



# I'M *all* YOURS

She will definitely make  
him believe in love.

*Madhumitha Lakshmanan*

## **Index**

[Prologue](#)

[Chapter 1-Meeting His Family](#)

[Chapter 2-The First Encounter](#)

[Chapter 3-The Marriage Arrangement](#)

[Chapter 4-Something Fishy](#)

[Chapter 5-The Big Day](#)

[Chapter 6-First Conflict](#)

[Chapter 7-The Talk](#)

[Chapter 8-My Life's New Turn](#)

[Chapter 9-Our New Home](#)

[Chapter 10-Jealous, was he?](#)

[Chapter 11-Does he care?](#)

[Chapter 12-My Crazy Best Friend](#)

[Chapter 13-He's Mine](#)

[Chapter 14-In His Arms](#)

[Chapter 15-Kabir's Visit](#)

[Chapter 16-Realization](#)

[Chapter 17-They were friends](#)

[Chapter 18-No Answers](#)

[Chapter 19-Learning to Trust Him](#)

[Chapter 20-My Adorable Wife](#)

[Chapter 21-His touches](#)

[Chapter 22-Sexual Tension](#)

[Chapter 23-You Call It Guilt](#)

[Chapter 24-Honeymoon Plans](#)

[Chapter 25-My Bipolar Husband](#)

[Chapter 26-Twisting the Knife](#)

[Chapter 27-The Silent Treatment](#)

[Chapter 28-The First Kiss](#)

[Chapter 29-His Legion of Ex-girlfriends](#)

[Chapter 30-A Bolt from the Blue](#)

[Chapter 31-The Backfired Plan](#)

[Chapter 32-Back to Square One](#)

[Chapter 33-What do I feel for him?](#)

[Chapter 34-Maintaining Distance](#)  
[Chapter 35-In Love](#)  
[Chapter 36-More Complications](#)  
[Chapter 37-His Wrath](#)  
[Chapter 38-Discoveries](#)  
[Chapter 39-Resolved or maybe not...](#)  
[Chapter 40-Making Up](#)  
[Chapter 41-The Enthralling Dinner](#)  
[Chapter 42-Coming in Terms with Reality](#)  
[Chapter 43-The Bygone](#)  
[Chapter 44-One Soul](#)  
[Chapter 45-Surprising Him](#)  
[Chapter 46-Promises](#)  
[Chapter 47-The Lost Life](#)  
[Chapter 48-Painful Revelations](#)  
[Chapter 49-The Lost Souls](#)  
[Chapter 50-It's Just a Little Too Late](#)  
[Chapter 51-The Divorce and?](#)  
[Epilogue](#)

## **Prologue**

"How long will this go on for?" I asked, desperate for him to explain why he'd been so cold.

"What are you talking about?" he replied, moving towards the bedroom.

Why was he treating me like a piece of trash? I blocked his way into the

room.

"Please! Tell me!" I pleaded.

"Just get the hell out of here!" He moved away.

I tugged at his wrist and he turned towards me. His silvery grey eyes never ceased to make my heart beat rapidly. His gaze carried nothing but hatred and I wanted to know why.

I stood on my toes. "I won't," I whispered in his ear and crashed my lips against his.

## **Chapter 1-Meeting His Family**

### **Shakthi's POV**

I just finished the day's work and opened the door of my navy blue Skoda Laura. My phone rang. It was mom.

"Yes, mom?" I asked, answering the call.

"Shakthi, where are you? Have you left your office?" Mom seemed tense, her voice panicked.

"Mom, relax!! I've just left," I replied, turning the ignition.

"Go home, wear a nice saree and come to Kabaleshwar temple," she commanded.

"Why?"

"We have chosen a guy for you," she paused.

*Ooh God!! Please help me!* I silently prayed.

"Hello? Shakthi! Hello?"



"Uh... Mom..." I tried to hide my nervousness.

"Shakthi, listen! Be a brave girl, take deep breaths and you will be alright. Okay?" she sounded convinced but she had no idea what I was thinking.

I took a few deep breaths. "Okay Mom! I'll see you soon." I hung up.

I drove, lost in my thoughts, not noticing I was above the speed limit. I had never imagined or seen a man from the perspective of a husband.

My parents had been trying to get me married for a long time. I kept making excuses, because I wanted to focus on my career before I committed to someone. But, they kept pestering me, and so, I gave in a month ago.

Good background research of the family and verification of the match in all other aspects was usually followed by the step of making the girl and the guy meet. So the last step to fix the marriage was the approval from us and that was going to happen today. I totally trusted my parents in this. I was sure they wouldn't make a dumb ass of a man, my husband, would they? Would I like him?

When I reached home I had a quick shower. I opened the closet and stood before it. I was just so confused about what colour saree I should wear.

Maybe a blue..yeah..no..

Maybe a red..no..

I then settled on my favourite colour, purple.

I grabbed it and neatly draped it. I wore my accessory, which was nothing more than a big jhumka earring that went matched my saree. My neck was always adorned with a necklace that had a small heart shaped pendant, a present from my parents on my sixteenth birthday.

I side braided my long black hair, stroked the waterline of my eyes with kajal, and glossed my lips, my usual routine.

I was sure about one thing, I was not going to change myself for anyone. If he doesn't like me this way, then that will be it!!

I had one final look at the mirror. My saree was neatly draped, sticking to my curves, revealing a bit of my flat stomach. I adjusted the pallu one last time and left after grabbing my phone, wallet and car keys.

I arrived at the temple and called Mom. "Mom, where are you?" I started searching for her.

"I see you, Shakthi! Wait..." she answered, hanging up. I looked around and she was walking towards me.

"Shakthi, the guy hasn't arrived yet. But, his parents are here. They said he will be here in a few minutes."

"Huh! Okay! "I said. At least that gave me time to calm my nerves.

"And listen to me carefully! They are not your clients and this is not your audit assignment, so just be careful while talking to them and be polite," she advised.

I smiled, nodding. But unfortunately, politeness and me don't go hand in hand. But, today I'll do my best for Mom.

She handed me a strand of jasmine flowers to keep on my braid.

I clipped it neatly to my braid and took a selfie to check if it was okay.

We walked and entered a hall built especially for social gatherings, where his parents and my dad and nineteen year old brother, Arun were. I felt all their eyes on me, making me more anxious. I greeted everyone and took my place next to my dad.

His parents seemed to be around the same age as mine. They looked nice and greeted me with smiles stretching to their eyes.

His mom looked simple and she was elegantly dressed in a blue silk saree. His father was dressed in a traditional silk dhoti and cream shirt, just the way my dad had dressed.

I smiled half-heartedly and waited, scanning the room to avoid any awkwardness. I heard the woman in front of me talk, "So, what is your name,

dear?? she asked.

As if she doesn't know! They would have done a thorough search about me, starting from my name to my salary. That was why I hated these kind of meetings! It was just for the sake of formality.

*Be polite!!* My mom's voice rang in my ears. "My name is Shakthi" I answered

"What are you doing now?" she asked.

*Answering your stupid questions!* I swallowed the word before they could leave and cause trouble. "I am working as a Chartered Accountant at the Auditing Sands." I smiled.

"Auditing Sands? Oh really?" she asked, astonished.

"Yeah, why?" I asked. What problem did she have with my company?

"My son also works there," she pointed out.

What?? Was it some guy whom I hate? What was his name? I was frightened to ask.

Just then, my dad asked for me. "Oh! Gautham also works there? Sounds great!"

*'Gautham.'* I haven't heard his name in my company ever before. Oh wait, wait!! If we share a profession at least we have something in common at the start, and I do love intelligent people. He'd started to turn me on and we hadn't even met yet.

My mind raced. Thoughts of building our own audit firm together, one day. Maybe after a few years of experience, it might happen. What was I thinking? I should wait and meet him before dreaming!

My dad then asked me, "Have you met him, Shakthi?" I shook my head.

"There wouldn't have been any chance of Shakthi meeting him. He rarely goes to office. He loves traveling, so he is always on some outstation audit."

He loves traveling? That's a nice piece of information! It was not that I didn't like out station audits. I do! I've also been on several, but I get homesick.

Then his dad started a boring conversation and my mind wandered off.

I tried to plaster a smile on my face during the whole ordeal. My dad could sense I was drifting away.

"Shakthi and Arun, why don't you both go pray," Dad said. He was such a saviour.

"Okay!" I agreed quickly, sliding my flicks behind my ear.

After a fifteen minute prayer, we returned. Still the man hadn't come! Does he even value this meet or his parents? Was he even interested in this marriage?

"Is Gautham coming? Did he say anything?" Dad questioned.

"He just sent me a message, he has entered the temple," his mom sounded happy.

Finally, here comes the President! I rolled my eyes mentally.

"Yeah! There he is!" his father said, getting up.



## Chapter 2-The First Encounter

### Shakthi's POV

"Yea! There he is!" his father said, getting up.

I refrained from turning. I didn't want to show that I was desperate to see him.

*No, Shakthi! Don't look!* I repeated to myself.

I also made sure that the look I had on my face was not misunderstood for shyness.

His father excused himself to go towards him.

Maybe, I could have a glimpse of Gautham on the pretense of watching his father walking away.

What did I just see?? I mean, whom did I just see?? He looked like a model from the cover of a magazine. Suddenly, I wished I had dressed better.

*No Shakthi, this is you! Be yourself!* I kept saying.

I couldn't help but stare at this Greek God.

He was tall, maybe six feet, where I stood only at 5 feet 5 inches. His broad, well-built shoulders went down to his narrow and thin waist. His white sleeves, folded up his elbows, moulding his taut muscles were enough to make me drool. I just knew he had a delicious six pack under that shirt! His nose was sharp and defined. His square jaws and five o'clock shadow made him a blend of fierce and sexy. His lips pleaded to be kissed.

How did he escape my eyes at work??

He looked a bit exhausted. It seemed like even he had come directly from his (my) office. But, how on earth did he manage to look so dangerously handsome?

While he spoke to his dad, his peculiar silvery grey orbs caught my chocolate brown eyes. Bolts of electricity ran through my veins. I didn't know why, but I didn't look away. I could stare into those eyes forever. I noticed they held some sort of pain or maybe, I was just hallucinating!

It was rare to find silvery grey eyes in India. But maybe, it defined his character. Was he a confused man, by nature? Would he be bipolar?

*Shakthi! Stop being judgmental!!* I told myself.

His lips curved, creating the most cocky and sexy smirk I've ever seen.

Arrogant jerk!!!

I quickly started fidgeting with my phone, avoiding his gaze.

I never thought my parents would find such a match for me.

After a few minutes of personal conversation between him and his father, they walked towards us and sat.

He greeted my parents and wait, me?

"Hello?" his voice was deep and husky.

My breath caught in my throat. I should get my stupid voice out of my mouth, right now.

"Uh..hi," I croaked like a frog. Why was his presence affecting me so much?

My parents questioned him. "What is your name?"

Now it was my parents' turn to conduct his interview. As if they didn't know his name. This was really stupid!

"Gautham," he answered with a polite tone. Good that I didn't judge. This man was turning out to be okay-ish, actually more than okay-ish!

My dad started, "So, your parents were saying that even you work at Auditing Sands?"

"Yes uncle, I do."

"Have you seen Shakthi there?" my dad continued.

"No uncle. Actually I attend only outstation audits. I go to office very rarely, which happened to be today and I am really sorry for making you all wait."

"No problem! It's really fine," mom interjected.

It was not fine mom!

"So when did you complete your studies?" Dad asked him.

"Three years back, when I was twenty-two."

Okay, so we were the same age! He might just be a few months older. It looked like this journey together might be interesting.

Suddenly his mom chimed in, "We will go home and let you know what Gautham feels. It is actually that, today is our niece's wedding reception. So we need to hurry. We are really sorry about this," she mused and all of them stood up from their places, getting ready to leave.

My parents also nodded, understanding the situation.

This can't get more annoying! Why were they doing this? What about my feelings?

How will he decide without us speaking? How will I decide?

We all left.

Throughout the drive, neither of my parents pondered over this topic of marriage. It was weird.

It was almost ten minutes past eight when we reached home.

The first thing I did was to barge into my room and remove my saree. I was not great at managing a saree. But, I loved the way I looked in them. I loved traditional clothing. I quickly got into my t-shirt and pajamas and joined everyone else in the hall.

I was anticipating a talk about what happened in the temple, but everyone acted as if nothing really happened.

\*\*\*

The next day was really hectic. I had so much work to complete at my office.

So I decided to leave early.

I chose to wear a saree today as well.

I went in a blue chiffon saree today. After doing my usual makeup, I was ready to go.

As I was entering my office, my phone went off. It was my mom. I quickly answered the call, getting into the elevator, "What do you think about Gautham?" she asked without the usual pleasantries.

"Mom!! How can I answer that now? People are there around me!" I whispered into my phone.

"It's fine, Shakthi, tell me," she pressed

"Fine! He is apparently good looking. He was polite when he spoke. He respected you all and I know that if you make a choice for me, it will never go wrong. If you and dad have chosen him, then he will be a good man. I trust you all," I explained.

"Is that a 'yes' from you, darling? Are you sure of the marriage? There is no pressure, sweetheart. We can always look for another guy," she suggested, but hopefulness shadowed her voice. I didn't want to disappoint them.

"Mom? I am sure about it!" I convinced her.

"Shakthi, I am really happy!" she squealed.

"But, why are you bringing this up now?" I asked.

"His parents just called up and told us that Gautham was ready to get married to you. We wanted to know what you feel and now that we know; consider that your marriage is fixed." Those words made the hairs on my neck stand up.

I didn't answer for a few seconds, "Shakthi!" my mum called out.

I cleared my throat. "Okay mom. I will meet you in the evening. Bye." I quickly hung up.

He was ready to get married to me?? How did he decide, when we hardly spoke? Maybe, just the way like how I decided! I just trusted my parents on this! My gut feeling said that my marriage wouldn't be that bad after all!

The elevator dinged at the next floor and I just had seven more floors to my cabin.

"Hey!" A familiar deep and husky voice caught my attention.

It was Gautham! Why was I becoming nervous??

*Relax!* I tried telling myself.

"Hey Gautham," I said, trying to sound calm. But, only God knew how tense I was.

"Both purple and blue suit you," he said, commenting on my saree.

I tried hard not to blush. I managed to hide it with a small tight lipped smile.

"Thank you. So, what brought you to office?" I asked curiously.

"Just came to submit the audit report," he replied

"Hmm," I said, simply playing with the phone.

"So, looks like you are a traditional girl!"

I couldn't help but laugh at his question.

"Did I ask something wrong?" He looked confused.

"No, no! This is just the second time that I am wearing a saree and you saw me on both the days and trust me, I never fall into the traditional category. I like traditional clothes, but they are tough to manage," I clarified.

Someone, please come and glue my unstoppable mouth! I just gave too much information about myself!

*Shut up! Just shut up!!*

"You look nice in them." He winked at me.

My heart literally skipped a beat. How adorable he looked when he winked.

He looked even more handsome today, all fresh and fine.

Just when I was checking him out again, the elevator's ding interrupted me and I had to get out.

"See you soon," I said and I left mumbling a "wow" under my breath.

The day at my work ended well.

All my colleagues congratulated me for the news that I broke.

When I revealed Gautham's name, the room was filled with gasps. So weird that only I didn't know him!

So many girls went crazy listening to the news. Some of them started cussing at me calling me names, asking me how I trapped Gautham! I just shrugged it off.

But, this thought kept swimming in my head. What if he had previous girlfriends? I wouldn't mind much since it was his past. But I would be shattered if the past started to affect his future.

\*\*\*

I came home extremely exhausted and the news that my parents broke didn't do any good.

How do you think a girl was supposed to feel after knowing that her marriage with a stranger was in two weeks after both families met?



## Chapter 3-The Marriage Arrangement

### Shakthi's POV

How do you think a girl was supposed to feel, knowing that her marriage with a stranger was in two weeks after both families met?

Pathetic, right?! That was how I felt!

I only knew that his name was Gautham and that he was an Auditor working at the same firm as mine. Two weeks were all I had! Just two weeks! The entire two weeks were to be spent shopping and preparing for the wedding. How would I get to know him in those two weeks?? Why two weeks? The bride and the groom are not allowed to even talk once the engagement is over. So all I had were a few days.

I had to just get on with it. I reasoned I have my entire life to know him.

But, was he fine with this? I was honestly surprised.

He never told me anything about this when we met at the office and that was weird.

I had been postponing my age of marriage as much as possible with reasons like studies and work, but then I couldn't find any valid reason to postpone it further or maybe my parents would have thought that it was better to get me married before I changed my mind, again.

*My parents!* I laughed mentally.

I would never ever go back on my decisions.They knew that very well.

I was just curious to know the reason for this hurried and rushed up wedding.

I took a long shower and all the memories of today replayed in my head.

After my shower, I slipped into my t-shirt and pajamas and I decided to check out his Facebook profile. I could at least get to know something about him.

I logged into my account and opened my friends list. I knew that it wouldn't be a tough job to find him on Facebook because we worked in the same place and were bound to have a mutual friend. My guess was right. I clicked on his

profile.

His profile photo was a side profile of his face. It was clicked with the night sky as a background with a full focus on his face, showing his highly defined nose, sexy and perfect jaw that made me drool. Of course, there were numerous likes for this sexy man.

I slowly started to read the comments. One comment caught my attention.

'Hope you didn't miss Anitha, buddy!' What?? Who was this Anitha? Was he talking about the Anitha at my office? Could it be her??

Was Gautham in love with her or something? Was he being forced into this marriage?

*Shakthi! Stop being judgemental! Stop it!*

When I wanted to have a second look at the comment, I searched for it. The comment wasn't there. It was deleted!

Gautham must have deleted it! There was something fishy!

"Shakthi??" my mum called up.

I closed my laptop and went to the kitchen to see what she wanted.

She was cooking our dinner.

"Yes mom?" I asked. She turned the stove off to face me.

"Shakthi, tomorrow you will be engaged. Don't be shocked; you knew that this would happen soon."

I was at least a bit shocked. But, the culture here was that the engagement takes place without the bride and the groom. I don't know the reason it. It was kind of absurd. But, it being a ritual, I had to accept it!

The engagement took place and of course my relationship status did change from single to engaged. Days passed by in a blur of shopping and wedding preparations.

We usually buy silk sarees for our marriage. The colour was usually red. The gold silk border of the saree had to be big. The wedding saree was to be bought by Gautham's family which was the usual tradition. When the saree arrived it looked breathtakingly rich and beautiful. I just couldn't wait to see how it was going to look on me on my big day!

I had asked my mom to grant me at least two days for my personal shopping. I always wear these boring pajamas and t-shirts at home. I always wanted to wear these hot pants at home. So my shopping was mainly for that.

I had pulled my cousin, Tanya along with me for shopping.

I grabbed three to four hot pants. They looked really nice and comfortable. But, do I have the courage to wear these in front of Gautham??

I had purchased some formal knee length skirts and a few shirts that matched the skirts, a few pairs of denims, lingerie sets and some night wears.

And trust me, the next three days ran by without even a little contact with Gautham.

There was a strict warning from my parents and elders that I was not allowed to see him or talk to him. As if I was dying to talk to him!

\*\*\*

There were just five days left.

My marriage was to be held at my native, which was a district near Trichy.

I was really excited to visit my house at my native. It had been seven years since I visited.

Houses in this district are huge bungalows, the typical Chettinadu type.

My house was no exception and it had the amazing traditional touch to it, having its nativity and culture intact. Usually, the wedding would be held at bride's house, because the houses are bigger than the marriage halls.

But, in the recent times, marriages at houses were slowly reducing because people felt that it was easier to hold a wedding at a marriage hall and it would

save a lot of time and effort.

In order to make the arrangements for the wedding and to conduct all other rituals, we decided to leave Chennai at least five days before the wedding and the day had also arrived.

When I gave the invitations to my friends, all of them were really excited and told me that they would be there at least two days before my wedding which made me feel really happy. But, Anitha had a scowl on her face when I gave her the invitation and it was evident that she wasn't happy at all. But, I just shrugged it off, thinking that she was jealous.

My mom had asked me to pack all my things. It meant that my entire room had to go into many trolleys.

I was becoming emotional. This was the last day at my home. I was born and brought up here and I was leaving this place. I was going to miss my room so much. It looked empty and soulless without my things.

I was so engrossed in packing that my mom's loud voice startled me!

"Shakthi!!"

"Mom!! You scared me!" I shrieked

She lightly chuckled and asked, "Can you get me Gautham's residential address?"

"Don't you know it?" I asked.

It was weird that she didn't know his residence. Without even knowing the address, how did my parents visit his house so many times?

"I know his parents' residential address, Shakthi. But, I don't know his new flat's address!"

"What???" I choked. This meant that I was going to stay alone with him in that flat. We were not going to be in a joint family.

It sounded creepy to stay alone with, just him. It would give us a lot of privacy, but living with his family had its advantages.

There was no use thinking about things that wouldn't happen. It felt like I had no more control over my life. But, I was doing all this for my parents.

"Shakthi!! Are you even listening to what I am saying??" my mom's voice pulled me out of my thoughts.

"Sorry mom! What were you saying?" I asked

"It's okay! Forget it! Nothing important. But, just get me his address," she ordered and turned to leave my room when I stopped her.

"Mom!" I called.

"I have so much work left, Shakthi. What is it??"

"You are forgetting something Mom."

"Tell me what it is, dear! I have no time to spare! Be quick!" she said in a hurried tone.

"I need his contact number to talk to him and get his address," I stated the obvious.

"Oh my clever daughter!! Contact him through his landline number. I don't have his number," she said and left.

Even if she had it, she wouldn't give it to me, because she would want to maintain the so called rule of 'don't allow the bride and the groom to talk.'

I sighed and contacted the landline number and his mom answered. I spoke to her for a few minutes and got the address.

It was one of the famous builders' flats and it was getting me all excited. Such flats are quite expensive. It would easily cost crores. But, he managed to buy it.

My own bank balance was *just* in crores. It became '*just*' crores, until I came to know his address. This made me really curious about the money he earned. There was nothing wrong in wanting to know your fiancé's salary.

What made me even more curious was that we both were in the same job and

same company, but it seemed like his salary was more than mine. Auditors get paid more when they attend more of outstation audits.

\*\*\*

In a few hours, all of us had finished our packing.

My mom kept packing until we left and only God knew what she kept packing.

We had three more hours until the train arrived. I started to get dressed in skinny fit jeans and a comfortable t-shirt. I pulled my hair into a high pony-tail and let my bangs hang in front.

Before we could leave, I had a last tour around my house. I was really going to miss it. I had memories attached to every nook and corner. Tears ran down my cheeks. My parents kept consoling me and it did make me feel better.

The long, traffic disrupted drive to the junction was fun-filled along with my parents, brother, cousins, uncle and aunt.

We reached the junction and settled in our seats after the train arrived. It was going to be an exciting overnight journey. In no time the train came to life. My heart was racing as the train started to move. The next time I came to Chennai, I would be married. This mere thought sent shivers down my spine.

All the elders started to chat. My cousins and I teased each other and spoke.

They teased me so much and it looked like there was no end.

We decided to play. They had brought a deck of cards with them. I felt like a teenager again.

But, it felt nice to behave like a teenager once in a while. There were seven of us. Soon the game became interesting.

"When is Gautham's family leaving Chennai??" my aunt asked.

"Today, in fact they are on the same train," Mom replied.

"I just met them! They are in the same compartment," Dad answered.



Should I react? It's better I don't!

I refocused on the game, but that soon got boring. Some fresh air would really be nice. So, I took my cousin Tanya along with me. She started to tease me.

"You are so eager to meet him that you walked out of the game!"

I regretted bringing her with me. Why do they have to relate every single thing to him?? I knew she'd never stop, so I let it go.

We walked to entrance of the compartment, near the door.

A guy was already standing there with his back towards us. It looked like he was enjoying the breeze as well.

So, we thought of using the other door. I leaned on the door as the clean and fresh air hit my face. It was a heavenly feeling.

Tanya quickly got bored since I was ignoring her so called 'teasing'. She quietly went back to her seat and joined the others.

I stood there, enjoying the touch of the wind. It sent my hair flying all over, but I didn't care. I took in the cool and fresh air.

"Hmm," I moaned, purely enjoying the breeze.

As I turned to lean on the other side of the door, I was shocked to see him standing in front of me and from what I saw, he was equally shocked.

## Chapter 4-Something Fishy

"Hmm," I moaned, purely enjoying the breeze.

As I turned to lean on the other side of the door, I was shocked to see him standing in front of me and from what I saw, he was equally shocked. It was Gautham! It was real!

He looked entirely different. He was dressed in black denim jeans with a red polo t-shirt and his taut muscles were clearly displayed. The wind had messed up his dark hair. I felt his eyes moving over my body, making me self-conscious.

His husky and deep voice shook me from my thoughts.

"Why are you here??" he asked, raising an eyebrow.

"Excuse me?? Is it your father's property??" I asked, irked.

He smirked and couldn't get cockier! What made him smirk? I was rude to him, but he was smirking? This man had a confusing personality!

"Bold, are we?" he mocked and it made me roll my eyes.

I didn't feel like prolonging this conversation, because I felt totally restless being around this man! He was so intimidating! Was I really ready to get married to him??

When I just turned on my heel to leave, his voice stopped me again.

"Are you traveling alone?"

I again turned to face him. "No! I am with my family. We are going to our native and you apparently know the reason?" I explained, folding my arms across my chest.

"Of course, *our wedding*," he scorned, air quoting those words and the mark of sarcasm didn't escape my ears.

"Why, the sarcasm??" I was truly baffled

"Did it sound like that? I wasn't being sarcastic," he lied.

I definitely smelt something fishy. If he was hiding anything from me, he had to tell me. I was not a girl who would put up with nonsense.

"Should I be knowing something??" I asked, looking directly in his eyes

His body visibly tensed, but he quickly covered it up with his reply. "Of course not"

Maybe, I was expecting a little too much from him for a third meeting!

But, I made a note to talk to him about it after our wedding even if it was going to ruin our lives. I may sound rude, but let's face it; it was my life that was at stake!

He started to shuffle, clearly on the edge.

I decided to ask him something else to cheer him up. "So, what made you think that I was traveling alone??"

"I thought that you were going for some outstation audit."

His answer made me laugh my ass off and my stomach started to hurt so badly.

He was puzzled looking at my reaction. He gave me an amused look. "What is it?? Why are you laughing so much?"

"You thought that I would leave for an outstation audit with my wedding just five days away? Whom would you marry then?" Oops! The words were already out!

*Why would you ask that?*

"Yea, right." He rolled his eyes.

Maybe, I should just leave.

Thank God for the yawn that escaped my mouth, if not for that I would have faked one.

"Looks like you are sleepy! You go and catch some sleep. We will meet

soon!"

"Yea ...soon!" I yawned again while he smiled at me. Not waiting any longer, I left the place.

Not bad! For once we had a decent conversation. It was indeed a good start, but there was something that was eating him up. I was not going to force it out of him. He had to trust me and tell it himself. I know that trusting someone was not a joke, it takes time and it looked like we had all the time in the world. The hectic night came to a peaceful end.

\*\*\*

"Shakthi! We will reach within 20 minutes, dear! Wake up," my mom said.

Where are we supposed to reach?

I was in a train traveling to my native place! How could I forget it!

In no time we arrived at our destination.

It was seven thirty and the sun was shining.

We carried all the luggage into the house. I was dying to look around, knowing I'd be leaving to live somewhere else in a few days.

All of them retired to their rooms to get dressed up.

Elders had so much work to do while my cousins and I spent the day taking pictures, playing and having fun.

It was a nice feeling that I had missed for a long time.

\*\*\*

I was having a nice and a sound sleep which was interrupted by my aunt. I heard her shouting, "Wake up, Shakthi! It's four already."

Oh God! This was *The Big Day* .

## **Chapter 5-The Big Day**

### **Shakthi's pov**

I did my usual morning routine followed by a nice, long and a hot shower which eased my nerves. I wrapped the towel around my body and stepped into the room. I then picked up my wedding saree that was placed on my bed.

After blow drying my hair, I applied my body cream and then put on my underwear.

I started draping my wedding saree.

I let out a frustrated sigh. Managing a silk saree was going to be really tough.

I first wore the blouse which was also in red. It did enhance my complexion.

I wore the petticoat for the saree. Then I slowly tied the saree taking care over every fold.

After thirty minutes, I was done.

I looked at myself in the mirror.

It was close to perfect.

In a few minutes, the person who does the bridal makeover arrived. She listened to me patiently. I didn't want to overdo my makeup. I told her every detail, how it had to be.

It took her one whole hour to complete it and I struggled to sit patiently in one place.

I took a look at my reflection in the mirror. She had totally transformed me. I looked beautiful, more than I could ever imagine.

My eyes were neatly kohled and eye lined. She had used a dark red on the inner part of the lids and gold eye shadow on the corners. It looked elegant. Not overdone at all. Just perfect.

My lips were coated with a nice shade of brick red lipstick, matching my saree. She had used a little blush to cover my cheeks, making me look more

natural. My hair was neatly braided with a part of my bangs out.

"You look so beautiful," she shrieked.

"Thank you." I smiled at her.

That was when I saw all my aunts and Mom enter. "Shakthi, you look so pretty!!" Mom exclaimed. Her eyes were filled with love.

All my aunts complimented my looks. I was hoping they didn't say that to reassure me.

My mom made me wear all the diamond necklaces, bangles and the earrings.

My hair was filled with jasmine flowers. Then, I had a look at myself in the mirror. I was a complete bride.

It was almost six. I was going to get married in an hour and I began to feel anxious.

All my things were carried by my brother and they locked up my room. As I walked down the stairs, memories flooded my mind.

Tears rolled down my cheeks. "Don't cry, baby!!" Tanya, who was walking alongside me, said. She wiped my tears.

"No...It is just that... Just that," I stuttered...

"I understand, sweetheart! Don't spoil your makeover, yea?"

I smiled and nodded. All of us left our house. They locked the house while I took my place in the car with my mum, dad, Arun and Tanya.

\*\*\*

We arrived at the wedding hall and I grasped my mom's hand. She kept whispering that it would all end well and that I could meet them whenever I wanted. It eased my nerves a bit.

I was taken to a room in the wedding hall which was labeled as the bride's room. It was opposite to the groom's room.



All my friends came and surrounded me. They started teasing me. I was extremely exasperated!

"Guys! Just stop it! Please!!" I cried out.

My best friend from high school, Shalini came to my rescue. "Guys!! She is having an arranged marriage, for god sake! You are making it tough for her."

I thanked Shalini silently. She acknowledged it and sat near me. "Don't worry, Shakthi! You both are going to rock together."

Has she seen him?

"Did you see him already?" I questioned

She nodded positively. "I bet you both are going to look great together." She beamed and pulled me into a tight hug.

"love you!" I told her.

"Aww! Love you too," she replied.

In a few moments, I heard a voice. "Bring the bride!! It's time already."

I suddenly felt someone touch my shoulder.

"Mom!" I sobbed when I saw her

"Shakthi, calm down, dear. Just relax!" She tried to pacify me.

"It is time. Shall we go??" she asked.

She wiped away my tears. I had a last look at myself in the mirror. Nothing was out of place.

Mom took me out of the room to the stage. There was a huge audience; my relatives and his.

Then my eyes caught Gautham. He was in a silk dhoti, an unstitched piece of cloth wrapped around the waist, and a white silk shirt. He was bright and handsome. He carried the traditional attire so well which made me jealous. His hair was neatly done with gel, his broad shoulders fit neatly into his shirt

and his muscles were visible through his shirt.

He smiled at me and I smiled back.

Then I was made to stand on a small stool that was made of gold, having various mantras inscribed on it and it was only a few inches above the ground.

I stood on it, but even then I didn't match his height, he was way taller. His silvery grey eyes caught mine and it only tensed me up. All our close relatives and friends surrounded us on the stage.

Then my uncle gave me the mala and his uncle gave him his.

We were asked to exchange the mala thrice and we did it as we were told.

There were a few other rituals that were done before the clock struck Seven.

The priest shouted "Ketti melam...ketti melam," meaning, the auspicious time has arrived. Tie the sacred thread. The words sent chills down my spine.

Gautham tied the first two knots around my neck as his sister tied the last knot. Uncontrollable tears rolled down my cheeks. I looked at my parents and their eyes were also filled with happy tears.

"You are married, Shakthi," Shalini whispered in my ears.

Reality hit me hard.

## Chapter 6-First Conflict

### Shakthi's pov

I didn't know why! But after that I didn't look at Gautham.

Though we were together to do all the rituals, I couldn't.

You can call it frustration. If not for him, I wouldn't have been separated from my family.

During lunch, when Gautham was asked to feed me sweets, I was grumpy. I have spent twenty five years with family and was about to leave them. Yet he smiled as he moved sweets towards my mouth.

"Stop smiling, will you?!" I snapped

He scowled. But, I had too much on my mind to care about his feelings right now.

\*\*\*

It was almost evening. It was time for me to leave my parents and go to my new house that was Gautham's; which was at his native place.

I hugged my mom. "I don't want to leave you all, Mom! Please!" I pleaded, though I knew it would be of no use.

"Shakthi, marriage is a part of every girl's life! Every girl has to leave her family one day."

"That is why I never wanted to marry!!" I cried harder.

"No, dear! You will not regret this decision ever and why are you even worrying?? We are in the same city, so you can meet us whenever you want!" She consoled me.

It made sense. I nodded and smiled at her through the tears, while I wiped her tears.

My father gave me the strength to face my life. Be it my studies, my work, anything and everything. He was my strength and would always be.

I hugged him. "Take care of your health, Dad. And don't forget to take your tablets!" I sobbed again.

He nodded with a smile and gave me an encouraging pat on the back.

"Shakthi! Just remember one thing in life! Don't give up at any point! It is your life; live it the way you want!"

"Gautham, she is my princess. I am giving her to you, trusting you totally. Please treat her like a queen."

I cried harder listening to my father's words, not hearing Gautham's reply.

I smiled at my dad and hugged him once more. "Love you, Dad," I whispered.

I saw my brother waiting. "Listen, Arun! I will whack you if you don't take care of our parents properly." He laughed.

"Of course, Shakthi! And don't forget that you always have a brother to talk to, when you are in need!" I chuckled at his emotional words. I didn't know that my brother had grown up so much. We hugged.

I also bid my byes to my grandparents, aunts, uncles and my dearest cousins.

After the last minute talks, we were taken to the parking lot.

The car arrived .Gautham and I sat inside with the chauffeur in front.

My luggage was loaded in the car and it came to life. It was going to be a long drive.

I was now settled and my tears also dried up.

Fifteen minutes had gone by since the car came to life, but not a single word was exchanged. He didn't even bother to console me. How insensitive can a person be??

I looked at him. He grimaced at his phone. It wasn't he who left his family. It was me who had to bear such pain. Why was he annoyed? If someone should be annoyed, it should be me!

Oh wait!!

I snapped at him during lunch and that was why he didn't utter a single word.

Should I apologize? It was not his mistake for not understanding me. We hardly knew each other. So I really can't expect him to know my feelings.

"Gautham??" I called him as softly as possible.

I had never been so soft, ever.

He didn't reply. He pretended I didn't exist!

I repeated, "Gautham??" this time a bit louder.

"What??" he barked.

Shit! What was that?

"Excuse me?" My anger boiled.

He looked at me questioningly.

"It was your mistake! You couldn't even understand what a girl had to undergo when she leaves her parents and all the while you kept smiling and when I was trying to apologize since I thought I was rude, you are shouting at me??"

His expression changed after my outburst. It softened, like he realized something.

"Shakthi, I am totally sorry! I really am! I totally misunderstood!" His tone was sincere.

"It is fine, Gautham! And let me make it very clear!! If I am wrong I will apologize, if I am not, I will stand up for myself and I will not compromise at all!!"

He chuckled... I was serious and he was laughing!

"I am serious! Why are you laughing??"

"You can turn into a lioness anytime!!" he stated.

"Oh yes! Don't underestimate me!" I joined him, laughing hard.

"So, do you want to work further??" he asked

"Of course, out of question! Why??" his question was ridiculous

I was amused. I wouldn't choose such a difficult profession if I were to sit at home and hatch eggs.

"I was just curious, because many girls will want to enjoy their married lives without work pressure."

"Do you think it would be wise of me to quit my job?? And wait, whatever answer you give won't change my decision of me continuing."

He smirked

"No! It is not about you quitting your job. I was just thinking, you know, maybe we can start a firm together??"

That was really unexpected.

"Gautham, I am totally fine with the firm idea. But, I think we need more experience, say at least five more years?" I suggested.

"You are right, that will do and it looks like you are thoroughly planned."

I laughed. "Sure thing!!" I rolled my eyes.

Soon we started receiving calls from our friends, congratulating us. His friends spoke to mine and mine to his.

The time flew as we reached his house.



## **Chapter 7-The Talk**

### **Shakthi's pov**

When we reached his house, we were asked to do certain rituals. Every ritual had a meaning behind it. I never knew the meaning until today.

His house was as big as mine. But, my house was more traditional and his was totally modern.

It was four in the evening when my sister- in- law took me to a room.

I was guessing it was her room. It was vast and luxurious. I was famished and requested her to get me something to eat. She made me sit and gave me some food. It was really sweet of her.

She became more than a friend to me. She was a beautiful person. She filled the place of a caring sister. She was with me from the moment I was married, helping me and getting me things I wanted.

"Sri!!!" someone called her.

"Shakthi, you just finish the food while I look into what is needed."

I nodded, smiling at her. I was done with the food and used the washroom and when I stepped out of the restroom, Sri was already waiting for me with a gorgeous saree in her hand.

"Wear this and get dressed, Shakthi! People from your house might come any time!"

"Okay!" I shrieked, taking the silk saree from her.

It was just too beautiful for words. It was an ink blue saree with a beautiful and an elegant peacock on the pallu. It was just marvellous. I couldn't ask for better.

I quickly changed and draped the saree neatly around my body. I braided my hair and touched up my makeup. Just when I was done, there was a knock on the door.

I opened it to find Sri waiting for me. "Shakthi, you look gorgeous! Simply

wow!" she shouted.

"Shh!! People are there!" I silenced her, not wanting to attract attention.

Sri was followed by my mother-in-law. "Shakthi, dear! Shall we go?? Your relatives have arrived!"

This ritual was that the groom's family invited the bride's family for dinner so that the bride's family can be assured of how well their girl was being taken care of.

\*\*\*

I was talking with my friends and cousins and out of nowhere they pulled Gautham into the conversation which soon turned into a photo session.

It was really awkward when my friends were pushing me closer to Gautham, making me embarrassed. It was getting onto my nerves but I tried my best to stay calm.

*Just this day, and no more teasing!* I kept telling myself.

We then had our dinner and soon the time arrived for my family, relatives and friends to leave.

My mom suddenly wanted to talk to me. "Shakthi...erm..Actually"

"What is it, mom??" I was concerned

"Be careful, Shakthi! This relationship is the most delicate relationship. Be very careful with your words!"

"Mom! Get to the point!" I was curious to know what she was trying to say.

"Shakthi..Today is your wedding night! Do you know what you are-"

I started laughing and she stopped. She was trying to give me a sex talk! She still thought I was her little innocent daughter!

She looked at me confused.

"Why are you laughing??" she was clueless.

"Mom, I understand what you are trying to hint at! I get it! You don't worry!"

She seemed convinced and enveloped me in a hug as we had our last moments together.

Soon they left.

\*\*\*

Everyone had left and the noise slowly settled down.

It was only Gautham's family and his very close relatives with us.

They were all talking, while Sri ushered me into her room.

"Sri! What the hell are you doing" I was confounded.

"Quiet!" she ordered, locking the door behind her.

"Time to make some changes," she said, eyeing me from head to toe.

Out of nowhere, she pulled my saree inches below my navel.

"What are you doing?" I yelled.

"Getting you dressed for your wedding night."

*What?*

"You are slim and you have nice curves, you know!" she commented, which I ignored.

She was married and as far as she told me, she had an arranged marriage as well.

Does she expect me to have sex with Gautham tonight?? As if what she thought was going to change my decision. But, I was shocked at her actions.

"Sri! You think that I will do this tonight!"

She laughed. "Of course, not!"

"Then, why are you doing all this?"

"I just want my brother to know, what he has and what he wanted and we have to make him realize that you are more precious than any other girl!"

There she goes. He was definitely in love with another girl. I should talk to Gautham about it.

*He was not going to cheat on me, right?* I was hoping.

When I was about to ask Sri of whom the girl was, a giggle erupted from, I guess Gautham's cousins who were standing outside the locked door.

Sri gave me a last look. "Perfect!" she breathed out and went to open the door.

Her cousins barged into the room.

One of them commented, "wedding night preparations are going on!" She winked

"Can't wait to meet your hubby, can you?" A few chorused.

*Duh! NO.*

I just smiled at them and they assumed I was blushing.

Soon, a few of his relatives took me to what I assumed to be his room.

They pushed me in and shut the door behind me.

I looked around the extravagant room for Gautham. He was nowhere to be found. Where was he?

I saw my suitcase lying on the table.

I opened it and took out some of my night clothes.

I zipped it up and went to washroom to change but wait, it was locked.

*Oh!! Perfect!!*

Gautham was actually in the washroom.

I waited patiently. But, still there was no sign of him. He takes more time than a girl! What the hell was he doing inside? This saree was also becoming uncomfortable to stay in.

I switched on the television to pass the time until he was ready.

I started flipping the channels when the president finally decided to come out! He had changed into his casuals and looked dangerously handsome.

"I thought you literally slept inside!"

"Very funny!" he snarled. He looked pissed off.

I wanted to talk to him about what Sri told me. But, I decided to ask him about it after going back to Chennai and once when everything settled.

Suddenly, his eyes roamed over my body. I was suddenly becoming diffident. I was never stared at like this.

I ignored him and got into the washroom to escape his heated gaze.

I undraped my saree and had a quick, hot shower.

I got into my regular night clothes and put my hair in a messy bun.

Now I felt refreshed without any makeup.

When I was done, I joined Gautham in the room. He was watching news.

Without wasting any more time, I laid on the bed, enjoying the feel of it.

By the time I settled, he had switched off the television.

I became anxious due to the silence.

I was just staring at the ceiling.

I finally heard him. "Shakthi?"

"Hmm??" I said, not trusting my voice.

Suddenly my phone went off. It was Shalini. I put it on silent and continued.

"Yea, you were saying something??"

"Erm..yea, actually.." he started to stammer. I knew what he was coming to.

"I understand. We cannot consummate our marriage without even knowing each other."

He seemed to relax. Was he thinking that I actually wanted to have sex?

"Thank god, Shakthi!! I was thinking if this would upset you," he sounded relieved.

He really did think that? Did I seem so desperate?

"I am not upset at all! I just can't have sex with a man I hardly know, right?"

He smiled in agreement.

"Yea! I can't believe that the fourth real conversation that we are having is, about sex." I rolled my eyes and we laughed.

"And yea, tomorrow we are leaving for Chennai at four in the morning and by evening we can see our new house. My parents will also be coming with us."

"Okay, sounds like a plan and for now I am going to sleep! Goodnight, Gautham!!" I yawned, letting sleep consume me.

## **Chapter 8-My Life's New Turn**

### **Shakthi's pov**

I woke up the moment my alarm rang!

It was already two. I should have a shower and get dressed!

As I got up, I heard Gautham questioning me sleepily. "What is the time?"

"It's two," I answered and took my clothes from the neatly packed suitcase.

He sprang up from the bed. Maybe he was tense about leaving on time or something. I went for my shower.

After having a nice hot shower, I slipped into a black jean with a simple V-neck t shirt.

As I was changing into my clothes, I heard Gautham's voice. He clearly wasn't asking me for something! It was evident that he was on the phone. Who was he talking to this early??

When I was done dressing, I unlocked bathroom door and entered.

"I love you too," Gautham hushed softly into his phone

Whom was he talking to? I wasn't in a single relationship, but look at this man! I fumed. If I were pure he had to be.

I banged the restroom door close to observe his reaction.

"Okay, will talk to you later" he murmured into his phone when he saw me coming out and hung up quickly.

It was definitely his girlfriend for sure, I concluded.

Why was he going to hang up, looking at me if it wasn't?

He smiled.

I dismissed him completely and started packing.

He grabbed his clothes and went for his shower.

I brushed my hair quickly and pulled it back in a ponytail. I kohled my eyes and I was ready to go.

He was starting to disgust me.

Even if he didn't know me, I wanted him to respect me and the pure bond of

marriage. If he loves another girl then why did he get married to me and spoil my life?

Wait a minute! He was flirting with me when we met at the office elevator.

If he loved another girl, why would he do that?

Was he forced by his family to get married because they didn't want him to marry a girl whom they didn't approve of?

Maybe his parents had forced him to talk sweetly to me and that was why he was faking it.

I tried to put his words and what Sri told me about what he has and what he wanted.

It totally made sense! He was faking this relationship!

He was trying his best to do it without hurting me.

But, why?? He can say it to my face if he was having an affair.

When I was in a deep thought, I heard Gautham ask me something which I didn't catch.

"What?" I asked again

He was dressed in a black t-shirt and a dark blue denim jeans, looking strikingly handsome.

"I asked if we can leave. Mom and Dad are also ready. If you are ready as well, we can leave," he said patiently.

"Yea sure," I agreed.

\*\*\*

Our train arrived and we settled in our places.

His mom and dad being old had dozed off.

Gautham was busy texting someone. It was just four in the morning.



I was tempted to ask him if it was his girlfriend. But I would seem like an insecure, desperate bitch to him.

Maybe I should just wait and see if he actually had a girlfriend and find out who this girl was.

To put a temporary end to the thoughts, I plugged in my earphones and let the music blast my ears.

\*\*\*

We reached Chennai and it was almost evening.

I was back as a married woman and the very thought sent chills down my spine.

His parents had gone to their house and so we decided to go to our new flat.

I was longing to see it.

When we crossed the road to catch a cab, he securely held my hands. The mere touch was electric.

Can he even fake the concern he holds for a person?

*He was just faking it all ,Shakthi!! Control Yourself!!*

Soon we reached our flat. It was enormous and had several blocks.

It was magnificent.

When we strolled to the elevator through the parking lot, I saw that my Skoda was parked. "My car!"

He chuckled. "Your parents left it here!"

"What about my two wheeler??" I asked.

"That also, Shakthi!" he added.

I was ecstatic.

My parents took care of every little thing. Soon we got into the elevator and he pressed the button to the seventh floor. When the doors opened he guided me to *our* house.

Our flat was numbered as 21. As I was waiting for him to unlock the door I observed the surroundings. It was calm and serene. It seemed like a very peaceful place.

"Shakthi!" I heard Gautham call me.

