***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.

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***Spoiler alert!!!!!***

***My mom said, "You have to help your brother."***

***I asked, "What kind of help?"***

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

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

***Thanks for reading, please share, comment and vote. The next part is coming soon :)***

***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.

***\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\****

***So, what did you think of this chapter, readers? I hope you enjoyed the emotional rollercoaster! Your support means the world to me, so thank you for being part of this journey.***

***Don't forget to add Forced To Forever to your library to get notified about new parts-trust me, you won't want to miss what's coming next!***

***Now, here's a little teaser: Are you ready to meet the our Siddhanth Oberoi? What do you think he's really like? Share your thoughts in the comments below!***

***I can't wait to hear what you all think!***