I nodded and dropped her off at her apartment before heading to my office.

"Is it done?" I asked Vikram, who stood in my office.

"Yes, sir, everything is ready," he confirmed before leaving.

I sat at my desk and opened the drawer, pulling out the contract Samayra had given me. She had asked for a mini library, so I had asked Aryan, Vivaan's brother and an architect, to set it up for her. I made sure it had all her favorite books, the ones I'd learned about when Avani had asked her about them. I tried to ignore their conversation at the time, but her voice was hard to ignore. I couldn't bring myself to say sorry—it's impossible for me—but I could do this for her, for my wife.

I called the man assigned to watch her. "Where is she?" I asked.

"She's at her apartment, sir," he replied.

"Good. Keep an eye on her, and remember, if anything happens to her, I'll make sure you don't leave this world peacefully," I warned and hung up.

Yesterday, I set guards to watch her, but today, they were there to protect her. Because I wanted to shield her from everything, even if it was from myself.

My phone rang again. "Sir... Ma'am..."

"What happened to her?" I asked, panic rising in my chest.

"Sir, we heard her voice coming from her apartment," he replied.

"Wait, I'm on my way," I said, my heart racing as I sped up the car. What happened to her? Is she okay?

I burst into her apartment and found her there, frozen in place, my eyes wide with complete shock. Wtf.......Who is he?

***14. SAMAYRA x SIDDHANT OBEROI***

***Talab hai tu, tu hai nasha gulaam hai dil ye tera***

***khul ke jara ji lun tuje aajaa meri sanson main aa***

***Love is a poison, a curse, a beautiful disaster***

**Siddhant's Pov**

I pushed open the door to her apartment, not bothering to knock. The door swung wide, and there she was, standing in the middle of the room, completely unaware that I was there.

She was facing away from me, and I could hear her voice-sharp, angry, and directed at someone. Or maybe... something?

My eyes widened in disbelief. *What the fuck... Who is he?*

I took a step inside, my eyebrows furrowed in confusion. *What the hell is going on?*

Then I saw it.

A doll.

A pathetic attempt at making something that resembled me. It looked more like a stuffed pillow wrapped in bedsheets with a beard and wide, bulging eyes glued on.

"Fuck! I don't look anything like that," I muttered under my breath, a small laugh escaping before I could stop it.

*Seriously? That's supposed to be me?*

She stood there with her hands on her hips, her small frame trembling with frustration. She looked like a tiny angry bird ready to explode.

"How dare you shout at me, huh?" she snapped at the doll. "What do you think of yourself? Staying away from your family? *Excuse me,* that's *my* family too, Mr. Oberoi! No, wait-*Mr. Akadu!* Yes, that's perfect. It suits you."

I bit my lip to keep from laughing as she continued her one-woman show, pacing in front of the doll.

"I've been ignoring you all day! Did you think I was hurt by your words? Well, guess what? I was. But now it's *my* turn. Let me show you who I really am!"

She marched over to the corner of the room and grabbed a pair of bright red boxing gloves.

*This is getting interesting.*

"You know what, Mr. Akadu? I'm a boxing expert. And today, you'll see my skills!" She slipped on the gloves and began punching the poor doll.

Without any hesitation, she started punching it. Hard.

"I hate you! Do you hear me? *I hate you!*"

I leaned against the doorframe, arms crossed, watching her little showdown. She hadn't even noticed me yet.

*"*I *hate* you!" She landed another punch, breathless from the effort.

Yes, I got it, madam," I replied calmly, still leaning against the doorframe.

She froze mid-punch, her back still to me. Slowly, she turned around, her eyes wide with shock.

Her face turned bright red. She burst into laughter, but it wasn't a normal laugh-it felt awkward as she tried to cover up her act.

"Wha-" Her voice caught in her throat. Her face flushed as she realized I had been watching the entire scene.

I took a step forward, and she took a step back. My hands were still on my chest as I spoke again. "*I got it princesses*," with a smirk.

"Mr. Oberoi... I mean, Mr. Akadu-no, wait! Mr. Oberoi! Why are you here?" she asked, flustered.

I smirked. "I came to take my wife."

Her eyes blinked in confusion. "Your wife?"

"Yes. *My* wife," I repeated, watching as realization dawned on her.

"Oh... right. That's me." She laughed again, still awkward. "We should, um, probably go. We're getting late."

"Late for what, princess?"

"Business! You're a busy man, right? Let's just... go."

I shook my head, amused. "Never too busy for my wife."

She backed up with every step I took, her eyes darting around like she was searching for an escape. Finally, she tripped, nearly falling onto the sofa. I caught her by the waist before she hit the cushions.

For a moment, everything went still.

Her hands rested lightly on my chest, and her eyes widened as she realized how close we were.

She looked completely adorable, a little frightened, and I couldn't help but smile.

I held her with one hand and brushed a strand of hair away from her face, my fingers lingering near her cheek. Her skin was warm, soft. My intrusive thoughts were getting more intense, and for a moment, they were hard to control.

She slowly opened her eyes, and for a brief second, our eyes met.

She quickly pulled away, avoiding eye contact, and began to move toward the doll she had made to take out her frustration. I grabbed her gloved hand before she could reach it.

"Planning to punch me with those soft little hands?" I teased, raising an eyebrow.

Her mouth opened, but no words came out. "Um... I-"

"Go ahead, princess. Hit me." I took her hand and placed it over my chest.

She stared, unsure of what to do.

"What happened? Lost your nerve?" I asked playfully.

She pulled her hand away and, in a quick movement, she ran toward the door.