He offered the key to me. I looked at him in confusion

"Open it! What are you waiting for?" he said

I was perplexed.

"I want you to open our home first," he mused

Oh shit! *Stop it already!* He was faking it, my brain shouted.

"No, Gautham! You bought the house, right! You should open it!"

"Shakthi! I bought it for *us*, *not* for me alone."

"No,Gautham! You open it!"

"Fine! Shall we open it together?" he proposed

I had no reason to refuse and so I gave in.

He held the keys while I held his hand. We opened it together and stepped into our new home where our lives would take a new turn!

## Chapter 9-Our New Home

### Shakthi's pov

We opened it together and stepped into our new home where our lives would take a new turn!

I was awestruck! The entire house was well furnished and it looked posh and classy.

The hall was enormous with a home theatre fixed to the wall. There was a sizable couch in the middle and my favorite bean bags were also there. I loved them.

The wall was pure white; with patches of dark wood works that made it look elegant.

The curtains that hid the sunlight corresponded perfectly with dark wood works.

The dining area was attached to a stylish modular kitchen. It was precisely how I always wanted my own kitchen to be.

When I strode further into the house, I found the master bedroom. It was again white and a King-sized bed was placed in the middle. The bed frame looked royally elegant.

Then I realized there were no switchboards at all, everything was to be operated by a mere touch on a screen.

The washroom was out of a five-star hotel.

You've got to be kidding me! My room used to be smaller than the size of this washroom.

The bedroom had a little balcony. It had a nice loveseat in a corner. I was not going to think of using that. *Never!* I thought to myself.

I turned left from the master bedroom. It was when I discovered that our house was a duplex! It couldn't have been more exciting!!

As I walked up the dark wood stairs, I found that there were two rooms

opposite each other. Both were similar looking with dressing tables.

I walked along the aisle. There were few steps again leading to a sliding glass door. I slid it open.

Was this for real??? It was our own private terrace with a study room attached to it.

This terrace gave me such a beautiful view of Chennai.

The exhilarating evening air calmed my strained nerves.

Though I liked the house, there was something missing which I wasn't able to put my finger on.

Wouldn't the house be lifeless with just the two of us? I was totally not used to this solitude. I love being surrounded by people. In fact, my friends call me a nonstop nonsense. I used to talk so much. But now, I was stuck alone with him in such a big house!

Suddenly, my phone went off. It was an unknown number.

"Hey, where are you?" I heard deep and a husky male voice.

Audacity of that man.

"Who are you?" I retorted

"We just got married yesterday!"

"Gautham?" How could I not recognize him?

"How did you get my number?" I couldn't control the curiosity that was rising in me.

"First tell me where are you and we can have a real conversation instead of talking over the phone," he ordered

"Uff! I am at the terrace. I will come down," I replied, hanging up.

I had a few minutes of peace and this man could not tolerate it.

As I walked down the stairs, I was saving his number on my phone.

I walked down to the hall and found him relaxing on the couch.

"There you are!" he turned his head to look at me when he heard my footsteps.

"What is it?? Why did you call me?" I sulked

"I know you can't cook today."

"Okay??" I urged him to continue

"Shall we go out for dinner?"

"I am too tired to get dressed and go out for food. Why don't you order some pizzas?" I suggested.

"Sounds good," he agreed.

I took my luggage and marched to the master bedroom.

"And yea, make sure to order from pizza doze," I shouted from the room.

I heard a distant chuckle.

I loved their pizzas. I could die for them.

I had my shower, letting my body and mind relax. It was a much needed shower, I would say.

I got out of the shower and changed into my t-shirt and pajamas. I let my hair stay in a messy bun as I walked out of the room.

As I advanced to the hall, the smell of pizzas filled my nostrils.

"That was quick," I shrieked and started opening the box.

"Pizza doze was near our apartment. So I went and got it myself."

I was appalled and completely still. Why does he care so much? Was I misunderstanding him?

*No, Shakthi! Have your head cleared already! He was faking it.*

Without pondering, I started to munch on the pizzas while I turned the television on.

In a few minutes, he joined me after his shower... his hair was dripping wet. He was just in his vest and shorts. His taut muscles were now naked for my sight. He looked mouthwateringly delicious! More than my pizza!

He didn't realize that I was checking him out, so that was a relief.

I quickly averted my gaze from his well-built torso to the pizza in my hand, before he could realize. We ate our pizzas in silence.

"I want a separate room." Suddenly, my words echoed through the silent room.

## **Chapter 10-Jealous, was he?**

### **Shakthi's POV**

"I want a separate room." Suddenly, my words echoed through the silent room.

He munched on his pizza, seeming to process what I was saying. "All the rooms are yours, Shakthi. We can choose any room."

"No no.. it's not that! I don't want to share a room with you. I want to have my own."

I didn't want to share my bed with this cheater! At least not until I knew for sure.

"Are you..." He cleared his throat and continued. "Are you sure??"

"Without a doubt," I replied.

A hint of hurt crossed his features.

\*\*\*

After we ate, I relaxed on the couch, watching The Vampire Diaries. I had missed an entire month of episodes, so there was a lot to catch up on.

"Which room do you want??" he poked his head into the room, distracting me.

He didn't even try and convince me to share the room with him. It was not like I wanted to share a room with him, but if he really cared, he would have definitely tried.

"Hmm.. I want the room upstairs, the blue one," I answered.

"Okay then." He yawned. "I am taking the master bedroom," he stated.

I nodded reassuringly and we bid our good nights.

My vampire diaries marathon continued and I had no clue of when sleep wrapped me up.

\*\*\*

I woke up to the sound of my alarm.

I tried to put the alarm on snooze! But I realized the phone next to me wasn't mine. It was Gautham's. What was his phone doing on my bed!??

*Bed?*

As far as I remember, I fell asleep on the couch. How did I end up in bed?

I turned and saw Gautham sleeping next to me. Then, it hit me!

Would he have brought me in?? That was out of question.

"Gautham?" I whispered in his ear.

He didn't stir. I touched his arm and tried to wake him up. But, he didn't budge.

I decided to let him sleep, so I ascended the stairs, carrying my luggage to my room.

I did my morning routine and changed into my workout clothes. After packing my gym bag, I went to the kitchen to grab a hot cup of Milo.

When the milk started to boil, I heard footsteps.

"Where are you going??" I heard his sleepy voice.

"Gym," I squeaked happily

"No wonder you have those curves," he commented under his breath.

"What?" I pretended like I didn't hear him and I tried hard to hide the blush that was almost creeping up my cheeks.

"Uhh! Nothing! Is it unisex?" he asked.

"Why do you want to know?"

"You're my wife and I have the right to know this." he said.

Like he really cares! If he thought that I was his wife and respected this relationship, don't I have the rights to know about him as well?

I was in no mood to answer his questions.

"Hey, I am asking you something!"

"It is unisex," I lied.

"Quit the gym," he dictated

"Who are you to make me quit my gym?" I fumed

"Your husband!" He smirked



"You finally realized that?? Congratulations." It was my turn to smirk

"I don't know what you are talking about. But, just quit the gym, okay??"

Was he jealous?

"Even if I were in a unisex gym, I wouldn't quit. But that is not the case, Mister. It's a ladies' gym. So thank your lucky stars," I raved.

Why was he jealous?? I shrugged that thought off.

\*\*\*

"Call me when you reach gym!" I heard him shout when I left.

I didn't bother to call him. I felt I was committed to this man who was nothing but a cheater.

I hated feeling obligated to him.

I worked out for 2 hours. I felt energized and stimulated.

I hurried home after my workout and I had two hours left to make breakfast and get dressed for my work.

When I reached the door it was locked!

Where did he go?? Did he go to meet his girlfriend at this busy hour?

"Stay there and never come back," I muttered under my breath and started to fish for my spare keys.

I opened the door and rushed to my room. I made a mental note to ask him how I ended up on his bed.

After my shower, I got into a bathrobe and let my dripping wet hair down my shoulders so that it would be air dried by the time I finish cooking.

I scurried to the kitchen and started to cook. I heard the main door unlock.

Gautham walked towards his room, not even looking at me. He was on his phone.

He was actually in a t-shirt and tracks which were sweaty.

In a few minutes, he came out dressed in his formal wear after his shower.

His crisp white coloured full sleeve shirt clearly molded his toned muscles. He had paired it with black slacks. He was a complete knockout! It was a sight to look at!

*Shakthi, Stop drooling!* I mentally scolded myself and continued cooking.

In a few seconds, the microwave beeped. I opened it to take the food.

When I turned, I bumped against a hard surface, his hard stone chest.

His eyes roved over my body. Why did this stupid robe have to end far above my knee?

I was naked under the robe. There was only a single knot that held my respect.

His hand started moving towards me.

My grip on the dish became tighter. But, his fingers just stopped the water drops sliding down my neck. His touch sent sparks down my body. It all felt so right, but wrong at the same time.

Why can't it be simple?

"I am not going to eat you up ,Shakthi! Relax," he whispered in my ear.

That was when I came out of the spell.

"Erm.. Actually.. ehh.." I stuttered.

It actually touched me that he respected my feelings. He maintained a distance. I really thought that he would undo the knot. But no, he was a gentleman.

"Shakthi, it's okay! Relax," he calmed me down, holding me by my shoulders.

I took a few deep breaths and nodded, assuring him that I was fine.

"I will be back," I said and made a quick escape to my room without looking back.

## **Chapter 11-Does he care?**

### **Shakthi's POV**

I shut the door behind me and I started to breathe heavily.

What did I just do??

I was supposed to have control over my emotions and not show him that I was affected by his touches, that I was becoming weak due to his closeness.

Next time, I should not let my feelings take over me!! There wasn't going to be a next time!!

I managed to cool down.

I started to get dressed for work in a formal knee length, navy blue skirt and a formal black shirt. I neatly tucked it in and I did my usual makeover.

I hurried down to the dining to have my food.

I took my seat opposite Gautham who was already eating. There was nothing, but silence.

He didn't even ask me if I was alright!

I could at least expect some comments on the food, right?

But nothing, he just said nothing!

That was when a thought crossed my mind. "How did I end up on the bed today??" I asked him.

"I carried you to the bed." he replied in an emotionless voice. Maybe he was just mad at himself that he was betraying his so called '*girlfriend*' by coming closer to me!

That must be it!

But, he carried me to bed?

When I was young and when I used to sleep on the couch it was only my dad who carried me to the bed.

It was really sweet of Gautham!

Did I just compare him with my dad??

He comes nowhere near my dad!

"And yea! When you leave the house, I do not expect you to tell me where you are going, but at least tell me if you are going out. It would make my life a lot easier." I gave a straight smile, trying to make it as fake as possible.

"Oh! Sorry about that! I actually left for the gym immediately after you," he clarified.

He also goes to gym!

Now I knew for sure there was a six pack hidden under that shirt he was wearing.

But, I also felt a relief sinking in me realizing that he hadn't gone to meet his girlfriend.

\*\*\*

After our breakfast, we grabbed our office stuffs and we decided to leave for work.

"Shall we go together today?" he offered.

Where did that come from? But, I was too firm on the decision that I wasn't going to allow him to use me as a trophy wife.

But what will people think about us at our office?? They would think, we fought the moment we got married and so we came in different cars.

I wouldn't allow such an image about me to be framed!

"Yea, sure!" I agreed

He gave me a heart wrenching smile. His silvery grey eyes twinkled, something I had never seen in him and something I can never describe.

\*\*\*

Our drive was dead silent and awkward. I regretted accepting his offer.

We reached our office and when I was about to get out I heard him call me.

"Yea?" I twirled to meet his eyes.

"The food was nice, you cook well," he complimented.

I really thought he was oblivious to the food I cooked.

Of course, I get to cook for him hereafter! Maybe, he just got scared like, what if I don't cook his food properly if he doesn't compliment my cooking skills!

But I swear, I really did plan on cooking an over salted food for him!

He narrowly made an escape from that!

"Thank you!" I replied and rushed into my office not wanting to be late.

All my friends, except Anitha, congratulated me. She was a friend, but just a namesake friend. I didn't get good vibes from her. I was suddenly reminded about the Facebook comment that I read. Could there be anything between the two?? Maybe I was over thinking.

\*\*\*

It was half past six and high time for me to leave.

I was totally caught off guard when the doors of the elevator opened. Gautham was already standing near the elevator.

"Finally!!" he sighed, looking at me.

"What happened?" I asked.

"I am going out, Shakthi! Can you manage and go home alone, today??"

*Perfect!* I was not worried about going alone! That was what I had been doing all my life. It was nothing new to me. But, how will I go home?

I will have to ask my friend to give me a ride.

"Okay!" I agreed, trying my best to not be rude.

"Sorry," he apologized and left.

My eyes followed him as he walked to his car.

Anitha was waiting near his car while he got into his BMW. She took the passenger seat and the car purred and drove away.

A lone tear escaped my eye and I felt it running down my cheeks.

## **Chapter 12-My Crazy Best Friend**

I have to stop crying! But, my heart just doesn't seem to co-operate with my brain!

It hurt me inside out that I was being cheated on.

Just then, I was shook hard by my shoulder and I heard a screeching voice. "Shakthi??" Ankitha's shrill voice pained my ear drums.

I quickly wiped my tears. Apart from Shalini, Ankitha was my other best friend. She was happily married with a kid and knew every inch of me. She

kept asking me throughout the whole day if things were fine and why I looked a bit out of myself. But, I just shrugged it off not wanting to disturb her, because she already was stressed about getting her kid into a good school.

"Stop shouting, will you!?" I barked.

"Shakthi?? What happened? Why are you crying? What is it, baby?? Tell me!?" she pleaded.

I sighed. "Nothing Ankitha, I am just overwhelmed with this married life that I am pushed into." I knew she would eventually make me tell the truth.

"Stop spinning tales, Madam!"

"Can you give me a ride home?" I asked, trying to avoid the topic

"I won't, unless you tell me what the problem is with you!" she commanded.

"Fine! But, not in front of the elevator!"

She nodded, giving me an understanding look and soon we got into her car and she started driving.

She couldn't come to my wedding, because her son was ill and hospitalized. I really missed her.

"We'll talk about this over a nice dinner?"

I knew she wouldn't give up. "Thanks."

\*\*\*

We went to Chang's kitchen and found our usual cozy seats.

"So, shoot!" She glared at me.

I hesitated.

"Let it out! It will really make you feel better."

I looked at the table, not sure talking about it would make me feel anything

other than angry.

"Trust me!" she said as if she was Edward Cullen, who would read my mind like it was nothing.

I opened up and once I started there was no stopping me. She listened like the amazing friend she was and didn't react even after I was done.

"Ankitha, I am done??!" I said, waving a hand in front of her petrified face.

She cleared her throat. "I think there is a misunderstanding, Shakthi."

"He said he loved her and quickly hung up when he saw me! Where is the misunderstanding?" I cried out.

"Calm down, Shakthi."

Our soups arrived. So, I held my tongue until the waiter left.

"Shakthi, you might be right, but Anitha is not that kind of a woman to have an affair with a married man."

"He got married just a few days back, but the time when he was in an actual relationship, he was unmarried, right? So it doesn't mean she should have a habit of having affairs with married men, it just happens that Gautham is now married."

"No no!! As far as I know she is not in any relationship, Shakthi."

"Fine! But, there can be another woman having an affair with Gautham!" I was frustrated.

"It doesn't matter who the woman is, as of now! Just bring him into your web and all the other things will settle on its own!"

"I don't understand," I said, taking another sip of my soup.

"Listen! What Gautham is doing is totally unfair on you and you don't deserve it, but we can't try and find his girlfriend-"

"Why can't I find who his girlfriend is? I can!" I was determined.



"Shakthi! You should sneak around and go through his personal stuffs for some clue. Which means when it comes to staying in separate rooms..."

"The first thing that I am going to do when I get home is shift my things to his room!"

"Good! A jealous wife is a better detective than a CBI" She winked.

"I am not a jealous wife! I just want to know the reason why he spoilt my life like this and for whom is he doing all this?"

"Then you know what? You should give him a divorce and let him be happy with the one he loves!"

"Maybe you are right! But, not so soon! The law says that, right?"

She looked confused.

" Indian law requires us to be married for a minimum of six months even if you want a divorce by mutual consent, do you know that?"

"Unbelievable!!!" She continued with her soup.

But, she was partly right. I seriously can't do the detective thing. It will be tough for me.

"Shakthi, why don't you ask him about his girlfriend? It will solve everything, right?"

"Ankitha! Any thief when caught will say that he is not a thief! You are talking as if he is going to introduce his girlfriend to me the moment I question him. I don't want to seem so insecure within five days of our marriage."

"I agree with your first part, but not the insecure part! You are his wife! Do you even buy that?"

"*Wife*, only in words, Ankitha! Not for real." I sensed a sad tone in my voice! I didn't want to be sad.

"You should make it for real, Shakthi! You have six months in hand! Make

him yours!!!"

Our main course just arrived. When the waiter left I continued. "I don't want to make a person mine when he is someone else's already!!"

"Don't jump to conclusions! For now, assume he has no girlfriend and take your married life in a normal way!"

"For that you need a normal and a faithful husband."

"Just let nature take its course you will eventually fall for him and he will fall for you!"

I started coughing badly with the food stuck in my throat, refusing to go down. Gulping in some water, I said, "You think he will fall for me? He won't, Ankitha! He just won't!"

"Seduce him, babe," she whispered in a seductive voice which sounded funny.

I laughed until my stomach hurt.

"Are you out of your mind??" I asked her, wiping the tears that slipped from my eyes.

"I have never been so serious!"

"You've got to be kidding me! That is the last thing I would do!"

"I am not asking you to do it today! Take your time, get comfortable around him." She winked.

"Not happening!" I was not going to please such an asshole! Why should I dress up for him and do stuff for him! I will stay with him for six months and then will give him a divorce!

The drive home was pretty pleasant talking about movies and TV shows, and gossiping.

"We're home!" she squealed.

“Bye, babe! Take care! And call me whenever you feel like you need me and my gut feeling says that Gautham will fall in love with you.” She gave me a tight hug.

I rolled my eyes. “Anyways, you aren't going anywhere before you see my new flat!” I commanded.

“No, Shakthi! Sanjay will be missing me at home, I need to go!”

She loved her son so much that I had to let her go.

“Okay, Ankitha! Bye.” I waved, walking to my flat.

I pushed the door open and entered.

“Hey, Shakthi!! What a pleasant surprise.” Her voice burnt my ears

## Chapter 13-He's Mine

The door slowly opened

"Hey, Shakthi!! What a pleasant surprise." Her voice burnt my ears.

It was official!! I hate her!

She was a home wrecker!

How can a woman stoop so low??

It was not just her, how can Gautham do this? Does he think that this was some hotel where he and his filthy girlfriend can crash?

"Well!! It is a *pleasant* surprise, Anitha!" I air quoted the word *pleasant*.

She laughed! It was the worst sound I have ever heard.

"Will you allow me into my home??" I raised my eyebrow.

"Ooh! Sorry!!" she said, moving away from the foyer for me to enter.

"Where is Gautham??" I asked

"He just went to get freshened up," she answered and continued watching some crap on the television.

"Do you want something to eat or drink??" I tried my best to be a good host.

"No, Gautham and I just had our dinner," she smirked.

I so wanted to wipe it off!

"Good! Cause even if you want something, I wasn't planning to make it." Seeing the smirk wear off her bitchy face calmed me down.

I went to the kitchen and grabbed some cold water.

So, he took her on a date and he brought her home! To my home??

"Hey?? You are back!" I heard Gautham just then.

"Hmm..yea!" I put the jug of water down.

"I was really worried, you know? Where were you for so long?" he questioned

Like he really cares! If he was concerned one bit, he would have called me!

"I was having dinner with my friend!" I answered

"Name?"

"It is none of your concern!" I said, folding my arms in front of my chest.

He paced forward and pulled me by my arm, twisting it behind me.

"Gautham! It hurts!! Leave me!!" I tried pushing him away with my good hand.

He loosened his grip a bit, but even then I was not able to escape his strong grip.

"I am your husband. And anything concerning you is my business, do you get that?" he snarled.

"Okay, leave me now." I pleaded.

"What is your friend's name?"

"Ankitha" I replied and then he let go of me.

"Now, that is like a good girl," he said, caressing my cheek with the pad of his thumb.

"Looks like we have a guest," I commented when he was about to have his glass of water.

"Oh! Anitha? Her sister is not feeling well and she is hospitalized, Shakthi! And the hospital is just at the next street, so she asked me if she could stay here because it will be easier for her to reach the hospital."

Lies!

Lies!

Lies!

Was she lying or was it him??

If her sister was in such a critical condition she should be at the hospital and not wrecking another person's home!

It had to be Gautham who was lying! He just wanted her near him, but I was not going to let that happen.

"So, she is going to stay here?" I asked

"I guess!!"

"Hmm! Let her sleep on the couch!!" I said

"Shakthi, we have a guest room! Let her stay there!"

It was a relief that she was not sharing his room.

"So, I am sleeping in your room for today!" I said before he could leave the kitchen.

He turned towards me in surprise "Whoa!! Where did that come from??"

"Don't be too happy! Just pretending that we are a happy couple! That is it! Do you want people in our office to know that we are not happy??"

"Oh! Yea! I totally forgot!"

"Of course, you did," because it was just Anitha who was haunting your mind.

I had a nice hot shower and changed into hot pants and a t-shirt.

I tied up my hair in a messy bun and carried my laptop and other things I needed to Gautham's room.

I had an audit report to submit, so I dived into it, forgetting about Anitha

flirting with my husband.

I worked for more than two hours, but I was nowhere close to completion. I felt my eyes droop, so I planned to complete it tomorrow and stopped my work.

It was almost ten minutes past ten! What was keeping Gautham for so long??

I was not going to hit bed without him so I went to see what they both were up to.

"It is really sweet of you, this means so much to me Gautham," I heard her fake flirty voice.

I cleared my throat, making them aware of my presence.

She had her hand on Gautham's thigh and kept rubbing it! Jeez!! She didn't even remove it when she saw me! *Slutty bitch!*

"Care to join me in the bed??" I asked him. It was more an order than a request.

"Yea, sure! We were just talking." His gaze roamed from my legs to my eyes.

"I can see that!" I said.

His eyes quickly met mine.

"Okay, Anitha! Do you mind giving a little privacy to the newly married couple?" Her face fell when I said that.

I did a little victory dance in my head and pulled Gautham by his arm to the bedroom.

---

## Chapter 14-In His Arms

We entered our room and I quickly walked to the bed, pretending nothing happened.

I laid on the bed, pulling the comforter over my face, not wanting to have a chat.

"Shakthi?" he said.

I slowly peeped from my duvet, facing him "what?"

"What was that?"

"Gautham! Stop it! I am feeling really sleepy!" I said, faking a yawn.

"Oh really??" He pounced on the bed, pulling me over him.

I felt my chest press against his hard and well-toned body. My heart fluttered and I sensed my breathing becoming erratic.

He held my waist securely and my small, fragile hands grabbed his muscled arms for support.

His face was inches from mine, and his silvery grey eyes pierced through my chocolate brown ones.

"Gautham!?" I whispered

"Hmm??"

"Let go of me!" I managed to say without fighting a move.

"I won't," he said. His lips nearing mine.

*No, Gautham! It is really too soon! Stop it! Please...! Don't kiss me! Please!! Don't make me regret of sharing the bed with you! Please!!*

Just then I realized I didn't actually say those words!

His lips pressed on my cheeks.

It was a wave of shock and surprise, totally mixed up, that ran from my



curled up toes till my stomach.

I felt a spark when his lips came into contact with my skin... I closed my eyes, savoring the small yet precious feeling. My lips shivered wanting to enjoy more.

Then suddenly, I opened my eyes to move away from him.

"Enjoying it?" He smirked

I pulled myself out of his embrace and went under the comforter. I laid in such a way that my back faced him. "In your dreams," I said and then I heard him say, "crazy!!"

\*\*\*

I woke up the next morning, hoping that I would start afresh.

But, that thought ceased when I saw Anitha along with Gautham in his BMW, leaving for work.

"Perfect way to start a nice bright day."

I drove to the office and my not so good day became dreadful when I saw Anitha all over Gautham, standing at the office corridor, pleading. "Divorce Shakthi, Gautham! You know that she doesn't deserve you"

## **Chapter 15-Kabir's Visit**

My not so good day became dreadful, when I saw Anitha all over Gautham, standing at the office corridor, pleading. "Divorce Shakthi, Gautham! You know that she doesn't deserve you"

I really felt like rebelling against this whole divorce thing! Even if Gautham wanted a divorce, I was not going to give him one!

I turned to leave before they could catch me eavesdropping them.

But just then, I heard Gautham yelling. "Are you out of your mind, Anitha?? She is my wife!! Don't you get that?? Get off me!!"

My heart pounded with happiness!

So he really wasn't having an affair! It was all my misunderstanding! I have started watching too many shows which made my imagination run wild!

It was just this little dog, Anitha.

I opened my cabin and I was in for another surprise.

"Hi, Shakthi." He gave me warm smile.

"What brought you here, Kabir?" I was piqued.

We both studied Chartered Accountancy together in the same institute and he was one of my closest friends until he said that he was in love with me.

He cleared his throat. "I'm here for an audit. So I thought of visiting you. It has been a really long time since we actually met up, right?"

"Erm!! Yea! Two years!" I smiled.

"So, I heard that your husband is working here as well! And wait! Shall I guess?? Love marriage!! Right?"

"No!! It was arranged!" I gave him an amused look.

"Just like that!! Are you happy?" he queried.

"Of course, I am!" I was not going to let him know the truth.

"Oh! Okay!" I sensed his face fall.

"So when will you introduce me to your husband?"

"He is actually busy! I will surely introduce him to you some other time, yea?"

"Hmm, okay then! So, will you join me for lunch?"

What? If he was trying to hit on me, again, I swear I was going to kill him!

"Just for old times' sake!" Maybe he sensed what I was thinking!

"I would love to, but, I have an audit report due in a day! I am so sorry! I promise we will meet up soon." Negative vibes always remain that way!

"You surely can spare a few minutes with me, come on!" he urged.

"No, Kabir! Please try and understand!"

"Looks like you aren't going to accept! And that is a cue for me to take leave!"

I smiled and waved at him while he left my cabin.

"Finally." I sighed and proceeded with my work.

\*\*\*

After work, when I got to my home, I rang the bell, waiting impatiently for the door to be opened so I could confront Anitha.

Gautham opened it and my mood took a full 180 degree turn.

His hair was dripping wet! Why does he have to look so gorgeous?

His looks eased my mood!

"Hey!" He leered and opened the door wider for me to step in.

There were no sign of Anitha!

Where did she go? I began looking around.

"I asked her to leave." he said as he opened the refrigerator.

"Why?" It made my blood run cold.

"She isn't a good friend, I discovered." He drank the juice from the carton.

"She was trying to make me divorce you!"

"And you didn't want to divorce me?"

"Why would I?? Why the hell would I give you a divorce?" He was riled.

Condemn the liquid that comes out of your eyes. Yes, my tears, why did I have to break down in front of him?

I felt him hug me tightly. He was literally breaking my fragile bones! He was really strong. It felt perfect to stay in his embrace.

The tighter he hugged me, the harder I cried.

"Why are you crying?" His tone was soft.

I couldn't find my voice.

"Did I hurt you? I am really sorry if I did!"

I withdrew from his arms "No no! I am just a bit dazed!" I said, looking at the floor, but soon I felt his fingers brushing away my tears.

"I don't want you to lie! Please tell me! Why did you cry?" he begged.

"I actually thought that Anitha was your girlfriend," I said, bursting into laughter with him joining me.

The laughter soon died and he spoke sincerely. "I will never cheat on you, Shakthi! You've got to trust me!" he said, holding my face in his large palms and forcing me to meet his eyes.

"That will take time, but I will try." I smiled.

"Convincing enough" he nodded.

"Okay, Gautham! I will just get changed and be back!" I excused myself and hurried to our room.

I went in to have nice shower. The water started to flow over my naked body.

With every flow, I felt like every problem was coming undone. It was the

best and the most peaceful shower since my wedding.

I quickly dried myself and changed into a t-shirt and pajamas.

I decided to call up Ankitha.

I narrated the entire story to her and she was listening patiently

"Something is just not right, Shakthi!" she said.

"Ankitha! Things are perfectly fine between us now! And I guess it is going to be a fresh start from my side!"

"Shakthi, I am really happy that you are relieved! But, some pieces just don't fit!"

"Like?"

"Now we are just sure that Anitha isn't his girlfriend! What about the person to whom he said that he loved her, on a call?"

## Chapter 16-Realization

"Now we are just sure that Anitha isn't his girlfriend! What about the person to whom he said that he loved her, on a call?"

Was I so dumb that this didn't cross my mind at all??

"Shakthi?? Are you there?? Hello??" I heard her voice ringing in my ears.

"Yea...yea! Tell me!" I said, switching the phone to my other ear.

"Shakthi? Am I reading some news here? It is something important! And I can't seriously believe that you are so oblivious to it!"

"No, Ankitha!! I am going to trust Gautham! He promised me that he won't cheat on me!"

"Will you be happy?" she asked doubtfully.

"I will try to," I managed to say. I will try my best to be happy with him.

"I just can't believe that it is the same Shakthi I spoke to yesterday! You are already falling for him!"

"I am just trying to make my marriage work!"

"Reasonable enough..."

My reply was interrupted with the sound of the door opening.

"I think he is coming, I will talk to you later! Bye!"

"Have fun, babe!" I could actually picture her winking.

I hung up and twirled around to find Gautham with his hands folded in front of his chest. "Did I interrupt something important?"

"No, no!!" I replied.

"Well, I was just thinking if... I mean. If we could go out, you know! Like a dinner together?"

I was eager to join him so that we could get to know more of each other. But,

I wouldn't give in easily. I enjoyed his reactions and expressions.

"When?" I asked, faking a straight face.

"Maybe this weekend?" His expression was worth a photograph!

"Not happening!" I walked out of the bedroom with him behind me. I laughed hoping that he wouldn't notice me. I just wasn't able to control it.

"We are going out! And that is final!" he ordered. Audacity!!

It always puts me off, but also turns me on!

"Excuse me! You are the one who wants a favor! So, be polite!" I turned, pointing my finger at him. Now my wrath was for real.

"I know that you were teasing me and I saw you laughing! So stop spinning stories."

"But, your expressions were so enjoyable! It was really worth a photograph." I chuckled

"Oh really??" He came towards me, pulling me into his arms.

That was totally unexpected! His touch always made me edgy. Again, I felt sparks. I looked deep into his eyes. They carried so much intensity which always made me wonder.

I had my palms on his chiseled chest. I could feel his well-toned muscles.

He held me by my waist and pinned me. My breathing hitched as his lips neared mine.

I closed my eyes tight, anticipating his lips about to devour mine.

Suddenly, I felt his grip loosen. I opened my eyes and saw him laughing. "That expression is now worth a photograph."

"I hate you!" I huffed as I walked to the hall and settled in front of the television.

\*\*\*

After dinner, he went straight to his room and I followed. I had work to complete.

He settled on the bed and opened his laptop while I sighed to myself and opened mine.

Suddenly, I realized I was in his room. I should move to my room. So when I started to gather all my things to shift back, I heard him, "What are you doing?"

"Climbing a tree!" I scorned.

"I can see that you are putting all your things together, but why?"

"I am moving back to my room!"

"But, why? I mean, we can share the same room!"

"Huh! Remember, we were just pretending for Anitha! Now that she is gone, we are back to square one, I guess!"

"If you aren't comfortable with me, it is fine!" I sensed that my words stung him.

It made my heart do a little somersault. Was he sad that I wasn't sharing a room with him? It made me a little glum that he was hurt! But, why did I feel that way?

"Okay fine! We will share the room." I gave in, I don't know why I gave in!

He grinned. "Perfect!"

I was happy to see him smile like that. It made my heart melt.

"So, is the plan on?" he asked me when I settled on the bed with the laptop in front of me.

"What plan?"

"Dinner plan?"

"Oh! Do I have a choice?"



"That is like my good wife!" I jerked at that endearment. It was weird, really weird to be called like that. But, somewhere, in some corner of my heart, it actually felt nice.

We carried on with our work silently. But, it was soon broken. "Shakthi, can I ask you something?"

"Hmm." I urged him to carry on, working on my report.

"I saw a man leaving your cabin today, who is he?"

I thought he was busy with Anitha when Kabir was with me!

"He is actually... err... My old friend," I managed to spit it out, finally

"Just a friend, right?"

"Jealous, are we?" I tried shifting the topic.

He laughed. "You can say!"

"Aww! My handsome husband is jealous!" I sang.

"Wait a minute!" he stopped me. Just then I realized what I said. *Shakthi, can't you keep your mouth shut! Why did you let him know that he looks handsome?? Why?*

"What?" I pretended like I didn't mention that at all.

"You just called me handsome!"

"No! I didn't! I would be the last person on earth to call you that!"

He rolled his eyes like he didn't believe me! "Whatever!"

The long day finally came to a peaceful end.

\*\*\*

The next day went by in a blur. We both had our audit reports to submit, so it was hectic and exhausting.

We came home tired and spent and after changing, I flumped on the bed ready to welcome a free Saturday.

My phone went off! Who the hell could it be?!

It was Shruthi, my friend from my Chartered Accountancy Institute. The last time I saw her was at her wedding, but I hardly saw her at mine.

"Hey!!" I sleepily answered.

"Did I disturb you? Were you sleeping?"

"Never mind, tell me! How are you doing?" I inquired

"I am doing good, and you?"

"Better than ever!" I replied.

"Shakthi, we have actually planned a small meet, all our friends are meeting up."

"Wow," I exclaimed, leaping up from my bed.

"Where and when?"

"Blue dessert restaurant, at five in the evening! Are you in for it?"

"Of course!"

"Bring your husband also!" she added.

"I thought it was just our friends."

"Yea! But, all of us are coming with our families and moreover everyone wants to meet the newlywed couple!" she teased.

"Alright then, I'll ask him."

We hung up after gossiping for a while.

I asked Gautham who was relaxing on the couch watching TV. He said yes which was amazing. Happily, I made my way back to the bed and tucked

myself under the duvet.

But, a realization made me spring up. "Kabir will also be coming tomorrow!"

### **Chapter 17-They were friends**

But, a realization made me spring up. "Kabir will also be coming tomorrow!"

I really hope that Kabir wouldn't open his mouth about our so called '*past*' even by mistake! Gautham was always playing this '*jealous husband*' and it would turn into a terrible nightmare if Gautham gets to know about Kabir.

Why was I getting so scared when I hadn't done anything wrong except be friends with Kabir?

He should have probably moved on! I was just over thinking it!

*Watching too many shows won't do any good*, I told myself and drifted to sleep.

\*\*\*

Saturday morning was unusually bright with the sun making its way through the bedroom curtains and reflecting on my face.

I woke up sleepily to an empty bed. I badly wanted to see him sleeping. He would look so adorable! But where did he go??

I got my answer when I heard the shower running in the washroom.

I checked my phone! It was twelve noon! No wonder it was so bright!

I got up and stretched myself. I walked to the washroom which was in my former bedroom. I washed my face, brushed my teeth and passed a brush through my tangled hair and made into a nice bun.

When I was done, I went to the kitchen to take care of my grumbling tummy. I grabbed the milk from the refrigerator and made myself a nice hot cup of Milo considering I have a bad aversion towards caffeine.

Before I could enjoy it, I heard the ring.

I hurried to the bedroom to answer the call. It was from my firm regarding work. When I was done talking, I heard the washroom door click open.

The sight didn't fail to melt me.

Gautham stood there, with just a towel wrapped around his waist. I had a perfect look at his six pack. My fingers ached to touch his abs and trace every inch of him.

My eyes slowly trailed down and I was able to see his delicious V lines.

He looked so sexy in his half naked glory!

"Like what you see?" he asked, knocking me out of my trance.

"Yeah, I mean... NO! I don't know!" I stammered idiotically and I stormed out of the room.

*Shakthi!! You are such a dumbass!! Why would you stutter??*

"Sleepy head??" I heard him again.

Think of the devil and he comes!!

"I was just tired!" I explained.

"So, what have you cooked for lunch?" he asked.

"I woke up just a few minutes back. I won't let you die of hunger! Don't worry!!" I spoke rudely and walked to the kitchen to cook.

But, something caught my eyes! I went to see what it was.

"Gautham!" I squealed.

"What happened? Are you alright?" I heard him behind me as his voice filled with concern.

"You cooked??" I was taken aback.

He smiled, acknowledging it!

I couldn't help myself. I went up to him, stood on my toes and quickly pecked him on his cheek!

Now, it looked like it was his turn to be surprised.

"If you would kiss me, I would cook every day!" He said and we both laughed.

\*\*\*

After lunch, we relaxed and had a nice chat about our lives before marriage.

We talked about everything; our schooling, favourite colours, places, cuisines, and our friends, almost all! In fact I also came to know that he learnt cooking when he was seventeen and it was his hobby.

But, neither of us questioned each other about our pre marriage relationships! Maybe that should actually wait and we should get to know more of each other!

It was almost quarter to four, so we decided to get ready for the meet up.

Since it was just casual, I wore a pair of pencil jeans which stuck to my legs, making them look longer than usual, pairing them with a red top which was transparent at its shoulder. It clung to my body, accentuating my curves. I felt like my workouts were actually worth it.

I kohled my eyes and glossed my lips with my favorite flavor of baby lips and finished my makeup with a little bit of loose powder.

I let my hair open, allowing it to fall down my shoulders. I wore my all-time favorite Tommy Hilfiger perfume that came with a jasmine fragrance.

I then chose to wear red sandals which would look perfect with my outfit.

Gautham was dressed in his casuals as well. But, he didn't fail to take my breath away, looking strikingly handsome in his denims and a black polo t-shirt that stuck to his muscly arms making him look even hotter.

We soon left the house, locking it and his BMW came to life and we headed to the Blue Dessert.

I kept checking myself in the mirror, adjusting my hair. I was becoming nervous since we are meeting up for real, after a long time and I wanted to look presentable. Actually the fact was, I wanted to look good enough for Gautham.

"You look beautiful!" he said.

Did he just say that? Oh my God!! Did I hear it right? Or was I just hallucinating?

He smiled at me and for the first time I felt myself blushing. When did I become such a 'girly' girl?

I quickly calmed myself and said "thanks"

He smiled again. How can a person look so good when he does nothing but smile??

Throughout the drive I kept jabbering about my friends so that he would know at least something about them when he meets them. But, I didn't dare to talk about Kabir. I just didn't!

We arrived thirty five minutes late. I had never been punctual for meet ups and today was no different.

Gautham dropped me at the foyer of the restaurant and he told me that he would join me after parking the car.

I met my friend Emily at the elevator. We hugged each other and she kept digging into my married life. She was blushing when she was asking me about it.

We reached the third floor that was booked for us. Almost everyone had come! Everyone shrieked when they saw us coming. I felt so loved! How I missed them all!

"Why didn't you bring Gautham?" my friend, Rohit asked me.

"He has come!! He is stuck parking!" I smiled.

"I would never get married if I am going to be the driver!" he said

I rolled my eyes! He was such a playboy! He would flirt with every girl he met and says he won't get married!

"What? Trust me! I wouldn't," he said, looking at my expression which said – I won't trust you.

"Oh really!?" I asked while he faked a hurt expression and it earned a hearty laugh.

"Here comes your knight in shining armor!" I heard Shruthi squeal.

I turned to look at Gautham! The sight made me dizzy!

He came walking down towards us with Kabir alongside him. They were talking and laughing together.

Why would Kabir keep doing this; piercing through my life time and again!!!

"Hey, Shakthi!" Kabir waved.

"Err..Hi!" I smiled nervously.

"You never told me that you were married to Gautham?" he asked.

Gautham stood next to me, wrapping his arms around my waist. I felt relieved! So Kabir hadn't said anything.

"What do you mean, I didn't say? I sent you the wedding invitation!" I answered.

"Yea! But, I didn't know it was him! We are really good friends, you know??"

"Oh! Nice to know." I gave him a fake smile. That was the last thing I spoke.

"It is so cool that we actually have a mutual friend, Shakthi!" Gautham said.

I just nodded in acknowledgment.

All spoke to Gautham and asked if I were a good wife and similar stuffs like that and I also observed that Kabir tried hard to keep himself in the conversation.

Why did he feel so uncomfortable? Hadn't he moved on?

Just then, a thought hit me! Gautham told me that he saw a man coming out of my cabin; didn't he notice that it was Kabir?? I have to tell Gautham everything before he gets to know it through Kabir.

My train of thought was broken when I heard Shruthi's worried voice. "Are you alright?"

"Eh! Yea!" I tried my best to put on a smile to pretend that I was fine! Actually no one knew the thing between me and Kabir. So I had to put on an act.

\*\*\*

We soon bid our byes and left the place! Coming here was the worst decision ever!

Our silent drive had me on the edge of my seat! Did Kabir say anything to Gautham? Or did Gautham notice anything unusual between me and Kabir? Why was Gautham being so unusually quiet??

"Gautham?"

"Hmm?" he was still concentrating on the road.

"Are you fine?"

"Yea!" he answered but he was visibly tense .Should I tell him now?

"You sure?" I asked.



After a few seconds, he replied. "I am!"

"I have something to say!" I mustered up my courage.

"Go on! Am listening!" he urged, not looking away from the road.

I cleared my throat. "You said you saw a man leave my cabin, remember??"

His grip on the steering wheel tightened. "Yea?" his voice was cold. His mood shifted again.

It scared me. My palms started to sweat.

Holding my phone tightly, I said, "Uh..It was...err..Kabir!"

## **Chapter 18-No Answers**

Holding my phone tightly, I said "Uh..It was...err..Kabir!"

He didn't respond. I should've kept my stupid mouth shut! It was a huge mistake! Why did I even tell him all this?

"So, I was uselessly jealous!" He smiled! He actually smiled! But, how...I mean, why??

"So, doesn't it make any difference to you??" I was completely petrified

"Why? Should it make any difference to me? Should I know something??" he cocked his eyebrow.

"No no!! Yesterday you were mad at me when you were asking about the man who left my cabin, remember??"

"Yea?"

"Now you aren't angry, that was why I asked," I quickly mused.

He chuckled. "I don't need to become jealous of Kabir! He is already in love."

That came as news for me as well, a good news rather! I felt relieved that Kabir had actually moved on! Now I need not worry about telling Gautham.

"That is nice!" I said happily.

"Didn't you know?" he asked.

"No! Me and Kabir are not in touch," I explained.

"Ooh!" He smiled.

\*\*\*

Soon we reached home. I couldn't control the curiosity bubbling in me to know when Kabir fell in love.

When Gautham changed I asked him. "Do you know when Kabir fell in love?"

"Nope!" he answered.

"Ooh!" Even he didn't know!

I was glad that Kabir had at least moved on!

I changed into my night clothes and joined Gautham on the bed. He was facing me looking deep into my eyes. There was a moment of silence

"So, did you like my friends?" I tried to make a conversation, wanting to break the uncomfortable silence.

"Of course! All of them were really sweet just like-" we were interrupted when his phone went off.

He walked away from the bed, answering the call. I couldn't really catch his words. He spoke really soft and his words were rushed which made it impossible for me to understand.

When he was done with the call, he picked up his car keys and left the bedroom.

Where was he going at this hour? He could have at least told me.

I followed him before he could leave, so that I could ask him about it. But, he was faster.

This man was never going to change.

I angrily plumped myself on the bed and decided to sleep, thinking that he would return soon, but little did I know that I would be proven wrong.

\*\*\*

I woke up to an empty bed. I checked my phone and it was twenty to ten, but he was nowhere.

Whining, I got up from the empty bed.

"Gautham??" I called out.

But, there was no response! Where did he go?? Was he even alright? I began to think the worst. The moment I dialed his number, I heard the doorbell ring.

I sprinted to open the door. It was Gautham! Thank God, he was perfectly fine!!

But, he was in yesterday's clothes. It means he didn't return home last night! But, he looked tired and worried. What had happened?

Before I could ask him, he rushed to the restroom. I decided to cook and talk this over at breakfast.

I made a quick breakfast and in not more than thirty minutes, I was done. When I started to set the dining table, I heard the sound of the front door.

I went to see who it was, but the door was left open and I saw Gautham stepping into the elevator.

I called him up to know what it was, but he didn't answer the call. He would

be driving, that was why he wasn't answering. I convinced myself.

\*\*\*

I started watching television as time flew by. Being alone, I totally forgot about lunch. But, I wasn't hungry. So I didn't bother to cook.

It was almost six in the evening and he hadn't turned up!! He couldn't be at work because it was a Sunday. Where could he be?

I tried calling him again, but it went on voicemail. So I left a text message asking him where he was and when he would return home.

We had planned for dinner today! It was really hurting that he didn't consider my feelings!

The day came to a frustrating end with no sign of Gautham.

\*\*\*

My alarm rang I stirred in my bed. It was 6am!! I was already late for the gym. I got up, but just then I saw Gautham sleeping peacefully on his side of the bed.

He looked so worn out, even the loud noise of my alarm didn't wake him. Worry lines were evident on his face. My fingers ached to wipe off those lines.

I climbed on to the bed and scooted over to him. I slowly caressed his hair. It was soft as silk. It felt smooth. I found him slowly relaxing under my touch. The sight made my heart flutter. Without disturbing him much, I left him to sleep.

I decided to spare my workouts today so that I could talk to him before he decided to vanish again.

I did a few floor exercises and started to cook breakfast for me and Gautham, expecting that he would have food today at least.

Just when I completed cooking, I heard the bedroom door open. I quickly shifted the food to the dishes and set the dining table.

He was dressed in his formals, ready to leave. Two whole hours were left for work, but why did he get dressed so soon??

"Did you finally realize that this is a home and not a lodge??" I mocked when he was drinking his cup of coffee that I had prepared for him.

"Whatever!!" he said with irritation dripping in his voice

Perfect! He treats *me* like a piece of shit and *he* was angry!!

"That is all you've got to say after two days of disappearing?"

"Did you cook?" he asked, moving towards the dining table, completely paying no heed to me.

"So you treat this like some hotel and not a home?" I asked, not bothering to answer his question.

He looked into the dishes that I had prepared and fixed the breakfast on his own.

But, he didn't bother to answer me.

I waited for him to complete his food. I really didn't want to fight when he was eating.

Just as he washed his hands, I went and stood in front him, trying to block his way. "Gautham, I deserve an explanation!"

"I don't owe you an explanation!" he snarled.

"Oh yea? I am your wife and I have every right to know where you have been!"

"You are getting on my nerves, Shakthi! Just mind your own business!"

"You are such a pain in the ass, Gautham."

## **Chapter 19-Learning to Trust Him**

"You are such a pain in the ass, Gautham!" I raged! He really was a pain in the ass!

He gave me a death stare and walked away, leaving the front door open.

Before he could leave, I slammed the door in his face!

"Serves you right!" I muttered under my breath and went for my shower.

I quickly dressed up and gulped my food. It was almost time for me to leave.

\*\*\*

I reached the office and found that Gautham's car was missing!

The whole of next week was a repeat of Gautham coming home late and leaving early before I could even wake up. Every call and message went unanswered and even when I tried contacting him through my friend's phone, he didn't answer.

I felt that this was too much.

I did some digging at the office to find out what work he was assigned to. I learned that he was working at a client's office. But, there was no reason for him to leave home at six in the morning!!

Something wasn't right!

My head was spinning, and the food I ate refused to enter my system. I felt like throwing up.

I ran to the toilet and puked my guts out.

The dinner I had prepared was a waste! After rinsing my mouth and washing my face, I made myself comfortable on the couch!

Being alone always does this to me! It makes me ill! This was why I didn't want such a big house! I stared at the ceiling with no one to even ask me if I was alright! I missed my family sorely! Tears started rolling down my cheeks.

My life took a big turn and I didn't like its direction!

I thought marriage gave you a soul mate in sickness and in health, till death would do us apart!

*Shakthi, stop crying. What was the use of crying?*

I was going to wait for him until he came home!

I was going to handle the situation patiently. I decided to face his wrath. It would be better than being stuck alone at home.

It was almost ten and still there was no sign of him. I kept washing my face so that I wouldn't sleep.

But my eyes started to droop and I never realized that I actually slept.

Suddenly, I felt a pair of strong arms pickig me up and slowly placing me on the bed. I must be dreaming!

I opened my eyes and that was when I actually saw Gautham ,trying to remove his hands from underneath my body.

I wasn't dreaming! It was for real! At least that much of concern was left in him.

I cleared my throat.

He looked down at me, locking his eyes with mine.

I immediately stood up, freeing myself from his arms.

"I didn't mean to wake you up!" he said. This was the first time I was seeing him in so many days. He had dark circles under his worn out eyes.

It pained me so much to see him like this.

I couldn't stop myself that I went near him and caressed his cheek with my thumb. I felt his one week stubble.

I saw him close his eyes and relax under my touch. He pulled me closer and held me tighter, encircling me in his arms. I really wanted him to tell me what

his problem was, what was keeping him so stressed?

"What is it, Gautham??" I whispered.

"Hmm??"

"Is there any problem? I can help you out! Really!" I pleaded.

I felt him become stiff when I offered to help. He immediately withdrew himself from me.

"It is nothing, Shakthi!" He shrugged.

"Gautham! You can trust me! Just tell me what it is! Why are you coming home late and leaving so early??"

I checked the time and it was three in the morning!

"Just office work!" he lied.

"Don't give me that! There is something else! Please tell me!" I urged.

"No, Shakthi! It is really nothing! Remember, You've just got to trust me!" he said sincerely, holding my small face in his large hands.

I nodded positively. "But, till when will this go on?" Because I just cannot handle being alone, anymore."

"Just give me two more weeks??" he asked.

Two more weeks?? Maybe I should give him some space so that we can get used to this 'being married thing.'

"Okay !" I sighed in defeat.

"I will shower and come!" he said and went to the bathroom.

I kept stirring on the bed, thinking why he wasn't saying the reason! Why can't he let me help him? I was more than willing!

In a few minutes, he joined me on the bed.



"I still can't understand, why you aren't telling me?" I asked.

He caressed my hair. "Sleep" he murmured softly in my ears.

I sighed and drifted to sleep.

\*\*\*

I woke up the next morning again to an empty bed. I could never get used to this!

"Same old!" I mumbled to myself and stretched my hands.

I brushed my teeth, had my usual cup of Milo and went to the gym. Just when I was driving back home, I received a message from Kabir which read '*hey ,beautiful.*'

It made me shiver. Why was he texting me so early?

When I reached home, I texted back.

*'Hi.'*

I didn't get any reply for the next few minutes.

Did Kabir say anything to Gautham about our past? It was only after the phone call that Gautham received on the night of the meet up that he acted more distant. Could the call the Gautham received be Kabir's?

Just then, Kabir called.

"Yes Kabir?" I answered the call.

"Hey! How are you?" he asked.

"Doing well! What about you?"

"Yea..fine!" he sounded happy.

"You sound happy! What is it? You proposed to your girlfriend or something?"

"That would never happen, Shakthi!" his voice became sad.

"Why is that? I can help you out!" I wanted him to genuinely move on.

I heard him laugh sarcastically! It scared me! Had he really moved on or did he fake it for Gautham?

"Chuck it, Shakthi!" he said.

I let it go. "Hmm! So what is it?"

"I actually wanted a favor!" he said.

"Yea, tell me?"

"My mom is coming to Chennai today for a marriage. So, I was just hoping you could help her out!"

"Yea! Sure! Why not!" I agreed.

"Thank you so much, Shakthi! It really means a lot!"

"No problem!" I said and hung up after getting the address and timings.

By helping his mom, I actually could escape the loneliness.

After work, I rushed to the airport to pick her up and took her to the hotel. She was really sweet and she kept complaining about Kabir and that he was refusing to get married. It actually scared me but I pretended to laugh it off.

I came home exhausted and hit the bed.

\*\*\*

The following two weeks, I tried to keep my evenings as busy as possible to keep my mental state healthy.

I went out with my friends, caught up with my school pals, went shopping and cleaned the entire home. I still missed Gautham badly.

It was a bit more than two weeks now, but still Gautham hadn't turned up. Or maybe I didn't get an actual chance to see him. Though I had kept myself

busy, but always somewhere, in some corner of my heart, I prayed that he should be safe.

I woke up that morning with the alarm ringing in my ears. I was expecting to wake up to an empty bed, but my heart did a little somersault when I saw him sleeping next to me.

"Gautham?"

## **Chapter 20-My Adorable Wife**

### **Gautham's pov**

I lazily woke up when I heard my name being screamed.

Shakthi's morning face looked adorable. Her hair was completely tangled, but it only made her look innocent.

I'd love to wake up to her beautiful face every morning.

"You are home!!" she squealed happily.

I felt really bad for keeping her in the dark. It ate me inside out! But, I couldn't risk it! If Shakthi got to know the reason for my disappearance, it would stress her. The problem would be sorted out soon, so I just found no need in telling her the truth and making her stressed for no reason.

"Yea Shakthi, finally..." I sighed, returning a smile.

"Sorry if I woke you up! But, I just couldn't help it" she apologized and the next moment I was caught off guard by her actions.

She crawled over and hugged me tight. I couldn't stop myself and I took her in my arms.

"I missed you!!" she whispered in my ears.

I felt my nerves come alive.

I missed her as well, too much to even describe!! I missed her beautiful jasmine scent, her understanding nature, her care, her concern and all the more, her gorgeous body to die for.

"Missed you too!" I whispered back.

"Hmm!!" I heard her moan! It was always a turn on! From day one, all her moans made me crazy.

I just couldn't control it anymore and I quickly pecked her on her cheek.

I felt her suddenly stiffen and she pulled out of my arms.

She was innocent as an angel. I really doubt if she had ever been near a man! I found it out the moment I touched her for the first time, that she was pure as water.

I loved the fact that I was the first one to touch her and she was all mine.

Without a word, she rushed to the bathroom. She was one crazy woman.

Later, after I showered and put on my work clothes. I entered the kitchen and my nostrils filled with the beautiful aroma!

Food!!! I yearned for home cooked food and I couldn't wait to have a good breakfast.

I walked to the dining room and saw Shakthi setting the dining table. I went and took my place.

She was dressed in a red chiffon saree and her wet hair cascaded down her shoulders. The water droplets ran down her back, making her look sexy as hell.

Her saree was tied low down her waist and it gave me a little peek of her navel. Her blouse was backless and it enhanced her milky white complexion. The droplets of water sliding down her skin made the saree all the more transparent than it was.

She came and sat opposite me and I was still lost in her alluring features.

"Ahem." I heard her clear her throat! Did she catch me checking her out?

I should really stop embarrassing myself

I smiled and started to munch on my food. "It tastes so darn good!!" I said, taking another bite.

"Thanks! But, how did you manage these days?"

"Manage what?" I was a bit scared! Did she find out?

"Food!!" She gave me a look like she stated the obvious.

"Restaurants!" I answered, relieved.

"Where have you been, Gautham??" Not again!!

"I told you, Shakthi!! Just drop it, please?" I pleaded. Hiding the truth was always a better option to lying.

"For almost three whole weeks, you were missing in action, and trust me; I didn't even know if you were alive or dead! You wouldn't answer my calls, you weren't coming to work, but you left home early before I could even wake up and all the excuse that you came up with was your damn office work??"

I just cannot lose my temper now! I knew that I was unfair on her for the past week, but I have my reasons and it's just that it is not good for her to know them!

"Shakthi!! Relax!! Please!! Just trust me!" I tried convincing her.

"Trust??" she scorned.

I felt defeated "Don't you trust me??" I pleaded.

Her eyes softened. "I do Gautham! You have no idea of what I had been going through and you really put me through hell. I just cannot tolerate it again!" she said calmly, finishing her food as I was done with mine.

I held her wrist. "I am really sorry for what I did! And I would never put you through it again, I prom-"

Just then, she silenced me by bringing her fragile finger to my lips. "Never promise," she said and she left to the kitchen, clearing all the dishes.

I was completely horrified. "What do you mean I should never promise?"

"Simple! Cause you never keep one!" she replied.

"What promise didn't I keep up? Enlighten me!"

"You said that you would be back in two weeks, but it took you almost three weeks-"

"It's just two weeks and four days!" I defended myself.

"Fine, but, it was more than two weeks. And second, you promised me a dinner! Didn't you?" She raised her eyebrow.

I laughed at her complaints. She was really cute.

"I am damn serious." she said.

"Oh yea?" I pulled her into my arms. I felt her curves against my body. I felt her smooth, bare and petite waist for the first time and it took all in me to stop myself from kissing her senselessly.

"Yea!" she said, trying to keep a straight face and struggling to get freed from my arms, but I held her.

"You want to have a dinner with me when I am a pain in the ass?" I asked.

"You want to have me in your arms even when I get on your nerves?" she retorted, biting me back with her words.

"Fine! I give up!" I couldn't find an escape now!

"That is like my good husband." She chuckled and I joined in.

"Dinner, this Saturday!" I whispered in her ear and left to the bedroom to grab my things.

I decided to wait for her so that we could drive to office together. I really wanted to spend time with her and make up for the last few weeks. I missed her so much!

In twenty minutes, I saw her coming towards me and her expression slowly changed from aligning her saree to looking at me surprised.

She wasn't like the other nagging wives. She was one of a kind. She was all mine!

"Didn't you leave yet?" she asked, pulling me out of my thoughts.

She looked mind numbingly beautiful with her usual light makeup and tied up hair.

"Ohh..err.. I was hoping if we could go together today!"

She rolled her eyes

"Hey! I am serious!"

"Of course you are!" She laughed again, wearing her sandals.

"Come on, Shakthi!"

She smiled. "I should be the one returning with you and not some random woman!" she demanded.

"Of course!!" I readily agreed and led her to the car park.

My car soon came to life and I started driving.

"Can I ask you something?" she asked doubtfully

"Yea! Go on!" I encouraged.

"You suddenly made a dinner plan and asked me to come along with you to the office and all! After the '*no Gautham*' episode for the past three weeks, this is all just making me over think the entire thing. I know you asked me to trust you, but I just feel like you are doing all this to hide something from me."

"Fine! Keep it the way you want," I snapped.

She just infuriates me at times!

"Gautham, look! I thought it was better to clear it off rather than just over thinking things."

She actually had a point. I was the one who left her to suffocate in this house and my sudden gestures are just making her anxious. It was totally natural for any woman to think that way.

"I am really sorry, Shakthi!! I was really mad that you didn't trust me. But now, I totally understand. I am sorry." I apologized.

She smiled and looked away.

We reached office, and we stepped into the empty elevator. It was just me and her.

I was standing, with her almost bare back in front of me which was slightly brushing my chest. "I wanted you to come with me to the office because I wanted to be with you!" I whispered, bending down to her ears.

She looked back up to me and made contact with my eyes. "Not bad!!" She smirked.

Just when I was about to peck her on her cheek, the elevator dinged and my best friend Karan stood at the doorway.

Shakthi left us at that floor, after giving me her dazzling smile that made my morning even more beautiful.

"You have fallen for her!!" I heard Karan state.

"What??"



## **Chapter 21-His touches**

### **Gautham's pov**

"You have fallen for her!!" I heard Karan state.

"What??" has he gone crazy?

"You have and don't you try to deny!"

"No, Karan! It is pure nonsense!"

He rolled his eyes!

I care for her. She was such a sweet person to be with! I missed her presence during the last few weeks. But, love will not be the way that I would define my relationship and being committed to a person takes so much effort and love, and at the moment I was totally not ready!!

"Karan! You've got it all wrong!"

"I just saw the way you looked at her, so don't give me that crap!"

Just when I was about retort, the elevator dinged and we moved to my cabin.

I know that he was about to shoot so many questions and especially after my long disappearance, there was no doubt on it!

\*\*\*

### **Shakthi's pov**

Lunch time soon arrived and I decided to go to cafeteria.

Just as I entered, I saw Gautham and the man, whom I saw at the elevator before I left them, were sitting together.

It looked like they were friends. I really didn't want to interrupt. So I silently went and bought my food. I chose a corner table and started to munch on my sandwich.

I finished it quickly and just when I was about to leave, I felt a strong hand

tug my wrist, pulling me hard.

I closed my eyes tightly due to the sudden jerk, but soon I felt my hands grabbing well-toned abs for support.

I know this familiar feel!!

"Did I scare you?" Gautham asked

"Of course not!! No one dares to touch me!" I said boldly.

"Except your husband!" That made my nerves tingle.

"Not even you!" I said, pushing him away with my finger.

"You can't be sure of that!" he said, pulling me into his arms.

"Gautham, people are watching!" I pleaded.

But suddenly, out of the blue, he pulled the hair tie that held my hair together, making my hair fall down over my shoulders. Audacity of this man!! "Suits you better!!" he whispered, giving my hair tie back.

When I was about to comment on his rudeness, I heard a person clearing his throat.

I quickly came out of Gautham's embrace and fixed my hair. It was the elevator guy again.

"Sorry to disturb you guys!" he said politely.

"No problem at all!" I tried to hide my embarrassment.

"Your sorry isn't accepted! Why did you disturb us?" Gautham asked him.

That guy laughed. "Because, you were all over your wife and everyone is watching!"

"Whatever!!" Gautham shrugged it off.

I felt like hiding under a rock. "By the way, he is Karan!" Gautham finally introduced him.

"Hi Shakthi! I've heard a lot about you."

"Uhh...Hi!" I stammered. "How come I didn't get to see you at our wedding" I asked, trying to make a conversation.

"Cause your husband didn't allow me to talk to you!"

"Karan! You know it is not that!" Gautham interrupted. They had a silent eye assuring conversation. What was that all about?

I felt odd standing there, in between the best friends!

"I just have some work! Will catch you both later..Yea??" I asked.

"I will wait for you in the car park!" Gautham said and I smiled assuring him I would also be there. I was really taken aback that he still remembered even these small little things.

"Bye!" Karan said and I left the cafeteria.

\*\*\*

The day at office soon came to an end and just like Gautham had promised, we drove together.

As soon as we entered home, I crashed on the couch, relaxing when Gautham had gone to answer his call.

"Shakthi??" I heard him call me.

I opened my eyes to meet his.

"Yea??"

"I need to go now, I will be back soon!" he said, picking up his car keys.

Now this frightened me. Would he return home or was it going to be a repeat of the last three weeks??

"I hope that it won't be a repeat of the previous weeks?" I probed.

A hint of hurt crossed his features. "Of course not! It is my friend and he

needs help, so I need to go! Don't worry!!" he assured me and left.

After relaxing for a bit, I went to freshen up. I had a nice shower, wiped myself dry and wrapped a towel around my body. Just when I went to grab my pajamas and t-shirt, it hit me that I hadn't done the previous weeks' laundry!!

Now there were no proper night clothes for me to wear. The only alternative was to wear the lingerie nighties that Tanya had forced me to buy during my wedding shopping. All of them were skimpy and how could I even wear them in front of Gautham!

When I was standing in front of the wardrobe, choosing which was the least revealing, my phone buzzed.

It was a message from Gautham and it read, *'don't make dinner for me! I will be late!'*

Now I can wear this without getting scared.

I chose a black satin two piece nighty. The inner piece was spaghetti strapped, stopping two inches above my knee and the outer piece was a black robe which ended at my knee. It looked fairly decent when I looked into the mirror.

"I will hit the bed before he could get home!" I mumbled to myself.

I made a nice dinner and enjoyed it, watching my favorite episode of The Vampire Diaries.

Now it was almost quarter to ten. My eyes started to droop. I sleepily walked to the room and just when I was about to settle, the room's light came to life and it wasn't me who switched it on!

Gautham, how could he get back so soon? I should have gone to bed earlier.

I slowly turned to meet his gaze. I tried to have a bold face like the dress I was wearing didn't matter at all!

But, I became more aware of the state I was in. His eyes roamed over my

body and finally met mine. They carried pure lust which scared me!

"You're home??" I said, trying to shift the mood.

"Hmm" he said and slowly neared me until I felt his well-toned chest grazing my back.

I felt his hand on my stomach, pulling me closer to him.

He slowly gathered my open hair and laid it on one side and his fingers and brushed my neck in this process. The touch was electric.

His fingers caressed my cheek which was easing my tension. He nuzzled at my neck which tickled my nerves. The touch was utterly foreign. But I kind of started to like it.

Soon I felt my robe come undone and pool at my feet. I wanted to surrender to him. I wanted to enjoy this and it was mouthwateringly blissful.

He slowly turned me, making me face him and pressed our bodies together. A different feel started to stir in me as he left a trail of kisses from my ear lobe to my collar bone. It was a feeling beyond heaven when I felt the touch of his lips on my skin. My legs were becoming jelly and my knees were becoming weak that I couldn't actually support myself.

Fireworks exploded when he started to apply pressure on the area between my ears and neck with his lips. I grabbed a fistful of his silky hair and suddenly I felt his teeth on the same area and it sent me jerking in pain but soon he started to kiss the same spot making me moan in pleasure.

His fingers roamed on my skin and I slowly felt him removing the strap.

That was when a hard realization hit me. What was I doing? How could I give into the physical desire so soon? I had to keep it under control! Why is his touch making me go wild? This was just not right!

"Gautham!!" I cried out under my breath, pushing him away

## Chapter 22-Sexual Tension

"Gautham!!" I cried out under my breath, pushing him away.

Panting, he turned on his heels and walked towards the washroom. He turned to face me. "I am sorry!" he mumbled and disappeared into the bathroom.

*Don't you even know to control yourself!*

He was a dangerous lustful drug and I needed to keep my hands to myself.

I picked up the robe lying at my feet and covered myself.

I tucked myself under the comforter.

I closed my eyes pretending to sleep.

The bathroom door unlocked. The sound of his footsteps neared me and I felt the bed dip.

I peeked through my duvet to check if he was asleep, but he had his back to me. It hurt but I immediately shrugged off the feeling.

Worried he no longer liked me, I somehow forced myself to sleep.

\*\*\*

I woke up at five in the morning, unable to get back to sleep.

I got up, stretched and looked at Gautham who seemed to be sleeping peacefully.

I tiptoed to the washroom to do my morning routine and the laundry.

I strolled to the kitchen to make myself a cup of Milo. I enjoyed every bit of it and it seemed even more soothing after the sleepless night.

I peeked outside the window the climate was blissful. I badly felt the need for yoga.

I changed into my sports bra and shorts, tied my hair up in a messy bun and carried a floor mat to our private terrace. Yoga under the rising sun was too tempting.

I laid the mat on the floor and started doing surya namaskar.

I continued doing the other asana that I had learnt during my school days.

I felt the knots inside my stomach come undone with every passing minute.

Time flew by and soon I felt the warm heat kiss my skin. It was wonderful to feel the glowing light rays of the sun on my skin that made me relax.

I was doing chakra asana which required me to lift my upper body up from the floor, facing the ceiling with the support on my hands and feet and the posture was like a half wheel.

When I was about to release it, I heard Gautham's voice, "Shakthi!!" *I* slipped, but one of his hands caught my bare stomach and the other supported my spine.

I landed on the mat feeling my back slowly hit the floor.

He sat on his knees next to where I was lying down. I took in long deep breaths to calm down.

"Are you alright??"

I just couldn't calm myself down with his hand still on my bare stomach, making my nerves tingle.

"Yes!!" I gasped audibly and my breathing turned erratic.

"Are you sure??"

I rose up from the mat. "I am fine!" I folded the mat and left the terrace as quickly as possible.

I rushed into the room and locked it behind me! He was such a gentleman today; it was just my hormones that were all over the place. If this was going to prolong, it was going to be really hard for me to be around him.

My phone buzzed, it was my friend from high school who moved away a long time ago, Ashika.

Her message actually took me by surprise. *'Care to meet me?'*

*'Are you in Chennai?'* I texted back, I was super excited.

*'Yes, honey!'* wow!

*'Sounds good! Time and place, your call.'*

*'Now, at eight, hotel Waves, Chrompet, room number 404. I am leaving tonight! So you better not refuse'* She wants me in an hour? She must be insane!

*'Done!'* I replied and went for a shower.

I changed into some casual clothes, grabbed my wallet and car keys and left.

Did I forget something?? I had this weird feeling that I was forgetting something. My phone. I thought about going back to get it, but I'd only be gone a couple of hours.

\*\*\*

My time with Ashika was well spent. I enjoyed every minute of it. Talking to her felt really like an escape from the reality.

Before I knew it it was six, and my cue to leave before I was late for dinner which Gautham was preparing.

I reached home, after driving through heavy Saturday night traffic. I unlocked the front door.

There was no sign of Gautham.

"Gautham?" I kept calling as I walked to the bedroom.

My phone rang. I followed the ringtone to find my phone, lying on the bed.

I picked it up and it was my brother, Arun.

I answered it. "Hey Arun!!"

"Shakthi!! Where were you?? I have been trying for so long!!" he panicked



"Hey! Relax! I just went to meet my friend."

"Shakthi, It's Dad! Come to City Hospital!"

"What??" I felt tears running down my cheeks.

"It is nothing serious, Shakthi! Just make it soon!" He hung up.

How I wish Gautham was here to support me! Where had he gone?

\*\*\*

My heart kept beating faster as I parked my two wheeler at the hospital. I inquired for my dad at the reception and they guided me.

I saw Arun standing near the staircase. "Arun!! What happened??" I felt my legs shiver.

"Heart attack" What? But...

"You told me it was not serious!" I cried, holding him by his collar.

"Shakthi, relax! It's okay!" Just then, I heard Gautham's voice and he tried removing my hands from Arun's collar.

"You, stay out of this! This is none of your business!!" I said, pointing my finger at him. My emotions were heightened.

"You didn't answer any of my calls today and stop scolding the man who saved our father!" Arun defended Gautham.

"It's alright Arun! She is just upset!" Gautham said.

"Can I meet dad?" I asked Arun.

"In a few minutes!" he answered.

Soon the doctor arrived and Gautham went to talk with him while I moved into the ward to meet my dad.

The sight killed me! It was the second time I was seeing him like this! My mom was sitting next to him, assuring me with her eyes that my dad was fine.

I was happy to see her strong and not an emotional mess like me.

I started talking to dad and he kept assuring me that he was fine. I controlled my tears in front of him, not wanting to make him sad.

"Shall I go and get you dinner, Dad?" I proposed.

He nodded. I came out of the room and mom followed me while Arun went to take my mom's place in the ward.

As soon as I came out, I hugged my mom, breaking down.

"Shakthi! Your dad is perfectly fine!" she said, pulling out of the hug, wiping my tears.

I nodded, grasping her hands tightly.

"Now smile!" she said.

I felt my lips faintly curve.

"Now that is like my daughter!" she said, hugging me again.

"If it wasn't for Gautham, we wouldn't have seen your father alive!" she explained.

I came out of the hug and I read respect for Gautham in her eyes. The way Arun defended him also showed how much Gautham actually helped my family! I need to see him, right now!

"I will be back mom!" I said, leaving her and started to search for Gautham.

I saw him standing near the window and gazing outside "Gautham!"

## **Chapter 23-You Call It Guilt**

### **Shakthi's POV**

I saw him standing near the window and gazing outside.

"Gautham!" I called out.

"Hey." He cleared his throat and tried to smile. It made my insides melt.

How would I thank him?

"Ugh..erm..I saw you talking to the doctor, what did he say?"

"Nothing to worry, it was just a minor attack! He said that the attack was due to emotional stress, like you had to leave him suddenly and looks like he couldn't take it well!" By the time he finished, tears ran down my cheeks.

My dad had been missing me so much! I didn't visit once in the past month! But I did it so they would think I was happy with Gautham! If I knew things would end up like this, I would have surely visited my parents!

"Hey, stop crying!!" He pulled me into his arms.

"I am so selfish, Gautham! I should have visited my parents!" I said among my muffled sobs. I felt his t-shirt getting soaked by my tears.

"You are the most selfless person I've ever met!"

"You are lying! You are just trying to convince me!" I said and pulled away from the hug.

"I have never been so truthful in my entire life," he said and wiped away my tears. Just then, we were interrupted by someone clearing his throat.

It was Arun. "Sorry, if I interrupted you guys!" he said with a playful smirk.

Was he assuming that we were romancing in a hospital?

"You really need someone to put some sense into you, Arun," I said, slapping his shoulder playfully and walking to the cafeteria to buy the dinner.

I bought some oil free food for dad and strode to his ward. When I opened the door, I heard Gautham ask. "Do you think I can see him?"

"Of course!! You don't need my permission!"

"I thought you won't like it if I get involved with your family," he said doubtfully

"Nonsense! Just come in!" I said, pulling him by his hand into the room.

My dad smiled at both of us when we entered.

When he was struggling to sit up properly, Gautham rushed to him before I could, and helped him. I felt a little jealous of Gautham there! He was slowly taking my place! But it made me happy seeing my family gel.

"How are you, Uncle?" he asked my dad sincerely and took a place next to him while I went and stood beside Gautham.

"I am perfectly fine, Gautham!" He smiled.

"Please take care of your health, Uncle."

"You know that you can call me 'Dad'?" Dad said which really took me by surprise.

Gautham laughed. "Sure Uncle, I mean 'Dad'!"

"Thank you so much, Gautham! If it wasn't for you-"

"Please do not embarrass me! You consider me your son and you are thanking me! It is my responsibility, Dad! Shakthi would have done the same thing, right?"

"Now I know that I didn't make a bad choice in choosing you for my little girl!" Dad said, holding Gautham's hands.

"I promise you, Dad! I won't let you down!" he said. That was the one that I really couldn't trust on! Him and his promises!

"Dad! I've got food for you!" I said and handed over his food to him.

He gave me a warm smile and took it.

"Dad! You are so mean! You gave my place to him?" I asked him, I wanted to lighten up the mood.

"Of course, not! I just gained another son," he said and took a bite of his food.

All of us smiled at his comment. Suddenly, I heard Mom's voice.

"Shakthi and Gautham! You both go home! It's already ten minutes past eleven, go and catch up with some sleep!"

"No way! I am not leaving until Dad's discharged!" I retorted.

"Shakthi! He is getting discharged tomorrow! There is nothing to worry about! I just had a talk with the doctor! So you both can leave!" she pressed

"You sure, mom? Cause I really want to stay!"

"Don't be a kid, Shakthi! Go home!" It was my Mom's turn to order.

Soon we left the hospital. I prayed; *everything should get better for my dad*. Gautham drove the car while I was in the passenger seat and the bike was left at the hospital. Gautham wouldn't allow me to drive it. He thought that it was dangerous.

Arun told me that he would do the job of bringing it to my place. Those were the perks of having a brother!

When we reached home I was so exhausted I walked to the bedroom when Gautham had gone to freshen up. My phone caught my eyes. I checked my phone for the calls that I had missed today. Just then, my phone went off! It was Ankitha!

She screamed. "Where the hell have you been?? Are you alright??"

"Whoa!! Chill! I am fine!" I said.

"I was so worried for you! Is everything alright? Why didn't you answer any of my calls?"

"Please don't ask me!" I pleaded.

"You know you've got to tell me!"

I started from the previous night's event till the present minute. "I wasn't there for my Dad when he needed me the most, Ankitha! How can I be so selfish?" I cried thinking of how ignorant I had been.

"Calm dow-"

Suddenly, a strong hand suddenly grabbed my phone. "She will talk to you tomorrow!" Gautham said into the phone and hung up.

I felt weak and sat on the bed, head in my hands.

Gautham's arms wrapped around my shoulders and I felt him whisper in my ear "Everything is alright, Shakthi!"

"No!! Damn no!! I should have told you about where I was going! Things wouldn't have ended up like this!" I screamed while I cried.

"Your dad is safe now!"

"But I wasn't there when he needed me!"

"So, are you worried about the fact that it was me who saved your dad and not you?"

"Thank you so much for your favor on my helpless family, like you think!! But, you know what? I am there for them!" I snapped.

"Unbelievable, Shakthi! I never thought that you would put things this way!"

"What? You aren't some great person just because you were there on time!"

"I seriously have no clue of what I can do to change your thoughts about me! But, just get this into that thick skull of yours, I consider your dad as mine! How would you have felt if you had saved my dad and I was throwing all these words at you?" He said and walked out.

He was trying to help me out and I was rebuking him for it!

I left the room to find him. He was neither in the hall nor the kitchen. I walked up the stairs to check in the other rooms, but there was no sign of him.

Then I went to our private terrace. He was leaning on the wall and his hands occasionally raked past his hair. I recalled it was his habit when he was frustrated! It was me who kept him frustrated!

"Gautham!" I called.

He turned "Shakthi! Please! Not again! I am fed up of explaining!"

"No! I actually am so thankful to you that you were there for my family when I failed! It is just all the guilt, Gautham! I am really sorry for taking out my frustration on you!"

He came near me and lifted my face by my chin and made me look into his intense grey eyes. "Why are you guilty? Just think of it like, I filled in in your absence! Don't you consider me as your family?"

Tears started to blur my vision. What did I do to deserve such a man in my life! I crashed into his arms, hugging him, wanting to feel his warmth and my joy knew no bounds when he hugged me back.

\*\*\*

I had a slightly disturbed sleep that night. But, the next morning was bright! The place next to me was empty. When I started to wonder about where Gautham could have gone, I heard the shower in the bathroom run. How the hell does he manage to wake up so early? Nine in the morning wasn't that early! But, if any person could wake up before me, he was an early riser.

I stretched and rose up from the bed. My phone suddenly went off. It was Arun.

*Let everything be fine!* I made a silent prayer and answered. "Hey! how is dad?"

"He has been discharged and we have come home!"

"Why didn't you tell me?"

"What am I doing now?" he mocked.

"Smart ass! Why didn't you tell me earlier?"

"We were caught up in paper work!"

"Take care of dad," I told him and the conversation came to an end.

"Get dressed. I have a place to take you to!" Gautham said as I made the bed.

I thought that I could visit my parents, but where was he going to take me? After what he did for my family, I really felt obligated to him; so I accepted and went to get dressed up.

But still, my heart yearned to see my Dad.

After a good shower, I changed into a nice pair of jeans with a simple violet top. I totally wasn't in the mood to do a makeover. But, due to heavy crying, my eyes were like two red tomatoes popping out of their swollen sockets and I had to put some effort in to hide them.

I left my hair the way it was, without bothering to comb it and I put on my flip flops while Gautham had already reached the parking lot.

I locked the house and sprinted to the car. He drove around unfamiliar roads but then I recognised a few of them. It was my home! He took a different route to surprise me. It made my heart swell in happiness. I knew that I was falling for him, but I also knew that our journey together wasn't going to be that easy!

"Thank you so much Gautham!" I pecked him on his cheek.

"Wow!" he said.

I felt myself blush, realizing what I had just done.

I opened the car door, charged to my home and rang the doorbell.

My mom opened the door and I hugged everyone and Gautham soon joined us.

We spent the entire day together! It was fun bonding with my family after a long time! I realized that I had missed them so much! With Gautham next to us, it doubled our happiness.

My life couldn't have gotten any better!

It was nearing eight at night. My mom's target would be to chase me away!



"Please mom! Let me stay!" I begged.

"Your mom is right, dear! You both should go home!" Dad said.

I didn't whine further. "Okay!"

Gautham grabbed his car keys and he bid his bye to everyone, signaling to me that he would be waiting. When I was about to leave, my mom tugged at me.

"What is it Mom?" I hissed.

"Shakthi! Me and your dad have planned something for you!" she said.

"Okay?"

"A honeymoon for you!"

Did I just say that my life can't get any better? Scratch it!

## **Chapter 24-Honeymoon Plans**

### **Gautham's pov**

I started the car and waited for Shakthi to join me. What was taking her so long?

Just then, my phone went off and it was a call from the hospital where I had admitted Natasha. I hoped everything was fine!

"Hello?!"

"Am I talking to Mr.Gautham?" a female questioned me. It seemed like a nurse.

"Yea! Is she fine? Is there any problem?" I panicked.

"Everything is fine! The patient has been discharged today and please see to that she is not put under any sort of stress," she advised.

"Thank you so much for informing me!"

"No problem!" she said, hanging up.

I sighed and clutched the steering.

"Gautham??" I heard Shakthi sing my name, making me come to reality!

"Sorry! I just..Umm..zoned out!" I explained.

She giggled lightly. "I got that!" she said and she quickly placed an envelope in her hand bag.

"So? Shall we leave??" I asked.

Just then, Arun shouted. "Don't forget what Mom said!" he teased.

Shakthi rolled her eyes. "Thanks for the reminder," she screamed sarcastically at Arun.

"Gautham! You start the car!!" she said and raised her hands; which I guessed was her mannerism when she was impatient.

I gave her a curt nod and immediately started the car.

"Gautham! You seriously have no idea how much this meant to me! Thank you for the entire day!! Thank you so much!!" she said in a single go.

"Shakthi, stop thanking me for every little thing! It really puts me off when you thank me!"

An understanding look crossed her features. "I know! But, I couldn't stop myself!" she said and smiled at me which reached her eyes.

Soon, we reached home. She went to change and I went to get freshened up as well.

I settled on the bed waiting for her. She came out, looking cute and adorable in her usual pajamas and t-shirt with her hair in a messy bun.

It reminded me of the night when she was in a black satin nighty and she looked dangerously sexy. I was surprised to find her dressed that way! I thought she was actually trying to seduce me, but the next morning I was disappointed when I saw all her clothes getting dried up on the terrace! She had no option but to wear that dress!!

Her sleepy yet sexy state was such a huge turn on. I just didn't know what came over me that I actually wasn't able to control myself! I wanted to ravish every part of her delicious body.

She settled next to me, making her sharp chocolate brown eyes pierce through mine. What did she have in those eyes of hers? Adrenaline rushed through me.

She seemed anxious, fidgeting with the duvet. What was it that kept her disturbed? Was it still her dad?

"Hey! Your dad is alright!" I comforted her by rubbing my palm over her hands that nervously held the duvet.

"Yea! Ermm..I know! It is not that!..actually..err.." she stuttered.

"Go on!" I encouraged her and tried to hide my curiosity.

"Ugh... I swear that it wasn't my decision!" She sat up on the bed.

She started to scare me! What wasn't her decision?

"My mom, she wants us to go on honeymoon!"

I gave her an 'I-didn't-understand-a-single-word' look. "Shakthi!! I have no idea what you just said!" I stood and faced her.

She took a deep breath. "My mom wants us to go on honeymoon," she said with her eyes closed.

I started laughing my ass off! Was she becoming nervous to tell me such a simple thing?

She opened her eyes and gave me a surprised look

"Why are you laughing?" she asked.

"I can't believe you were so nervous!" I tried to hold my laughter.

"Fine! Now tell me! What do you think?" she was serious.

"You can cook up some excuse to avoid it unless you are dying to go with me!" I said, smirking at her.

"That would be the last thing I want to do!" she said.

"I know, I know! You wouldn't be able to control yourself around me!" I teased.

"We both know who wouldn't be able to control themselves." She raised her eyebrows, referring to the night when I saw her in the black satin robe.

"Oh! Really? Looks like you know everything!" I said, pulling her into my arms.

Her soft bosom pressed on my hard chest which created havoc on my senses! Her eyes spoke volumes. She didn't anticipate this, one bit! Even I didn't!

Her pink and juicy lips looked so kissable. Her fragile petals were shivering and it made me want to kiss the brains out of her.

"Gautham!!" came her airy voice. My name had never sounded so good!

"Hmm??" I asked

"Let go of me!" she whispered still fighting to pull out of my arms.

"Not so soon!" I said and I held her small stunning face in my large hands. I felt myself move towards her lips. She looked into my eyes, confused.

I neared her quivering lips and felt her grip on my arms become tighter. Her nails seeped through my hard muscles. She was becoming nervous.

I felt her breathing go wild. I was about to claim her soft lips. Just then, we were interrupted by my phone's loud ring.

"Perfect timing!" I cursed under my breath and I let go of Shakthi to pick my

phone.

It was Natasha!

How would I answer it with Shakthi around? I walked out of the bedroom.

"How are you?" I asked.

"I am fine! Thank you so much, Gautham!" she said, tiredness in her voice.

I felt really guilty for having caused it. "Just take care of your health! I will meet you tomorrow!" I said, hanging up.

I entered the room and found Shakthi still deep in thought! I hope she doesn't doubt me!

"So, where were we?" I asked, smirking.

"Gautham, please! It is something serious! Please stop joking!" she said with a stern look.

"Hmm..okay! On a serious note! If you don't want to go, just make up some excuse" I said, lying on the bed.

"I thought we can just go to someplace, stay there for a week or so and return!" she suggested.

"Like a honeymoon couple?" I asked

"Yes! As simple as that!" she said. But, I knew that it wasn't going to be as easy as it sounded.

"So, where are we going?" I asked, pulling the comforter over me.

"I thought, some place nearby would do it!" she said, relaxing next to me.

"What about Bangalore?" I recommended.

She had a moment of debate in her mind. "What is it?" I questioned.

"Uh!! Nothing! Bangalore is fine! But, when will we be going?"

"Next week's workload is less. So I guess we can probably leave on Tuesday! I guess that would be perfect!"

"Hmm! I will convey this to my parents!" she said and turned away with her back facing me.

\*\*\*

I had to wake up early to visit Natasha! I saw Shakthi peacefully sleeping! She looked like an innocent child with her hair sprawled all over her face.

I changed into my office clothes, deciding that I would go directly to work after visiting her. I still regretted keeping Shakthi in the dark.

### **Shakthi's pov**

I woke up to the sound of my annoying alarm ringing! The moment I opened my eyes, all the memories of last night came flooding back.

Of all the places, why would Gautham choose Bangalore! I was scared about the '*what ifs?*' what if we meet Kabir? What if he says something about the past? What if he makes up some story about me and him?

I woke up, stretched my arms and to my shock the bed was empty again. Where had he gone at six in the morning?

My phone beeped. It was Gautham's message and it read. '*I've gone out! Catch you at office!*'

He had gone out? But, what came up so early? I really hoped that I wouldn't see 'no Gautham' episodes again!

## **Chapter 25-My Bipolar Husband**

## **Shakthi's pov**

I was highly strung as I set foot in my cabin. Thinking about the Bangalore trip made me a nervous wreck!

My mom laughed her ass off when I told her that we chose Bangalore. Bangalore was not a place for honeymoon!! But, that was the nearest place that Gautham could think of and I just couldn't come up with anything near and better.

To divert myself, I drowned myself in work!

\*\*\*

Just when I decided to join Ankitha at her cabin for lunch, she came to mine. "I was just coming to your cabin!" I exclaimed

She laughed. "looks like I beat you to it!" she said as she took the duo seat which was meant for informal meets, that was at the corner of my cabin.

"You sure did!" I replied as I joined her.

"How is your Dad?" she asked.

"Good for now, I guess," I said and she hugged me, almost crushing my bones.

We started eating when the thought hit me! Was Gautham back? Or was he stuck somewhere else?! I just hoped I wasn't going home to an empty house tonight.

"Are things good between you and Gautham??" She loved getting straight to the point.

"Uh..yea!" I said doubtfully.

" Tell me!" she asked, knowing I was hiding something.

"Gautham left before I could wake up and this is scaring me! I don't want to have a repeat of those dreadful three weeks of my life!"

"Relax, babe!!" She rubbed my shoulders, trying to ease the tension.

"You have no idea Ankitha! It felt like a mental institution to me! It was so tough to live like that!" I said, trying to make her understand.

"Did he say that he will return?" she asked to which I nodded.

"So go and check in his cabin!" she suggested.

"Easy for you to say! But it would seem like spying!"

"So, are you going to stay worked up until you reach home?"

"This would actually be nothing compared to what will be coming up next week!" I said, thinking of Bangalore.

"Anything special?" she asked curiously.

"My mom wants me and Gautham to go on a honeymoon and I can't avoid it due to my father's health!" I mused.

"Wow!!" she said happily.

"I know! But, there is nothing to be happy about!" I said glumly.

"Shakthi, it is your honeymoon! You have a great chance to know more about him! After all what he has done for you, I think he is one hell of a guy!"

I would totally agree with the last part, but definitely not the first! But, getting to know him more wasn't a bad idea. "You are right!" I sighed.

"And don't just stop with that! Make babies!!!" she winked.

I would love to have babies! But for now, with Gautham was a big NO -NO!

"You know it won't happen!"

"Let's see!!" she smirked.

"So, where are you going??" she asked.

"Bangalore!" I said, annoyed at our choice of place.



She laughed.

"That's enough." I said, trying to be angry.

"Have you applied for your leave??" she raised.

"I haven't."

" Ask Gautham to do it and use this as a reason to check if he has come back."

"Wow! You really do have brains!"

"You are talking to a Chartered Accountant." she boasted.

"I thought I was one as well," I said.

"Okay! You are talking to a Chartered Accountant and wife for three years." She chuckled.

"That, I can accept!" I said.

\*\*\*

I stood outside Gautham's cabin.

*Stop overthinking it. It is nothing. You can do it!*

I cracked the door a little open. It wasn't locked! So, he was there.

I heard Gautham's voice. "Yea, I just met Natasha this morning and-" I guess he sensed someone opening the door because he stopped talking.

So he had gone to meet a woman!

When I opened the door fully, I saw another man sitting opposite to Gautham. He turned to look. It was Karan.

"Hey, Shakthi!" Karan smiled. But, I sensed something wrong with Gautham. He was distressed. Frustration and anxiety was written all over his face.

"Err... Guess I came at the wrong time!" I said, turning on my heels to leave.

"Sure, you did!" Gautham lashed out.

*Ouch!* That hurt!

He needn't do this in front of Karan!

I silently opened the door to leave and just then I heard Karan. "Shakthi! Where are you going?"

"My cabin," I answered.

"It's not you who should leave!" he said and silently walked out of the room.

"So tell me! What are you here for?" Gautham asked rudely.

"Learn some manners on the first place!" I said.

"Well, in that case, you should learn a few as well!" he said. "You should've knocked on the door!" he said.

"Do you charge for your lecture?" I taunted.

"Oh! Stop it! Tell me! What brought you here?" he asked, sitting in front of his laptop. I felt like a piece of trash!

"You know what? Coming here was a terrible idea, like marrying you!" I said, banging the table with my hand.

I didn't give him a single second to reply. I left, slamming his cabin door shut.

I sauntered to my cabin.

Forget about going on a honeymoon, I was not even going home today! I didn't deserve this! Why should he humiliate me in front of a third person? Why should he be mad at me without any reason? Why should I go to a house where I am not respected?

But, where else would I go? I could go to meet my parents. I could just make up some excuse. But, I would not be able to stay there for more than a day, especially with my mom trying to chase me away.

I couldn't disturb Ankitha! She had a family, unlike me!

Why did my situation become like this? I was a burden to everyone around me!

I tried to focus on my work when I was interrupted by my phone ringing. It was Ankitha.

"You've got to tell me!! How did it go? Is he back?" she asked, excited.

"Ankitha! You won't believe what happened! He met some woman called Natasha this morning! I heard that when I opened the door! His best friend was there along with him and Gautham had to snap at me right in front of him! That guy decently walked away! And God knows for what he was reacting this way! It was starting to creep me out! I felt like a piece of shit!" My voice started to break.

"I am coming!" she said and the next moment the door to my cabin flew open.

"Shakthi! I am so sorry! I shouldn't have suggested that idea! It is my fault entirely!" she said, feeling guilty.

"You were just trying to help me out! It was Gautham's." I pulled her into a hug.

"Why is he treating you this way?" she probed.

"If I knew the reason, I wouldn't be standing in front of you, right now!"

"You have a point! I feel like punching him in his gut, right now!!!" she ranted.

I giggled " Thank you for being there!" I felt really grateful for what she did.

\*\*\*

I crossed the threshold of my home!

After refreshing myself, I sat in front of the television, hoping that it would help me relax. Even television started to lack excitement. I decided to cook

something to fill up my hungry stomach.

While cooking, I heard the front door unlock. It seemed like Gautham was back.

"Shakthi!" I heard him bellow.

He still sounded angry. But, I was not going to put up with this.

I decided not to answer him.

"Shakthi!! Where the hell are you?" he yelled at the top of his voice.

I remained oblivious to him and continued with my work!

"There you are!!" he said, sighing a breath of relief.

I chopped my onions.

"Get dressed! We have somewhere to go!" he ordered.

"I am not going anywhere, with you!" I said, looking up at him.

"Stop being tough and get dressed!" he ordered again.

"You are the one who wants a favor! So behave!!" I snarled.

"Shakthi!! Now you are starting to annoy me!" he said.

"Oh yea?? Then why bear with me?? Divorce is always an option."

## **Chapter 26-Twisting the Knife**

"Oh yea?? Then why bear with me?? Divorce is always an option." He was the one who was raising my hackles.

I sensed his jaw tightening! To hell with his anger!

I felt his strong arms pull me by my hand. He twisted it behind my back which made me yelp. "Gautham! It hurts!! Let go of me!"

"You should've thought of that before you opened your mouth!"

"Please!!" I begged.

"Agree to come with me, then I will let go of you!"

"Fine! I accept! Now leave me!"

He let go. "I want you to wear this!" He handed me the cover.

I took it and stomped across the kitchen to my room. This time, it was the room upstairs!

"Get prepared for the night of your life, Gautham." I said to myself and went to get changed.