I chuckled, following her outside. By the time I reached the car, she was already sitting quietly in the passenger seat, avoiding my gaze.

Michael, approached me. "Everything alright, sir?"

"Under control," I replied. "And make sure the guards I assigned are always with Samayra, but without her noticing."

"Yes, sir."

I slid into the driver's seat and started the engine. "Shall we?" I asked, glancing at her.

She nodded, still quiet, her fingers nervously playing with the edge of her dress.

As I pulled onto the road, I couldn't help but steal a glance at her.

Her cheeks were still flushed, her eyes focused straight ahead.

And for the first time in a long while, I felt something stir inside me-something I hadn't felt in years.

**Samayra's Pov**

I sat silently, feeling his gaze on me. Why had he shown up at my apartment? And worse... why did he have to see *that*?

*God, could this day get any more embarrassing?*

Mr. Oberoi drove with one hand on the wheel and the other resting on the gearshift. He looked calm, but his eyes kept looking at me.

It wasn't just a quick glance. He kept staring at me like he was trying to understand something about me. Every time I looked at him, I caught him watching me.

I had been taking out my frustration on a *doll*, for fuck's sake. Sometimes, I wonder if I have a hidden talent for turning everyday moments into epic disasters.

He had seen everything. He saw me acting stupid, and I couldn't help but wonder... Why did he come to my apartment? He said he came to take me, but should I believe him?

Whenever he looked at me with those eyes, I felt something strange twist in my stomach. When he placed my hand on his chest and told me to hit him, I couldn't focus. My body wasn't reacting the way it normally did. I couldn't control myself.

His shirt's top buttons were open, and I couldn't help but want to look at his chest. I couldn't stop staring at it. Before I could think about what I was doing, I quickly pulled my hand back and rushed to the door of my apartment. I sat quietly in the car, trying to calm myself.

Then, I noticed him talking to his bodyguard. He looked serious, his face hard.

We soon arrived at his penthouse, and I pushed my thoughts away as I stepped inside. It was huge, like something out of a movie. The walls were dark gray, the furniture was black, and the lights were dim. There were no bright colors at all, making the place feel cold and serious. It didn't feel cozy-it felt more like a fancy hotel than a home.

"Welcome, madam," a voice greeted me.

I turned to see an older woman, probably in her mid-fifties, wearing a neat uniform with an apron and gloves.

I noticed there were other servants around, so maybe she was the head of them.

"This is Mrs. Leena," Mr. Oberoi said. "She's been with the family for years. If you need anything, just ask her."

I nodded politely. "Thank you."

"Where's my room?" I asked, looking at Mrs. Leena.

She smiled and gestured upstairs. "This way, madam."

My room was on the upper floor, while Mr. Oberoi's was on the ground floor. I quickly went inside and locked the door behind me. I collapsed onto the bed, grabbed a pillow, and screamed into it, kicking my legs in frustration.

*You're impossible, Sam.*

After a quick shower to calm myself down, I changed into something comfortable. With Mr. Oberoi busy with work, I decided to explore the house.

As I walked through the halls, I noticed a gym next to his room. I peeked inside but didn't feel like going in. I was tempted to check out his room, but I figured it was better to avoid that for now.

I kept walking until I came across another door. I reached for the handle, but before I could open it, I heard Mrs. Leena's voice behind me.

"Madam, nobody is allowed to enter there".

I quickly took a step back and turned around, wondering w*hat could be in there?*

I turned and noticed another room across the hall. "What's that room?" I asked Mrs. Leena.

"That's your workspace, madam. Sir arranged it for you," she replied.

"For my work?" I repeated, surprised.

Curious, I rushed inside-and my jaw dropped. I had asked for a small library, but this... this was beyond anything I'd imagined. The room was warm and inviting, unlike the rest of the cold, dark house.

In the center stood a large desk, perfect for writing. A cozy reading nook with a couch full of cushions sat in one corner, and a low bed with soft blankets rested in another. It felt like a dream-a haven for any book lover.

My heart skipped a beat as I looked around. The shelves were filled with books I loved. Some were my own, but many were from my wish list-books I had always wanted but never bought. But h*ow did he know?*

Just then, Mrs. Leena entered, holding my current read, *Haunting Adeline.* "Ma'am, this is for you," she said, handing it to me. As I took the book, a small note slipped out.

"Sir asked me to give this to you," she added before leaving.

I sat down on the couch, my hands trembling as I unfolded the note. My breath caught as I read the words:

***"****Don't fall for any fictional heroes... you are only mine."*

I stared at the note, my mind racing. Did Mr. Oberoi really write this? It didn't make sense. He'd always treated me like a wife on paper, nothing more. But the handwriting was unmistakably his.

*You are only mine.*

Those words echoed in my mind as I left the room, feeling more confused than ever. Back in my bedroom, I checked my phone. Messages from Prish and Isha flooded in, full of gossip about Mr. Oberoi and me, and I ignored their conversation as my mind was full of his thoughts- Mr.Oberoi's.

*What's going on?*

Why was Mr. Oberoi acting like this? He'd been distant before, but something had changed.

I needed answers.

I went to the kitchen, where Mrs. Leena was preparing something. "Where is Mr. Oberoi?" I asked.

She glanced up. "Sir just left for the office."

"He's gone already?" I muttered.

Just then, my phone buzzed. It was a message from him. I had saved his number under *Mr. Akadu.*

*"I'm going on a business trip. I'll be back in a week."*

*Why was he telling me this?* He had never bothered to inform me about his schedule before.

My mind raced with questions. *What's going on with him?* This note... the sudden attention... the library filled with my favorite books.

*What are you planning, Siddhanth Oberoi?*