The dress that he had bought was a red off shoulder dress which stopped an inch below my knee. It clung on to my body like my second skin. It enhanced my curves at the right places. It revealed much, but didn't reveal anything. He really had made a careful choice in selecting this dress.

Was he taking me to some party?

If he was, I really want to make myself look a little presentable, not for his sake, but for myself!

I side braided a part of my hair and let the hair fall open on my shoulders.

I did my makeup, and used a smoky red lipstick to match my dress.

I had a final look at myself in the mirror!! For the first time my makeup and the dress really bore fruits! I do look sexy! No harm in appreciating myself

when I know that this happens only once in a blue moon.

I finally chose a pair of red stilettos and marched to the hall, expecting to see Gautham dressed up as well.

Oh my God!!! What was I seeing?? I was spell bound.

Gautham was in a black tuxedo and he looked like a Greek god. I was drooling at the sight in front of me! He looked tall and dangerously handsome with his hair all gelled up and it gave a perfect bedroom look. He looked smoking hot.

*Shakthi, did you forget? He humiliated you and you are drooling over him? Shut it up.*

He was busy working on his phone. The hall was silent apart from my stilettos clattering against the floor.

He lifted his head from his phone and his eyes roamed over my body, making me mindful of what I was wearing!

I tried to even out my breathing and I choked when his piercing grey eyes caught mine. I quickly took my phone and pretended to type away to avoid his intense gaze.

"Shall we leave??" he asked when I approached.

"Like I have a choice," I scoffed.

After a silent drive, we arrived to The Taj Sheraton! Why am I here??

Gautham handed over his key to the valet and we walked into the lobby.

"Hey, buddy!!" a man in a green tux said, pulling Gautham into a hug.

"Hi Sam!!" Gautham said, hugging him back.

"So, who is this beautiful lady you have here?" he said, giving me a flirty smirk.

Gautham put his arm around my waist and pulled me closer. "She's my wife!"

he said.

"Hello gorgeous!" he said. His eyes roamed over my body.

Gautham's grip tightened.

I was going to make him jealous for humiliating me.

"Uh..Hi!" I greeted him.

"I am Sam! Gautham's friend from high school!" he said.

"Oh. I am Shakthi!" I said, shaking his hand.

"Nice name! I really like it!"

"Thanks!" I smiled back.

"Hey, Gautham!!" A woman approached, in a full black gown with a sweetheart neckline clinging to her body and a slit at the side of her gown revealing her legs.

"Hey, Sonia!" Gautham said, removing his hand from my waist.

Sonia hugged him. Did his friends even know that Gautham was married and I was his wife??

"Happy Wedding Anniversary" Gautham wished her.

"Thank you!!" she said, pulling out of the hug. "And thank you so much for making it to my party."

"That's no problem!" Gautham glared at me. Why was he glaring at me?

"Excuse me?? Do I know you??" she asked me.

"She is Gautham's wife!!" Sam said.

"Oh! Wow! Really?" She shrieked and hugged me.

"I am Sonia!" she introduced herself.

"I am Shakthi!" I said with a broad smile plastered on my face.

"Gautham, why didn't you tell me that you were married?"

"Shakthi, why don't you get a drink or something?" Gautham said and before I could even reply, he walked away with Sonia.

I angrily walked to the mocktail section and ordered myself an orange squash and sipped on it. I wondered why he wouldn't tell his friends he was married.

I was starting to feel uncomfortable. I could feel someone staring at me. I looked around and I saw a man in a black tux, dressed the exact same way as Gautham. He looked smart and his eyes were stuck on me. A devilish smirk appeared on his face when he realized that I was checking him out.

I averted my gaze and searched for Gautham. He was surrounded by a group of women. He was openly flirting with them.

\*\*\*

Soon Sonia and her husband started to give '*I can't live without you*' talks. The air was filled with all the alcohol and love. Even Gautham took a swig of champagne.

The music filled the room and everybody started to dance.

Suddenly, I felt someone pulling me by my arms. I looked up and it was the man who kept staring at me. "Want to dance?" he asked and his hands were still on my arms.

I looked around for Gautham. He was talking with another woman who was again flirting with him and her hands were constantly touching him.

"Yea! Sure!"

He pulled me by my waist to the dance floor. The dance was first slow and soothing. He had his hands tightly enveloping my waist and I held him by his shoulders.

"You look beautiful!" he said.



I felt myself blush at that comment "Thanks!"

He pulled me closer to him. His chest lightly brushed mine and it felt disgusting. His hands were all over me.

I tried to pull away but he didn't let me. I was waiting for the song to get over so that I could leave. To hell with making Gautham jealous, I wanted to get out of this disgusting man's arms.

Suddenly, I felt another pair of strong arms pulling me. It was Gautham. I silently thanked God, but I wasn't going to let my face show that.

"What the-" I cried out

"We are leaving!" His eyes were red with anger.

\*\*\*

Just when Gautham was about to enter his room, I stopped him "What was that??"

"I should ask you that!" he snarled

"What!! What did I do??"

He took fast and quick strides towards me and held me tightly by my arms  
"Looks like you really enjoyed his touch."

His grip hurt. "Gautham!" I pulled out of his grip.

"You don't like my touch?" he ridiculed.

"You weren't touching me! You were hurting me!" I rubbed my arm.

"Cut the crap!" he finished, walking away.

"Crap! Oh yes! I am!"

"Glad you realize it!" he said, shutting the bedroom door in my face.

## **Chapter 27-The Silent Treatment**

### **Gautham's POV**

How dare she? She was in another man's arms in front of my eyes! It was killing me! Doesn't she expect me to even react?

I locked the door, not wanting her to come and join me on the bed. But the moment I locked it, I unlocked it. A part of me had a hope that she would eventually come and sleep with me.

I removed the coat, loosened my tie and crashed on the bed. I was too tired to change. Starting with the meet up with Natasha, till the party, had me completely exhausted.

Natasha was already giving me a rough time! She was hell bent on making me divorce Shakthi and I stood there helpless, accepting her conditions!

Shakthi didn't make it any easier! It was not like I loved her! But, I definitely care for her! She had already become a major part of my life and I just can't bear the thought of hurting her.

Separating would be a major blow, and considering her father's health, Shakthi would never forgive me!

I was a mess, a total mess! First it was Natasha and now Shakthi won't stop annoying me! The image of Shakthi and that creepy man dancing, made my anger shoot up! He was all over her! She was mine, just mine!

\*\*\*

The images of the night of the accident kept replaying in my head! Guilt consumed me! Natasha was suffering because of me! How could I do such a thing??

Suddenly the images were replaced by Shakthi dancing with another man and she was demanding a divorce. Betrayal after betrayal.

It was just five in the morning, but I'd rather stay awake than have such nightmares!

I went to the kitchen to make myself a cup of coffee.

I saw Shakthi making her cup of Milo. I adore the way she enjoys every sip of it! She hated caffeine, but her coffees are super tasty!

"Good morning!" I muttered. I really wanted to forget what happened yesterday and start afresh! I really did. But the thought of another man touching her made me angry!

She didn't reply.

"Good morning!!" I said a bit louder.

She looked up and her eyes met mine. She was hurt and I was the reason! *Gautham, you screwed up big time!*

She silently took her cup of Milo and walked upstairs.

I sighed and went to make my cup of coffee. But, it was already there near the coffee machine. She had made it for me. How would I live without her?

\*\*\*

I was ready to leave for work. I came to the dining and it was set with all the dishes.

She walked to the dining with a Tupperware in her hand. She looked enticingly beautiful. She was in a pencil fit jeans with her red formal shirt neatly tucked in. She looked taller than usual. She was breathtakingly stunning. She started putting some food in her box.

"Why are-" I was interrupted by the sound of her phone ringing.

"Thank God!" I heard her say under her breath.

She was talking about some office work and simultaneously she packed her food.

When she was done with her packing, her call also came to end.

She took the box and marched to the hall. I followed her. "Shakthi!!" I said,

when she was busy assembling her things into her bag.

I knew she was listening, but she was just not reacting. So it would be better if I at least put my words into her ears.

"I am sorry for what happened yesterday!"

She took her bag and opened the front door. "Shakthi, listen to me! This is not done!" I bawled, pulling her by her arms when she was about to leave.

"Let go of me!"

"What do you think of yourself? I am not dying to talk to you! Get that into you fir-"

"Gautham!" I was interrupted by a shocking gasp. It was Karan.

"What are you doing here?".

"What are *you* doing??" he repeated, pointing at my tight hold on Shakthi's arms. I let go of her.

"None of your concern"

Shakthi straightened her shirt and she disappeared.

"Why are you treating her this way?" Karan asked me when we got into the house.

"Karan, stop it!" I said and served myself some food.

Karan grabbed a plate and fixed his breakfast. Shakthi always makes enough food for three, so the food was perfect. "This is not right Gautham! Why do you treat her this way? Is it Natasha again?"

"Yea! She keeps annoying me! She wants me to divorce Shakthi! But, I don't want to!!"

"Natasha isn't going to let you go that easily!" he said.

"I know! To top it all, even Shakthi keeps bringing up divorce!" I let out a frustrated sigh.

"Obviously she will! With the way you treat her, any woman will!"

"But, what do I do? I am so stressed with Natasha and now Shakthi's silent treatment!"

"Look! You are digging your own grave! If Shakthi is asking for a divorce, you are the reason! You should stop taking out your anger on her! Handle the situations properly!" he advised.

"It's not that easy as it sounds!" I said.

"I know! But you've got to try and make it up to her! And with what happened outside, she was totally upset with you, buddy!" he said, munching on his food.

I stared at the door, wishing I could turn back time.

"She is an amazing cook" Karan said, relishing the food.

I chuckled. "Yea!"

"So? How did the party go on?" he asked.

"That was another disaster!" I told him the whole story and he couldn't believe it.

"You have fallen for her! Haven't you?" he asked, out of all the things that he had to ask!

"What made you assume that?" I was perplexed.

"You were so not ready for this marriage! You were trying to find some way out of it, but now you don't want a divorce, when you can easily get one! Explains it all!" He sipped his water.

"That doesn't mean that I have fallen for her!"

"You were jealous of that man who was dancing with her!"

"So what? She is my wife!" I snarled.

"Whoa! Chill dude! She has clearly got her claws deep in you!"

"Stop it! That is not true!" I said.

"Whatever!" He rolled his eyes.

\*\*\*

I just couldn't get myself to focus on my work. Karan was right.

I opened the door to her cabin and I found her busy working on her laptop.

I closed the door behind me and walked up to her seat. She boldly stood up. She gave me a straight look.

"Listen, Gautham! If you are here to fight with me! Please save it for later!" she said .

"Shakthi, I am sorry! I really am; for yesterday and for this morning!"

She didn't react at all! *Shakthi, react, please!*

"I shouldn't have done that! I shouldn't have taken my stress out on you."

I waited a second, hoping that she would say at least something, but no!

"Shakthi, please talk to me!"

Again silence welcomed me with open arms.

"What should I do? Just tell me! I am really sorry!" I felt my voice breaking.

"Shakthi, please, just give me a chance!?"

She rose up. "I don't think that you are interested in listening to my crap!"

"Shakthi, I know, I shouldn't have said that!"

"No, Gautham! It is not done! Every time, every single time, you treat me like trash and I am totally fed up!" Tears threatened to fall from her eyes.

"No, Shakthi! It wasn't intentional! I really didn't mean to do it!"

"Please, you scold me in front of Karan! You fought just because I forgot to knock on the door and you say you were stressed out-"

"Shak-"

"Let me talk! I got dressed up just because you asked me to and you took me to a boring party and left me alone in a hall filled with strangers and when I found company of my own, you had a problem with it. I don't remember treating you that way when you came to meet my friends! You treated me like a piece of shit but-" Tears streamed down her face.

"No-"

"And when I try to explain myself, my words sound like crap to you! It is just making me go crazy! You are such a jerk! Your behaviour is too weird! It hurts me when you are sweet to me one time and so harsh the other! Why are you doing this? You seem to have a problem when I talk and even when I don't! I just don't unders-"

I silenced her by crashing my lips with hers.

## **Chapter 28-The First Kiss**

### **Shakthi's POV**

I felt Gautham's lips against mine. What was he doing?

The feeling slowly started to sink in me. He was trying to kiss me.

He started to tease me, trying to make an entrance.

Should I kiss him back?

Suddenly his hands that securely held my face, moved to my waist bringing me closer and our bodies pressed together.

I couldn't hold on anymore with his lips and hands creating magic. I decided to give in and enjoy the moment. He was just too tempting to resist.

I parted my lips, inviting him to relish me and just then, I felt him smirk against my lips.

*Wrong move, Shakthi!* But who the hell cares! I want to be kissed! That was

all that mattered!

I felt his tongue tracing my lips and his hands roamed over my body. It sent shivers down my spine.

I let him dominate me because frankly, I didn't know how to kiss because this was my first.

I responded to his touch and the kiss grew more passionate. His tongue created wonders.

His kiss told me so many things. He was actually sorry for what he did. It held sincerity. I could feel it. I never knew that he could express it this way.

I put in equal effort kissing him back. I wanted to show that he was forgiven.

He was surprised, but then he smiled against my lips and kissed me back.

I knew I had to stop this before I reach the point of no return.

Before I could pull out, I bit the corner of his lip with my teeth.

"Oww!" he shouted, pulling back from the kiss. He was still panting for breath.

I smirked while trying to steady my breathing.

"What was that for?" he asked.

"For putting me through hell" I smiled.

"I would love to continue that if you keep biting me" He winked.

"Don't you dare!!?" I held him by his collar.

"Whoa, tigress! I was just kidding okay!" he said, holding me by my shoulders.

I ignored him and went to continue my work.

"Shakthi, I really am sorry for everything," he said, coming near me, speaking sincerely.



I looked up from my work. His eyes held care and concern.

"It is fine this time, Gautham ! But I just can't put up with this shit once more!" I said and I really hoped that he got that into that thick skull of his.

"I understand! I shouldn't have done that!"

"Happy you realized!" I smiled at him.

"I am happy that you finally started talking to me! Please! Fight with me! Talk any cra- sorry! I mean...anything! But, just don't stop talking to me!" he said.

"You are going to regret what you just said, Gautham! I can bore you to hell!" I warned him.

He rolled his eyes and I chuckled.

"Hey..I was thinking if we could go out for lunch today?" he proposed.

"You are asking me?" I asked, shaken up.

"No! Not you! Hey wall over there, do you want to have lunch with me?" he mocked.

"Very funny!"

"What! Isn't it obvious that I was asking you?"

"Okay fine! I will meet you at lunch! For now, just leave! I have so much work!!" I said.

"Bye then!" he said and left my cabin.

It was all just too right to believe! Just too right. Am I falling for him? I let it stay untouched for now.

"Shakthi!!" I heard Ankitha call.

"What do you want?" I asked, still not fully over the kiss.

"Wait! What did I miss?" she asked.

I felt my cheeks turning hot.

"Shakthi, you are blushing!!" she teased.

"No, I am not!" I said, trying to calm myself down.

"Let me guess! You finally had sex with him?" I totally expected this from her.

"This is what you came up with? Bad guess, baby," I said.

" You kissed him, didn't you?" she guessed, winking at me.

" How did you do that??" I asked.

"Your lips are swollen! Says it all!" by now my cheeks were the deepest shade of red.

"Whoa! Shakthi, you really did?? This is so exciting! You are in love with him!" she screeched.

"Ankitha! Relax! Now you are jumping to conclusions! Just because I kissed him back and I didn't regret it, doesn't mean I am in love with him!" I clarified.

"Yea! You are right! Who would want to fall in love with a psycho like your husband!" she said.

"Don't talk like that. "

"Hmm! So you are becoming protective of him when I abuse him and you say you enjoyed kissing him. But you say that you haven't fallen in love with him?"

"What the hell do you want?" I was irritated with the bitter truth she was spitting.

"I just came to get the financial statements from you!" she said.

I got them and offered them to her..

She thanked me and left.

I did forgive him, but that doesn't mean all that actually happened won't matter to me. Every single thing counts. Ultimately there was no reason for me to fall in love with him. It was just mere lust, nothing more than physical attraction, I convinced myself.

\*\*\*

Gautham and I ordered our food and soon it arrived.

"I want to visit my parents today, Shakthi," he started.

"That's great! Looks like you are missing them!" I asked.

"Kind of! Long since we met them," he said.

It was more than a month since we met them. We have been married for a month! *'Happy realization!'* I mentally rolled my eyes.

"So, when will you be back?" I asked because I seriously didn't want to be home alone, again.

"Uh.. I thought we both were going together to meet my parents!"

"Ooh! Okay! You told me that you wanted to meet your parents so I thought I wasn't a part of your plan!" I justified.

"Okay! So are you in?" he questioned, having his food.

"Gautham, I really wish I could! But, I have an audit report due tomorrow and I have so much work to do today! I can't make it!" I tried to sound convincing.

"Never mind! We can go this weekend then?" he expressed.

"Weekend, yea! Perfect!" I agreed, munching on my food.

"Good! After that we can also go shopping for our honeymoon!"

"Hey! But, wait! We are just pretending to be a honeymoon couple, remember?!" I asked, hoping to ring a bell in him.

"Of course! Why?" he asked and it was written all over his face that he was

clueless.

"What do you want to shop for our '*honeymoon*' then?" I asked, air quoting the word '*honeymoon*'.

"I have many of my friends there. So I thought I can get them some gifts." He smirked just like he actually read my dirty mind.

*Oh God! Shakthi! You just dug your own grave! Now he would think that you are desperate.*

"Ohh!" I said quickly, taking a sip of water to hide my embarrassment.

"Why? What did you think?" he asked, raising his eyebrow with the same teasing smirk.

I felt myself blushing!

"Did you seriously blush??" he exclaimed.

"No, I didn't" I panicked and drank the whole glass of water.

"Hey! Relax, Shakthi!" he said, rubbing my hand that was on the table. "You need not feel awkward."

For the first time, things felt, normal.

Our small little bubble was broken when his phone which he had kept on the table, started ringing.

I couldn't control the urge to read the name of the person who had called him. I strained my neck to read it without his knowledge and it read Natasha.

"Give me just a minute!" He excused himself, picking up the phone and walking towards the exit.

When he returned I had to ask. "Do you have a girlfriend?"

## **Chapter 29-His Legion of Ex-girlfriends**

### **Shakthi's POV**

When he returned I had to ask. "Do you have a girlfriend?"

He cleared his throat and asked, "What do you mean? I am married to you! Do you think that I am cheating on you??"

"Whoa! Hold on! The words didn't come out the way I intended it to!"

He gave me a -unbelievable- look

"I wanted to ask you, if had any girlfriend, before we got married." I corrected my grammar this time!

"Oh!" he paused and had a piece of the food.

I was expecting him to continue, but clearly he didn't.

"I guess I was asking you something," I pressed on it again.

"Yea, I had a few," he answered.

"Oh." My voice sounded like a frog. I cleared my throat. "How many?"

"You wouldn't be happy to know!" he said with a sly smirk playing on his lips.

"You are talking like you've had 50 girlfriends!" I said, trying to laugh to cover up the jealousy.

"You never know!" he said, taking a sip of water from the glass.

I rolled my eyes.

He laughed. "Fine! I just had four! Two of them were nothing more than flings," he said.

"Hmm," I said relieved. But, what about the other two, should I ask him?

We sat in silence until the waiter asked for our dessert orders.

While relishing our desserts, Gautham asked, "What about you?"

"Uhh?"

"Did you have any boyfriends?"

"Why do you want to know?"

"The same reason for which you wanted to know about mine," he said

"Even I had a few!" I said, biting my lip!

Suddenly, he started to laugh!

"Did I miss something?" I asked, raising my eyebrow.

But, still he wouldn't stop laughing. I felt like pouring the glass of water over his head.

"Why the hell were you laughing like a retard?" He infuriated me.

"You told me that you had boyfriends and I know that you are lying!"

"What do you mean?? I don't look good for men to court me??"

"You are too innocent for that, baby!" he whispered.

*Baby!?* He just called me that?? That endearment sounded so sexy coming from his husky voice.

"Hey!!" I heard him call when I just zoned out for a few seconds.

"Yea, sorry! I just..uh! You know." I drank some water

"And yea! You are the most beautiful woman I've ever met!" he said, looking straight into my eyes piercing through my soul.

I felt my cheeks heating up.

\*\*\*

"Audit report!! Here I come!!" I sighed and sat comfortably on the couch.

I never realized when I slept until my annoying alarm started to ring.

I was on the bed again! Gautham would have carried me!

He looked so cute asleep beside me. I never got to see the cute side of him unless he was asleep.

I was really glad that we got through it and I was finally able to come in terms with the fact that he apologized with a kiss!

That was when the thought about my work hit me!

I don't remember completing it! It was already six and I had two hours left until work!

I quickly turned on my laptop and opened the report.

I kept scrolling it and it was complete with just my signature to be filled in. I don't remember finishing it!

But, how was it done?! Gautham, could it be possible? He must have completed the work for me!

Without disturbing him, I did my morning routine and dressed up in a black skin fit jean and an ink blue formal shirt that I had neatly tucked in.

I cooked the breakfast quickly and just when I was setting the dining table, I heard Gautham's voice. It seemed like he was over the phone.

"Why are you dressed up so soon?" he asked, serving some food for himself

"Just rushing! I need to submit the report today" I said.

"Oh! Okay!" he smiled.

Just when I was about to leave, I remembered that I had actually forgotten to thank him.

I bent down to his chair where he was seated and pecked him quickly on his cheek. "Thanks for completing my work!" I said and a blush crept up my cheeks.

Before he could respond, I turned to leave when suddenly I felt him gripping my hand tightly and pulling me back. I shut my eyes tight due to the sudden jerk. I opened my eyes to find myself on his lap.

"What..uh..are you doing??"

"Let me show you!" he whispered in my ears.

His hot breath fanned across my neck, creating a pool of desire in me.

His gaze fell on my lips, and just when his lips brushed mine, I turned my head and he ended up kissing my cheek.

"Darn!!!" he cursed under his breath

I chuckled and rose from his lap. "Getting late! Will meet you soon." I leaned in to his ear. "Baby."

"This is not done, Shakthi!!!" he shouted when I almost left the house

I couldn't go home that night because Ankitha and her husband had some emergency and I had to babysit her son. He was such an adorable kid and I didn't find it hard at all to babysit him!

How will my baby look? Will the baby look more like Gautham or more like me?? I definitely wanted a girl, but she should have pretty features like Gautham's!

What was I thinking! I didn't want to analyze anything any further and I shut my brain and I slept.

\*\*\*

I rushed home the next day, the minute Ankitha arrived. Gautham was really understanding about the entire situation and in fact he offered to help me babysit Ankitha's son which I decently rejected!

Just before I left her home, I had applied for two days off which I was gladly granted with. I badly wanted a break. I was stressed and my periods were doing no good and my mood swings were just terrible.



Gautham made it worse by leaving me home alone again because of some outstation audit I found out about thanks to the note stuck on the refrigerator. I texted him and he said that he would return only the day before our so called honeymoon.

The weekend program with his parents was also cancelled. What was the use of going to his home without Gautham?

Somehow, I managed to spend those four days in an empty house with just the television and my phone entertaining me.

I missed Gautham. He kept texting to check if I had had my meals, which was really sweet.

I slept in an empty bed which was least welcoming without Gautham. But, his musky scent was on the pillows. I never thought that I would go crazy like this over Gautham!

I slept with a hope that he would finally come tomorrow.

\*\*\*

I was super excited the whole day about Gautham's arrival.

After mustering my courage, I texted him, saying '*missing you!! Come soon.*'

I waited but he didn't reply. It was the last day of his work, maybe he was too busy finalizing reports.

Ankitha was also surprised to see this impatient side of me. But, I just dismissed her when she kept asking me for the reason.

I planned to go to the airport and surprise him when his plane landed at eight in the evening. But, it was just twenty minutes past two and I was getting impatient.

I repeatedly kept checking my phone for his reply. But, sadly I didn't get any.

Suddenly, my phone went off. It must be Gautham! I quickly picked up the phone to answer it but the caller ID was unknown.

"Hello??" I spoke.

"Shakthi, this is Karan!"

Why was he panicking?

"Hi Karan, are you okay??" I asked

"Shak..Shakthi..Gautham met with an accident!"

### **Chapter 30-A Bolt from the Blue** **Shakthi's POV**

"Shak..Shakthi..Gautham met with an accident!"

"Are... What do you mean?" My heart ached and I feared the worst. So many scenarios played through my mind. "How and when did it happen? Is Gautham alright??" I asked hurriedly among my agitated cries.

"Go and get some of your clothes and Gautham's medical papers and be at the airport in an hour. I have booked your ticket to Mumbai. Just make it quick! Run!"

"O..okay.!" I said and my voice was evidently shaking with fear. Tears started to roll down my cheeks.

I sped home, not caring about my carelessness. My priority was only Gautham! I can do anything for him!

Gautham please be fine! God! Please! Please, help him!!! I need him!

Traffic lights were the worst! My heart tensed whenever I had to stop at one.

When I reached the flat and I fumbled with the keys to open the door. My hands were shivering due to the fear and it was all sweaty.

"Damn! You door!! Just Open!!" I finally managed it.

I checked all the draws for Gautham's medical papers. I couldn't find them in the hall nor in our room.

Where could they be??

*Think, Shakthi! Think harder!!*

I ran up the stairs and entered the blue room. I checked the draws there, but I couldn't find them!

Then I hurriedly opened the closet among my frantic cries, when suddenly, I heard a deep husky voice whisper in my ear "surprise!!"

"Ahh!!" I screamed and turned to look at the intruder.

"Gautham??" A startled gasp escaped my lips

"Do you like my surprise??" he smirked

"You... You call this a surprise??" I held him by his collar.

I felt the next set of hot tears running down my cheeks. "Shh!! Shh!! It's okay!!" he said, wiping my tears.

"It's not okay Gautham!! It's not! You have no idea what I went through, do you?? I was so scared, you know! What if I had lost you! What if-"

"Shakthi! Baby, I am really sorry!!" he said and pulled me into his arms. I hugged him. To have him safe and to be in his arms was a feeling beyond words. He was alive and I was in his arms. He was fine! He was!!

"I am here now! I am totally fine! Nothing has happened to me!" he assured me and I felt him kiss my hair.

I cried, making his shirt wet. "Please don't do that to me ever again, Gautham! Please!" I pleaded, looking into his eyes, still remaining in his arms.

"I won't" he said sincerely and I felt his lips slowly press on mine and I

closed my eyes ready to drink in the moment of ecstasy.

I kissed him with all my passion. The fact that he was fine made me kiss him even harder.

Our tongues fought for dominance. The kiss grew passionate.. I felt my legs become jelly and I guess he sensed that because he held me tightly by my waist, carried me and made me sit on the table nearby, without breaking the kiss.

I weaved my fingers through his unruly hair and kept kissing him. He was standing in between my legs and I straddled him. I wanted this moment to never end. He kissed me like his life depended on it, and I kissed him like he was my life!

He groaned. His hands roamed over my body in a different way. His fingers found the fly of my skin fit jean. It slowly started to sink in me. All of a sudden, it didn't feel right.

I broke the kiss. "No, Gautham!" I whispered and I was still gasping for breath.

He touched my forehead with his. "I am sorry! I was just-"

"Shh!!" I silenced him by pressing my finger on his lips.

"I am so happy that you are alright!" I said and I hugged him, smiling that he actually was fine.

"Did you like my surprise?" he asked, breaking the hug.

"Don't you dare call that a surprise!" I said, getting down from the table.

"Aren't you happy with me coming sooner than you expected?" he asked.

"I am not happy with you fooling me with your damn life. Couldn't you think of a better way? Of all the options when you could have actually surprised me, today you shocked me!"

"Okay! Fine! I am sorry!"

"You better be!!" I said, smiling.

We freshened up and we spoke about all things that we did in the past week without each other.

I was cooking and he sat on the kitchen counter, listening to my stories, engrossed in it. I felt like my life was finally complete. It felt so perfect. I felt contented. These moments are too precious and always will be cherished.

\*\*\*

It was Tuesday and I couldn't believe that our honeymoon came so soon. The next few days were the ones I would have to watch out for.

Ankitha said that she would pack, since me and Gautham had to buy gifts for his friends who were in Bangalore.

By the time we came home, Ankitha was done with my packing and I was really grateful.

I changed into my snug jeans and a yellow t-shirt and Gautham was in a pair of jeans and a tempting red polo shirt.

Gautham took the luggage to the car, leaving me and Ankitha to lock the house and join him.

"Do you remember what I told you??" Ankitha asked me, when I was locked the house.

"Huh?"

"Shakthi, remember? You are going on a honeymoon!" she pointed out.

"I told you that we were just pretending, right?"

"Yea! I know! Use this opportunity! Get to know him."

"We just kissed, Ankitha and I can promise nothing more than that will happen!" I said. I wasn't ready for sex!

The elevator dinged, we stepped out and started to walk towards Gautham's

BMW.

I couldn't help but stare at him.

"Keep saying that to yourself so that you won't forget!" Ankitha said, pulling my attention from Gautham. She didn't buy my words at all.

"What! I am not ready for sex, Ankitha! Don't you get that??"

"Why is that??"

"I don't know! I just don't feel that it is right!"

"Wrong! You are scared! Scared that you will accept the fact that you have fallen in love with him!"

"Ankitha! Please, I really don't want to discuss this now!" This was already starting to give me a headache.

I opened the door and sat in the passenger seat waiting for Gautham to come and join me.

Ankitha popped her head into window. "Hey! Look! I am sorry I upset you! But, why are you resisting the fact that you have fallen in love with him??"

"Shh!!! Shh!!" I tried silencing her.

"So, shall we start??" I heard Gautham ask. He opened the door and took his seat and started the car.

"Make babies!! Guys!" Ankitha said, astonishing me! I hated her for this!!!

Gautham clearly looked uncomfortable at that comment.

I cleared my throat! "Bye, Ankitha! And thank you so much for your wonderful help," I said.

"Have a nice time guys!!" she said, waving at both of us.

"Sure thing!" I heard Gautham comment under his breath.

After an excruciatingly silent car journey we boarded our planes and the two

hour journey to Bangalore begun. It passed with me just sleeping the entire time.

When we landed we took our luggage and saw the hotel cab waiting for us. It was Taj hotel's cab! Gautham booked a room at Taj??

"Gautham!? Taj?" I asked him once when we settled in our cab.

"Yea! I had asked Karan to do the bookings!"

"That man! Even, he fooled me yesterday! His acting was so real that I actually believed him!!" I said.

He laughed "He was the one who gave me this whole accident idea!"

"He is so dead!!" I said and mentally snapped his neck.

## **Chapter 31-The Backfired Plan**

### **Shakthi's POV**

"Honeymoon suite, room number 204, seventh floor sir!"

Karan had booked a honeymoon suite? Karan, you are seriously in deep trouble!

"Who made the bookings?" Gautham cross checked with the receptionist. From his tone, it looked like he was equally perturbed.

"Mr. Karan made the bookings, sir!" She gave him a flirty smile again.

That slut of a receptionist bothered me more than the honeymoon suite!

"Is it possible to change room?" Gautham asked.

"Just give me a minute, sir!" she said and she checked her computer.

"I am afraid not, sir!"

"Oh!" he said and he turned to face me. "What do we do?" he asked.

"We can move to another hotel!" I could at least have Gautham away from the eyes of this receptionist who was still staring like she would eat him up.

"I am already so tired, Shakthi. We can go to another hotel unless you really can't control yourself around me!" He smirked.

*Cocky, arrogant jerk!*

"The question is not about me, Mister! It is about you! Can you control yourself?" I asked, raising my eyebrow.

"Ha-ha! We will see!" He gave me his crooked smile.

Looks like the next seven days are going to be tough! I sighed and without replying, I pulled the trolley to the elevator! I guess he got the signal because he followed.

The suite was huge with a big hall and spongy white carpets all over the floor. There was a huge plasma TV mounted on the wall and a little balcony attached to hall. I opened the doors to the balcony and the fresh night air was cold.

From the pink and white sofas and bean bags, it was clear what the hotel's image of romance was. I rushed to the bedroom, expecting more of the same.

It was an entirely different story! The smell of fresh roses hit my nostrils the moment I opened the bedroom. But I couldn't see any roses. Maybe it was the air freshener.



The king sized bed looked so welcoming that I wanted to pounce on it even before a shower!

I opened my suitcase to grab my clothes! But was shocked at my bag's contents. I knew letting Ankitha help me pack was a bad idea.

She'd filled my suitcase with lingerie!

I'd have to go shopping, but the city is two hours away. Thanks Ankitha.

I picked up a piece of red night wear and stormed into the bathroom.

After having a nice long and hot shower, I wiped myself dry and nervously took the nightwear to see what I actually chose. The inner spaghetti top was entirely laced and fully transparent. I put it on. It ended way above my knee leaving most of my leg uncovered.

Ankitha, just wait for me to come, missy!

Hoping and praying that at least the robe wouldn't be that revealing, I put it on!

It was a red satin, netted material which was way more revealing than the inner top that I was wearing!

Just when I was done tying the robe, I heard Gautham talking on the phone in the bedroom.

I had a last final look at myself in the mirror! The dress revealed everything, but still it didn't! It was designed to tease.

I opened the door with oozing confidence and I found Gautham facing the window, still talking on the phone.

The moment I turned and locked the bathroom door, I heard him hang up. "Listen! I'll talk to you later!"

He saw me! I could feel his hot piercing gaze.

I fearlessly turned to face him.

I smirked at him, talking baby steps to where he was standing. He was rooted to the spot.

I purposely stood two steps away from him. I actually felt my control slowly wearing out within moments, by merely just looking at his silvery grey orbs that carried so much intensity. My heart started to race.

"Can't you handle the hotn-" I was cut off when his lips smashed against mine. The kiss grew hotter and hotter within seconds.

Our tongues fought for dominance, but I was fighting a losing battle. I gladly gave up and he ventured into every inch of my mouth. I could get a taste of an unusual pepper mint from him. This made my nerves run even wilder. He deepened the kiss and made my heart flutter like a humming bird's wings.

My toes gave up since I was standing on its tip to reach his height, to kiss him and my weakening knees wouldn't support it. I held him tight by his neck and he hoisted me and placed me on his waist without breaking the kiss.

He placed me on the bed, making me lie down. "You are seriously killing me!" He whispered. He trailed kisses on my neck.

I moaned when he actually found my pleasure spot behind my ear and between my neck. His lips started to nibble on it, making my toes curl. "Gautham!" I moaned.

I felt his hand move over the length of my body while his lips were still torturing me with pleasure.

I felt my nails pierce into his muscled arms when he claimed my lips.

I felt his fingers slowly removing the robe. In a few seconds the robe was thrown to one corner of the room.

His fingers travelled inside my spaghetti top and just then, my phone started to ring.

I quickly pushed him away, rushing to answer it. It was my mom, asking me if we had reached safely.

I thanked my mom for calling me! If it wasn't for her, things would have ended differently; I was sure I would have regretted it.

My plan backfired.

I angrily marched to the bedroom and found that Gautham was in deep thought. I picked up the robe that was thrown away minutes back and put it on securely.

Without disturbing him any further, I tucked myself in the bed, hoping for a better morning.

\*\*\*

The following day, I finally got a chance to wake up without an alarm. It was highly energizing was to have a good night's sleep!

I heard the shower running in the bathroom! He was awake so soon, wow!

I started to grab my things needed for the shower along with my dress for today. Finally, I could get out of this skimpy dress!

Within minutes, Gautham came out with just a towel wrapped low around his waist. The room filled with his minty aftershave. His delicious Vlines looked even sexier with water grazing his skin.

Usually, his cocky side comes out when I openly check him out like this! But, today he was unusually quiet. It crept me out a bit.

I ran into the bathroom and had a quick shower and changed into my yellow t-shirt and a caprice. I was in no mood to dress up today, and this dress, matched my mood.

When I came out, Gautham was already in his casual faded black Levis jeans with a blue button down shirt, not failing to make my heart flutter.

"Your breakfast is there, eat it!" he ordered, pointing at the place where it was kept and he scurried out to the hall.

"Where are you going?" I asked him.

"Nowhere that concerns you!" he snapped and left the suite.

## **Chapter 32-Back to Square One**

### **Shakthi's POV**

What makes him think that if chooses to leave me alone in this God forsaken place, I can't go out on my own? I know Bangalore inside out! I quickly called up Ashika and made plans with her to meet at the Forum mall.

I untied my bun and combed my hair, pulling it into a loose ponytail. After applying some Kajal and lip gloss, I was ready to go.

I deliberately ignored the breakfast that he had ordered just like the way he took no notice of me.

In two hours, I reached the mall using Taj hotel's cab.

Just when I was about to enter McDonald's, I heard a very familiar, gruff male voice calling out to me "Shakthi!!"

I turned.

The person whom I never wanted to see, the reason why Bangalore didn't appeal to me, was now running up to me, panting from running to catch up with me.

"Kabir! Why were you shouting my name for everyone to hear?"

"I didn't want to miss a chance at meeting you!" he said, and suddenly pulled me into a hug which totally caught me off guard.

My instant reaction was to push him away slowly without hurting his feelings.

"What are you doing in Bangalore?? Why didn't you tell me about it?" he ranted.

"I just came today for my cousin's marriage." I smiled to mask my lie. "I am actually getting late! Can we meet later?" I asked.

"Yea sure! When are we going to meet again?" he sounded excited.

"Will text you!" I said, knowing I wouldn't.

"Okay! Carry on! Have fun!"

Just when I was about to thank God it was over, I heard him again. "I am sorry, but I have something for you."

He started to rummage into his shopping bags and after few seconds of waiting he took out a keychain. It was a girl with a flower in one hand and the other hand having half of a heart. It looked incomplete.

"You like it?" he asked, his voice dripping with eagerness.

I didn't want to hurt him by rejecting this and the keychain was nice except for the incomplete heart.

"Of course! Thank you so much!" I said, trying to be enthusiastic about it.

"I am so glad you like it!" He beamed.

I smiled, keeping the keychain in my purse.

"Okay, then! Will see you soon! Bye!"

"Bye" I said, waving and he left.

\*\*\*

My day with Ashika was amazing! We gossiped, ate, tried on outfits and so much more. And I bought some decent sweat pants and t-shirts for the night!

By the time we were done, it was almost evening.

The travel back to the hotel was tiring and it almost took two and a half hours. But, the climate made it up. It was incredible. The mornings being warm and nice and evenings being cool and breezy with occasional showers, made Bangalore a heavenly place.

The suite was already unlocked with the card inserted. So, Gautham was back. I rang the bell, hoping he would be back to his normal mode.

In a few seconds, he opened the door. He was in the same dress that I saw him in when he left. He still hadn't changed. He had a frown on his face,

clearly showing that his mood was even worse.

He glared at me. What was his problem? Why was he acting so weird?

"Give me a pillow, I will sleep in the corridor" I said, hoping he would allow me inside the suite.

It looked like he got the signal, because he quickly moved.

He closed the door behind me and still I felt him staring at me as I walked to the bedroom.

"Where were you?" he asked, folding his arms across his chest, leaning on the door frame.

"Like you care!" I muttered under my breath.

"You are right, I actually don't care!" he said.

Without prolonging this awkward and hurtful talk, I rushed to the restroom.

Tears stung my eyes. Why was I crying? I should have known he was never going to change!

*Stop it, Shakthi! Crying will just cause a headache! Relax!!*

I had a long hot shower and changed into my sweatpants and a t-shirt which had a zip at the back.

I lazily settled on one end of the couch, making myself comfortable and switched on the huge plasma TV.

I was really tired with all the roaming and not a single show on the television caught my interest. I just kept shuffling the channels, sighing heavily. This so called honeymoon was boring.

Gautham was on the other side of the couch, working on his laptop.

Unconsciously, I just kept surfing through the channels, thinking about what made him react like this suddenly.

"Settle with one channel or switch off the television!" he said.

Before I could bite back with an equally harsh response, his phone rang.

He picked up his phone and went to the bedroom and I continued flipping the channels again.

"We are going out and I want you to get dressed" He said as he shut his laptop, standing in front of me, blocking the TV so that he can have my full attention on his words.

"I am not going anywhere with you" I retorted.

"Shakthi, stop being difficult and get dressed up. We are leaving in twenty minute!" he said in a dangerously angry voice.

"Which part of '*I don't want to go*' did you not understand??" I cried out, standing up from the couch. This was the limit! He can't treat me like a puppy, going behind him, wagging my tail!

"Get dressed or else I will have to dress you up!" he threatened.

"You've got to be kidding me!" I said, totally ignoring what he said and turned to leave.

He pulled me towards him and in one swift movement, his other hand removed the zip of my top.



## **Chapter 33-What do I feel for him?**

### **Shakthi's POV**

He pulled me towards him and in one swift movement, his other hand removed the zip of my top.

I shrieked, holding the front side of my t-shirt to prevent it from falling "Gautham, stop!!" I yelled again, but his hands were now moving towards my sweatpants.

"Okay! I will go with you!" I agreed in a flash, wanting to save myself of the embarrassment.

"Good! Be quick!" He smirked, loosening his grip and I used the chance to zip up my t-shirt again.

"Where are we going? I am just asking so that I can dress accordingly!" I said, justifying my question as well.

"Just a movie and a dinner with friends," he replied and left to answer another phone.

I sighed and got dressed in a knee length, wrap around skirt and a pale yellow sleeveless silk blouse to match.

When we reached the theatre, we saw four of them standing near the ticket counter, waving at Gautham.

But, only the two men waved and not the women. Each girl held her man's arm and it was evident that they were couples with how closely they held on to each other.

But, Gautham and I were walking like strangers.

Both the guys hugged Gautham and now their eyes were on me.

"Who is this, you have with you?" the taller man asked.

"She is Shakthi, my wife," he said and both of them exchanged a look of shock.

"Hi Shakthi! I am Sharad and this is my wife Aqueela," the taller guy said and I smiled.

"And I am Chirag," the other guy introduced himself and suddenly, the girl elbowed Chirag signaling that he had forgotten to introduce her.

"Ow! Sorry! She's my fiancé Vidya," he said proudly, holding her by her waist, looking into her eyes and she gave him a sweet smile. It was really heartening to see a couple so much in love.

"Hi." She put her hand forward and I gladly shook it. She was sweet.

After a few minutes of talking and getting to know his friends, and with Gautham completely avoiding me, it was time for the show to start and so we went into the cinema hall that had been booked.

Both Chirag and Sharad sat with their girls on their sides leaving me no option, but to sit next to Gautham.

The titles started and to my shock the movie was Bombay Velvet and I was literally drooling over Ranbir Kapoor throughout. He was one of my favorites. The movie was just okay-ish, but Ranbir Kapoor was totally worth the tickets.

After our movie we headed to the restaurant for our food. I was famished, considering the fact, that I had a long day. I eagerly picked up the menu card to place my orders, but before I could even have a good look at the menu, I heard Gautham placing the orders on my behalf as well.

It was fine that he had placed the order on my behalf, but he knew that any dish with fish puts me off and every dish he ordered had fish in it.

His behavior was just too weird today. Even while watching the movie, accidentally I had placed my hand on the arm rest where he had placed his hand, and he quickly withdrew his hand, making me feel like as if touching him was a crime.

I let go of it and tried not to take it to heart, but his behavior made that task a little tough for me.

The guys started to talk about old times and how they enjoyed every bit of it. My heart warmed at the sight of Gautham actually laughing his heart out.

"So, when did you guys get married?" Aqueela asked me, from across the table.

"Two months back" I said, smiling.

"Whoa! So where did you guys go for your honeymoon?" Aqueela asked curiously.

"Manali," I lied.

"Wow! How romantic!" Aqueela squealed.

"So when are you both getting married?" I asked Vidya.

"In four days and I just can't wait!"

"Wow." I really hope they have a wonderful married life unlike me and Gautham.

"You and Gautham should come!" she offered.

"Of course, we will," I said and I didn't know why. I had this feeling, we would surely go and Gautham would definitely force me if I refuse.

Just then, our orders arrived.

The smell of fish was making my stomach twist and I already started feel like throwing up..

With great effort I ate the food, hoping that this day couldn't get worse.

\*\*\*

I was totally spent as I lazily sat on the bed.

I had this feeling of nausea. It must be the fish! If this was going to prolong, I know for sure that I would surely end up puking. I got up and started to jump furiously and trust me, this was what my mom made me do when I felt like throwing up when I was young. I know it's a bit funny, but it really works.

Gautham who was busy texting someone, gave me a -what the hell are you doing? look.

I ignored him and continued jumping.

The bile started to rise up and I rushed to the toilet.

I started to puke. After emptying the contents of my stomach, I rinsed my mouth and washed my face. My head started to ache.

I had no energy. I made my way to the bed, laid down and closed my eyes.

"Eat this," I heard him command me again.

"I won't." I felt my words come out in a whisper.

I felt his strong arms hold me by my shoulders and make me sit up on the bed.

"What do you want?"

He didn't reply, but simply took the glass of milk which was placed on the table and made me drink it.

Then he handed me a glass of water along with the tablet. "Take this, it will make you feel better," he said.

I took the tablet.

"Feeling better?" he asked, sounding worried. My anger started to boil.

"There is no point in wounding someone and then applying the medicine as well."

A flash of guilt crossed his features, but he quickly masked it with anger and walked away.

What was his problem? Why was he behaving like this? He was normal till yesterday night!

Yesterday night, oh shit!

Did the rejection make him act like this? Was he hurt? He was behaving distant! This was it! It was my fault entirely. I should have stopped him saying, I wasn't ready for sex. Instead, I just pushed him off.

*Shakthi, you screwed it up!* I needed to apologize right now!

I managed to get up and go to the hall where he was watching some news program.

He was seated lazily on the couch with his right hand holding the remote and his left hand resting behind his head and his foot tapping the floor gently. He looked simply mouthwatering even when he doesn't try...

"I am sorry Gautham."

I felt the TV being muted and he stood up from his place and approached me.

"You should be resting," he said, holding my shoulders and forcing me to the bed. But, I stood rooted to the spot.

"Not until we clear things between us," I retaliated.

"Everything is fine between us, Shakthi! You really need to sleep."

"No, Gautham! Nothing is fine between us! You are being distant."

"I am perfectly normal with you! You are just imagining it! You should really sleep."

"Yea right! Then why did you leave me alone and go this morning? Why did you keep snapping at me the entire time? Why did you behave like a stranger in front of your friends? Why did you order that stupid fish even after knowing that I hate it? And yet you say I am imagining all this?"

His adam's apple bobbed. He was becoming apprehensive. I was able to feel the tension that gripped him. He quickly turned away and his hand kept brushing through his hair messily.

I went and stood in front of him again, making him face me.

"Gautham! Please! I am sorry! I know that you are hurt because of me! I am

sorry! I really am! I shouldn't have pushed you off like that last night! But, I am really not ready for-"

He silenced me by placing his finger on my lips. "Shh! Not a word! I know that you aren't ready for sex! But, why are you feeling sorry about it? It should be me! Just because I was lost in the heat of the moment and wanted sex it doesn't mean that even you should feel the same way about it and give in to my desires! Even you have your boundaries and I respect it! I felt really guilty of forcing myself on you-"

"No! You didn't force yourself on me, even I-"

"I could have stopped it, but I didn't. I felt really guilty and that was why I wanted to maintain some distance with you so that you can have your own private space! I thought if I create some distance between us we can have some time to think about our relationship! I never was mad at you for pushing me off yesterday! I was angry at my own self that I brought you to a situation where you had to push me off."

## Chapter 34-Maintaining Distance

### Shakthi's POV

I was left dumb founded. What was he saying? I thought that I had hurt him, but the whole time he was thinking, he had hurt me? How could I be so selfish?? What did I do to deserve such a gem of a man in my life?

An unknown feeling, something more than respect, something more than lust, something more than concern and care, something that I never experienced, a feeling that I wasn't able to define, grew for him in my heart. I could trust him with my life! We hear about marital rapes and abuse every day, yet here was Gautham allowing me to take my own time!

I knew that men cannot control themselves when they are sexually charged up, but for Gautham, it would have taken so much for him to process the whole thing when I pushed him off! Even after that, he respected my choices and my personal space.

"Why are you crying?" he asked, holding my face securely in his large hands.

I quickly wiped my tears. "Sorry!" I said.

"I am sorry!" he said, making me powerless.

"Just remember that I will never touch you until you ask for it, yourself," he said with utmost sincerity, which reflected in his eyes.

I smiled at his words and stood on my toes and kissed him, holding him by his neck. He didn't react.

I slowly withdrew myself from him and started to leave when suddenly, I felt a tug at my wrist.

He pulled me towards him and started to kiss me slowly, devouring my lips. I felt my body perfectly molding with his as he held me securely by my waist, lifting me a bit from the ground to match his height.

I could feel the same passion that I used to feel. He didn't dare to deepen the kiss, but he stopped once when he sensed that the kiss grew more passionate.

"Thank you," I said and my breathing was totally ragged as my forehead rested on his.

"For?" he questioned, trying to control his breathing.

"For respecting my choices."

He smiled. "Stop thanking me for all this! Am I not supposed to respect every choice you make?"

I felt blessed to have him in my life.

"But, you know what? Ordering the dishes containing fish was a bad stunt that you pulled on me!" I said, laughing.

"I know! I am sorry!" He chuckled.

"You better be mister! Otherwise I wouldn't mind throwing up on you."

"Oh really??" he asked, again pulling me by my waist, making me crash on his chest. His husky voice sounded so sexy and seductive.

"Uh." I croaked and he started laughing, letting go of me. "I don't think I cracked a joke!"

He stopped laughing. "But your expressions! Seriously!!"

I huffed, shunning away from him and walked over to my bed. He should really write a book on '100 ways to spoil good moments.'

I pulled the covers over me and was pleased that things were back to normal.

"Good night, sleep tight!" I heard him chuckle.

"Hmm." I dragged sleepily.

\*\*\*

The next three days went by in a blur with me and Gautham just hanging out together at all the famous places in Bangalore. We have both been to Bangalore several times, but it was always related to work.



There was a newfound friendship growing between us. We were behaving like we were friends since we were five.

It was nice to see Gautham being carefree and every time he smiled, it made my heart do a little somersault.

He would smile at every random ugly thing that I did. When I sensed that my pants started to lower down on my waist, I adjusted it, thinking that he wasn't looking at me. But, he had actually caught me doing it and he started to smile and even commented that it was cute.

But, every time when I saw a girl check him out, I snapped at him in the next few seconds. I shouldn't have done that, I know. But what do I do? I felt so jealous when any girl checked him out!

\*\*\*

It was just five in the morning! Why had I set my alarm for this early hour in the morning?

I dismissed it and again slept. But the next moment, I was woken up by Gautham.

"What is your problem? Let me sleep" I moaned sleepily, shutting my ears with the pillow to avoid his loud voice.

"Shakthi, we are already running late! Don't you remember the Mysore trip and long bike drive we had planned for today?" it sunk in me. I sprang out of bed!

"I am really sorry! I totally forgot!"

"Go and get your smart ass dressed up first!" he said, almost pushing me into the bathroom.

I quickly brushed my teeth and had a soothing, hot shower. I dressed up in a comfortable cotton caprice and a black full sleeved t-shirt. I didn't care about my makeup. I didn't even bother to brush my hair. I left it in the same messy bun. I was actually so excited about the long bike drive that nothing made sense to me.

Gautham was already ready in his jeans and black, V-neck t-shirt that clung to his muscles.

We packed our requirements for the next two days in our backpacks and left our suite.

Soon our rented bike arrived and it made my jaw drop to the ground. I was expecting some normal bike, but this was India's top most sports bike, for crying out loud! It looked so stylish and dangerous as well.

"Oh my God, Gautham! Are we really going to go on that?" I asked him with both excitement and doubtfulness.

"Of course!!" he said, handing me the safety wear.

"I just can't wait!! Thank you so much!!" I said and pecked him lightly on his lips. He was taken aback again, but he quickly recovered and smirked at me.

I started to feel that it was normal to kiss him, but not to miss the fact that every time I kissed him, it felt like it was the first time! Our relationship grew so much over the past few months. Every conflict we had just made us stronger. Somewhere, I actually felt that this marriage wasn't going to be that bad, after all.

Gautham started the bike and signaled for me to get on. Enthusiastically, I hopped on the bike. The back part of the seat was elevated and I actually could find no balance! I tightly held the bars behind me, maintaining a little distance between him and me.

He started driving the bike and when we reached the outskirts of Bangalore, he accelerated so much that I almost fell on him and it made my breast crush against his back.

But, it didn't look like he had gotten the signal. He didn't reduce the speed and it was unnerving me.

"Slow down!!" I shouted through the breeze as he was still driving.

He didn't react at all! It looked like he couldn't hear me. But, the speed at which he was going thrilled me. I have never driven at this speed.

In a few minutes, the highway was completely empty and he picked up more speed! Was he planning to kill me?

I looped my arms around his arms and tightly grasped his shoulder, smashing my body against his.

He looked at me through the rear view mirror, making me brittle. Mere eye contact made my nerves come alive. Though his helmet covered most of his face, I could see that he was smirking!

Arrogant jerk, he did all this purposely!

But, this wasn't that bad! This speed galvanized me.

\*\*\*

I thanked God that I was alive when the journey ended. This was my first long bike drive and I really was grateful to Gautham for implementing my idea!

We freshened up in our room and started our exploration. We both had never been to this place. I hoped it wouldn't be boring.

Our first day at Mysore was something that I would never forget. The palace we visited, the parks, the dams, the street food; it was fun!

The next day, we visited the Brindavan Garden; it was marvelous. The fountains and the flowers just added to beauty of nature's glory. We walked around the park talking, making fun of each other, clicking pictures and we left before it became too sunny.

This entire trip made me learn more about Gautham, but still I felt that he was holding back a big secret.

\*\*\*

Now we were heading to Mysore palace. It was something that shouldn't be missed at all, especially during the Dasara nights.

It was a remarkable sight from the distance as well. I just couldn't wait to get near the palace.

We walked, and I just kept blabbering about how I couldn't come to Mysore, but he wasn't responding and I lifted my head to see what he was actually doing.

He wasn't there. It was some random man. Panic struck me. Where did he go? It was so crowded!

I felt like a child who had lost her parents in a supermarket! I tried calling several times, but it was unreachable. Where did he go??

I sprinted around seeking and calling out for him. But, there was no sign of him.

I finally felt relieved when I saw him in the garden which was in a secluded corner of the entire place. What was he doing there? I wasn't going to spare you, mister! I rushed over to him and turned him by his shoulder, ready to shout at him.

But, it wasn't him. The man gave me a weird look and walked away.

What would I do now?

"Look what we've got!" I heard someone; in the next second the man caught me by my hand even before I could act.

Three other men surrounded me and started talking in their native language, but it was evident that it was something about me. They were dressed so badly and their eyes were roaming hungrily on my body. I struggled to get out of the man's grip, but my strength was not enough.

"Help," I cried, but there was no one to help me.

I was terror-stricken. I tried kicking the man, but the other man started to grab my body. I felt so helpless and disgusted.

Please, someone just come and help me! I shut my eyes, not wanting to see and feel anything. I was becoming surer that they were going to rape me. My body became numb and my brain ceased to work.

## **Chapter 35-In Love**

### **Shakthi's POV**

Please, someone just come and help me out! I shut my eyes, not wanting to see and feel anything. I was becoming surer that they were going to rape me. My body became numb and my brain ceased to work.

I tried to break free but it was hopeless. They had complete power over me. I closed my eyes.

"How dare you!"

Gautham raced and pulled me towards him in one swift movement.

He punched one of the guys, drawing blood. The others attacked him, cutting his face, but he kept fighting back.

I tried pulling him away. But, he wouldn't stop punching them. "She's my wife! You got that?" He punched the man's bleeding nose again. He kicked another and they finally ran off.

"You alright?" he asked, holding my face securely in his hands, wiping away my tears.

I nodded and made him sit on the bench. "But, you aren't," I said. Blood ran down his forehead.

I removed the handkerchief I had and wiped the blood.

I hated seeing him in pain.

"All this is because of me, Shakthi! I am really sorry!" he said.

"Huh! Hang on! Don't blame yourself for this! In fact, all this was because of me!" I said, cleaning his wound.

"It is not your fault! I should have held your hand while we walked, then we wouldn't have lost each other!"

"That, you should have! But it's still my fault. I panicked."

He laughed. "Okay! Let's stop the reversal blame game!"

"Thank you so much for saving me, Gautham! If it wasn't for you, I would have literally been rap-" he silenced me by claiming my lips.

His kiss conveyed sincerity, care and concern. I kissed him back with equal fervor and pulled him towards me by holding his t-shirt in my fist and deepened the kiss. I felt a moan escape my lips as his tongue swept over mine. My stomach spun like a wheel. His hand crawled up my thighs to my waist. A bolt of electricity shot through me, making me weak. I moved towards him and held him by his nape. My body crashed against his, creating a pool of desire in me.

Every time I touched him, it felt like the first time, it left me wanting more.. I wanted to be the reason for his smile. I have not fallen in love with this man! I was already in love with him!

I was in love with this man!

*You are in love!* I wanted to announce it to the whole world!

Just then, he pulled away and leaned his forehead on mine.

He looked at me and his intense silvery grey orbs made my heart wobble.

"Are you really fine?" he whispered.

I felt his worry lines against my forehead. It really moved me, to see a person caring so much for me besides my parents! I was all his! But, will he be mine?

### **Gautham's POV**

"I am," she said. But, still I wasn't ready to accept that she was. I wouldn't have ever forgiven myself if I hadn't reached her on time.

I would have actually killed them, if Shakthi hadn't stopped me!

We reached our room and the first thing she did was dress my wounds with a Band-Aid.

She looked so tired I told her she should go to bed. She wanted to keep looking after me but I had to insist.

She looked so peaceful while sleeping. Her innocence never failed to make my heart skip a beat. My feelings for her grew stronger and I hated it! Commitment was not my thing! I could provide her with all she needed, but not commitment. I hated the fact that I cared for her, that she cared for me. I felt sexually attracted towards her to the extent that even her innocence turned me on. She could be a handful, at times! But, even her anger attracted me! I hated this feeling!

I had to stop thinking about her, but she always kept haunting my mind! A cold shower would serve me right.

\*\*\*

The next day we reached Bangalore and checked into our suite again. Shakthi suggested we could stay in and rest. I agreed, remembering Chirag's wedding was tomorrow.

I should convince Shakthi to come along. It was high time that I introduced her to all my friends! She must have freaked out about the fact that none of my friends knew that I was married! I should stop making her insecure.

Just as I was flipping the channels, I heard the shower in the bathroom stop.

Just then her phone rang. But, she didn't come to answer her phone and it kept ringing. I picked her phone and the caller ID read Kabir. Why was he calling her? Just when I was about to answer the call, he hung up. A message from Kabir came through. It said, *'Shall we meet at cafe crush in an hour?'*

I would have let it go, if I hadn't seen Kabir and Shakthi together at the mall on the first day of our trip. Kabir came to the mall purposely to meet me, but it was weird that he remained silent about the fact that he had met Shakthi soon after I left. He told me that he had a girlfriend, but the way he hugged Shakthi, the way he looked at her conveyed something else and it made me furious.

Soon Shakthi came dressed in her sweatpants and a spaghetti top. Her thick black hair was wet from the shower and it hung on her shoulders, reaching

her waist. The room was filled with her jasmine aroma. She was so crazy over that fragrance. Every product that she used had something to do with jasmine.

She looked at me questioningly. That was when I realized that I had her phone in my hand.

"Uh! You just had a call and it won't stop ringing," I explained, handing over the phone.

"Thanks," she muttered and quickly took the phone from me.

Her body visibly tensed once when she looked into the phone. Why was she skittish about it?

She left to get dressed and came back in her jeans and t-shirt. Her hair was left open and she didn't have much makeup on, yet she looked beautiful.

"Gautham, I am going out, but I will be back in an hour." Her voice seemed as if she was seeking permission.

"I thought you wanted to sleep in?" I asked, meeting her chocolate brown eyes.

"Err..yea, but.." She thought for a moment.

"Where are you going?" I asked her

"Just going to catch up with someone," she said.

Why wasn't she open about it?

"Be safe," I said.

She nodded and left.

Like the way she had promised, she returned in an hour. It was evident that something troubled her. Her face clearly said, *'I am confused'*. But, what could it be? I wanted to ask what it was, but I just shrugged it off, thinking that she would say it herself if there was some serious problem.



We had our dinner in our room and it went unusually quiet. She just kept answering questions with one word and it started to piss me off. Usually she talks so much that I had to shut her up by stuffing some food into her mouth. I missed her jabbering. What was wrong with her?

"Tomorrow is Chirag's wedding. I want you to come along." It came out more like a command than a request.

"Sure," she said. She would have usually thrown at least a thousand tantrums before agreeing but now, she agreed the next second!

She silently went to the bathroom and in a few minutes she slept. It was just eight! I had to talk to her before we leave for the wedding.

The next day when I woke up, Shakthi was still asleep. I knew that she was not a morning person, but it was already nine and we had to leave at least in an hour. I woke her up.

"Please Gautham, just five more minutes," she pleaded. Her cuteness always created a smile on my face. I decided to get dressed and then wake her up. She needed some rest.

I had my shower and dressed up in a navy blue sherwani and gelled my hair.

I went on to wake her up once I was dressed.

"Shakthi, we are already running late! Wake up!" I said and she quickly opened her eyes.

"You are dressed up already?"

"Yea! You've got to hurry!" I said and she rushed to the bathroom.

I ordered breakfast for her and I settled for a sandwich and a glass of juice.

The bathroom door opened and there she stood with just a towel wrapped around her petite body. She grasped the towel tightly, ensuring that it wouldn't fall off her. It clung to her body, revealing her curves and it stopped a few inches above her knee, making her look hot as hell. It started to turn me on. My eyes fell on her pink lips which now had droplets of water on them,

how I wished to kiss them off. I knew that she caught me checking her out.

"Err.. Gautham," she called me. "I need to get dressed," she exclaimed, picking up her saree from the bed. She was just inches away from me. I was finding it hard to breathe.

I yearned to have her in my arms, right now!

*You should remember your promise Gautham! She needs time! Stop scaring her!*

"Stop staring, will you?"

I couldn't help but chuckle at her cuteness, again. I left the room, allowing her to get dressed.

In a few minutes she came out of the room, dressed up in a fusion blue designer saree and matched it with a blue closed neck, full sleeved blouse. Her saree was tied low below her navel. Her mane-like hair was tied in a fishtail lying on her shoulder. She finished her outfit with diamond earrings. Her makeup never went overboard and today she looked like heaven on heels. Her lips which were painted red, begging to be kissed.

"You look beautiful." The words escaped my mouth and she blushed. I can never get used to her blushing.

"You don't look bad, yourself," she commented.

\*\*\*

After the wedding I was talking to my friends, but Shakthi was nowhere to be seen. She was with Sharad's wife the whole time but now, both of them weren't there. I was growing impatient.

"Searching for your wife, huh?" Sharad asked in a teasing tone.

I ignored his comment and went in search of her.

I finally found her in the garden with Kabir, and they hugged.

"They look so cute together, right?" I heard a woman asking me, as I stood

there, looking at them.

"What do you mean?" I asked her.

"I am talking about Kabir and Shakthi! They were in so much love! Poor Shakthi! She had to get married."

## **Chapter 36-More Complications**

### **Gautham's POV**

"I am talking about Kabir and Shakthi! They were in so much love! Poor Shakthi! She had to get married."

What was this lady saying and who was she?

"Excuse me??" I asked her.

"They were together for four years before she got married. I can't believe they aren't together anymore." She looked at me with sadness in her eyes. "How do you know them?"

"Thank you." I walked off.

Was Shakthi forced to marry me? Does she still have feelings for him? I thought that Kabir had a girlfriend and that he was in love!

This lady must be lying! Shakthi would have told me if there had been something like this.

"Gautham!" I heard Shakthi calling out to me.

"Yea?" I turned to look at her. She was now only with Aqueela, sitting on the chairs near the small lake.

"I left my wallet and phone in the bride's room. Can you please get it for me? Please?" she asked me with those cute puppy eyes that I couldn't refuse.

"Sure," I agreed and left to get her things. I recognised the key chain of a girl with an incomplete heart in one hand. The other half was supposed to be a keychain of a boy with the other part of the heart. I gave this to Kabir for his newfound love. And he had presented it to my wife? What was going on?

Her phone beeped. It was Kabir.

*'Meet me at the terrace, I have a surprise for you.'*

I need to find out what it was that she wasn't telling me. I ran to the lake, but to my dismay, I found only Aqueela there.

"Where is Shakthi?" I inquired.

"Just now, a small kid pulled her up to the terrace! Why? Is there any problem?"

"No! No problem at all! Thank you!" I said and advanced to the terrace.

"Kabir! You actually scared me!" Shakthi said.

"How do you like it?" I heard Kabir's voice.

"Are you mad? What will happen if anyone sees us here! You are out of your mind, Kabir! I am here with Gautham!"

The door was ajar and I stood there, watching.

The entire terrace was decorated with roses and jasmines. Jasmine flowers were Shakthi's favorite. Shakthi's back was facing me. Kabir was on his knees, like he was about to propose or something.

"Who cares? I love you so much Shakthi! I would do anything for you! That is all that matters."

"Are you-" Kabir plastered his fucking mouth on hers.

I wasn't able to digest the scene in front of me and I rushed downstairs.

So this was it! I felt like ripping Kabir's head off.

It all came crashing down on me! She asked me to divorce her, numerous times, but me being a fool, thinking about her family's emotions and feelings, I didn't want to! She was so worked up knowing that Kabir was my friend, but now, I understand why! It made perfect sense why Shakthi had a part of the keychain that I had gifted to Kabir! How did I let this happen? Now I understood why she kept rejecting sex! She was in love with Kabir.

*Mark my words, Shakthi! From now on, I will make your life a living hell!*

### **Shakthi's POV**

Suddenly, out of the blue, I felt Kabir's lips on mine. He started pressing his lip so hard on mine and I felt the breakfast coming up my throat. It was disgusting! He can be so awful! I tightly closed my lips and tried pushing him off me.

"Kabir!!" I shouted and I was finally able to get his lips off mine.

I slapped him. "I really thought you were a good friend of mine!" I walked off.

The next moment he pulled me by my wrist. "I want to be more than a friend to you, Shakthi!"

"Didn't I make it clear. I don't have such feelings for you! I am married! Get this into that thick skull of yours!" I felt like killing him.

"Gautham doesn't even love you! Will you be happy in a loveless marriage?"

"It isn't a loveless marriage! I love him!"

"Don't give me that shit! I know that you don't love him!"

"I don't need to explain my feelings for Gautham to you! You and I don't have a future! Don't waste your time on me because my heart is already taken!" He shouldn't have tried kissing me! But, since he was my best friend once, I at least had to make him realize that he needed to move on!

He looked defeated. He looked as if he realized something. Maybe, he was

finally able to read my sincere love for Gautham.

"I am sorry." His words came in a low whisper.

"I forgive you for all what you did and even for kissing me, Kabir! But, move on and find a girl who loves you! There is someone out there waiting for you! You just need to find her!" I said.

"You know it is going to be tough!"

"It is tough, but never impossible!" I sincerely wanted him to move on!

"And I hope that Gautham really deserves all your love!" he said.

Just then, I heard Aqueela calling me.

"You will find your girl! Just move on!" I said and I rushed down the stairs.

Last night, I had a big confusion of whether I should say about Kabir to Gautham! But, I felt that it might spoil the progress we made, which I didn't want, so I literally swallowed the words back in. I didn't open my mouth yesterday knowing that if I did, I would probably end up throwing it all out. Gautham looked really concerned about me staying quiet. I was actually scared if he might ask me about it and if I might end up saying it all to him, which was why I hit the bed so early last night.

I was going to tell Gautham about this! Once we reach Chennai tomorrow, I should tell him all this.

I never saw Gautham until it was time for us to leave. I made a mental note to ask him where he had been the entire time.

We took a cab to our hotel and from the moment we had stepped into the cab till the time when we reached airport to board our flight, he was either on the phone or on his laptop doing some work, providing me no chance to talk to him or ask him anything.

\*\*\*

It was almost one in the afternoon when we reached home. Without a word, he left to the room and locked the door behind him

He was behaving weirdly. Maybe he was just tired due to the trip.

When he came out, he was dressed in his usual formals. He picked up his car keys.

"Just rest for today, Gautham! You can go to office tomorrow."

He ignored me and opened the door to leave, so I grabbed his wrist.

"Our office can survive without you for another day!" I urged.

He pulled his wrist in a harsh move from my grip. His jaw tightened.

"Why don't you mind your own business?" he said and left.

\*\*\*

I skipped lunch since I had no mood to either cook or eat.

Ankitha called which was a welcome distraction.

"Tell me every bit of it,"

I did, the whole long story of the ups and downs.

"Considering all what you told, I think your husband must be pregnant!" she said and started laughing.

"Very funny." I sighed and she stopped laughing.

"Don't worry! Just give him some time!"

"I am just really worried!"

"Oh my god! You are in love! Aren't you? I knew it!" I could imagine her jumping. "I knew it!!"

"Okay! Fine! Fine!" I exclaimed, blushing.

Our talk went over for hours that I never realized it was almost five minutes to nine.

I cooked some simple food for the dinner and waited for Gautham to arrive. I really hoped that we could at least have a peaceful dinner, together.

When Gautham arrived he looked drained. He went straight to the bedroom.

I darted to the bedroom and realized that all my things were now lying scattered on the floor, outside the room and he was still throwing all my things out of the room.

"What are you doing Gautham?"

"I just realized that your room was upstairs, you can go back to where you wanted to be."

## **Chapter 37-His Wrath**

### **Shakthi's POV**

"I just realized that your room was upstairs, you can go back to where you wanted to be."

I was shaken with the way he was behaving. He was the one who convinced me to share the room with him.



"I thought-"

He cut me off. "I don't want to know what you think! Just move to your room!"

"Why?" My voice trembled.

"You really want to know, why?"

"Of course."

"Because I don't want to see your face."

I couldn't imagine going a single day, without sleeping next to him, without feeling his presence, without seeing his face when he was asleep!

"Okay." My words came out as a strangled whisper through my silent tears.

He shut the bedroom door on my face.

I picked up all my things and managed to carry them to my room.

I forced myself to sleep, hoping that he would realize his mistake the next day.

\*\*\*

However it didn't happen. A month went by of humiliation at work and being ignored at home.

Did it make him happy to see me hurt?

I was not even able to concentrate on my work! He was always on my mind!

"Shakthi!" Ankitha intruded into my room, yelling.

"Shh, keep it down! What is it?" I asked, standing up from my seat.

"Why didn't you tell me about it?"

"About what?"

"You didn't know about it, did you?" she asked, raising her eyebrows.

"Cut the suspense!"

"Gautham fucking resigned from his job," she shouted.

"You've got to be kidding me." Why didn't Gautham tell me about this?

"When?" I asked.

"Two days ago," she said.

So it means, he had already given his one month notice which goes back to exactly the day after our honeymoon. That was when things started to fall apart. I couldn't stop the tears from falling.

"Shakthi! Stop crying." She hugged me tight.

"I am losing him." I cried in her arms.

"Just get out of this marriage, Shakthi! It is doing you no good! You cry almost every day after he insults you! Have you ever seen yourself in the mirror? You look like a person who just woke up from coma! You wouldn't even stop talking even for a minute, but now even if I try making you talk, you wouldn't! This is not the Shakthi I know!"

I broke the hug. "What are you talking about? I love him!"

"You've fallen hard for him," she stated.

"How do you know about his resignation?" I asked, disregarding her statement.

"I just received an invitation for his farewell party."

"When and where is the party?" I asked.

"Tonight at Hilton," she said.

\*\*\*

Ankitha dropped me off. She insisted she sleep over with me, but I couldn't

let her. No matter how much she insisted, she had her own family to look after.

It was 1 a.m. when finally I heard his car honking. I rushed to our private terrace. He parked and walked clumsily to the passenger door. He was clearly drunk. He opened the door for a beautiful woman dressed in a slutty black gown.

She was all over Gautham. Tears filled my eyes and I couldn't watch them kiss any longer.

I heard the front door unlock. I hurtled down the stairs to the hall. They were still kissing each other and she removed his blazer while I stood rooted to the spot. Gautham didn't care to stop even after he saw me.

"What is going on?" I wanted to sound angry, but I only sounded helpless.

She pulled herself away from him and looked at me.

Gautham was clearly displeased.

"Just shut up." He pulled her to him, dragging her towards the room.

I grabbed Gautham's arm, but he pushed me. I almost hit my head on the painting that was fixed on the wall. A sharp pain pierced my skull and I bled.

Without looking back, he locked the door. Was this really happening? He was not the man I fell in love with!

I ran upstairs to my room and crashed on the bed! Why was he behaving like this? My tears soaked the pillow.

Something smashed outside of the room. Then again.

I sped down to see what it was. The entire room was ruined, vases were broken, paintings were destroyed, cushions were ripped out and everything was upside down.

Gautham broke another ceramic vase with such force that a piece wedged in my ankle.

"Ahh," I yelped in pain as I took the piece out of my ankle.

I walked across the room where he still had his back to me. He picked up another vase to break and I grabbed it.

He looked at me with so much rage, it frightened me. He grabbed my wrists tightly and pinned me to the wall. His face was inches from mine. His breath fanned the crook of my neck.

It made my heart constrict in pain to see a person who I love so much, carry such intense abhorrence for me. What made him loath me so much?

"Gauth-"

"Shut up! Just shut the hell up!" his voice carried pure venom.

"You ruined it all!" he said. "I couldn't be with the woman I brought home! I just couldn't touch her further without the guilt eating me! You did this to me!"

His words actually brought some hope back in me. My fingers yearned to touch his face and smoothen those worry lines off. I couldn't help myself, as I felt my fingers caressing his cheek. I just noticed his week's stubble that he had been growing. His features softened a bit and I felt his grip loosening on my wrists.

"I'm sorry," he whispered and directed me to the couch. He slowly cleaned the dried blood of my forehead. I could easily read that he was guilty about wounding me. But, it was accidental. He kneeled down in front of me and placed my foot on his thigh, holding my toes. He then started to clean the blood oozing out of my ankle.

I cried out when he applied the antiseptic on the wound.

"Is it hurting a lot?" The simple question he asked carried so much concern for me that it eased out all my pain in a second.

"No." I smiled.

"How was your farewell party?"

"You weren't there! Wasn't that self-explanatory that the party went well," he said and he stood up when he was done with the first aid.

I stood up, just then I lost my balance.

"Careful," he said, holding me by my waist and made me sit on the couch again. It felt like heaven to be back in his arms again. I missed him so much.

"Did you resign just because you didn't want to be around me?" It was hard for me to pull those words out.

"Don't give so much importance to yourself," he said and he turned his back to me. He raked his fingers across his silky hair. He was becoming embittered and it was evident.

I carefully stood up and hobbled towards him. "Why are you doing this, Gautham?" I pleaded.

He looked into my eyes after what seemed like a lifetime. His intense orbs pierced through mine.

He remained silent. I took few tentative steps and went near him. My face was just an inch away from his. "Why are you punishing me?" I whispered and my eyes travelled to his lips. I neared my lips to his, wanting to have them on mine, wanting to remove the traces of that woman!

My heart beat wildly. I kissed him showing how much I love him, but he didn't respond. I strained my ankle and stood on my toes, pulling him by his collar. I felt my breast crush against his well sculpted chest. I kept kissing him when he finally started to respond and his hands snaked my waist.

I clung on to him like he was my savior and he slowly sat on the couch without breaking the kiss. I was on his lap just when I felt his boner. He was turned on so much! That instantly created a pool of desire low in my stomach. My fingers travelled along his shirt clad chest, fumbling with his buttons.

Suddenly he stopped kissing me and looked at me totally horrified. That was when I remembered the promise he made, that he wouldn't touch me unless I ask him to!

"Touch me," I groaned in his ears, waiting for the unexpected to claim me.

## **Chapter 38-Discoveries**

### **Shakthi's POV**

"Touch me," I groaned in his ears.

With that, he claimed my lips, punishing me with his kiss. His tongue swiped over mine and as he deepened the kiss. I felt a tinge of whisky which drove me crazier.

There was an edge of urgency with the way we kissed. He kissed my neck and his touch was what I yearned for and it felt utterly blissful to be in his arms.

His lips caught mine again and without breaking the passionate kiss, he picked me up and lay me on the bed.

He continued to litter kisses on my neck and tortured me by sucking on my sensitive spot and nibbling at it. I yelped, slightly in pain. But, he started to lick the bite, soothing it and the pleasure I felt increased tenfold.

"Gautham!" I moaned not being able to handle all the pleasure. I felt his huge boner on my belly which made my nerves run wilder.

I fumbled at his buttons again, but finally I managed to remove his shirt with his quick help and for the first time, I felt his naked velvety torso. His sculpted abs looked so delicious. I kissed his broad shoulder blade and left a trail of kisses up till his neck.

"Damn," he groaned and shuddered in pleasure.

His eyes met mine, reflecting pure dark lust and my eyes mirrored the same.

I fisted his hair and started kissing his lips and then, I suddenly felt his

fingers removing the strap of my spaghetti top. An unknown flame of desire burned me up as he removed my top and threw it to one corner of the room.

I closed my eyes! It was the first time I went this far with a man! But, I felt embarrassed. I was not in a lacy bra or something sexy. It was my usual red cotton bra in which I was always comfortable in.

He kissed the valley between my breasts, making me moan. He squeezed my breast. I felt its peaks straining through the cotton material. My nails dug deep into his shoulders as he rubbed my peaks over my bra. Blood rushed through my veins in a spur. His touche was addictive.

"Oh God!!" moans escaped my lips.

He showered me with kisses, proceeding down south and I felt his tongue dip in my navel which made my toes curl.

I held his face and brought his lips to mine and kissed him. He removed the catch of my bra. My heart hammered against my chest. He quickly snapped it open and just then, I heard the doorbell ring.

Suddenly all his actions stopped. I felt his body go rigid and his eyes didn't meet mine even for a second when he completely pulled himself off me. He put on his shirt and left me alone.

### **Gautham's POV**

"Shit!" what did I just do! I shouldn't have allowed the lust to take over! Why do I see innocence in her eyes, every time? A major part of me knew that she was faking it! I shouldn't have lost control. Her body just screamed for me to touch her.

I opened the door to find who it was. It was the security who handed me the car keys which I had forgotten in the car. I was just being careless everywhere!

I just wanted to get out of this place!

I drove to Karan's place. He would have just arrived home. I could catch some good sleep at his.

Impatiently I rang the doorbell.

"Gautham!" he said.

"What took you so long?" I pushed him away from the entrance and barged into his home.

There was a girl sitting on the couch. She seemed to be in her mid-twenties. She looked very familiar. What was a girl doing at Karan's house at this hour of the night? He never told me that he had a girlfriend!

She gasped the moment she saw me. "Gautham!"

"You know him?" Karan interrupted and took her side quickly.

"Of course! He is Shakthi's husband, right?"

Her name, again, it pricked me! I hated anything related to Shakthi. No wonder this girl looked familiar! But, where did she see me?

I shrugged, ignoring the girl. I don't care of how she knew me, anymore.

"And you, Karan! You've got a lot of explaining to do!" I settled on the divan.

He smiled sheepishly. "She's Shalini, my girlfriend." He held her by her waist, looking proudly at her.

"Why didn't you tell me?"

"Shalini just wanted to keep it low profile. If any of her family members get to know, they might force her into an arranged marriage."

*Arranged marriage!* That can be the worst thing ever! Wrong person like Shakthi could make it totally worst.

"So what is she doing at your home? Won't her family know?"

"No! Her family is at Coimbatore! She has just rented the flat next to mine."

"When did all this happen??" I asked.



"Probably a month before your marriage."

"Nevertheless! I am here for you guys!" I hugged Karan.

"Thanks man!"

"So, how do you know Shakthi?" Karan asked Shalini.

"She is my best friend from high school! She is such a sweet and a caring person to be with! We just couldn't keep in touch since I had to move to Mumbai for my studies. The days before her wedding were when we actually caught up! God I miss her so much! And what are you doing here Gautham? I hope Shakthi isn't alone at home! She becomes sick when she is alone! I just -"

"God! Will you just stop this! I don't want to hear another word about her!"

"Hey relax," Karan interrupted.

"Shalini, you just go to your flat. We will meet tomorrow." He ushered her to her house.

"What's wrong? Don't tell me that you hurt that poor soul again?" Karan was taking Shakthi's side again, after everything that happened.

"Poor soul?? She is a cunning lady, Karan! You have no clue of it!"

"What is wrong with you? You can't accuse her of cheating when you haven't confronted her yet!"

"She will lie."

"There are always two sides to a story, Gautham! You have seen one! Listen to the other."

"Look! I am not a fool anymore to keep listening to her stories!"

"As far as I know Shakthi, she isn't a person who cheats! And why are you treating her like this? I don't know what you have done now! But, I am sure that you just hurt her again."

"Yes! I hurt her again! So what's the big deal?"

"Every time you humiliate her, it hurts her! If she was cheating on you, the humiliation wouldn't have affected her so much!"

"She is just faking it, Karan!"

"Fine! Okay! Let's consider she is cheating on you! Why don't you just let her go? Why do you keep insulting her? Why?"

"That is what she wants! She thinks, she can blame me for the divorce and have a happy life with that Kabir guy! But, I won't let it happen and that Kabir should be taught a lesson!"

"Okay! So, why are you here?"

"Can't I crash at my friend's place?"

"Oh really?? You just hurt her and you weren't able to see her hurt, so you came running here not being able to face her! You resigned just because you thought that you would end up hurting her in front of your friends again! You don't want to let her go cause you know that you can't live without her! You are jealous of Kabir! You think he has the love that you want! You are just afraid to fall in love with her, but the truth is, you are already in love with her!"

The realization came crashing down on me.

"Nonsense, Karan! This is bullshit! You know it well! Commitment is not my thing!"

"You are married to her! That is the biggest commitment ever, Gautham!"

"You know really well, I married her just because my family forced me to and I didn't want to divorce her because I didn't want to hurt her family! I can't really satisfy any of her needs emotionally. And anyway, what difference is it going to make, she loves another man."

"You didn't want to divorce her because you wanted to be with her, not because you didn't want to hurt her family! Stop giving it some false labeling!"

You failed to realize when you were actually being cheated on, but now when Shakthi isn't cheating on you, you are assuming otherwise! You are just being over cautious, Gautham! Shakthi is not Natasha!"

"Now you are humiliating Shakthi by comparing her with Natasha."

He laughed. "You have fallen hard for her! Don't numb your emotions just because of Natasha! She was trash! You never loved her, but I just failed to understand what kept you so long with her! I never saw the love for Natasha in your eyes. But still, you thought, you were in love! But now, it pains you when you hurt Shakthi! You are not able to tolerate the pain in her eyes! You are not able to tolerate the thought of another man with-"

"Just stop it, Karan! Please! I don't love Shakthi! She cheated on me! How will I ever love her?"

"You are right! How can she do that? She is married to you and she has been two timing! How cheap! God knows of how many more men are there in her lif-"

"Not another word about my wife from your filthy mouth! You get that?" I held his collar!

"You always wanted me to take your side, right? When I actually did, why are you furious?" he removed my hands off his collar.

"My wife is not cheap! And she is not the way how you frame her to be! She is such a harmless human being! She is so selfless! She has been tolerating all my insults without a word! My life is just so incomplete without her."

He smiled.

"Damn! I have really fallen in love with her."

### **Shakthi's POV**

It was almost eight in the morning and still there was no sign of Gautham's arrival. Where could he be? This was the longest night of my life! I kept calling him, but it went to voicemail! I hoped he was safe!

Suddenly, my phone rang. I hoped it was Gautham!

But, it was Shalini, weird! Why was she calling me so early in a Saturday morning??

"Hey!" I tried to be happy when I answered the call.

"Stop acting! You are so bad at it! What is wrong between you and Gautham?"

How did she know?

"I met Gautham at Karan's house at three in the morning! That was more than enough to tell me that things are bad!"

"At Karan's house? But, I asked Karan and he refused! Oh!! Wait a minute!! At Karan's house? What were you doing at Karan's house at that hour?"

"We are in a relationship."

"Aww!! How cute! Karan is such a good man! I am so happy for you!! At least one good news!"

"So! Tell me! What is wrong between you and Gautham? Is he hurting you by any way? You can tell me, you know?"

"Was he alright?"

"Yea! But, what is wrong between you and him?"

Just then I heard the front door open.

"Hey! I think Gautham is back! I will talk to you later! Bye!" I hung up and rushed to the hall.

He looked fresh. His hair was neatly gelled with a little mess of course. He was dressed in his casual faded blue jean and a black shirt folded up to his elbows, molding his muscles. He had some documents in his hands and he studied me intently. His features softened for a moment when he looked at me, but quickly masked it up with pure hatred.

"Where were you? I kept calling, but you wouldn't answer your phone! And Karan refused to tell me where you were! Where the hell did you go Gautham?"

"Stop acting like you care!" he said.

"I do Gautham! I really do!" I tried making some sense. I really did care for him.

He suddenly diverted all his attention to me. "Oh really? Will you do anything for me then?"

"Of course, I will!" I said without thinking.

"Then kindly show your favor on me by signing these papers!" He offered me the document that he had.

I opened it to find out what it was and to my horror, it was divorce papers.

### **Chapter 39-Resolved or maybe not...**

#### **Shakthi's POV**

I opened it to find out what it was and to my horror, it was divorce papers.

A gasp escaped my lips. "You really want me to sign these?"

"No! Why don't you just make paper planes out of them?"

"This is not funny! You are asking me for a divorce!"

"I know what I am asking for!" he said and moved to the bedroom.

He just demanded a divorce like it was some product from a supermarket.

I followed and stood in front of him stopping him from entering the bedroom.

"Please! Tell me why you're doing this!" I pleaded

"Just get the hell out of here."

I tugged at his wrist and he turned towards me. His silvery grey eyes never ceased to make my heart beat rapidly. His intense gaze carried so much hatred.

"I won't." I crashed my lips against his.

He refused to let me kiss him, but in a few seconds, all his resistance came crumbling down. The kiss grew more passionate. It had a new edge to it, completely different; it was as if he was pleading for me not to sign the papers. He pulled himself away from me and rested his forehead on mine and his eyes were still closed.

"You.. you still want me to sign the papers?" I whispered through my labored breathing, and his eyes snapped open only to push me off him.

"Yes!" he said.

"But why?"

"You are wasting my time! Let us just get this over with! Just sign it!" He handed me a pen.

I threw the pen to one corner of the hall. "Our entire marriage is about to be ruined and you say that I am wasting your time? Gautham, I need an explanation!"

"Don't act as if you care about our marriage!"

"I do! God, how will I make you believe?"

"By just signing the papers!"

"Divorce!! Divorce! Is that the only thing on your mind?" I tore the papers into pieces.

"I will ask the lawyer to draft the papers again!"

"All what you still care about are these papers? Really?"

"Of course! Sooner the better! I can't even breathe the same air that you breathe!"

Tears pricked my eyes. His face softened.

"Stop those crocodile tears! Women like you act so well that you make people think that the tears are actually true!"

"What do you mean, 'women like me'?"

"You never cease to surprise me with your acting skills, Shakthi! Just come to the lawyer's office at six today and you can sign the papers!"

"First, I won't come to the office! Second, we need to be married for a minimum of six month before applying for a divorce and third, I am not acting!"

"Oh wait! Don't tell me that you are after my money! I can give you how much you want just to make you sign the papers!"

"Look! Your money is the last thing I want! The only thing that is going to make me sign the papers is a proper explanation from you!" I said.

He seemed uninterested to even talk to me.

" This is our marriage that you are trying to ruin without even giving me a proper explanation."

Suddenly all his coolness was lost! His jaw tightened.

"You were the one who ruined it, Shakthi! By cheating on me!" He pushed me. I caught the wall to hold my balance.

What was he saying? This was a big accusation that he was making!

"What makes you think like that?" I questioned.

"Please stop acting and come to the office today!"

"Gautham! I am not going to let our marriage fall apart just because you think I am cheating on you! I know I have been faithful to you and I don't need to

prove that!"

"Of course you don't want the divorce! You think that you can blame me for the divorce and settle happily with Kabir!"

"Kabir?"

"Oh please! I am tired of your acting!" he said, rubbing his temples.

"Stop telling me that I am acting! I am not acting, okay! Please! You are misunderstanding something!" Tears rolled down my cheeks.

"Finally! Here that goes! I was expecting you to pull out that card! I am misunderstanding, is it?? I saw you literally sticking your tongue down his throat and you say that I have a misunderstanding!" He clapped. "I must accept your talent!"

"Did you come to the terrace?"

"Yes I did!" he stated, folding his arms across his chest.

"So why are you still accusing me of cheating if you were also there?"

"What do you mean?"

"I pushed him off the moment he tried to kiss me!"

"Stop lying! I know what I saw!"

"Even your own eyes can be deceiving, Gautham! I am just guessing that you weren't there for the entire time!"

"Do you still have an explanation after I caught you red handed!"

"I can't believe this! You aren't even ready to hear me out!" I felt frustrated.

"Okay! Go on!" he said. Finally he was making an attempt to let me clear it out.

"When we were studying in the institute, Kabir and I were best friends. But, one day he said he was in love with me when I had no feelings for him and never saw him as anything more than a best friend! He kept trying to make



me accept .When I got tired of him and his ways, I stopped talking to him. But, he said that he was sorry about it and he promised that it would never happen again. So we became friends again. Everything was normal between us and do you remember that even you told me that he was in love? With that, I actually thought that he had moved on! I was really happy for him and we were back to normal."

His body tensed for a moment.

"Not best friends, but just friends."

He relaxed and gestured me to continue. It looked like he started believing me. God, please make him trust me!

"But, I don't know what happened during Chirag's wedding! He suddenly started to kiss me, saying that he was still in love with me and all! I totally had no clue that he hadn't moved on! I pushed him off the moment he tried to kiss me and I even slapped him for it! I explained that we had no future and my future will always be with you and no one else! After so much of explaining, he finally understood and let me go!"

He suddenly walked up the stairs. I really hoped that he didn't think that I was making stories up!

He came back. "But, how did you get this?" He showed me the keychain which Kabir had presented.

"Where did you get it from?" I asked.

"Answer my question!" he snarled, which made me flinch.

"Kabir gifted it to me! And I don't even understand what it means! How can I refuse when someone gifts me something! But, how did you know about this??"

"This is a couple's key ring which I gifted to Kabir and I still can't believe that he had presented the other half to you!" he said, running his fingers through his hair.

It came dawning on me! No wonder, it had half of the heart! Why didn't I see

Gautham buying this gift when I went along with him for gift shopping!

"People said that you were in a relationship with him for four years and you were forced to marry me!"

"You believe what people say! And you don't believe what your wife says? You are so disgusting, Gautham! This is not the man whom I know!" I held him by his collar in anger and disgust.

Suddenly my phone started ringing. I picked it up to see who it was. It was Kabir!! What a perfect timing! He was last person I wanted to talk to! When I was about to press the ignore button, Gautham grabbed the phone from me and answered it and he put it on loudspeaker. Audacity of this man!

'Talk' he mouthed with a glare.

"Hey," my voice came out muffled.

"Are you okay?? Is everything alright??" he panicked!

"Of course I am! What's up?" I asked.

"Shakthi! I feel really guilty of what I did! I am really sorry!" I looked at Gautham and he was looking without a hint of emotion on his face.

"Kabir! I forgave you on that day itself! You still don't have the need to feel guilty! Just move on! That is all I want!"

"Yea! After you told me that someone was out there for me, I really gave it a try, you know!"

"Wow!" I faked a surprise. But, I was actually exasperated with the way Gautham was acting up. He was listening carefully to what Kabir and I were talking.

"Yea! She is really sweet! Her name is Ridhi. We have been dating for a few weeks! And I really like her."

"Sounds good, Kabir!! Congratulations! I really hope that she is one for you!"

"We haven't gone that far! But still..."

"I am really happy for you Kabir!"

"And- "

"Hey! Am really sorry! But, I've got to go! I am just a bit busy! Can I talk to you later?"

"Just before you leave! I am again sorry for all what I did! I shouldn't have forced myself on you! I am really sorry!"

I almost started to cry now. "It's okay!" I hung up and I ran upstairs to my bedroom, locking it behind me, unable to control my tears.

I sat on the floor leaning on the door, holding my knees to my chest!

I wasn't angry because he misunderstood me for cheating on him! It was my mistake too, not telling him about Kabir! But, the fact that he didn't believe me after I told him everything made my heart twist in pain! Even after Kabir's call, he would have thought that we were just making up stories! Did he hurt me so much just because of this! How did he come to know about the place where I had kept keychain? He had literally been spying on me the whole time. He didn't feel even a little sorry about listening to my call with another person! This was not the man who I fell in love with!

"Shakthi!" I heard him bang on my door.

What was he here for, to hurt me more??

"I am terribly sorry, Shakthi!! Please open the door!" He yelled, smacking the door.

I removed the suitcase from the cupboard and started throwing my dresses furiously into it. I can tolerate anything, but not a man who doesn't trust me!

He stopped banging the door for a while. What was he up to? Maybe he realized that his attempts were going to be futile!

Oh boy! Was I wrong! The next moment I heard the door unlock and he stood in front of me!

His eyes showed regret! But, it didn't matter to me anymore. It wasn't going

to make a difference! I was done packing! I shut it tight and put it down on floor!

"Don't leave!" He held my wrist, as I moved the trolley. My heart melted at his words! But, he just doesn't trust me! What was the use of me staying with him?

I turned to face him. He looked pathetic. My heart cried for him. But, a relationship without trust goes nowhere. "Look, Gautham! I am not a person who shuts myself out without even a proper explanation! I am leaving! I can't live with a person who doesn't trust me, even one bit!"

"Shakthi! Please, try and understand! I saw Kabir all over you! What do you expect me to do? I shouldn't have doubted you! I am sorry!"

"I am not mad at you for misunderstanding me! Maybe according to you, our relationship hasn't come that far, for you to believe me that I can never cheat on you! I agree- "

"No! Nothing like-"

"Will you allow me to talk, at least now? Please?" I asked him.

He remained quiet. "But, you could have at least trusted me when I explained everything to you! I begged for you to trust me! But, you didn't! Finally what made you believe was Kabir's call! Wasn't it?"

"Yea,but-"

"But, what? Do you remember when you were MIA for a few weeks?"

He nodded. "What did you expect me to think you were doing during those weeks? But, you just asked me to trust you and I did, just because you asked me to! If I hadn't trusted you then, we would have been divorced long back, Gautham! Trust is the foundation for any relationship, Gautham!"

"Shakthi! Please, don't cry! I am sorry!" he held my shoulders, and wiped away my tears.

"Don't touch me!" I pushed his hands off me.

## **Chapter 40-Making Up Shakthi's POV**

"Don't touch me!" I pushed his hands off me.

He looked hurt. I knew I was being rude, but it hurt me more that he didn't trust me!

I took the trolley and started to leave. I needed some time to myself, to!

Suddenly I felt the handle of my trolley being pulled out of my grip and being thrown, creating a thud, while landing on the floor!

"Gautham!! Are you out of your mind!?"

He pinned me to the wall. His face was just inches from mine and his eyes pierced through mine. His chest pressed against mine, crushing me.

I never expected him to react this way. His eyes held the determination to make me stay, but I was not going to!

"Wh..What are you doing??" my voice trembled.

"You will not go anywhere!"

"Why? You aren't able to breathe the same air as I do! I am actually doing you a favor, right?"

His eyes showed momentary regret. "I said I am sorry!" he said through his gritted teeth, but I've never heard an apology like that, in my entire life!

"Sorry?" I sneered. "Do you think it is all that is going to take? With just a word, do you think you will learn to trust me?"

"So if you leave me, will I learn to trust you?" he asked, raising his left eyebrow. "You can't run away from me, baby!"

He released my wrists from his tight grip and walked away. I stood glued to the wall, still shocked.

"I have my ways!" I shouted from the room.

"You can't even try leaving me!"

I quickly pulled the trolley to the front door and opened the latch at the top of the door. We don't use the security lock when we were in station. So it made sense for me to open the top latch to open the door instead of the security lock, but to my dismay, nothing happened! The door wouldn't open.

The keys were gone. So it means Gautham had activated the security lock.

We just had a random password that I typed into the system; which was fixed to the wall.

But it said wrong password! So again I retyped it slowly and carefully. Again it said that it was wrong!

Did he change it? I just had one try left, if it went wrong, Gautham would be alerted about it and he would know that I was trying to escape.

I can't imagine about escaping through the terrace, because we lived on the seventh floor. If I did that, it would be a direct escape to heaven! This was going to be my last and only try! I have to type in the right password. I started to type a combination.

"Trying to hack my security system?" I suddenly heard him and he totally caught me off guard. I turned to look at him.

He had his cocky grin plastered on his face. How I wanted to wipe it off!

"I.. Uh..why did you change the password?" I rasped.

He snickered. "You of course know why I did that!"

Of course, I knew! To keep me imprisoned in this house!

"I will make it up to you, Shakthi." He smirked and walked towards the kitchen.

He can be so annoying at times! So climbing down the pipes from the terrace was the only way out! It seemed scary to do from the seventh floor!

I hurriedly walked up to our private terrace! It was locked! The keys were

also not there. So I had no way out but to be stuck with him in this house!

I angrily went down to pick my suitcase to keep it back in my bedroom.

"Hard luck, baby!" he said, waving the keys of the terrace in front of me and sipping on a mug of his coffee.

After putting my suitcase back in my room, I settled on the couch, in front of the television.

Though the TV was running, all that was going on my mind were the things which happened. I couldn't believe that he had been hurting me so much just because he thought I was cheating! I trusted every word he spoke, but he never did trust me! He thought I was acting! How he kept saying I was a good actress. The most infuriating thing he told me, which I least expected from him, was a gold digger label!

Suddenly someone was shaking me hard by my shoulders. I lifted my head up.

"What?" I snapped, looking at him.

"Did you have your breakfast?" he asked.

I saw the time and it was five minutes to twelve. I wonder how I went for so long without my breakfast. But wait, why was he concerned so much about my breakfast, when he hardly bothered to check if I was even alive or not, during the previous month!? Like he said, he has got a lot of making up to do! But, I was not going to give in that easily.

I chose not to reply him. I decided to give him a taste of his own medicine.

"Shakthi?? I am asking you something!"

Again I sat like a statue with my eyes glued to the television screen, pretending I didn't hear him.

He sighed and walked away. In the next few minutes, I heard the sound of utensils from the kitchen and in no time, a fresh and a delicious aroma filled the air.

"Food is ready" he announced walking back into the room. "Shakthi?" he sang, tempting me!

Abruptly, I felt his arms envelope me. "What... What are you doing?" he carried me, like I weighed nothing.

"Making you have your breakfast!" he replied and made me sit on the dining table. My legs were dangling in the air. It felt too awkward to be sitting on the table. Before I could get down from the table, he stopped me by handing me the plate filled with amazing food.

The pancakes with whipped cream looked lip-smacking.

"You can have it!"

I turned my head away.

He turned my head by force, holding my chin with his large hands and forced a morsel into my mouth. It tasted even more delicious than it looked

"Hmm." An involuntary moan escaped my mouth.

"You have some cream there," he said, pointing at my lips. Before I could wipe it, he came and stood in between my legs. His intense eyes were on my lips. His lips neared mine and I felt his tongue licking away the cream off my lips. My nerves re-awoke at his touch, making my body electrify.

He teased me with his tongue, tracing my lips, without missing even its corners. I had no clue that my lips were this sensitive, until now. He swirled his tongue on my lips, creating small circles. I gasped. But he made sure that his lips never touched mine. Fire started to burn in my stomach. His slow tease turned into sweet torture, without being able to feel his lips on mine.

Suddenly I felt the lack of his touch. I quickly opened my eyes. He was smirking at me. He would have enjoyed the effect that he had on me!

He disappeared into the bedroom, leaving me alone on the table. I munched on the amazing breakfast that he had cooked! After finishing and doing all the dishes, I sat on the couch, relaxing with a new episode of the Pretty Little Liars.



Suddenly my phone started ringing and it was Ankitha. I answered the call.

"Hey! Did everything go well?" she asked.

"Just don't ask me about it!" I said, closing my eyes and rubbing my temple.

"Why? Was it that bad? Didn't he say the reason for his resignation? Did he again hurt you?"

I narrated the entire thing to her. "Can you believe, Ankitha? He didn't trust me a bit!"

"Hey! It happens! Don't over think!"

"Am I over thinking? Really? No, Ankitha! This is not done! I am not going to give in that easily!"

"But, eventually you are going to give in!"

"I know!" I admitted.

"Hey listen, my son is calling! We'll talk later!"

"Bye" I hung up.

The bedroom door opened. I turned to see his six pack in all its glory.

Gautham walked closer and closer and stood in front of me. He had changed from his jeans and shirt to his shorts that was hanging low at his narrow waist.

His perfectly sculpted abs made me want to run my fingers over him.

"My eyes are up here, baby." His cocky grin told me, how badly I was caught while checking out his delicious abs.

I felt blood rush to my cheeks, to make me look even more vulnerable. Without meeting his eyes, I stood and made my way up to my bedroom to have a relaxing shower. I wiped myself dry and wrapped a nice fluffy towel around my naked body.

I hopped out of the bathroom, to pick up my clothes from my unpacked

suitcase, which I had placed on the bed. But now, the bed was empty. Where did it go? I checked all around the room, but I couldn't find it anywhere! I remember keeping it on the bed or did I forget it downstairs?

I strolled out of the room and it was then I realized the state I was in! I didn't even have a bathrobe on! Now what do I do?

I walked back into the room and shouted for Gautham, hoping that he would help me to bring my suitcase back to my room.

"Gautham!!!" I shrieked again and still there was no response. If he wasn't around, I can safely bring my suitcase back. I walked down the stairs, holding my towel tightly with my fists.

But when I went down, there was no trace of my suitcase! Where could it be? Just then I heard a shrieking voice come from Gautham's bedroom.

I ran to his room and blood was oozing from his palm. I quickly picked up the first aid kit.

"How did this happen??" I panicked. I pulled him to the bathroom and washed his cut in the running water.

"I am fine," he said.

"Yea yea! I can see how fine you are!"

Then I made him sit on the bed and applied some antiseptic on his cut.

"You care for me, don't you?"

"Of course!" The words were already out before I realized. Of course, I loved him, cared for him, but at the moment I was supposed to stay angry.

"I mean, I don't" I said. But, it was too late to change. His crooked smirk on his face said it all. Quickly after dressing up his cut, I rose up, and there I saw my perfume bottle lying on the floor in bits and pieces.

"How did my perfume land in your room?" Just then, I saw the suitcase fully emptied, on the bed. "And my suitcase?"

Then the realization came filling me in. My things were back on the vanity table. I opened the closet and found all my dresses hanging in there.

"Why did you shift my clothes to *your* room?" I asked, folding my hands in front of my chest. That was when I felt the fluffy material of the towel against my hand! Shit! How did I forget I was in a towel? I better grab a dress before I sort out this bedroom issue.

Just when I was about to pull a dress from the closet, his hand met me and held it tightly behind my back, making it impossible for me to escape.

"What are you doing?" he asked.

"Playing cricket!" I rolled my eyes!

I heard his deep chuckle, right in my ears.

"Can't you see? I am taking my clothes! Just let me go!"

"I will never let you go!" he rustled in my ear, his breath fanned across my bare shoulders. I felt a deep meaning of the words he spoke. It carried so much intensity.

"Those clothes, they do don't do any justice to what I am seeing now, Shakthi!"

His arms looped around my waist, pulling me hard towards him. His naked chest pressed against my bare shoulders. While he pushed my wet hair to one side of my shoulder, his fingers brushed my shoulders, giving me goose bumps. I felt his lips press on my nape. He started to kiss me on my shoulders and slowly turned me, making me face him. He knew the right places to make me crumble. He started working on my sensitive spot, making my knees go weak. I fisted his hair, pulling him closer to me which earned a throaty groan from him.

*'Your acting skills are just amazing'*

*'I know that you are just after my money!'*

*'You've been cheating on me!'*

All his words rang in my ears. I peeled myself off him, grabbed my clothes and escaped to the washroom, without meeting his eyes! I knew that if I utter a single word, I would end up hurting him which I didn't want to do! I don't want any further damage done to our relationship! Enough was already done!

I changed quickly and I made up my mind to talk about the bedroom thing with him.

"Gautham!" I called him while he was on the phone.

"Talk to you later!" he murmured into the phone.

"What are my things doing in your room?" I questioned.

"*Our* room" he corrected me.

"Things don't work out like this, Gautham! Whenever you want, you chase me out and whenever you want, you put my things back into *your* room! I am not your maid! I am your wife!" I said.

"You have the answer for your question!" He laughed and walked away.

If he had persuaded me to stay here, it was not going to be a big deal to share his room. Somewhere I also felt happy, to be back to our room! How many nights have I spent, thinking about when I would get back to our room, when I would wake up to his adorable face! So, finally the day had come, so I decided to accept it with open arms.

I did all the chores around the house that I hadn't been doing for the past few days. I was on autopilot during the past month that these things hardly mattered to me. By the time I was done, Gautham who had gone out had also returned.

"Get dressed." His words diverted my attention from Candy Crush.

"But why?" I asked him.

"Wear this!" he ordered, giving me a box. Did he say he was making it up to me? By ordering me around, he was nowhere close to it!

"I won't get dressed unless you tell me why!"

"So stubborn, as always," he said and I rolled my eyes! We all know who the stubborn one here was!

"Dinner, that is still due!" he answered my question.

## **Chapter 41-The Enthralling Dinner**

### **Shakthi's POV**

"Dinner, that is still due!" he answered my question.

It was almost three months ago when he had promised me dinner!

"I am not going anywhere with you, Gautham!"

He pulled me by my arms, leaving me breathless. His arms circled my waist, pressing me to his chest. "I want you dressed, now!" his voice was low.

"I won't!"

"I don't mind dressing you up!" he said with a smirk and I already felt his hand lowering the strap of my top.

"Okay... I will!" I said.

He smirked. "Good!" He pecked my lips and disappeared.

I picked up the box that was lying on the couch and went into the bedroom. I felt really tired after all the work I did, so I had a quick shower. Afterwards, I eagerly opened the box to see the expensive dress that he had bought.

It was a beautiful chocolate brown dress, with a sweetheart neckline. It completely covered my arms with its full sleeves. It cinched at my waist making my upper waist look even narrower. The materials hung loose below my waist with the hem of the dress ending at my knee.

I put cream on my face to hide the wound on my forehead. I added a nude

shadow to my lids with a bit of eyeliner and kajal to my eyes and finished it with mascara. My eyes were the only feature I actually liked in myself. This dress was the exact shade of my eyes.

I glossed my lips with a pink shade which made them look fuller. I remembered the promise I made to myself that I wouldn't change for him before meeting him. But now, I wanted to look good enough for him.

Just when I decided to tie my hair up, I noticed the hickey which Gautham had left on my neck last night. It had turned purplish, creating a huge need for me to hide it. I applied the concealer and let my long straight hair fall to one side to hide the love bite.

I didn't wear much jewelry except for the diamond studs.

I completed the outfit with a flat brown ballerina. I really wouldn't be able to pull off the night on stilettos with the cut I had.

After checking my appearance for the last time, I marched out of the bedroom. As I walked down the hall, I saw him. He was seated on the couch with his back facing me. I heard his foot that kept tapping the floor. Did I take that long to get ready?

"Gautham," I called, and stood behind the couch.

He stood and faced me. He was dressed in a tight charcoal black tux. It made his broad shoulders and his lean waist look sexy as hell. His bedroom hairstyle looked perfect with his silvery grey eyes adding some spice.

"You look ravishing!" he said.

"Thanks." I couldn't help but blush.

We arrived to another five star hotel. I was about to open the door but he did it for me.

"Shall we?" he said, holding his hand out.

I smiled and nervously took his waiting hand, stepping out of the car.

He handed the car keys to the valet and held me tightly by my waist and we walked to the elevator. He pressed the last button and soon the elevator dinged. As the doors opened, the entire view took my breath away.

The rooftop was beautifully decorated with flowers, and I didn't miss the jasmines. The tiny classy and cute light bulbs ran around the walls, illuminating the rooftop. Soft music played in the background, and there was a table placed in the middle. The pool on the side glowed in the full moon.

I walked to the edge of the rooftop to take in the grand view of the sea with its rising high tides and waves. The breezy air and low sound of the waves made me release all my worries and relaxed my senses. The full moon in all its glory was such a wonderful sight.

"You like it?" he asked. I turned and he stood just a few inches away from me.

"Yea! But, you didn't have to do all this!"

"I wanted to," he said, looking into my eyes.

"I am not after your money, Gautham. Even a dinner on the roadside would have sufficed," I said.

He looked hurt. But, I really wanted him to know that I wasn't after his money!

"I am sorry! I didn't mean those words. Just give me a chance. Please?" he pleaded.

"Okay."

His strong arm snake around my waist, pulling me closer. My heart thumped.

"You have no idea what it means to me, Shakthi." My name sounded so sexy, coming from him. His deep and husky voice made it sound more like a whisper. It sounds so erotic when he calls my name, like this!

"Shakthi?" he called me again, making my knees grow weak. "I said, your acceptance to give me a chance means a lot to me."

I smiled. This close proximity muddled my mind.

His gaze shifted to my lips as his face inched closer to mine. When I almost felt his lips touch mine, I turned my head and his lips landed on my cheek.

I started giggling, wriggling out of his arms.

He gave me his trademark smirk and a - you can't escape me - look.

We walked to the table and he pulled out the chair for me. "Thanks," I murmured with a smile on my face.

He sat opposite me.

We looked at our menus. I was dying to have some food. It got me excited to see the Chinese cuisine. There wasn't a single dish with fish thankfully.

The waiter came with a flirty smile on his face, looking at me. I felt Gautham tense.

He took our orders. "Anything else, gorgeous?" he asked.

I couldn't help but blush.

"I want you to get the hell out of here ,now!" Gautham raged.

The waiter sped away, knowing his casual flirting might cost him his job.

"Relax, Gautham," I said, gently rubbing his hand that he had placed on the table.

"I will make sure that he gets fired," he said, sipping his glass of water.

I couldn't help but laugh.

"Why are you laughing?"

"I can't believe that you were going to get him fired just because he was flirting with me!"

"Does that seem funny to you?"



"Okay! Let's not spoil our night because of some stupid waiter."

He still had a stern look on his face.

"Relax, babe," I said and soon his mood shifted, giving me a sexy smirk.

He got up from his chair and approached me.

"Can I have a dance with my lady," he asked, holding his hand out to me. '*My lady.*' That endearment sent electric shivers down my spine.

Dancing and I were poles apart. In fact I can't even take a step properly. I literally fractured my leg from hammering the brake and accelerator pedals in the car. It led to a big accident. I didn't want to remember that, now. But, that was just an example. The list of my sprains and fractures was an unending one.

I cleared my throat " Gautham.. I can't dance."

"I remember you dancing at Sonia's party"

"I did that just to make you jealous," I admitted.

A playful smile spread across his handsome face. He pulled me up from the chair.

"Ahh," I yelped due to the unexpected force exerted on the cut on my ankle.

His expression turned to worry. "You okay?" he asked.

"It's nothing, I'm fine," I said with a re-assuring smile.

He seemed to relax after my assurance. "Why did you want to make me jealous?" he asked, pulling me closer to him.

"Because, you made me jealous," I said, remembering the incident when he left me alone in a room filled with strangers, but he had a wonderful time with pretty ladies in skimpy clothes.

"I didn't make you jealous, sweetheart, trust me. Women just throw themselves at my feet, I can't help it," he said.

"And you were enjoy their company," I said, a bit angry.

"Let's not fight over people who don't matter," he said, rubbing my back.

"And remember this, I can always make you dance," he said and within minutes we started dancing slowly to the soft music. Our bodies molded together, like we belonged to each other. His eyes never left mine. We were playing a staring game. But I loved getting lost in his eyes.

"I can get used to this," he said with a satisfied smile on his face.

"I can never get used to dancing, like never ever," I said and a shudder ran through my body.

He chuckled and it was the most wonderful sound in my world.

"I can get used to that," I said.

His hands moved from my waist to my leg, rubbing it gently, making my heart beat faster and louder and I was scared if he would hear it.

His face inched closer to mine, just leaving a gap of a hair's breadth. He looked deep into my eyes, making my knees go weak. I closed my eyes as his lips touched mine. We shared a deep and passionate kiss.

"I am sorry for everything I did, Shakthi," he said, resting his forehead on mine.

"It's okay. But, before assuming anything just confirm it with me, once," I said.

"I will." He pecked on my lips.

\*\*\*

"I can always give you the best dessert, baby," he said when the new waiter left us with our desserts.

I felt my cheeks become hot.

"This is the best dessert, Gautham," I said, relishing the first mouthful of the

sizzling brownie. I wanted to irritate him a little, though.

"I can always show you I can give you the best."

"Why don't you save it for later," I winked at him.

When we got home I was so tired that I wanted to hit the bed without changing.

I lay on the bed and closed my eyes. The bathroom door clicked open and he stood there with his delicious bare chest, toweling his gorgeous wet hair, looking intently at me.

"What?" I asked.

He came closer to me and that was when I saw that the hem of my dress had ridden up to my thighs, leaving almost the entire length of my leg bare. I stood, straightening my dress.

"What are you thinking?" I asked when I saw a mischievous glint in his eyes.

"Thinking of how you would look without this piece of fabric on you," he said.

"Why? Don't you like the dress that you bought for me?" I asked, thinking that I was cornering him.

"Your birthday suit is nowhere near to what I bought, sweetheart," he said, making me blush.

"You wish!" I said, sticking my tongue out.

"I do," he said and came towards me as I moved backwards.

"Gautham, no," I whispered.

"Yes," he said with a devilish grin.

"Please," I said and I felt my head lightly hit the wall. I pressed a finger on his naked chest.

"Am I making you nervous?" he asked, raising his eyebrow.

"Yea.. I mean. No! No, not at all!" I said, nudging him away, grabbing my nightclothes and heading to the bathroom.

*Shakthi! Relax! It's just the close proximity that is making you nervous!* After taking a few deep breaths, I felt tranquil and changed.

I opened the door and I saw him arranging my pillows. I was excited to sleep on this bed, but with the sexual tension thick, it made me a little anxious.

When he saw me coming, he moved to his side of the bed and lay on it.

"Join me?" he asked. I went and slept on the bed, tucking myself under the duvet.

"Not so far from me," he said, pulling me into his arms and I ended up laying my head on his naked chest. I could hear his heartbeat and I made small circles with my finger on his naked torso.

"I will never hurt you again, Shakthi!"

"What is done is done. It is our past now. Just let it go."

"I know! Let's begin our lives with a fresh start," he said, kissing my hair.

"Hopefully," I said, kissing his chest.

\*\*\*

The bright, Sunday sun shone through the curtains making it too hard for me to open my eyes.

"You look beautiful." Gautham's head was propped up on his elbow.

My cheeks turned hot.

"Even more beautiful," he whispered, which made me sprint to the bathroom.

I looked at myself in the mirror. My hair looked like a bird's nest, dark circles clearly visible under my eyes and he said that I was beautiful! This man needs to get his eyes checked.

After my usual morning routine, I came out and that was when I heard a little girl's laughter coming from the hall.

I walked and I saw Gautham tickling the five year old Ria, his niece. She was similar to her mom, Sri.

"Hey cutie pie," I sang and kissed her on her cute cheek while Gautham kept tickling her.

She smiled and threw herself into my arms like she was trying to escape from Gautham's tickles.

"Easy there, baby!!" I said, hugging her to my chest.

"Sri has some work. She wants us to babysit her till the evening," he said, going to fetch the mug of coffee.

"Do you have toffees?" Ria asked with a cute smile and a twinkle in her eyes.

"No toffees, Ria! Your mom will beat the shit out of me." Gautham sipped on his coffee.

Immediately Ria's smile faded and she looked like she was about to cry.

"Gautham! Stop being so rude! She is just a little girl!" I said, moving to the fridge to take the packet of gummy bears that I had stored.

The house came alive. After putting some toffees into a bowl, I took it and went to the hall.

Gautham was doing push-ups and Ria was sitting on his shoulders, clapping and encouraging him to do more.

Gautham never did his exercise at home. But, just at the request of this little girl, he did it happily. He looked really delighted, like nothing else in the world mattered to him except to do more of these push-ups for this adorable girl. He really seemed to love children.

"More moooreee, uncle Gautham!" she said, clapping her tiny little hands.

But, the moment she saw me with the bowl of toffees in my hand, she got

down from his shoulders and ran to me.

I kneeled and handed the bowl to her. She kissed me on my cheek. "That will be the last set of toffees," Gautham warned. She remained oblivious to him and she sang some school rhyme of her's and settled in front of the TV, watching Tellytubbies, eating her gummy bears.

"What do you think our baby will look like?" he asked.

"Wh..What?" I asked, checking if I had heard him correctly.

"What will our child look like?" he asked.

I blushed.

"I want her to look like you and be like you," he said, quickly pecking me on my lips. He disappeared into the bedroom.

That was a lot to take. He wants a baby! He wants a girl! I stood there, blushing like an idiot.

Gautham soon left me and Ria in the house to complete his work. I wondered what he was up to! He had resigned. So, what was his next step going to be?

\*\*\*

I was baking a cake for Ria and just when I had set the oven, the doorbell rang.

I walked to the front door and opened it. There stood a woman in her mid-twenties. Her brown hair was in a messy pony tail. She was dressed in jeans and a t-shirt. She looked like she was just recovering from some disease or something.

"Has uncle Gautham come?" Ria asked from the hall.

"No, dear! It's not your uncle," I answered Ria.

"Has Gautham gone somewhere?" the girl asked.

"Excuse me, but who are you?" I asked, raising my eyebrow. She seemed to

know him.

"His girlfriend."

---

## **Chapter 42-Coming in Terms with Reality**

### **Shakthi's POV**

"Excuse me, but who are you?" I asked, raising my eyebrow. She seemed to know him.

"His girlfriend."

"Oh, please! Stop this nonsense already!" I said.

She laughed with a strong sarcastic edge. "Poor, Shakthi! I really pity your condition! But, be ready for the divorce!"

None of Gautham's friends knew that we were married. How does she know my name?

"Gautham is my husband! He will never divorce me," I said.

"What do you think, if you're married to him, he is yours? You trapped my boyfriend who wasn't even interested in marrying a slutty gold digger like you!"

"I didn't trap him! Our marriage was arranged! But, now it looks like you're here to trap him!"

"I am not here to trap him! He is already mine and will be mine!" She sneered.

"Ha! Go and tell your stories to someone who is jobless!"

"I knew that you won't believe me! That is why I brought you a present!" she said, grabbing her phone and tapped it for a few minutes.

She handed me her phone and it contained a selfie of Gautham and her in some beach and Gautham was kissing her on her cheek while she had clicked it. Gautham looked like he was really in love and this girl was indeed pretty in this picture.

"He has many pictures like that with other women! That doesn't make every single woman who clicks a picture with him, his girlfriend," I said.



"Maybe a good hard blow will bring some sense into you! Which husband on his wedding night, would call and talk to another girl saying that he loves her and not his wife?"

I felt the blood drain from my face.

I remember how he rushed his '*I love you*' when he saw me coming from the restroom. It all started to add up.

"Made any sense, dumb head?" she asked.

"Just leave!" I was about to close the door.

"Not so soon!" she said, stopping the door with her hand. I felt like giving her a good punch on her crooked nose.

"What now?"

She took a paper and scribbled something on it. "Hand this over to Gautham." She forced the paper into my hand and left.

I closed the door with a loud bang, in frustration and I read the paper.

*'Your wife was not that pleased to meet me. Call me soon-love, Natasha.'*

I have heard her name somewhere. Yeah, once when Gautham and I went on a lunch date, she had called him up and he couldn't answer the call in front of me that he had to go out.

I stuck the note on fridge, for him to come and have a look. I slid down, leaning my head on the fridge and pulling my knees to my chest.

I really didn't want to make any assumptions before confronting him. But, my brain already started to work overtime, Things were just getting better between us and she had to appear now?

During our lunch date, I remembered asking him about his girlfriend and he got really furious. He couldn't be faking it all, could he?

I tried not to feel bad, because somewhere I felt that Gautham wouldn't do such an injustice to me.

Does this have any connection with Gautham's disappearance for those few weeks? Those weeks, I would never forget of what I had to go through!

My head throbbed! My brain was a barrage of questions. Jealousy got the better of me! That girl did look beautiful and a part of me felt guilty for this arranged marriage that he was forced into.

I know that I must trust Gautham and I shouldn't make any ridiculous assumptions before talking to him ,but what Natasha showed me didn't help!

"Aunt Shakthiiii" Ria screamed, tapping my shoulder. "You are cryingggg?" she said, making an 'O' with her pink lips and that made me laugh.

Her tiny fingers wiped my rolling tears. "Did uncle Gautham do anything to you?" she asked.

"No, sweetheart! It's nothing! Come here!" I pulled her into my arms, kissing her chubby cheeks and she kissed mine back. She lightened my mood in a minute and I just couldn't wait to have a baby like her!

I didn't even know if my marriage was going to last and here I was thinking about having babies!

I stood up and set Ria on her feet.

"Is the cake ready???" she asked, following me.

"Just a minute Ria," I said and I rushed to the oven. The delicious aroma filled the air. I pulled the mouthwatering chocolate cake from the oven. In no time we dug into it without saving a single piece for Gautham or Sri to taste.

Leaving her to watch TV, I had a hot shower and wore another pair of fresh sweatpants and a tank top. I ran a brush through my hair removing the tangles and put it up in a messy bun.

I went and checked on Ria. She was absorbed in what she was watching. I spent the entire day by diverting myself and playing with Ria, but the nagging headache continued in spite of me trying to keep Gautham at the back of my mind. Ria was such a blessing in disguise and I was thankful to this adorable angel.

I tried calling him and his phone was unreachable.

It was almost six in the evening and Ria was playing Hangaroo on my iPad and I used the time to make some dinner, incase Sri joined us.

The doorbell rang.

"I will get it, aunt Shakthi!!" she said.

"No! wai-" before I could stop her, I heard her excited voice.

"Thank youuu, unclee."

"You like it?" Gautham's deep voice filled the air.

"I lurrveee eeett," she spoke.

I turned off the stove to go and catch the scene in the hall, when suddenly I felt his strong arm wrap around my waist and bring me closer to his chest.

"Hope you didn't miss me much," he spoke softly into my ears, making me shiver.

All the memories of morning filled my brain. I quickly pulled his arm from me and faced him. He looked shocked and hurt, but I just can't have this conversation now with a child with us.

"Ria, shall we have our dinner?" I asked, walking to the hall, leaving Gautham.

"Look what uncle Gautham has got me!! Isn't it cuteee?" she asked, showing the stuffed toy of Winnie the Pooh.

"Not as cute as you, baby," I said and kissed her on her nose.

Gautham changed into his Pajama pants and a v neck t-shirt.

I had my toughest time feeding Ria. She kept running around and playing, refusing to eat.

"Ria! Come on! I will give you another toffee if you finish your food!" I said, running behind her.

"She doesn't like dinner," Gautham commented.

"No! Ria baby loves dinner, right Ria?"

"Yaaa! I lurvee your pasta," she said and took the plate of pasta from me, settling herself on the couch. I loved every bit of this girl.

I gave Gautham a -in your face- look and arranged Ria's hair behind her ears, because she was finding it tough to eat it with the hair in her way.

Gautham sighed and sat on the couch, slowly picking Ria's tiny body and sitting her on his lap

"How does it taste?" Gautham asked, looking affectionately at Ria.

"Yummmm," she said, closing her eyes, raising both her eyebrows and licking her lips.

Her reaction did earn a hearty laugh from Gautham. I couldn't help but stand there and admire both of them.

"She does cook well," he said, suddenly looking into my eyes.

I looked away, not wanting meet his gaze.

The bell rang. I really hope that it was Sri! I can't wait anymore to have the '*conversation*' with Gautham. I ran to the front door and opened it and I was caught off guard with the tight hug that I was pulled into.

"How are you?" Sri asked, releasing me from the hug.

"Good and how's your life?" I asked, pulling her into the house and locking the door.

"Same old," she said, setting her handbag down.

"So, what work did you have?" I asked. It was weird for her to work on a Sunday. She was a lawyer and her law firm doesn't work on weekends.

"Nothing important. So tell me, is there any good news?" Did she already expect me to be pregnant? She reminded me of Ankitha!

"Nothing to tell, just the usual," I said and walked her towards the kitchen. "Look who we have!" I announced as we reached Gautham and Ria.

"Mommyyy!" Ria screamed, getting down from Gautham's lap and running to Sri, hugging her waist.

"Were you a good girl??" she asked.

"Yes mommy," she said.

"Aww! She has been on her best behavior, trust me," I said, gently ruffling Ria's hair and she gave me her mesmerizing smile.

"Is the work done?" Gautham asked Sri and they had a conversation.

Sri refused dinner saying that her husband would be waiting for her. In spite of having an arranged marriage, they were in so much love even after six years, unlike me and Gautham.

In the next few minutes she left with Ria, and the silence was torturous.

Soon Gautham dived into his laptop, typing furiously.

I was scared to confront him! What if it was all true? I was scared to learn the truth and I was even more scared if I would be able to accept if he said actually had a girlfriend.

My head pounded! I walked to the bedroom to find the painkillers. I popped the tablet from the pack and swallowed it with the glass of water.

"Are you okay?" Gautham asked.

"Like you care," I snapped. The frustration increased.

He took fast and long strides towards me and held my face in his large hands.

"Shakthi! Are you still mad? I'm sorry! But, please don't say that I don't care for you, cause, I really do!"

Tears pricked my eyes. He really meant those words. I could feel it.

"I'm fine," I said, pushing his hands away and I walked out of the bedroom. I

felt him following me as I moved to the fridge, remembering the note that Natasha had left.

I grabbed the note and held it over to him.

"What is it?" He looked at me with a confused look.

"Check it out for yourself," I said and he took the note from me.

He read it and his eyes met mine and carried unmistakable guilt.

## **Chapter 43-The Bygone Shakthi's POV**

"Check it out for yourself," I said and he took the note from me.

He read it and his eyes met mine and it carried unmistakable guilt.

All my assumptions were right! Without another word, I turned on my heels to leave.

"Shakthi!" he called, but ignored him and took a few steps away from him.

His grip tightened on my hand and pulled me, making me face him. "What about trusting each other, Shakthi?"

"Your eyes, Gautham, your eyes, they carry enough guilt for me to figure out the truth."

"You're right! I am guilty! But, what you figured out is not the truth."

"Okay! Then what is the truth?"

He let go of my hand. He refused to meet my eyes. He raked his hand through his hair, troubled.

"Look! You aren't ready to tell me! But, you want me to hear you out! So, tell me!"

He was silent again.

"If you aren't going to say anything, then it means, what I assumed was right!"

"No, it's not like that..." he trailed off.

"Gautham! I can't force you to tell me anything! But, having been your wife for three months I at least have the right to know if Natasha is your girlfriend or not."

His body tensed.

"Gautham! Yes. Or. No?" I demanded.

He still kept silent. I was just asking for a 'YES or NO', not an explanation. I wouldn't need more proof than his words.

"Please! Tell me, please." I held his hand. I wanted to reassure him.

I moved into his eyeline, making sure he looked into my eyes. They were a mix of fear and guilt.

"Come!" I held him by his wrist and took him to the bedroom, making him sit on the bed.

I sat beside him, encasing his hand in both of mine. "You can tell me."

"Shakthi..." he started, but the next moment he pulled his hand away from mine and went to the balcony.

I followed. He stood near the railing with his back to me. I touched his shoulder. "Gautham," I said softly. He turned and hugged me tight.

"Say you won't leave me! Just say that you won't leave me!"

"I won't leave you, Gautham! I won't!" I said, hugging him tighter. "You can tell me anything! I won't leave you."

He pulled out from the hug and looked deep into my eyes like he was searching for reassurance. When he seemed to have found it, he started, "Me

and Natasha were in a relationship for two years, but not anymore." He relaxed a little and continued. "We first met on a plane. She was sitting next to me. We started talking and we hit off from day one. We stayed in touch and things started to grow more serious and we fell in love within three months. One night, she took me to her friend's party and out of the blue, I caught her kissing Amit. But, somehow she convinced me that Amit had forced himself on her and that she tried to push him off. But, she had been cheating on me for almost the entire time we were in a relationship! I was so insane to believe her, Shakthi! She had been cheating and I never knew it!!" he said, making my heart ache.

I rubbed his arm.

"But, things started to get better and we were good until I walked in to her house to give her birthday surprise and found her in bed with Amit. I had been such a fool to believe her for the entire two years! I came back to my home and she followed me. She still tried to convince me, but by then, I knew better than to trust her. We had a terrible argument when we broke up. She left the house and within minutes she left, I got the news that she had met with an accident." He paused waiting for me to say something, but I didn't, hoping it might stop him from saying anything further.

He continued. "She had slipped into coma. I did a background search on this Amit guy and got to know that he was a physical trainer at the gym she went to and she had met him after me and Natasha fell in love. She started to go behind my back from then on."

Gautham had loved her so much. It made my heart twist.

"That was when I realized that she was just after my money the whole time. I started to drink almost every night. I started to bring random women home which started to worry my parents. They wanted me to settle down and that is when you came into my life," he said and he made the most beautiful curve with his lips which made me also smile.

"I decided to move on when I saw you for the first time at the temple. Thinking I might change my mind they rushed the wedding. My parents made it a point to not invite any of my friends, thinking someone might mention Natasha and the marriage would be called off. But, only on our



wedding night, she had regained her consciousness, but she had partial memory loss."

"What?" I gasped.

"Yeah, she remembers only till the time we fell in love. The doctors advised that she shouldn't be stressed about anything and that might prove fatal for her. Her sister pleaded with me not to reveal our break up. She also blamed me for Natasha 's accident. And she was right, some way or the other I was the reason for her present state. It started to eat me. I almost killed a person, Shakthi! She lost her memory because of me!"

"No, Gautham! She was cheating on you! So it doesn't make sense for her to be driving the car so madly because of you! You aren't a murderer! You get that?" I tried convincing him.

"No! I am a bloody person who tried to kill a woman! I promised her sister that I would accept Natasha's responsibility until she regains her memory. So we decided to keep our marriage a secret. But, somehow she had learnt that I had gotten married and that became really fatal to her. Her condition worsened and she was hospitalized again. So, that was why I had to leave you alone for those three whole weeks, to take care of her. I told her that I was forced to marry you and that I will divorce you soon."

My heart clenched.

"But, none of what I told her was true. I was just helping her get better," he said and eased my tension.

"I will help you in bringing her memory back, Gautham! I promise," I said.

"Thank you, but are you sure?" he asked doubtfully.

"Two hundred percent." I smiled.

"Are you still sure you want to stay with me?"

"I promised that I will, remember? No matter what, I will always be by your side!"

He claimed my lips in a passionate, knee weakening kiss. His tongue swiped over mine as we fought for dominance. It was a kiss filled with trust, promise and care.

He pulled back and looked into my eyes, like he was piercing through my soul.

"I'm sorry" I whispered, totally breathless.

"Why are you sorry?"

"I totally understand what you went through when you saw Kabir kissing me. It makes complete sense why you didn't trust me when I said that Kabir had forced himself on me. You were already cheated on once and when the same thing happened again, you didn't want to be used and you needed Kabir's words to trust me. I'm terribly sor-" he placed his finger on my lips, making me shiver.

"I didn't tell you anything about my past then. I feel really guilty to have put you through so much! But, what you did was totally right, in your place. I would have done the same! If a person here needs to be sorry, then it's me. I should've told all about me earlier, but-"

"I understand, why you didn't tell me! But, let me make this one thing clear. Never make any decision on my behalf! How did you even make this ridiculous assumption that I would leave you after what you told me! Never do that, Mister! Never!"

He smiled, pulling me by my waist, making me crash on his chest. "I wasn't able to imagine a life without you, Shakthi! I was scared! My feelings for Natasha are not even remotely close to how I feel for you. I need you in my life."

My heart fluttered. "I'm never going to leave you, Gautham!" I said, kissing his chest, over his t-shirt as he kissed my hair.

"Did you have your dinner?" I asked him.

"You were so busy with Ria that you didn't even bother about my dinner," he said, faking anger.

"C'mon! Don't be such a baby!" I said, pulling him to the dining area. I reheated the pasta and served us each some.

"Why did Natasha come here?" I asked.

"She kept pestering me about the divorce. I got so annoyed at one point that I stopped answering her calls for a week. Maybe she came here because she wanted to create problems so that you would end up divorcing me. A memory loss or not, she will always be a bitch."

"That she is," I said.

He chuckled. "Looks like she went real harsh on you," he said, sipping on his glass of water.

"You have no idea. But, I don't understand why people accuse me of being a gold digger when there are so many other things to accuse me of. Do you have some secret place filled with money?"

"I didn't mean those words when I said them, okay! And yea, about a secret place filled with money, it is such a fucking good guess, Shakthi," he said.

"So..you..you actually mean, you hit a jackpot?"

He laughed, holding his stomach.

"Care to enlighten me!" I stared at him.

"Okay..Okay..My father owns this chain of textiles industries from which the returns are quite huge. Eventually, I am going to inherit his business and properties."

"So basically you are a millionaire's son?"

"You can say so!" he said, chuckling.

"Your dad looked so simple when I met him!"

"Yeah. That is when you should remind yourself that you shouldn't judge a book by its cover. He believes in simplicity, modesty and being humble."

"What else have you been hiding from me? Don't tell me now that, you are vampire!" I said in shock.

He chuckled. "Hey! Honestly I thought you knew it. Your parents apparently knew it!"

"Our wedding happened in such a rush, that all this didn't cross my mind. But, why didn't you take over the business?"

"I wanted to pursue Chartered accountancy badly, but I had promised my dad that I will never let his efforts go waste and I will surely take over his business one day when I become bored of my current profession," he said, rising up from the chair as he finished his food.

"But, Mister! Do you realize you don't have a job to continue your profession?" I asked, following him to kitchen.

"A job is not the only choice for us, Shakthi!" he said and his usual cocky smirk was back on his face.

"What do you mean?"

"Nothing," he said and walked off to the bedroom. But, I knew he was up to something.

After doing the dishes and cleaning the mess that Ria had done, I joined Gautham in the bedroom. He was working on his laptop.

I sighed and walked to the bathroom. I brushed my teeth, washed my face and after wiping it dry, I stepped out the bathroom.

He was still engrossed in his laptop. God knows what he was doing! I paced around the room gathering my things for work. Since Gautham had replaced my things, I had issues finding them.

"Gautham, where the hell is my laptop charger??" I asked him, searching the drawers.

"Gautham!!" I called again, but he didn't respond.

I turned and I crashed against a brick wall which basically was his hard chest.

"Did I tell you, how delicious you look in this?" he said, lightly pulling the hem of my tank top. My breathing sped up and my heart beat faster. It was the first time that I was wearing it around him.

I stood on my toes, holding his arms and whispered in his ear, "why don't you show me?"

## **Chapter 44-One Soul**

### **Shakthi's POV**

I stood on my toes, holding his arms and whispered in his ear, "why don't you show me?"

He chuckled softly and I could feel his breath on my neck, creating havoc. "Will you be able to take all of it?" he whispered in my ear, lightly biting my earlobe. I fisted his t-shirt and pulled him closer to me.

He pressed soft kisses on my neck. I closed my eyes eager in anticipation. Once I felt his lip on my sensitive spot, a deep moan escaped me.

"Tell me, baby!" he demanded, nibbling on my pleasure zone. "Gautham," I groaned, not able to bear his teasing.

"Can you take all of this??" he asked, kissing my chin. His tongue traced my lower lip, making me shiver. I desperately wanted to taste him.

"Tell me!" he demanded again. "Yes! Yes! I can" I groaned, already wanting his lips on mine. I quickly crashed my lips on his. I felt him smirk. His tongue played a sensual game against mine, making my blood boil.

His hands crawled up my waist, gripping me. I passed my fingers through his soft hair, knowing he loses it when I do that. I felt his cold fingers moving under my tank top, creating electric contact with my skin.

"I want you, Shakthi!" he groaned against my lips, pushing me against the vanity table and making me sit on it. Things from the table fell to the floor. I wrapped my legs around his waist.

"I'm all yours," I said and he started nuzzling on my neck, making me moan. He pulled my top off me. His fingers traced my skin, making my toes curl. My heart beat faster and he opened the catch of my bra. It landed on the floor with my top.

I tried to hide my breasts with my hand, but he stopped me. "You look beautiful," he whispered as his hand claimed one of my breasts and teased its peak. "Gautham!" I held his t-shirt in my fists, not being able to take the sweet torture.

Desire started to stir in my belly. "Take it off." I breathed, trying to pull his t-shirt off him. I wanted to feel him. He yanked his t-shirt off and I let my fingers memorize his delicious muscley arms and toned six pack.

"I don't want my first time to be on a dressing table," I said and he chuckled. He carried me and lay me on the bed.

His silvery grey eyes were nearly black with need and passion. I felt his boner nudging my thigh, making me blush. He started to kiss my lips and I felt his fingers pull my sweat pants off.

He kissed my eyelids and his lips slowly trailed south, but once he reached my bellybutton he started to tease me, making my body arch. Suddenly I felt his lips kiss the scar on my pelvic bone, which made my eyes flutter. I had got it due to an accident which thankfully ended with just a few stitches. It

was an ugly scar, though.

"How did you get this?" he asked, looking into my eyes.

"That is not important," I said, pulling him up to kiss him.

Soon we were skin to skin with all our clothes on the floor. He looked into my eyes for approval when he was about to enter me. I was more than ready. When he seemed to get what he wanted, he started to enter me. "This is going to hurt a bit, baby," he whispered and he thrust very slowly inside me and I felt his entire length entering me. The unbearable pain made me grip his shoulders with my nails almost marking his skin. "I'm sorry, Shakthi! Shall I stop?" he asked, kissing away my tears.

"No! Go on!" I said, knowing it would get better and in a few minutes it was beyond better. Indescribable pleasure took over. The entire apartment was filled with our moans and groans. I gripped the sheets when I felt my stomach clench, knees weaken and toes curl when I was reaching my peak. He made me come undone and see the stars in a few seconds and I moaned his name. In the next few seconds, I saw the most beautiful sight in front of me when he closed his eyes shuddering in pleasure as he came undone.

"You have no idea what you mean to me, Gautham," I whispered as we lay naked and tangled beneath the comforter, with my head resting on his chest as his fingers trailed over my spine.

He smiled at me and kissed me on my forehead. "Trust me, I do!" he said and we slept peacefully in each other's arms.

\*\*\*

The next morning was the best morning I ever woke up to when I felt his lips press on my temple. My eyes slowly opened to catch him staring at me with an adorable smile.

"Good morning, beautiful." He smiled and pecked my lips.

"I know, I look like I mess," I complained with a slow grumble.

"You're the most beautiful woman I've ever met," he said, and his fingers

played along my arm.

I felt my cheeks turn hot.. This feeling was never going to cease.

"Shakthi, I really am sorry to have hurt you all the while! I should have told you everything before. But ,I thought it would all get sorted out within a few days and if I tell all this to you, it would be an unnecessary stress on you. That was why I didn't say a -"

I placed my finger on his lip. "Never think of it as a stress on me! Your every problem is mine! It has to go through me before it can get to you! I would never allow you to face it alone!"

He smiled. "I'm so lucky to have you in my life!" He kissed me and his fingers traced my scar. "How did you get that scar?" he asked.

I rolled my eyes. "Is it that important?" I asked.

"It is, to me," he said.

"Fine, I met with an accident a few years back. Since I forgot to wear the seatbelt, I was thrown out of the car and something pierced into my stomach that tore the skin almost making the bone in the pelvic area visible. But, the doctors assured me that it was nothing deep and that it would get cured with a few stitches and so, that ugly scar!"

"It isn't ugly! It's beautiful! You're beautiful!" he said, kissing the tip of my nose.

"Remind me to get your eyes checked." I slapped his shoulder playfully.

"Isn't it too sunny for an early morning?" I asked, not remembering my alarm ringing on a Monday morning.

He laughed. "It's ten now," he said.

"But, my alarm! It didn't ring!" I said, checking my phone. I had an office to go to!

"It did! But, you looked like you really needed some sleep and so I switched it off."



"Hmm... Maybe I can use a day off. My office can function without me." I settled more comfortably on his chest as he wrapped his arms around my waist.

"But I have somewhere, to take you. Why don't you shower and get dressed?"

"Is it a must that we have to go today?" I asked lazily.

"I can always make you have your shower! Remember?" he asked.

I stood up, draping the duvet around my naked body when I felt a sharp pain hit my lower abdomen.

"Is it hurting?" he asked.

I took a few more steps to the bathroom when the pain slowly diminished. "I can manage," I said and slipped into the shower, letting the most beautiful night of my life replay in my head. The moment when we became one, made me shiver even now. The way he looked at me, the way he held me, the way he asked if he should stop, the way he cared for me, the way we fitted together perfectly. Everything made my heart flutter. I wouldn't have wanted to lose my virginity to any other man or in any other way. He was the one.

But, one thing kept bothering me was that, I didn't bleed. But, the blood would've really spoilt the mood. Good that I didn't bleed. All this was too perfect to be real. I was entirely his now by heart, body and soul.

But, we just have to get that Natasha out of our lives. I made a mental note to find about her doctor, from Gautham.

I stepped out of the bathroom with my towel tied around my body and just then I saw a beautiful purple saree lying on the bed. A note was left on top of it. I went and picked the note and it read,

*'I know you like purple! Get dressed for me in this, though I like you better without anything- Gautham.'*

The words made me blush. He was never going to stop his antics, was he?

The beautiful purple saree, clung on to my curves and the color

complimented my skin tone. The blouse was done with a boat neck in the front, but still leaving my entire back bare and held together with a dori. The sleeves were transparent purple, sticking to my hands covering the entire length.

The thin black bordering on the purple saree gave it an elegant and rich look. I did the same with my eye shadow. I used a purple inside the lid and finished the corners with a tinge of black. My kajal brought out the life in my eyes. My lips were swollen due to last night's encounter and I yearned to leave it like that. But I had to look decent, so I applied a light pink gloss which had a cherry taste. I blow dried my hair and curled the ends and straightened my bangs in the front. I gathered my hair and left it lying on one side of my shoulder. I completed the outfit with traditional silver jhumkas.

I slipped into a black peep toe heel and just when I grabbed my purse and adjusted my pallu, I heard his deep voice almost scaring the shit out of me.

"You look gorgeous," he said.

"Shit! You scared me!!" I breathed heavily. He was in a dark blue tux that stuck to his muscles, making my jaw drop. He looked sinfully sexy.

I didn't notice when his face was inching mine until his lips touched mine and pecked me lightly. "Ready to leave?" he asked, holding his hand out to me.

"More than ever," I said and nervously took his waiting hand.

\*\*\*

Our drive was filled with funny conversation and it was too perfect. That was when Natasha crossed my mind.

"Where was Natasha admitted, Gautham?"

Suddenly the smile that adorned his lips disappeared and his muscles tensed.

"Lifeline hospital," he said dismissively. My friend, Ashika was a doctor at the same hospital, but at the Bangalore branch. Maybe she could be of some help.

"Can we meet her doctor?"

"Do you think it's a good idea?" He sulked.

"Yea, otherwise how will we be able to help her?"

"Fine, maybe we can meet him in a day or so. I will fix an appointment," he said.

\*\*\*

The car came to a halt in front of a big hi-tech building. It looked like some big firm. The security guards came running to us and he handed over the keys for the parking. Why was he being respected so much here?

We were surrounded by four body guards. It was starting to frighten me.

"Gautham? What is happening?"

He held me by my waist. "Just wait and watch," he said and we were ushered into a big reception area. Everything screamed money. There were employees dressed in their suits and all their eyes were fixed on us and it was creeping me out.

We stood in the middle of the reception area, facing a wall. There was a granite piece engraved in the center, covered with a satin curtain.

"Good morning, ma'am." A guy dressed in his slacks and crisp white shirt held out a tray with a remote placed on it.

"Pick up the control," Gautham ordered me. What was happening? I was tongue tied and obediently followed.

"Press this button," Gautham said, pointing at an orange button that was big and looked catchy on the white remote control.

"Okay." I gasped and I pressed the button as the curtain hiding the granite piece opened up and I heard a huge '*congratulations*' chorus and all my family and friends started to come into the reception.

I read the carvings on the granite wall and that told me all! The building I was

standing in was an audit firm! It was named as '*Sharp and Measure*'. The founders list had mine and Gautham's names on it!

"Congratulations, dear!" My mom pulled me into a hug.

"Thanks mom!" I murmured and I pulled out of the hug.

"Gautham, I need to talk to you," I ordered, not minding the people around me.

"Of course, sweetheart, come," he said and we went into a room and that looked like a conference hall.

"Did you like my surprise?" he asked, holding my waist and looking down into my eyes.

"Surprise? Gautham, are you mad? Did you even think of making this decision with me? I would have never refused to this idea! But, you never bothered to include me in your plans!" I shouted, breaking away from his arms.

"No, Shakthi! That is not true! I just wanted to surprise you. After all that I made you go through, during the last month, I really wanted to do something for you and this seemed perfect!"

"We made plans, remember, that we would start a firm together after a few years? I wanted to be a part of every step we take. I wanted both of us to build this firm together and not to be surprised like this!" I said, with tears running down my eyes.

"Baby! No! Shh! Shh! Don't cry! This whole surprise was to make you happy and not cry!" He wiped my tears and pulled me to his chest. "I will dissolve the firm! Don't worry!"

I pulled out of his arms "Gautham! This is your problem! You just jump to a decision without even asking me! We are in this marriage together! It's not, only you or only me! Together we are in this! *Together*."

"I understand! Tell me! What do you want to do now? I will do what you say!"

"Look! You didn't understand me! I don't want you to do what I want. I want *us* to do it together!"

"Shakthi! Stop being so difficult!" he said, rubbing his forehead.

"If my expression of my feelings makes you think that I am being difficult! Then I'll never express anything, Gautham! Your surprise was amazing Mr. Millionaire's son!" I turned to leave.

But, he pulled me. "I didn't mean that! Tell me! What shall we do now?" he asked, holding my shoulders.

"Honestly, I don't know!"

He sighed. "Shakthi! You wanted us to build this firm together. But, it is yet to be started. It can start to function only when you are with me. It's people in here who matter and not this damn building. We have just opened it and it is going to be a long journey. But, this is not going to happen unless you are there with me in my every step. Will you be on my side?"

"I will," I said with a smile that reached my eyes. After such words, any human who refuses was heartless.

He let a huge breath of relief. "Thank you, my lady," he said and claimed my lips in a sweet kiss.

"Sharp and Measure is registered under your name," he said, holding my face tenderly in his soft hands.

"Hmm, I will make sure to register it under yours," I said.

"No! Don't do that!" he said.

"Relax! I won't! Just kidding!" I pecked his lips.

We joined all the others at the reception. Shalini was glued to Karan. They looked cute together. She hugged me the moment she saw me coming out. My long lost best friend was finally found! I was glad!

When I met Ankitha, the first thing she asked me was, "Did you lose your virginity?"

How did she know? Was it that evident on my face? "Whew! Hold on! Why do you think like that?" I asked.

"You have this twinkle in your eye which is so unlike you, you are literally stuck to Gautham every minute and the love bite, there," she said, pointing a finger at my neck. "All that is a label, on your face, screaming, '*guys, I just lost my virginity*'. "

"You're wrong! I am still a virgin!" I said. I wanted to see her disappointed look.

"Oh! That's bad! But, that day isn't that far!" she said and had the exact look on her face that I wanted to see, but she quickly covered it up with excitement.

"I hate it when you're right, you know?"

"What do you mean?" she asked, raising her eyebrow suspiciously.

"I am not a virgin anymore."

"I knew it! I knew it! Come here!!" She crushed my bones with her hug.

I was also surprised to meet Kabir there. He had come with his current girlfriend Ridhi. I made a good conversation with them, not pondering there for too long, knowing it might hurt Gautham. But, who invited Kabir??

After talking with Kabir, I joined Gautham who was talking to Karan and Sharad. He wrapped his arm possessively around my waist and kissed me on my lips.

Arun had taken care of the guest list and no wonder why Kabir was present! I further got to know that Sri was literally forced into completing her paper work and that was why we had to babysit Ria, while poor Sri had to work even on a Sunday. And what embarrassed me even more was that I didn't know what to say when Sri asked me what surprise I was planning for Gautham on his birthday! I didn't even know his birthdate! She understood when I told her about it and she also said that his birthday was just a week away. So that really calls for a surprise party and loads of planning.

Gautham showed me my cabin and I was excited seeing it. The glass walls which gave a beautiful view of the city were the best.

"Thank you," I said, closing the automatic curtains of the walls.

"For?"

"This surprise, maybe I just over reacted! But, I had dreams, you know! To build a firm with you and when I knew that it wasn't going to happen again, I wasn't able to take it! But, I am really touched by your motive to surprise me!"

"No! You didn't over react! But, I didn't expect that kind of a reaction from you either!" he said, settling on my chair and pulling me on to his lap.

"Maybe, you didn't expect this either," I said as I fused my lips with his. Our tongues connected and danced together in the battle which I preferred to lose. He groaned and that made me bite his lip. His hands slowly moved to my blouse and he teased me over my breast making me moan into the kiss.

Just then, the door to my cabin flew open. "Oh shit! I am! Uh! Really sorry," Ankitha said and she quickly walked away. I pulled myself away from Gautham. "I thought I locked the door!" he said as I adjusted my saree.

"Clearly, you didn't!" I said, rolling my eyes! She was never going to stop teasing me with this!

Our eventful night came to an end with our passionate love making, filling the flat with our moans.

\*\*\*

The next day was unusually pleasant. Gautham had managed to fix an appointment with Natasha's doctor for this evening. And currently, we were in the hospital's elevator after finishing our talk with the doctor. Everything what the doctor told us seemed to be the truth and he spoke very confidently until he refused to show me Natasha's reports when I asked him. Gautham was the one who admitted her and he had every right to see them. But, the doctor clearly refused saying that it was against the hospital rules.

Just then the elevator dinged and we stepped out and I bumped into Ashika!

"Ashika!!" I gasped and she hugged me.

"How are you, Shakthi??"

"I'm fine and what brings you to Chennai?"

"Just a boring seminar!" she said. "Won't you introduce me to this handsome man by your side?" she asked.

"He is Gautham, my husband! And she is Ashika, my school friend," I said, introducing them to each other. They shook hands, smiling at each other which made me fume. I cleared my throat when Gautham quickly excused himself to talk to some business associate on his phone.

"I know that you're married! But, you didn't tell me he was sexy as hell!" she said.

"Shut up, idiot!" I said, lightly hitting her head as she laughed. "Can you do me favor?" I asked.

"Of course, tell me!" she said, adjusting her spectacles properly.

I gave her Natasha's details and asked her to get the reports for me. She quickly accepted, saying it would be done in a week or two.

I just hope that I get it on time! I really wanted to know what those reports contained. The doctor was definitely hiding something and I was sure of it!



## **Chapter 45-Surprising Him**

### **Shakthi's POV**

This was my last month at the office and it was going to be hectic since I had so much to finish. I couldn't wait to get to work at mine and Gautham's firm.

I was reviewing the internal audit report when Ankitha called.

"Yea Ankitha?" I answered, rubbing my forehead. I really didn't feel that good. Gautham had cooked our breakfast and added the fish sauce mistaking it for soya sauce which made me throw up.

"Did you forget? You asked me to remind you about your meeting with the party organizers."

"Damn! I totally forgot," I said, shutting my laptop and grabbing my purse to leave.

"Don't panic. Leave now and drive safe," she said and hung up.

Gautham's birthday was tomorrow. I had initially decided that I would organize the entire party on my own. But since I wasn't feeling that well, I found an organizer. I had already sent the invitations to all our family and friends. There was no looking back. I really didn't want to spoil Gautham's birthday just because of my health. It had to be special.

Sri had already warned me that Gautham doesn't like celebrating his birthdays. But I had this feeling that he was going to enjoy this one.

I met the organizers and told them my requirements. It was just going to be a small party at our home. So they didn't find it tough to accept the order with such short notice and I paid them.

I drove to our audit firm to surprise Gautham. This was just the third time that I was going to our firm. The second time I went to have lunch with him and we ended up getting hot on his office table. I smiled whenever I thought about it.

He was super stressed with all his work. He returned home late every night

and it made me feel very guilty because I wasn't able to help. And moreover, Natasha's bugging texts and calls weren't really helping him.

I didn't tell him about how weird I felt when Natasha's doctor refused to show us the reports. I tried contacting Ashika many times, but I couldn't reach her. She had initially asked for two weeks. So I just hope that I get to know about the reports, as soon as possible.

I parked my car and took the private elevator to his cabin. The elevator dinged and I walked towards his secretary, in her early forties, and she greeted me. She had warmth in her eyes and a lovely smile.

"Is he busy?" I asked.

"Yea. He gave me strict instructions that he doesn't want anyone disturbing him. But I know that he is always free for you," she said, winking.

I felt my cheeks flush. I thought his office walls were soundproof. I tried not to moan but when I felt his hands on me, the story was totally different. He makes me forget the entire world around me.

"Uh..just don't tell him that I am here," I said with a stupid smile on my face and left her cubicle.

His room was closed, so I knocked on his door.

"Come in," he said.

I opened the door and locked it behind me. He stood with his back to me, looking through a file.

I tiptoed to where he was standing and looped my arms around his torso. "I missed you," I mumbled.

"That was a pleasant surprise," he said, turning to face me.

His black tie hung loose from his collar. His sleeves were folded up his elbows. His hair was in a slight mess but still it looked great. He looked really stressed out. A pang of guilt hit me.

"I am really sorry, I couldn't help you in this," I said.

"Why are you sorry Shakthi? It's just a matter of a few weeks and you will be with me ." A devilish grin played on his face.

"Mhmm," I mumbled as his lips claimed mine in a mind numbing kiss. His strong arms pulled me closer.

I tugged at his hair and he groaned.

"You are such a tease," his deep throaty voice vibrated against my lips.

"Hmm." I moaned as his hand travelled under my knee length pencil skirt. I felt my knees weaken as his hands created small circles on my thighs.

His phone rang and he silently cursed as he went to answer it. It made me chuckle.

It sounded like it would take a while, so I sat on his chair and made a list of items that I had to buy for the party. I decided to take a day off tomorrow and take care of the party arrangements. He hung up after about fifteen minutes.

"So, what brought my beautiful wife here?" he asked, taking the chair opposite to me.

"Do I need a reason to visit you?" I asked.

He laughed and it became my most favorite sound. "It's not every day a queen is at my doorstep."

"I am here to meet my King," I said with a smirk.

"So, I am your king?" he asked, raising his eyebrow which made my heart flutter.

I took a sip from his water.

"How are you feeling?" he asked.

"Good! Why? What's wrong with me?"

"Remember breakfast?" he said.

"Oh! I'm feeling better now! But always you're the one to make me throw up

with this fish thing."

"I'm so sorry! I should've concentrated."

"Relax! I'm okay now!"

"I asked you to rest! But you were so stubborn as ever," he scolded.

He sighed and sat down. It shocked me as to how the mood had entirely taken a full turn.

Time flew by as I helped him with a few reports. I knew it was totally against my professional ethics, but I couldn't bear to see him so stressed.

After completing the work at the office, we ended our night with a nice dinner with Shalini and Karan.

The moment we got home, we changed and crashed on our beds, letting sleep take us.

The next morning, I was woken up by my alarm. It was six.

It made me spring up from the bed. Today was Gautham's birthday! I texted everyone not to wish Gautham and let it be a surprise until the party.

If everybody acted as if they forgot his birthday and surprise him at the party, it would make him really happy!

I looked at him. His innocent face made my heart do a little somersault. I raked my fingers through his soft hair and pressed a kiss on his temple. How did Natasha even try to hurt this innocent soul? And that reminded me.

I called Ashika. "Pick up! Pick up," I muttered.

"Hey Shakthi!" came her chirpy voice.

"I am really sorry! Did I wake you?"

"No! I had an emergency. I finished the surgery just a few minutes ago," she said as I heard some shuffling.

"I tried contacting you so many times. But you weren't reachable. Are things

good? Is there any problem?"

"No, no! My so called waterproof phone fell into the water and it wouldn't work. I had given it for a service and got it back just yesterday."

"Ooh! Are you busy now or shall I talk later?"

"Tell me! What is it?"

"Do you remember about Natasha and her reports?"

"Oh yea! I had asked my friend to take a copy of it and she also told me that she had it done! I will get them from her and send it to you tomorrow, yea?"

"Thank you so much Ashika!"

"Anytime Shakthi! Hey listen; there is something I have to attend to. Will talk to you soon!"

"Yeah! Sure, bye." I hung up.

Finally! Something was going my way.

I drove to gym and an incident crossed my mind. The first fight me and Gautham had was because of how he wanted to know if I was going to a unisex gym. It was starting to make sense why he created a big scene over such a small thing. Natasha started to cheat on Gautham with that Amit who was a physical trainer at the gym. He was scared of history repeating itself and he was scared that I would cheat on him!

I just want this Natasha out of our lives!

Once I reached the gym, I started working out. When I started running on the treadmill, I felt slightly nauseous. I quickly stopped it and ran to the washroom to throw up. I washed my face and wiped it dry with a towel and relaxed by taking deep breaths.

I had no more energy in me to work out. I looked at my phone and had a message from Gautham.

*'I'm leaving home. Will meet you in the evening. I've cooked a proper breakfast without fish. Do eat before you leave.'*

His message made me smile.

*'I will.'* I texted back.

I drove home and called Shalini and Ankitha for help and texted them the list of things that they had to buy. They told me that they would come home in a few minutes.

I used the time to shower and eat.

Soon Shalini and Ankitha joined me as did the party organizers. They started decorating our huge hall under Shalini's instructions.

Me and Ankitha were baking the white forest cake. I was really thrilled about it. I just hope it turns out the way I wanted it to.

Shalini called us to have a look at the decorations. We had chosen the white and red theme. I liked it so much. It was simple but nice. All in all, Gautham loved simple things so he would definitely like this, I hoped!

Time flew by and our cake turned out really well and I just couldn't wait to dig into it!

It was almost five to six and the organizers started to bring in the dinner. The buffet table was neatly arranged. I made sure that there was no alcohol because there would be children.

"Girls! We've got to get dressed before the guests arrive," Shalini screeched.

"I'm doing your hair and makeup!" Ankitha said, pointing her finger at me.

"Thank you so much!" I said, side hugging her.

"I don't know what I would have done without you girls!" I said and Shalini joined the hug.

I was sweating like a pig. So I decided to have a shower and rinse my hair before dressing up. After having my shower, I wiped myself dry and wore my

bathrobe. Shalini showered in the guest room while Ankitha and me decided to share our master bedroom.

When I hopped out, Ankitha went in to have her shower. I blow dried my hair and took the saree that I was going to wear today. Yes! I chose a saree. Gautham liked me in sarees and he preferred to see me in them, when the occasion was really special. So I chose a full black netted saree. It had some intricate designs on it and it looked rich in its own way.

After wearing my black inner skirt and my black lace blouse, I started draping the saree neatly. I made small pleats on the saree and pinned the pallu over my blouse.

"You look sexy!" Ankitha said. She was wrapped up in a towel with her hair still wet.

"Thanks." I smiled. "You also get dressed up soon!" I hurried her.

"Yea! Your turn now! I am going to go nude," she said.

"You done?" I asked after a few minutes.

"Yea, you can turn now," she said, pinning up her pallu. She looked really beautiful in her olive green designer saree.

"Time to do your hair and makeup!" she said, making me sit in front of the vanity table.

Minutes passed by as Ankitha was doing my make-up. "Shakthi!! His parents and your parents have already come," I Shalini called.

"Ankitha! Hurry up!"

"Yea! Just a minute!" she said, finishing it off with the lipstick.

I had a quick look at myself in the mirror and it made me gasp. I looked beautiful and my eyes refused to believe that it was me.

My face wasn't caked up with heavy make-up. It was light, yet beautiful. She had used a thin layer concealer and it made my skin look more flawless. A pink blush was evident on my cheeks and the blush looked natural on my

skin. The bright red lipstick was the perfect combination with the black saree. My hair was plaited in a fishtail with my flicks curled in front. It all looked perfect and the black stoned earring which I had borrowed from Ankitha also looked really good.

"What do you think?" Ankitha asked

"Amazing!" I said and I hugged her.

"Go and receive your guests while I get dressed up," she said, chasing me away.

I went and greeted my family and Gautham's. Just then Ria came running up to me.

"You look pwettyy," she squealed. I knelt down in front of her. "Thank you baby. You look pretty too." I kissed her rosy cheeks.

"Where is your mom?" I asked her, searching around for Sri and finding her nowhere.

"She is parking the car," she said.

Soon everyone arrived and I spent a few minutes thanking all his friends who made it. But it was almost five minutes past eight and Gautham hadn't arrived. Was he still stuck at work? Usually he comes a little late. I just hoped today was an exception! Just then, our landline phone rang.

I quickly answered it. "Madam, it's security." I had asked him to call our flat when Gautham comes. So, has he come?

"Yea?" I asked

"Sir has arrived," he said

"Thank you," I said, hanging up.

"Guys! Gautham has come! You all know what to do, right?" I immediately went and locked the front door.

All stayed quiet. My heart beat faster. I just hoped he'd like the surprise. The



bell rang.

I went and opened the door and everyone shouted '*surprise*' in a chorus.

Gautham stood there speechless. He was dressed in a silvery grey suit matching his eyes and they caught mine. 'Surprise' I mouthed and all my nervousness was washed away with the heart stopping smile that appeared on his angelic face.

"Happiee burdayy unclee Gautham!!" Ria came running to him and hugged his knees.

"Thank you, sweetheart!" He laughed and picked her up.

His other arm wrapped around my waist and he whispered, "thank you, baby."

"Give some attention to your guests as well!" Sri said in a teasing tone and got Ria out of his arms. I tried to wriggle out of his arms but his grip was too strong.

"She deserves all my attention in the world, sissy," he said, looking deep into my soul. A single look from him made my knees weak.

Soon the party got going. He really seemed to enjoy it. The party seemed to be the positive change he needed.

Meanwhile, I went to the kitchen to get the cake for Gautham to cut.

Just then, I felt a strong arm wrap around my waist. "Do you know how irresistible you look?" Gautham's lips grazed my neck.

"Hmm," I moaned.

His tongue licked my earlobe making me shiver. I turned to face him. His dark eyes carried unmistakable desire and passion. His hands danced on my bare waist, making me cling on to him. His seductive touch made my heart pound. His lips claimed mine in a punishing kiss. I held him like he was my savior. His tongue did wonders. He started biting my lips and smoothened them with his tongue making me moan. He made me sit on the kitchen

counter without breaking the kiss. I sucked on his bottom lip just when we heard someone clearing his throat.

I quickly pulled away and got down from the counter. My cheeks turned red. Karan stood there smirking. "Get a room, guys!" he said and walked away.

"Happy birthday!" I wished Gautham and he gave a peck on the lips.

"You didn't have to do all this, you know!" he said as I paced around the kitchen to get the cake set. But his words made me stop.

"You can start a firm under my name and surprise me, but I can't give you a surprise party?"

"So, you're doing all this just in return?"

"What? No! Sri told me that you don't like celebrating your birthdays. It is the day you came into this world. I wouldn't have found my man if it wasn't for this day! That was why I wanted to celebrate! And I will keep celebrating this day every year, until my last breath-" he placed his finger on my lips, stopping me

"Don't say that!" he said and kissed me on my forehead. "I'm so lucky to have you."

Ankitha's loud voice interrupted. "Time to cut the cake guys!!"

"Yepp! Coming right up!" I said and pulled Gautham along with me, signaling Ankitha to bring the cake.

He cut the huge white forest cake. He found it really childish when I told him that he was going to cut it. This was how you celebrate birthdays, right?

"Why do you have such a look on your face?" Ankitha's voice interrupted my thoughts.

"Uh..no! Gautham just found the whole cake cutting thing to be a bit childish. Was it childish?" I asked

"Shakthi! Chill! He is celebrating his birthday after so many years and maybe that was why. But trust me, it isn't childish" she assured me.

"This cake is amazingg," Ria said, in the arms of her uncle. He held her so carefully and it made my heart melt. I could visualize our baby in his arms.

He wiped cream off her lips and tucked her hair behind her ears. He had this amazing connection with children and he seemed to love them. I just can't wait to have our baby. The thought was too real and I already wanted to enjoy the feeling of being a mother.

"They look adorable together, right?" Ankitha commented.

"Yea.." I trailed off.

"He seems to love children. When are you planning to give us the big news?" she asked, wiggling her eyebrows.

Suddenly, an awful smell filled the air or was it only me who found it that way. It was the smell of garlic from the buffet.

"You alright? You don't look good!" Ankitha said, holding me by my shoulders.

"This smell. It's so awful! I need some air," I said and we both went to the balcony.

I sat there taking deep breaths. I felt a lot better in a few minutes.

"Shakthi." Ankitha gasped.

I looked at her and she was looking down from the balcony to the parking lot, shocked. I followed her gaze.

I saw Gautham standing under the lights along with Natasha and from what I saw, they were kissing.

## **Chapter 46-Promises**

### **Shakthi's POV**

I saw Gautham standing under the lights along with Natasha and from what I saw, they were kissing.

The earth seemed to spin ferociously around me. Tears pricked my eyes. My heart stopped beating and I felt the bile rising up my throat. I ran back to my room, followed by Ankitha.

"Shakthi! Are you okay?" Ankitha asked.

"I am," I muttered and wiped my tears away.

"Sit here, come," she said, making me sit on the bed.

"Drink this," she said, handing me a glass of water.

"I am fine!" I snapped at her.

She froze, shocked.

"Sorry!" I whispered, crashing on the bed and bursting into tears.

"Who is she?" she asked, sitting beside me and wiping away my tears.

"Natasha," I said under my breath. "She was Gautham's girlfriend," I said and looked at her.

"Care to enlighten me?" she asked.

I took a deep breath and told her the entire episode. "And now I am scared if Gautham still feels for Natasha."

"Why do you want to help her? You needn't be selfless all the time Shakthi! You have to be selfish when it comes to your husband!" she said, shaking me by my shoulders.

"She needs to get her memory back Ankitha! Gautham feels guilty about her accident and I need to bring him out of the guilt. So I need to help her out! So in a way, I am selfish."

"So the kiss you witnessed is a result of your help," she said sarcastically, folding her arms.

"I trust him! He isn't going to leave me for her. I know that he hasn't fallen in love with me, but he respects our marriage."

"Then why did that kiss hurt you? Gautham is still pretending to be her boyfriend so he will have to kiss her," she said

"I know! But a part of me dies when I see her with him. I am scared! What if Gautham starts falling for her again."

"Shakthi! You just told me that you trust him, but now! Ugh! You are unbelievable!!" she said

"You are right. I should trust him and I do! If he really cared for me, he would tell me all about the kiss, on his own," I said, wiping away my tears.

"I really hope that he deserves all your trust and love," she said, pulling me into a hug. "Let's go out before anyone notices your absence," Ankitha said and we walked out and joined the party.

The moment I entered the hall, my eyes searched for Gautham but I found him nowhere. Was he still with Natasha? The mere thought made my heart twist.

Gautham made his appearance only when the guests started to leave. What took him so long? This party was for him and he wasn't here.

"Are you sure, you'll be okay?" Ankitha whispered in my ear while hugging me.

"Yea," I replied.

"Take care," she said, pulling away from the hug, leaving me and Gautham alone in our big empty house.

His eyes showed his guilt, but in spite of it he looked boldly into my eyes. "I liked the party."

"You need not pretend like you liked it," I said, moving to the bedroom

without waiting for his reply.

I heard his footsteps follow me to the bedroom. "What do you mean? I really loved it!"

I turned to face him. "Yeah! You enjoyed it so much that you didn't even stay," I said, making sure that sarcasm was evident in my tone.

He walked across the room to the balcony. His fingers raked through his hair and this was a big sign that he was disturbed.

I walked to the balcony and stood facing him. He refused to look into my eyes. I lifted his chin and made him look at me. "What is it?"

"Shakthi! I really shouldn't have done this to you! But I had no choice."

"I don't understand."

"When I was in the party, I suddenly received Natasha's text which said that she wanted to meet me and that she was waiting in the parking lot." He paused to look at my reaction.

I maintained a very neutral face.

"When I wanted to tell you about it, you weren't around so I decided to go and meet her. She kissed me saying that it was her right. I had to pretend and kiss her. It wasn't even real Shakthi! I was just pretending," he said, his eyes yearned for me to believe him.

"I know." I couldn't help but smile.

"You know?"

"Yeah, I saw."

"You saw?"

"Yeah. I came for some air to the balcony when I saw her kiss you," I explained.

"I am really sorry that you had to witness that. I know how it would have felt.

But trust me, I was just putting on an act!" he said, looking deep into my eyes wanting me trust him and forgive him.

"I do Gautham! I do trust you!" I said and stood on my toes to press my lips on his. This kiss was filled with passion, trust and love. We kissed like this was our last kiss. His lips moved over mine with so much intensity that it sent butterflies flying in my belly. He had my heart, every bit of it.

We pulled apart. His forehead rested on mine. "That was a fucking real kiss," he said and gave another quick kiss on the tip of my nose.

He took my hand. "I'm really sorry that I am putting you through all this! This isn't fair on you," he said

"It's okay! It does hurt a bit but it doesn't matter. Okay? Relax!!" I said.

"There is something more Shakthi," he said.

I knew it!

"What is it?" I asked.

"She wants me to divorce you during this week and wants me to marry her as soon as possible," he replied.

"What did you say?"

"I had no choice Shakthi! I had to accept. She was really demanding and her state of health left me no option."

Tears welled up in my eyes. "That's flipping great! So, you have finally made the choice between me and her! It has always been her, right? What are you waiting for? Divorce me then," I shouted, pushing him away.

"Are you crazy? It was never a choice between you and her! It has always been you! Do you get that? Only 'YOU'" he said, holding my shoulders.

"Gautham!! What do you mean? You are saying that you are going to divorce me and get married to her but you are also saying that you have chosen me over her!"

"I didn't choose you over her. She was not even an option. You are all I have."

"Now that is not the point of our discussion."

"Shakthi! I'm not going to divorce you for real! I am just going to pretend in front of her that we have divorced and-"

"And eventually marry her," I completed.

"Will you allow me to finish?" he shouted and his tone made me flinch.

He regained his composure and continued. "I am going to tell her that I won't marry her until she regains her memory. So once she regains her memory she will know that it's not me who she loves." Hurt dripped in his voice.

It hurt to know that he still had feelings for someone who cheated on him and betrayed him. She made him lose all his faith in love and yet he had feelings for her.

"You think that the entire divorce act will help her regain her memory?"

"We can only try," he said.

"I'm really scared," I confessed.

"Why, baby?" he asked, cupping my face.

"The divorce act shouldn't create a distance between us," I said, worried.

"That will never happen," he said, caressing my cheek with his thumb.

"How are you so sure? I am still having second thoughts about the act."

"Trust me Shakthi! I trust you with my heart and soul now! I already made a mistake by not trusting you. I know for sure that this act won't create a space between us! Just trust me!" he said and I felt like believing all his words.

"I do trust you" I said, smiling and pushing away all my negative thoughts.

He smiled from ear to ear, making my heart skip a beat. "Did you have your dinner?"



"Yeah," I lied. I didn't feel like eating.

"Liar."

"No! I really had my dinner," I said, trying to sound convincing.

"You are not that good at lying Shakthi! You are an open book! So wait until I get the dinner for you," he said, leaving me to get it.

I moved into the room and sat on the bed. Like I had thought, he forced the food down my throat and I actually felt better after the dinner.

He went to change. That was when I was reminded about the watch that I had bought him. I had kept it buried under my clothes. I opened the closet and took the box. It was a rolex watch and I had the words '*You and me-forever*' engraved in gold letters, inside the dial.

The bathroom door opened. I hid the box behind me. He was wearing only his boxers which were hanging low on his narrow waist. His naked and delicious six pack was on display. Droplets of water slipped down his chest, disappearing into his boxers. My hands ached to trace his glistening skin.

"Up here, baby! My eyes are up here," he said.

He walked closer. My heart beat fast against my ribcage.

I felt his tall figure towering over me. His cologne invaded my nostrils.

"What do you have there?" he asked and his hot breath fanned across my neck. His hands moved over my hand where I was holding the box.

"Your gift," I replied, holding it out to him. Surprise was written all over his face.

"Okay." He chuckled and took the box from my hand. He opened it, picked up the watch and looked at it. His expression went from surprise to shock and then to love? Or maybe, I was just imagining it all.

"You like it?" I asked and my voice was a mix of nervousness and eagerness.

He placed the watch on the dresser and looked at me again. Didn't he like it?

But his expressions told me that he did! He pressed his lips against mine, giving me the earth shattering kiss of my life.

"Forever, Shakthi," he whispered against my lips and my heart swelled in happiness. I held on to his narrow waist and kissed him harder while his fingers travelled up my hair, smashing our bodies together. His tongue danced over mine.

My fingers grazed his irresistible abs and traced his flawless torso which earned a throaty groan from him. "You are going to be the death of me." He grunted and kissed my nape, nibbling on my sensitive zone. I held his biceps tightly, with my nails almost piercing his skin.

His lips continued the same sweet assault all over my neck and collarbone while his fingers travelled to my bare stomach under my saree, teasing my navel. I threw my head back and moaned his name, unable to take it anymore. "Make... make love to me Gautham." My breathing was labored when I let the words out.

His head dipped down and I felt his hot breath on my sensitive spot behind my ear. "Your wish is my command, ma'am." His voice vibrated and his tongue licked my earlobe. A jolt of electricity ran through me at that contact. He slowly scooped me up in his arms and placed me on the bed. Our wonderful night came to an end with hours and hours of passionate love making.

I woke up to a bright morning with the sound of my annoying alarm ringing. I felt Gautham stir beneath me, so I quietly rolled from Gautham's chest to the other side of the bed, picked up my phone and dismissed the alarm.

I felt totally sick and exhausted. So I decided to skip the gym and make a nice breakfast.

I got out of bed and slipped on a sky blue shirt of Gautham's. I was able to smell him and his intoxicating cologne. I loved the feeling of his shirt on me.

After brushing my teeth and washing my face, I walked to the kitchen to fix myself a hot cup of milo.

I felt a pair of strong arms wrap around my waist scaring the shit out of me.

It took me a moment to realize they were Gautham's.

"You scared me!" I screeched as he laid his chin on my shoulder, pressing his chest firmly against my back.

"Mmm," he said, nuzzling into the crook of my neck.

My fingers traced slow patterns on his arms. This man was turning me on even this early in the morning.

"Mouthwatering," he mumbled. I loved his raspy and husky morning voice.

"Do you want a milo, as well?" I asked because, he always prefers a sugarless coffee.

"I want you," he said and I felt his hand travelling under my shirt.

"You are crazy!" I laughed

"Crazy about you, baby! You wearing my shirt is the best combination and it's driving me wild, already."

"Gautham!!" I shrieked and turned to face him. He was back in just his boxers, flaunting his naked chest. He knew that I wouldn't be able to resist his delicious abs.

"You've totally lost it!!" I said, slapping his shoulder playfully and trying to divert him.

He pulled me towards him and looked into my eyes. "You think we made a baby yesterday?" he asked. I felt blood rush to my cheeks.

"Maybe," I said, hiding my face in his neck and hugged him.

It was almost eleven and I was sitting in front of the laptop at my office cabin completing my work when, Ankitha barged in.

"Hey!" I dragged lazily. I was feeling terribly sick and lightheaded.

"You look sick," she said

"I know! I am," I said and she came to me and pressed the back of her hand

on my forehead to feel my temperature. "You are burning hot. You have a fever."

"I just feel exhausted."

"You kidding me!? You have a terrible fever! Go home and catch some sleep," she said.

"I am fine! Now tell me! What are you here for?"

"You asked me to remind you to call up your friend Ashika," she said.

"Yea! I had already called but it went to voice mail." I felt my morning breakfast rise up in my throat, quickly I barged out of the cabin and rushed to the restroom.

I puked and the next thing that I knew, I passed out .

I opened my eyes after what seemed like hours. I looked around and I realized that I was sleeping on a hospital bed. I saw Ankitha talking to the nurse. I tried getting up and suddenly a sharp pain hit my lower abdomen.

"Ahh," I yelped lying back on the bed.

"Hey! You're conscious! How do you feel?" she asked, helping me settle on the bed properly.

"I'm alright, but my abdomen hurts a bit," I said.

"Just relax and the doc will come and talk to you," she replied, rubbing my hand like she was trying to re-assure me.

"What happened?"

"So you're up?" I heard another female voice, behind Ankitha. Ankitha moved, revealing a doctor in her early forties, with her grey hair slightly visible but the smile she wore made her look young. "How are you feeling Shakthi?" she asked, feeling my breathing with her stethoscope.

"Good, but my abdomen hurts," I said.

Once she was done checking me, she took a deep breath and her contagious smile disappeared.

"Sweetheart... This is going to be a little tough for you to take," the doc said and quickly Ankitha came and stood beside me, holding me tightly by my shoulders.

"The pain you are feeling is because we removed the dead fetus from your womb," she said.

Tears already started to blur my eyes. "What? I was never pregnant!"

"You were one week pregnant. I'm afraid you are not fertile anymore"

## **Chapter 47-The Lost Life**

### **Shakthi's pov**

"You were one week pregnant. I'm afraid you are not fertile anymore."

My breathing stopped. My chest tightened. Her words made my head spin and heart break. I had had a baby?

"This is just not possible! You are lying!" I screamed while Ankitha's fingers wiping away my tears.

"Relax, dear! Please relax!" the doctor said, rubbing her hand over my shivering body.

"How can I become infertile?" I said.

"Normally only frequent miscarriages will lead to infertility. But your case is different!" the doc explained.

"Why?" I felt my voice break.

"I noticed a scar over your pelvic bone. How did you get that?" she asked.

"It was just a minor accident," I said

"I'm sorry, but it isn't minor. The doctors hadn't treated you properly and it has affected your reproductive system..." the rest of what she said didn't reach my brain.

I killed our baby and I can't carry Gautham's child anymore...

I would never be able to experience having a big pregnant belly. I would never be able to feel the first kick, the mood changes. I'd never be able to talk to my baby when it is in my womb. I won't be able to feel Gautham at my side when I'm in labor, whispering, 'I'm here with you Shakthi.' I would never be able to see Gautham's happiness when he holds our little angel.

How was he going to digest this news? I will not be able to see him hurt.

"She is not in a condition to listen. Can you please call any of her relatives?" the doc's words made every part of my body tense.

"Yea! I will call her husband. Just give me a minute," Ankitha said.

"Don't call him! Please!" I stopped her.

"He has to know about this," Ankitha said.

"You won't call anyone and that is final," I said, closing my eyes.

"Okay, you please come and collect her reports," I heard the doctor talk to Ankitha.

The room was empty with just me lying on the bed. I picked up my purse and dug for my phone. There were seven texts messages and two of them were from Gautham.

One message was sent just before I had passed out.

*'How are you feeling?? You still sick?'*

He had sent the next message just a few minutes back and it made me panic.

*'Why aren't you replying? Is anything wrong? I'm coming to your office.'*

I replied.

*'You don't have to come to my office because I am fine. Relax. Okay?!'* and I pressed the send button.

In the next second my phone vibrated with another message from him.

*'No arguments. I'm coming.'*

Oh god! If he comes to the office, he would get to know that I was admitted to hospital!

*'I've already left with Ankitha. Just a girls night out.'* I sent another message. I felt bad about lying to him but I can't see him break.

*'Oh. Be safe. Come home soon. Missing you,'* his reply tugged my heart.

"Hello Shakthi!!" a male voice said.

I looked up from my phone. It was Natasha's doctor. What is he doing here?

"Uh..hi," I said.

"How are you feeling?" he asked.

"Not that great!"

"You should feel lucky!"

"Because I lost my baby and can't carry one anymore?" I asked, totally

pissed.

He laughed. "Nice sense of humor!" he said.

"You are a neurologist, right? What are you doing here?"

He looked at the file that he was holding in his hand and looked back at me.

"I am the chief doctor here and I was on rounds."

"Oh."

"You asked me for Natasha's reports, remember?"

"Yea but you refused to even show them to the person who paid her bills."

"I have them now. You can have a look," he said, handing out the blue file that he had in his hand.

"But you told me that it was against your hospital rules."

"Yea..but looks like you are no harm to her. So you can see them."

"Okay."

I read the reports and everything was clear. She was suffering from a partial memory loss. There was nothing suspicious about it.

"How can we help her gain her memory?" I asked once when I was done reading the reports.

"Just don't give her any shocking news. It will stress her out and worsen her mental state. Just go with the flow. That is more than enough," he said, taking the reports.

"Okay," I said, settling on the bed more comfortably. The pain in my lower abdomen had subsided a bit.

"You should be lucky that you're already married," he said and did I smell sarcasm?

"Why is that?" I asked, raising my eyebrow.



"If you aren't married, no one will marry you knowing that you are a barren wasteland."

His taunt stung. Tears slipped from my eyes.

"But you're married. You should feel lucky. Take care," he said and left me.

He was fucking right! I was a barren wasteland!

"Shakthi!" Ankitha's panicky voice made me come out of my thoughts.

"Don't cry, baby! Please don't cry!" she said, hugging me.

"Is there any way that I can get pregnant?"

"I spoke to the doctor but she told me there are no chances. If you hadn't miscarried the baby, there were slight hopes. But now, there are none," she said and the truth hit hard in my gut.

"You saw Gautham and Ria's bonding, right? He loves children and I won't be able to give him one."

"You should talk to Gautham, Shakthi. He has the right to know."

I felt my body tense and I pulled away from the hug. "Can we leave now?" I asked.

She sighed. "Yea.. In a few minutes, after the paper work is done," she said.

It was almost eight thirty when we left the hospital. The traffic made me more impatient and grumpy. I was terrified to face Gautham.

"You sure you can manage?" Ankitha's doubtful voice brought me back to earth. The car was now standing in front of my apartment.

"Hopefully," I said and she hugged me.

"Everything is going to be alright... Don't lose hope," she said.

I stuffed the reports into my purse so that Gautham didn't see them. I'd hide them when I was inside.

I got to the front door and my finger shook towards the bell.

After a few seconds, the door opened. Gautham was in his grey sweatpants and a black t-shirt with his apron on. He gestured me to come in with his hand that held the spatula. He had an ear to ear grin.

"You seem to be in a good mood," I commented, locking the door behind me.

"I am. And I'll tell you why over your favorite dinner," he said, walking over to the kitchen to complete his cooking.

I walked to bedroom to freshen up. I hid the reports deep in my closet and covered them with clothes. After having a shower and changing into my regular pajamas and t-shirt, I went to the kitchen. The aroma of paneer butter masala filled my nostrils.

He was serving the dish along with the paratha on our plates.

"You've cooked paneer?"

"Yeah! Your favorite, right?" he turned to face me with two plates in his hands.

"Thank you," I said, taking a plate from him and kissed him on his cheek.

I sat on the kitchen counter and he stood opposite to me, leaning on the wall.

I took a mouthful and it was out of the world. "Too good Gautham! Mmm!"

"By the way, what is the occasion?" I asked, swaying my legs lightly in the air.

"I think there is a reason behind your sickness."

My heart clenched.

"I think that you're pregnant." His face came alive with a wide smile.

I didn't want to break his heart by saying that I can never carry a baby. The food that I had in my throat refused to move down. I gulped the water to force it.

"No, I'm not late and I can't. I mean, I am not pregnant," I said. The smile on his face was replaced with a frown and it shattered my heart. I got down from the counter and turned to leave because I wouldn't be able to see him hurting.

"How do you know?" he asked, stopping me by holding my shoulders.

"I just know," I said, pushing his hands away.

"How?"

"I did a pregnancy test, okay?"

"When did you do it?" he asked, forcing me to look into his eyes.

"This afternoon," I said, looking away.

"Why didn't you tell me?"

"I told you now, right?"

"Only after I asked you."

"Why are you blowing this out of proportion?"

"You can be really difficult, you know!"

"I know!" I huffed and walked to the bedroom.

I lay on the bed and closed my eyes and within minutes Gautham's hand moved my head to his chest.

"You upset?" he whispered.

"No, I'm fine..."

"You sure? Don't be upset over the negative pregnancy test. We can always try." He looked intensely into my eyes and it made me nervous. His lips neared mine.

"I'm feeling tired," I said, pulling myself away.

I closed my eyes and fell asleep.

I woke up to the sound of loud thunder. Without wanting to face the world, I kept my eyes closed and let my hand feel the other side of the bed, but it was empty.

I got up from the bed and just when I opened the bedroom door, I heard loud voices coming from the hall.

"Please! Do it soon," came a female voice and voice was very familiar.

"Natasha! Please! I will talk to you later! You leave now!" Gautham shouted.

"Gautham! Please! I want you to marry me as early as possible!" she started again.

"Why are you in such a hurry?"

"I'm pregnant."

## **Chapter 48-Painful Revelations**

### **Shakthi's POV**

"Why are you in such a hurry?"

"I'm pregnant." What the fucking hell, pregnant?

"Are you sure?" Gautham said. His voice was hopeful, like he believed her.

Every cell of my body wanted to stand and listen to the conversation but I wouldn't be able to bare the pain.

I dragged my feet to the bathroom, defeated. I stripped off and turned the shower on and I let the water run over my naked body.

All his stories about Natasha were lies. He loved her and he was just using me.

*'Stop, you barren wasteland! You aren't able to give him a baby and now you are using this Natasha fiasco just so that you can put all this blame on Gautham!'*

Yea, I would never be able to give Gautham a baby when Natasha can. At the

end of the day, I was a barren wasteland. Gautham still had feelings for her. Though he feels cheated, he still hadn't moved on. He would have never married me if he had known about my infertility. I still remember how sad he was when he told me that Natasha would never return to him when she regained her.

This baby will bring them closer. The baby will make him forget that he was cheated on. He was hopeful when he heard Natasha break the news. He was happy. He had the right to be a father and the baby hadn't done anything wrong to be in this world without a father.

I decided to finish my morning routine. I slipped into a pair of jeans and a simple top and I walked out of the bedroom. There was no sign of either Natasha or Gautham. I moved to the kitchen and there I found a note stuck on the refrigerator.

*'Will be back soon. Don't skip your breakfast –G.'*

I grabbed my phone and quickly dialed to my lawyer.

"Hello! Asha speaking," came my school friend's voice.

"Hi Asha! This is Shakthi."

"Hey! I am so sorry! I didn't see the caller ID," she said.

"No problem! I need a favor, Asha."

"Are you okay?"

"Not really! But I need you to do this for me."

"Yea, sure! What is it?"

"I need you to prepare the... the divorce papers" I said, holding my breath. A tear rolled down my cheeks.

"For whom?"

"For me and Gautham!"

"Why? I thought-"

"Please Asha! I don't have the time to explain. Can you please just bring them for me

"Okay, I will meet you in twenty minutes."

"Thanks," I said, hanging up then texting her the address.

I rushed to the bedroom, packed my stuff. I was going to get away from here and go somewhere he couldn't find me.

The doorbell rang.

Oh God! Could it be Gautham?

I walked to the front door and looked in through the peephole. It was Asha! Thank God!

I opened the door and ushered her inside. She reluctantly handed me the divorce papers, and after trying to talk to me about the situation, I asked her to leave.

I sat on the floor with the divorce papers on the bed. I held the pen over the papers. My hands shivered and tears blurred my eyes.

The smile that only he was capable of bringing to my face would never return. I'd never see him sleeping. I'd never be able to listen to his sexy morning voice. I would never be able to run my fingers through his soft hair, and I'd never get to look into those beautiful eyes again.

My lifeless fingers scribbled my signature over the papers. I wiped my tears, folded the papers, slipped them inside a white envelope and placed it on the middle of the bed.

"Shakthi! You have to do this! You can't look back!" I told myself.

I wrote my final goodbye to him.

*Hi Gautham,*

*You should have been wondering as to where this Shakthi has gone. Let me tell you, I can't do this anymore Gautham! I just can't! I can't pretend as if we are married happily when I am just pretending to be happy.*

*Yes Gautham! Our marriage was fake, our relationship was fake, every word that I said was forced out of me. It was never from my heart. Nothing in this marriage was true except for your money. I married you just for money and that is the truth.*

*I am in love with another man and I am not revealing his name. We needed money for him to start a company and that was why I married you. I basically used you as my credit card. But I just can't do this anymore. I can't live with a man whom I don't love. I can't sell my body to you every night, anymore. I despised every moment of it. But not anymore! This fake relationship has to come to an end. I have taken all the money from our locker. Don't search for it. I'm going and don't search for me or your money.*

*I was never yours,*

*Shakthi*

*P.S. The divorce papers are in the envelope with my signature on it.*

### **AFTER 3 MONTHS**

"Shakthi! You've got to check the delivery of the books before lunch," Rita shouted while on the ladder arranging books on the shelves.

"I am currently doing the exact same thing Rita," I said, checking the books to see if they have been delivered correctly.

I had been working as the librarian at '*Rise and Shine*'. If I chose to work as an Auditor again, Gautham would trace me. So I thought that it would be better to stay away. Until now, there wasn't a single call from anyone so I was relieved that they hadn't found me. The only reason that he would trace me would be to get back his money. The letter that I left would have made him hate me so much. I had to take the money to make my story seem as real as possible. Even if he finds me to get his money back, I have nothing to give him because I had donated it to an orphanage in Chennai.

The owner of this library was an old lady and her name was Elizabeth. She was kind enough to hire me. I didn't earn much, but it was enough for me to pay the rent on my small apartment and to make my ends meet.

I and Rita have been the only ones to take care of the entire library and I loved my job. While I was depressed for a whole month after leaving Gautham, books were a welcome companion. They made me lose my mind and forget the bitter reality for a while.

"Are you done?" Rita's voice brought me back to reality. Her bright big eyes were always a breath of fresh air. She was shorter than me and had her black hair done in layers up to her shoulders. Even though she was in her late twenties, she was single. She was totally against the idea of marriage or relationships and had endless rants about them. She knew nothing about my past and she was decent enough to let me have my personal space.

"Almost," I said, arranging the stack of books neatly and getting up from my seat.

I switched off the heaters in the library and pulled my cardigan tightly over me, zipping it over my yellow t-shirt that I had paired with black jeans.

"Ready to leave?" I asked, taking my phone and purse.

As we stepped out of the library, the cold climate made me shiver. I knew that Yercaud was a cool place but not this cold. But somehow, I started getting used to this lovely hill station.

We had our lunch at Elizabeth's house. She treated us like daughters and whenever I saw her, it reminded me of my family. I missed them terribly. But I couldn't let anyone know that I was at Yercaud.

It was almost half past five when we closed the library. Rita lived just a few apartments away from mine. So we usually walked home together. As we walked, I saw a couple kissing in the garden opposite to our cottage. Every touch of Gautham's was etched onto my memory. I almost felt his strong grip on my wrist but I knew I was just hallucinating. I was sorry for every word that I wrote in that letter to Gautham. I missed him so much.

"Look! You are crying again." Rita said.



"I am sorry,I..uh.. I just.."

"You need not apologize Shakthi! Just remember that everything happens for a reason," she said, hugging me.

I opened the door to my cottage and crashed lazily on the couch. I extended my hand for the remote of the heater and switched it on.

I removed my cardigan and moved to my kitchen. The cottage was small and just had a small hall with a compact kitchen and a little bedroom.

After drinking my hot cup of Milo, I pulled my laptop out. I opened Google and searched for Gautham's firm 'Sharp and Measure.' In the last three months, I Googled Gautham and his firm every day. I couldn't stop myself.

Sharp and Measure had grown and it was only due to his efficiency and hard work. But there was no change in his looks. He looked exactly the same, with his handsome features and intense eyes.

My fingers traced over his image on the laptop screen.

"I am sorry Gautham!" a whisper escaped my lips.

After a hot shower, I changed into my sweatpants and one of Gautham's t-shirts that I had taken when I had packed my suitcase. I had left all the clothes that he had presented me at Chennai, I needed something that belonged to him. So it was the irrational side of me that packed his black t-shirt. His cologne never left the t-shirt and it was intoxicating. I wore it only when I missed him terribly and today was one of those days.

I was done cooking my dinner. I settled on the couch and just when I had switched the television on, the doorbell rang.

It was probably Rita wanting to hang out.

I sighed and got up, walking to the door. I unlocked the front door and a pair of silvery grey eyes met mine.

## **Chapter 49-The Lost Souls**

### **Shakthi's POV**

I sighed and got up, walking to the door. I unlocked the front door and a pair of silvery grey eyes met mine.

"Shakthi!" his deep voice reverberated in my ears.

"Gautham!" I gasped.

His piercing eyes made my knees go weak. He was dressed in casual jeans and a grey button down shirt with the sleeves folded up to his elbows, making his taut muscles look prominent.

He had light stubble on his face, there was sadness in his eyes. His hair was a little dishelved which added a lot to his tiredness.

"What are you doing here?" I quickly put on an annoyed expression.

"Shouldn't I be asking you that?" He raised his eyebrow, making my heart race.

"How did you find me?" I asked.

"I have my ways."

"Just get lost" I said, closing the door, but his strong arms stopped me.

"How dare you?" he spoke through his gritted teeth, opening the door wider.

"What are you doing?" I shouted.

"I'm taking what belongs to me," he said, entering the house and shutting the door behind him.

"But I don't have your money" I said

A humorless laugh escaped his lips. "Let me guess! Your lover took the money and ran away leaving you in a stupid cottage like this."

He really believed in the letter that I had left him. It hurt to see how much I had made him hate me.

"He didn't run away."

"Then where is he? Why are you alone in the house at this hour of the night?"

"It is none of your business!"

"Oh really!!" He pushed me against the wall.

I could feel his breath on my neck. His touch made me feel secure, I wanted to hug him, surrender in his arms and tell him that the entire letter was a lie.

"Let go of me Gautham!" I screeched. I didn't want him to let me go. I wanted to stay imprisoned in his arms forever.

"So you were just another whore, weren't you?"

"Don't you da-"

"Oh please! You sold your body for my money! Do you know what they call such a lady?"

"I don't give a damn! I can do anything for my lover," I said, struggling under his grip.

"You turned out just to be another gold digger in my life," he said. His words like a knife in the gut.

"Yes! Damn it yes! So what? Why won't you leave me in peace?"

He grew even more furious.

"You promised me that you would never leave me, remember?"

Finally managing to push him, I walked away, not wanting to face him.

But, his fingers glided over my arms.

"Did you really have to sell yourself to me Shakthi? I thought, there was something between us."

I wanted to close my ears and stop listening.

"There was nothing between us Gautham! Don't you get it? It was all just an act!"

"Just an act? My foot!" He walked in front of me and forced me to look into his eyes.

" I never loved you! I hated every moment, " I said hoping he would believe me.

He pulled me towards him, making my chest crash against his. I felt his lips touch the sensitive area behind my ear. He nibbled on it and I had to bite my lips in order to avoid the moan escaping my lips and my mind totally lost track of when my sweatpants reached the floor leaving my legs naked.

"Did you hate this Shakthi?" he whispered in my ears and slowly his tongue licked my earlobe, sending bolts of electricity through my body. I wasn't able to find it in me to answer him.

"Tell me Shakthi," he demanded. His voice was low and husky as his hand slid up my naked legs. Starting from my feet, his fingers slowly travelled behind my calf, to my thighs, making my knees buckle and his long fingers travelled up towards an area only he had touched me before.

"Answer me."

I opened my eyes to meet his and that was the mistake! His silvery grey ones stared right into my soul and as I opened my mouth, a soft gasp escaped my mouth. "N-no."

That was all that he needed to crash his lips against mine.

His fingers traced my features, like he was trying to memorize my face, our kiss, our moments together.

We kissed like long lost lovers. I was lost as our tongues danced.

My fingers raked through his soft and unruly hair and I pulled him towards me, making our bodies press harder. His tongue punished me but still I felt a moan escape my lips. His fingers which were resting on my thighs moved upwards and pulled my panties down.

I started to remove the buttons of his shirt. I wanted to feel him.

"Take it off."

He removed his and my fingers finally grazed his chiseled chest. A groan escaped his lips.

He carried me in his strong arms in bridal style and in no time I was on the bed with Gautham hovering over me.

He kissed my neck and left love bites everywhere. He kissed my collarbone and his fingers tugged the hem of my t-shirt. "You are wearing my t-shirt," he said.

"Mhmm," I moaned as he created another love bite.

And in that second my t-shirt was off my body and I was naked under him.

"I missed you, baby," he whispered and my heart swelled.

He teased the peaks of my breasts with his fingers and the slow desire that was stirring low in my belly was reaching its peak.

Soon his lips took the place of his fingers and I felt his teeth teasing one my peaks.

"Gautham," I moaned and my body arched.

"Just let go of yourself," he whispered and I decided to do exactly what he said. He gave equal attention to both of the peaks and by now I thought I would die from pleasure.

His fingers travelled over my skin and I wanted this to last forever.

He placed himself at my entrance and looked deep into my eyes and then he entered me in a soft yet punishing way.

"You are so tight!" he grunted as he started to thrust deep in me.

He moved slowly and I closed my eyes enjoying every motion.

"Open your eyes," he demanded and I willingly opened them to meet his

intense ones. My nails pierced into his skin.

He moved faster and I was reaching my climax. "Faster, baby," I grunted.

Our bodies rocked in an erotic unison of love, desire and lust.

"Let it go Shakthi," he said and that was enough for me. We convulsed in pleasure and it was such a different feeling. Every time when we made love, I always used to close my eyes. I wouldn't be able to open my eyes at all. It was such a different connection the moment our eyes met when we were experiencing our release together. I never knew such feelings existed. It was not just my body that reached its peak, it was also my heart.

He stayed inside me as he lay nestled between my breasts. I played with his hair and his soft breath caressed my naked skin.

There was not a word exchanged between us. I knew that he was awake, he knew that I was awake but still it was just the sound of our breathing that filled the small room.

"Why did you have to leave me?" he asked, withdrawing from me and looking into my eyes.

"Why don't you catch some sleep?"

He sighed and fell back on the pillows and his eyes fluttered shut, taking him to a deep slumber.

Time flew by but I wanted it to stop forever. But a new day was already here to take Gautham away from me. He was still asleep while I was making my Milo and his coffee. I had to make up my mind to send him away.

*Remember Shakthi! You are a barren wasteland.*

I silently wiped away my tears and swallowed my hot Milo.

"You are still in my t-shirt."

"It isn't yours! It's mine," I said, forcing his cup of coffee into his hands.

He had slipped back into his boxers but his chest was naked.

"Keep lying to yourself Shakthi!"

"What the hell do you want Gautham? Why don't you leave me?"

"You want me to leave you alone even after what happened?" he asked with a devilish smirk playing on his lips.

"That was just a mistake," I said, looking away from his eyes.

A flash of hurt crossed his features and I immediately regretted it. But he recovered and held my chin, making me look into his eyes. "But your eyes tell me something else, honey" he said.

"Just leave me alone, will you," I said, pushing him away by his chest.

"I will once you return what's mine," he said so casually, sipping on his cup of coffee.

"I told you that I don't have the money!"

"Then I am not leaving!" he said, leaning on the kitchen counter.

"What is your fucking problem? Get the hell out of my house!"

"Okay! Then I have a better way to get back what's mine."

"What are you going to do?" I asked, worried.

"Why don't you see for yourself?" he challenged me.

"Why are you doing this to me Gautham? Please! Just leave me!" I pleaded and tears threatened to fall out of my eyes.

"If you can't return the money, your parents are going to do it," he said and turned to walk away.

"No! Wait! I will pay back the money to you in installments as I get my salary!" I said and he turned to face me.

"You think you can pay back such a huge amount?" he asked sarcastically.

"Why are you doing this to me Gautham?" I asked and my tears rolled down

my cheeks.

His features softened as he held me securely by my shoulders.

"I know that you have no lover Shakthi! Tell me! Why did you do this?"

"You are right! I have no lover! I did this for the money!"

"Great! If you aren't going to say, then I think it's time for me to contact your parents!" He took his phone out to dial.

"Wait! Don't!"

He looked at me expectantly but I couldn't find my voice anymore. He then sighed and continued to dial my parents.

"I am infertile."



## Chapter 50-It's Just a Little Too Late

### Shakthi's POV

"Great! If you aren't going to say, then I think it's time for me to contact your parents!" He took his phone out to dial.

"Wait! Don't!"

He looked at me expectantly but I couldn't find my voice anymore. He then sighed and continued to dial my parents.

"I am infertile," I blurted out, holding my breath. I couldn't read what he was thinking. He gave nothing away.

I felt him breathe a sigh of relief and his features softened. He held my face in his large palms and looked deep into my soul. "Why didn't you tell me?"

"Did you know about it already?"

"Yes, I did."

"But how?"

"You thought that I would believe in the letter that you left me? Not a word Shakthi! I didn't believe even one word of it, not even for a second! While searching for you, I called up Ankitha and she told me about the miscarriage and your infertility."

*Miscarriage and your infertility-why do those words from him hurt so much?*

"Why did you threaten me by demanding money from my parents, if you already knew about my infertility?"

"I didn't know that this was the reason that made you leave me."

"I can never give you a baby! Doesn't that make a difference to you?"

"Nothing is going to change between us because of a thing that never existed!" his words sounded convincing but I know how much he wants a child.

"We lost our baby Gautham and I can't give you one. " My eyes filled up with tears.

"Shakthi! That's not the end of the world! You are my baby and I am yours! We have each other and that is all that matters!" He wiped away my tears.

"You are not buying it Gautham!" I pushed his hands away.

"Shakthi! Baby! I understand what you feel," he said, pulling me into his arms.

I pulled away. "No! You don't have the slightest idea how I feel!"

"We are in this together. No matter what!" he said, interlocking our fingers.

"Okay! Tell me one thing! If you had known that I was infertile, would you have married me?"

"Of course, I would," he said, shocking me.

"You are just saying this so that it doesn't hurt me! I am a barren wasteland Gautham!"

"No one is perfect in this world, Shakthi! Didn't you accept me in spite of my flaws? And to me, you are beautiful in your own way and you're not aware of it! Most of all, you have the most beautiful soul." His words melted my heart.

"There won't be anyone in this world to call you a daddy or call me a mommy."

"You already gave me yourself and that's all that matters!" He kissed the tip of my nose which made my lips curve into a smile.

"Did you think that I wouldn't understand if I knew that we can't have a child?"

"It doesn't make sense for you to marry a stranger who is infertile, right? Would you have married me, really?"

"I would marry you a thousand times Shakthi! Why don't you get that into that goddamn head of yours?"

"Even if I can't ever carry your baby?"

"Of course." He pecked me on my lips.

"I don't know Gautham... I just don't! When we got married, we were practically strangers. It actually means that I got lucky when I didn't know about my infertility before marrying you. Why would anyone want to marry a barren wasteland?" I asked.

"Don't you ever utter those words again. Who put this fucking thought into your head!"

"It is not going to change the fact that I am a barren waste-"

"Stop that!" He shook me by my shoulders. His grip loosened and he took a few deep breaths to compose himself.

"I'm sorry," he muttered.

"But put yourself in my shoes and think for a minute. If I were infertile, would you have refused to marry me?"

"Of course not!" I said in a heartbeat.

He smiled. "Exactly! Why don't you believe me when I say that?"

"Cause I am in love you and I know that you aren't!"

He stood there like a bucket of cold water had just been poured on him.

"I knew it!" I said and ran into the bedroom.

"You hear this?" He said opening the door I forgot to lock.

I could almost feel his tall frame. I stood rooted to the spot, silently trying to concentrate on the sound he was talking about. It was a faint, very faint running watch.

I turned to face him and he was holding the watch close to my ears. I had a look at the watch and it was the same watch that I had gifted to him during his birthday.

"You still have it?"

He strapped it back on his wrist and held my face in his palms. "There is not a single day which passes without me looking at it! I wouldn't be searching for you like a madman with just this memory of you with me if I weren't in love with you Shakthi! You have no idea of what I went through when you left me even after you promised me that you wouldn't! Every single day that I went through without you was living hell! Waking up to your angelic face every day but realizing that it was empty and I was just hallucinating, searching for you every day hoping I would get to see you, it was hell Shakthi! Why would I even come back for you if I don't love you? I love you Shakthi. You and me, forever! Remember?"

"Why would you cheat on me if you really love me?" I asked, pushing his hands away from my face.

"What are you talking about?"

"Natasha is pregnant."

"How do you know?"

"So, she is!"

"Yes, but how do you know?"

"The day when I left you, I heard her say it," I said, running a hand through my hair.

"So you thought that I am the father of her baby?"

"Yes, aren't you?"

"No! I'm not! Amit is the father," he said

"But, but when she broke the news about her pregnancy your voice was so hopeful. I thought you still loved her and you made her pregnant."

"I didn't touch another woman after our marriage! It has always been you Shakthi! My feelings for you are so intense that I can't even explain! You taught me to believe in love. I realized that I didn't even love Natasha when I

fell in love with you! Why would I ever cheat on you with Natasha?"

"But... but how would Natasha be pregnant with Amit's baby when she has no memory of him?"

"Evidently, she didn't lose her memory and it was one of her games. She even tried to make me the father of her baby. But the DNA tests turned negative and that was exactly when your friend Ashika came in handy."

"You met her at the hospital again?"

"No, I didn't! Looked like you had asked for a copy of Natasha's reports and when she tried contacting you, you obviously weren't there. So she contacted me through Shalini and gave me the reports which said that Natasha wasn't suffering a memory loss."

"But her doctor showed me her reports which said that she was suffering a memory loss."

"Ugh! That doctor! Don't even start about him! I had his license cancelled. He had been playing along with Natasha the entire time! People do all this for money, you know!"

"Oh, God!" I said

"It was basically the trail that you left behind that helped me to find Natasha's true identity!"

"I'm so sorry!" I whispered

"Don't be! I totally understand how it would feel!" He caressed my cheeks and looked deep into my eyes.

"Do you actually know the reason I left you?"

His hands dropped from my face. "You left me because you thought that it was me who made Natasha pregnant?" he asked.

"Yea," I whispered.

"Unbelievable! How could you Shakthi? I thought we learned to trust each

other! You took such a big step without even talking to me once? You left me!"

"No! I am really sorry! I should have talked to you about it!"

"You are three months late Shakthi! Three freaking months!"

"I understand Gautham! It was equally tough for me!-"

"If you understand, you wouldn't have left me just because you thought that I made her pregnant."

"That decision wasn't easy for me Gautham! I couldn't give you a baby. I thought Natasha could. I thought that when you know about my infertility and with Natasha being pregnant on the other hand, you would hate me eventually! I didn't want to be a hindrance to your happiness. That was actually the whole reason I left you!"

"This is fucking unbelievable! I thought that you understood me and there was something in our relationship! Looks like our marriage was a total failure Shakthi!"

Tears started to fill my eyes. "No Gautham! No! I did this only for your happiness!"

"Happiness! My foot! The past three months without you were the worst days of my life!"

"I understand that I made a mistake by leaving you but I am sorry about it!" I said

"There is no use Shakthi! Some random girl will again come and accuse me of making her pregnant and you will again run away! You know what; it hurt like fucking hell when I knew that you were infertile. But, it tore me apart when I realized that you had to undergo the pain of this news alone, without me by your side! But only now, I realized that you had been thinking so low of me! What if another huge blow comes along, you will run away like this! You won't wait to share it with me! We were in this marriage together so that we stand by each other and not run away from our problems! You could have talked to me about it! But you didn't trust me at all! Marriage is trusting in

each other Shakthi! It's you who taught me this."

"I trust you Gautham! I do-"

"You know what? I'm done with you! The divorce you wanted will reach you in no time."

---

## **Chapter 51-The Divorce and? Shakthi's POV**

"You know what? I'm done with you! The divorce you wanted will reach you in no time," he said and walked away.

"Gautham! No! Listen!" I pleaded, running behind him.

"I. Am. Done. With. You" he said. His eyes were red with fury and carried the pain of betrayal.

"No, please," I pleaded, trying to hold his hand. But he swatted it away.

He didn't care about what I had to say. He opened the front door and walked away.

I had one option. I was going back to Chennai.

### **One week later**

"This is insane!" Ankitha shouted, almost bringing the roof off my room. She looked different, with her light curly hair fully straightened and with a little baby fat. She was pregnant with her second baby. The glow in her face was unmistakable. I'd missed her so much.

"Shh! Quiet!"

"Are you freaking crazy? This is the first time I am seeing two people who love each other so much getting a divorce."

"Please Ankita! Please lower your voice! My parents have no idea and I plan on keeping it that way" I said. They were just sitting in the living room, thinking that their daughter needed a small break from her married life. That was the story that I spun and they seemed to buy it.

They didn't question me which was strange, but that made it easier for me. They were shocked and happy when they saw me at their doorstep. They welcomed me with open arms.

I didn't want to disappoint my parents with the divorce.

"Alright! But do you want a divorce?" she asked.

" No! I love him so much!"

"Alright! Do you think he wants the divorce?"

"Of course! That was why he demanded one! I'm starting to think that it really is because of my infertility."

"You have to stop overthinking! Don't put that brain of yours into use until Gautham calls you up."

"He called me up," I said.

" When did this happen?" She asked, wide eyed.

"An hour before you arrived."

"Why didn't you tell me?"

"He didn't exactly call. I just got a text." I showed her my phone.

It hurt me that he didn't even want to hear my voice. He just sent a stupid, cold text which only had the lawyer's office address where I was supposed to be at five in the evening to sign our divorce papers.

"He must be really hurt Shakthi."



"Yeah! Hurt that I can never give him a baby!" I wiped away a tear.

"No! He is hurt that you didn't trust him enough to tell him about your infertility."

"I didn't tell him because I didn't want to hurt him but-"

"But what hurt him the most was that you didn't tell him," she said and walked away, leaving me alone in my room.

She was right and I knew it!

But a voice kept telling me that Gautham didn't want to be with me because I was a barren wasteland. Those words haunted me and I felt worthless.

It was almost ten past five. I sat in the parking lot of the lawyer's office, not wanting to go in.

I smoothed my purple silk top that I had paired with my denims. I re-checked my face to see if my makeup was in place. I really didn't want to look weak and helpless, so my makeup helped cover my sadness.

I dragged my feet towards the office. My palms sweat as I neared it. Gautham was sitting lethargically on the chair and laughing his heart out. It hurt to see him taking this so well.

He had his back to me and the lawyer who seemed to be in his late twenties was so engrossed in talking to him that he didn't see that I was standing there.

I cleared my throat, so that Gautham could at least put on an act that he does feel bad about getting divorced.

Gautham turned and my heart stopped. His silvery grey eyes caught mine. His wide smile disappeared. He wore a well-tailored, charcoal black suit. His hair was in place and didn't look messy; unlike the way it looked a week back when he wanted to desperately meet me at Yercaud. He was looking happy and handsome with no facial hair. His spicy scent was still intoxicating.

"Yes, please come in," the advocate said and I entered.

"So, are you Shakthi?"

"Yes."

"I am advocate, Dev Roy. I'll be handling your divorce proceedings," he said, offering his hand.

I nervously shook it. "Thank you," I said.

"Please, have a seat." I took the seat next to Gautham.

Our hands brushed and Gautham flinched. My heart twisted at the thought that he would find my touch repellent.

"I can't believe that she came!" Gautham said.

"Why would you say that?" Mr. Roy asked.

"She has a habit of running away from her problems," he said casually, raking his fingers through his hair, without sparing me a glance.

"That's not..not true," I felt my voice already breaking.

He looked at me. "Don't you tell me what's true and what is not ,because I know the truth! Do you get that?" he said angrily. Tears started to blur my eyes.

"Gautham! Please understand why I had to leave you! Please!" I pleaded.

"Let's not go there! I want to get this divorce done!" He looked away.

"Gautham! Please! Don't do this! I don't want this divorce! Please!"

He looked at me and for just a minute, his features softened. Just for a minute, I thought that even he didn't want this divorce to happen. But annoyance swept over his face once more.

"Gautham! Since she doesn't want a divorce, I can't put it down as by mutual consent. There will be many court proceedings and both of you will be asked to stay together for another six months to give your marriage a chance," Mr. Roy explained.

Gautham groaned and looked at me with so much of anger and hatred and I wanted the ground to swallow me.

"Now I understand why you came here!"

"What do you mean?"

"I will give you hundred crores rupees and you can also take the flat that we lived in, just sign the divorce papers already!"

"I don't want your money!"

"I know that you are doing all this for the money!" he said.

"I genuinely didn't want a divorce!" I said, wiping away the tear that was about to roll down. I didn't want him to know that his words were killing me.

"I will double the amount! Just sign the papers!"

His anger towards me hurt so much. How could he change so much from being loving and caring to brutal and cold. I didn't want him to see me weak. I had to fight back. "You know what? Keep your fucking money to yourself! Where do you want me to sign?"

Mr. Roy handed out the papers and the pen and showed me where to sign.

I read all the papers and it confirmed that this was a divorce on mutual consent. There would be no more communication between us. As I was about to sign, my fingers trembled. This was it. He wouldn't be there to hold me when I needed him, and I wouldn't be able to make him smile. But I was barren. I couldn't make him truly happy, or complete him with a family. He deserved better.

His words interrupted my thoughts. "I will triple the amount if you-"

And those words pushed me to sign. The pen touching paper was like a dam bursting and my tears flowed. I didn't care that he knew his words crushed me. He still thought that I was doing this for the money!

I handed the papers to him.

He signed them all with a smile plastered on his lips. He could at least pretend that he feels bad. He was now my ex-husband now, and he was happy about it.

"Well, you both are divorced." Mr. Roy said when Gautham returned the papers.

"Thank you Mr. Roy," I said and turned to face Gautham.

"I really hope that you find a woman who deserves you," I said and ran out of the office, not wanting to face him anymore.

No one could ever replace Gautham. He would neither fade away from my memory nor my heart. The memories that we made would be enough for me to spend a lifetime without him, but he was never really mine, was he?

I was a walking corpse for the next five days. I re-joined my old firm and my job was the only thing that kept me going. I didn't feel like talking to anyone. Ankitha took me on several shopping sprees to try to make me feel better but it was no use. I didn't give a damn to my looks and resembled someone who just recovered from a coma. I skipped my meals which mum hated. My parents had been amazing when I told them about the divorce.

My mom was so persistent in taking me to the temple today so that I could have a refreshing spiritual time, which even I thought was something that I really needed.

"Wear this for today," my mom said, handing me the same purple saree that I wore when Gautham and I met for the first time. It carried too many memories. I really did not think that we were made for each other when we first met, but as months passed by it changed. He put an end to everything we had. But still, he had an undeniable place in my heart. But the wounds would never heal, yet I couldn't break down in front of my mom. I couldn't scare her.

I nodded positively, giving her a tight lipped smile.

We both got dressed up and reached Kabaleshwar temple. Memories flooded my brain as I stepped inside the temple. Why did God plan such a fate for me?

"Are you okay, dear?" my mom's voice interrupted my thoughts.

I wiped the brimming tears before she could notice. "I'm fine."

"Are you sure, Shakthi?"

"Yes Mom." I pulled her inside the temple.

"Not this way! We have to go that side," my mom said, pointing towards the place where brides and the grooms met.

"Why?"

"Shakthi! Listen to me! For how long can you stay like this? You need someone in your life, someone with whom you can share your happiness and sorrow with. You can't stay single forever."

"Mom! Are you crazy! I understand all what you say, but it has not even been a week! "

"No, dear! You don't need to get married right away. For now, just see if you like the guy and the wedding can happen any time you want!"

"Mom! No one can replace Gautham! Even if he is not mine, *I was always his!* I will not give his place to anyone and I am leaving right now," I said angrily and turned to leave.

"If you leave now, then you will be considered dead according to me."

"What kind of a threat is that? Mom!"

"Shakthi! No one is forcing you to get married! Just meet the guy! Don't you trust me?" she pleaded, with tears almost filling her eyes. I didn't want to see her hurt like this.

"Fine," I agreed and we went to the meeting hall.

The entire hall was decorated with jasmine and roses. Some grand event should have taken place, but there was no one in the hall for me to meet.

"Mom! Why is it so silent?" I asked and just then she tapped my shoulder.

I turned and my eyes met the same pair of silvery grey eyes.

"Gautham," I whispered.

He was dressed neatly in a silk dhoti and white silk shirt. The sleeves of the shirt were neatly folded up his arms outlining his delicious muscles.

He smiled as his long fingers caressed my cheek. "How are you?" he asked  
"What are you doing here?"

"That is not the answer to my question, baby."

"I don't owe you an answer anymore! And don't *baby* me! Do you get that?" I said, removing his hand from my face and moving a step away from him.

"Wow! Someone is angry!"

"What? Now I need your permission to become angry?"

"For how long can you stay angry like this? You have to let go of it sometime!" He held me by my shoulders.

"Are you insane? We are divorced! There is nothing between you and me anymore! Please leave me alone and go find a better girl for yourself" I said and tears blurred my eyes.

"That is why I am here!"

"What? What are you saying?"

"I found the better girl for me Shakthi! She is such a crazy girl! Our relationship started in a weird way. She is not that tall but her height is cute," he said and he laughed softly as held my hand securely.

I was supposed to feel happy for him, but it really hurt me to think that he had another woman in his life.

"Even when she remains silent, her eyes speak volumes to me. She is not a saree person but when she wears it, she really has no idea as to how beautiful she looks. She loves roaming around the house in my shirts. She loves eating

pizzas. She loves being surrounded by people. Solitude is something she can't handle! Our relationship grew stronger over strange circumstances. But it only became stronger. She was such a difficult person to understand, but once I understood her, she was the simplest person I ever came across. Her selflessness is something that I adore, but sometimes, she really goes overboard. She just has one bad quality, running away from her problems. But she can literally do anything for me, anything!" he said, looking into my tear filled eyes. He wiped the tears from my cheeks. He really did love the girl whom he was talking about.

"I can tolerate anything, but not her tears. It pains me to see her hurt. She loves me unconditionally that she even went to the extent of leaving me, thinking that I will be hurt when I get to know about her infertility."

He was talking about *me*, the whole time.

"I loved her with my heart and soul but she wasn't able to believe it. She doesn't know to lie at all. She made some stupid stories and left me. Even her written words couldn't lie. That innocent she is. But She kept doubting our marriage, so I thought, why don't I end it?"

I could see his eyes glistening with tears.

"I put an end to our marriage. She doubted if I would ever marry her if I ever knew about her infertility before our marriage. Even when I convinced her that I didn't want to pry on a thing that never existed, not even one percentage of her was ready to accept that. She didn't believe me that I loved her. She promised me '*forever*' and I am here to fulfill her broken promise. I promised that I would marry her a thousand times and I am just done with one," he said, taking out a blue velvety box from his pocket and going down on one knee.

"I want to start afresh! I want you to believe that I love you. But you didn't believe in my words. You told me to find a better girl for myself and I did. I want to marry your soul, your character and you will be the only woman who would continue to fulfill my dreams. Will you do the honor of marrying me for the second time and be my *life*?" he said, opening the box, revealing the beautiful diamond ring.

My heart beat fast against my ribcage.

"My knees are starting to hurt, baby," he said playfully.

"Yes! Yes, you crazy man! Yes! I will marry you."

"Thank you, love," he said and slid the ring into my ring finger. He stood and crashed his lips against mine. Our lips moved in perfect synchronization. This was not a lustful kiss. This kiss was filled with love, trust and passion. He cupped my face and deepened the kiss. I fisted his shirt, bringing him closer.

"I love you," he whispered against my lips and kissed the tip of my nose.

"I love you more," I said and looked deep into his eyes. My infertility didn't really matter to him. His entire plan of getting divorced really made me realize his true love for me. If only he hadn't done that, then till my death I would have believed my infertility still bothered him.

"But why were you so rude to me at Mr. Roy's office?"

"If I weren't so rude, you wouldn't have believed the whole act! But I had such a hard time, seeing you hurt and helpless. It was the toughest thing that I had to ever do! I am sorry that I put-"

"No! When you told me at Yercaud, that you would marry me in spite of anything, I really didn't trust that. But now, I realized that you love me no matter what. It's all because of your plan! So don't be sorry!"

"I really do love you, okay?"

"I know! But I love you more."

"Wait! Where is my mom? Was she? I mean, she was a part of your plan?"

"She must have reached home by now. Your parents supported me so much! They were so furious when I told them about divorce and remarriage, initially! But later they understood and agreed to help me," he said.

"I can't believe that Mom and Dad were a part of it! No wonder they took every news that I broke, so lethargically."



"Mhmm," he said and his lips slowly neared mine.

"Gautham! This is a temple! Stop it!"

"Ugh!" He groaned. "Let's go home then?"

"Mister Millionaire! Did you forget that we aren't married yet? Strictly no sex until marriage," I said.

"Come on! Don't be so mean!"

"You didn't even want to touch me at Mr. Roy's office!"

"Don't rub it in my face."

"I'm sorry," I said and pressed a quick kiss on his cheek.

"And you know something? When you proposed, by mistake you said *life* instead of *wife*."

"It was not by mistake Shakthi! I meant it. I want you to be my life!"

His words brought tears to my eyes.

"Will you be my *life*? Will you be mine?" he asked, cupping my face. His silvery grey eyes always made my heart beat faster.

"I will Gautham! I'm all yours." I sealed the promise with a kiss.

## **Epilogue**

### **Shakthi's POV**

Today was the big day! No! It wasn't the day of our wedding. But it was an even bigger day! The day, I thought that would never come in my life. The day that I was dying to have in my life! I would give my entire life away just to experience this precious day.

I was holding our little baby daughter in my hands. Yes! My baby. Our little daughter. She was wailing, throwing her tiny hands in the air. My eyes filled

with tears, holding our daughter in my hands for the first time.

"She looks so beautiful," Gautham commented.

"Without a doubt," I said, pressing a soft kiss on her forehead and laid her tiny body over my shoulder, patting her back to silence her cries.

"Why is she crying so much? Is there anything wrong?" Gautham asked.

"I think it's time for her milk Gautham! It's nothing serious alright! Relax!" I said, slipping the bottle of milk into her mouth. Her cries softened as she sipped on the milk.

"She is magic in our lives! I never expected that I would have a daughter who calls me her Mom," I said, caressing her eyebrows.

"That she is," he said, looking at her with so much adoration.

"The adoption papers are ready Mr. and Mrs. Gautham," Sister Theresa said, coming into the office, interrupting the first moment that we had as a family. She sat across the table, facing us.

"There are just a few formalities for adoption and then this little angel will be yours forever," Sister said.

"We can't wait to take her home," Gautham said.

"I'm glad you chose adoption," she said, holding out the papers to Gautham.

Our wedding took place within a week from the date of his proposal. It was a very private affair with just our close circle of family and friends.

That was the day when our lives took a new turn. We had a new start. We trusted each other more.

This time, we had a proper honeymoon and we chose Paris. It was a one week trip. But the only place that we visited was The Eiffel Tower. We weren't able to move out of the room. Gautham wouldn't keep his hands off me. Either we spent the days and nights making earth shattering love or sleep for a little while due to non-stop sex. He was insatiable!

But never once did he make me feel the need for a baby. But I wanted a child who would call us his/her parents. Our family always felt incomplete.

Though we knew that we had each other, Gautham got the hint that I wanted a child. When we discussed it, he suggested that we should see the best doctors for my treatment, if that was what I really wanted.

I really wanted to give it a try. So we did approach the best doctor in India. But he said that there was less than a one percent chance for me to conceive and even if I conceive, my womb would be very weak to carry the baby. So, we were left with just two options which were surrogacy and adoption.

After a lot of discussion we decided on adoption. We wanted to parent a child who needed the care of parents. I didn't find it important of having a genetic connection with the child. The connection with the child should be through the heart.

"So, the formalities are done and this two month old baby is your daughter from now on," Sister Theresa said.

"Thank you so much Sister!" Gautham said.

"No problem Mr. Gautham! What name are you going to give this little one," the sister asked and that took me into deep thoughts.

"Can I hold her?" Gautham asked with so much expectation in his eyes.

"Of course," I said, placing our little bundle of joy in his strong and protective arms.

He looked affectionately into her forest like black eyes which turned dark brown when light fell on her.

"Can I have the honor of naming our daughter?" he asked, looking at me.

"Yes!" I was more than excited to know the name that he had in mind for her.

"She is a miracle that happened to us, she is a *magic* that God created in our lives and so I name her *Maya*," he said, kissing her on her plump, rosy cheeks. For the first time I saw Gautham becoming emotional. *Maya* was such an adorable name!

"She is looking so intently at you! Aww! Look at that!" I screeched.

### **After 4 years**

"Maya must have woken up Gautham," I said, untangling my naked self from him.

"We have two more hours, baby!" he said, pulling me back to him and I landed on his chest. His fingers caressed my bare back.

"It's her first day at school!" I said, tucking my hair behind my ear.

"Mhmm," he said, pulling me closer for another session of love making.

We were already running late for Maya's school!

I slipped into a dark navy blue pencil skirt and its hem ended right at my knees. I wore an orange spaghetti top and threw on a matching blue blazer. I put my hair in a tight high ponytail and after wearing my mascara and kajal, I was ready to go.

I quietly walked upstairs. Now the blue room was Maya's. She loved blue and every small thing that she owned was blue.

As I walked up the stairs, I heard my daughter's cute giggles. I was more excited than her about her first day at school.

It wasn't the actual school. It was going to be her first day at her pre-kindergarten.

She adored Ria and whenever Ria was free, Ria would force Sri to drop her at our place so that she could play with Maya. Maya liked Ria so much that she wanted to go to the same school as her.

"No, Daddyyy! Blue clippy here, here! Not there," I heard Maya screaming in frustration at her Daddy.

I found her looking grumpy. Gautham was kneeling in front of Maya, trying to put her favorite blue clip on her hair. Maya was the only other girl to whom Gautham would ever apologize or go on his knees for. He had her whole room re-painted with Mickey mouse clubhouse characters the moment

Maya started to love them.

Maya was nonstop nonsense just like me. She would never stop talking.

"I'm so sorry, Princess! I will do it properly now!" he apologized and tried to put on the clip again but eventually ended up spoiling her neatly brushed out hair.

I couldn't help but laugh and that caught Maya's attention. Her little feet padded across the room towards me.

Her tiny arms looped around my legs. "Mommy! Daddy knows nothing! No clippy hair properly," she said in her adorable flawed English.

"My baby!! Come here!" I said, lifting her up and I took her to her blue dresser.

We had her beautiful black hair cut in a bob style. She wanted to look like Dora the explorer.

I parted her hair and put on her blue clips which matched her cute blue frock. I tied the bow of the frock and she looked at me with a gleaming smile.

"Thank you Mommy!!" she said and placed a wet sloppy kiss on my cheek.

"You are welcome, sweetheart. Did you have your breakfast?"

She nodded. "Daddy made."

"Good. Go and wear your sandals, Mommy and Daddy will join you," I said and she ran out of the room

"Go slow! Don't run Maya!" Gautham's warning followed.

"Yesss daddy!!" she shouted from the stairs.

I had a last look at myself in the mirror and straightened my skirt again.

"Someone is looking all hot," Gautham whispered in my ears. He stood behind me and looked at my eyes through the mirror with a wicked smirk on his face. And he started to press soft kisses on my neck.

"Hmm..Gautham!!" I moaned, throwing my head back. His hands removed my blazer. He nipped at my pleasure spot and it was making my knees go weak.

"Ple..Please Gautham. Stop."

He looked at me questioningly

"We don't even have an hour! We've got to hurry up!" I said, panicking. I put on my blazer, straightened my dress and hurried.

"On one condition," he said, stopping me by holding my wrists. "We are leaving our home only on one condition that we can continue this later on," he said.

"Do I have a choice?" I said and I already felt the blood rushing up my cheeks.

"You blush even after five years of our marriage," he said, caressing my cheek.

"Now come! We are already running late! We should also reach our office on time after we drop Maya at her school."

I walked down the stairs and just then I heard a faint sound from the kitchen. It was the sound of repeated jumping.

I hurried to the kitchen and saw her standing on a stool and jumping on it, to reach for the jar of candy.

"Maya!!" I shouted when she was just about to fall. I ran and held her before she could fall.

"What happened?" I heard Gautham's panic filled voice behind me.

"Are you okay? Did you hurt yourself?" I pulled Maya into my arms and hugged her tightly. "Don't you dare do that again, Maya!"

"But Mommy," she whined in my arms.

I pulled her out of my arms and looked at her sad face. "No buts, Maya! How

many times have I told you that if you want something from the kitchen, ask me?"

"You busy with Daddy."

"I'm never busy for you Maya! Never! I can't bear if something happens to you? Never!" I said and tears filled my eyes. It's all my fault! I shouldn't have lost it when Gautham touched me.

"No cryy Mommyy! Please! Maya no do this again!" she said, wiping my tears with her small fingers. I took her fingers in my hand and kissed them.

"Promise Mommy that you won't do this ever again."

"Pinky promise Mommyy," she said and kissed my cheek and made me smile.

"Why did my princess want candies suddenly?" Gautham asked, looking at us.

"Candies for Ria and my new friends at school."

"You are not going to school today!" I said and put her slowly down on her feet.

"Why mommy?? I go!! I go to school!"

"Mommy is playing with you! You will go to school today. My beautiful princess!" Gautham said, carrying Maya in his arms and took her to the hall.

I was not going to allow Maya to go to school. I would teach her everything at home and make her the most brilliant student.

"Don't be scared Shakthi," Gautham said.

"But I am," I said, crashing in his arms. "What if I lose her, as well? I can't live if anything happens to her Gautham!"

"Trust me Shakthi! I will always be there to protect her," he said.

I came out of his arms and looked into his eyes. "Please Gautham! Let's wait

a year more. What is the need for her to go to school now? Pre- kindergarten isn't a must."

He smiled. "She has been so excited. Haven't you seen it? I can't see her heart broken Shakthi! Trust me! I won't let anything happen to her! Don't you trust me?"

"I trust you more than I trust myself."

He pressed a soft kiss on my forehead. "Then, let's get going and drop her at her school."

This man can even bring the moon down on earth for his daughter.

In the car she sat on my lap and was jabbering nonstop.

It would have really hurt her if I had refused to allow her. But even now, I was scared.

"Daddy!! Is this hot?" she asked, showing the bottle of heated water that I had boiled for her.

"Let me feel it and tell you," he said and touched the bottle. "It is hot."

"Why did you touch it?" she asked.

"I can't tell you if it's hot unless I feel it, Princess," he said.

"No Daddy! You can tell by looking at it."

"No, princess! It's not possible," he said and ruffled her hair.

"Why would you say that Maya?" I asked.

"Daddy told someone looks hot," she said innocently sipping on the bottle of water. When did she listen to our conversation!

The car came to a sudden halt. Gautham looked at me with guilty eyes. I pressed Maya's ears tightly and said sternly. "No explicit language around her Gautham."



He accepted quickly without a word and ignited the engine again.

"Look and tell, Daddy! Is this hot?" She held out her lunch box.

And now, I couldn't stop laughing.

The entire day flew by. We also had a busy day at Sharp and Measure since it was the last day for filing returns.

When I went to pick up Maya from her school, she said that she wanted to spend the day with Ria. So Sri took both Maya and Ria to her home for the night. I would really miss her.

"Ready to go home?" I heard Gautham ask me, as I was shutting down the laptop. It was almost a quarter past eleven and I was growing tired and exhausted.

"Yes boss," I said, which earned a chuckle.

"You are the boss here, remember?" he said, which made me roll my eyes.

"Don't even get me started on it! Please!"

"Alright! Let's go!" he said and we left.

I felt so sleepy and tired that I dozed off in the car.

A soft breeze caressed my cheek sending chills down my spine, making me wake up. When I woke up, I saw the sky with sparkling stars and a full moon. The place was so silent. Where was I? There was no one around me. It was an empty place.

I got up from the chair and I lost balance since I was standing on something that was moving. I peeped outside the railing and realized that I was in the sea.

This was a cruise! Oh my fucking God! How did I come here?

And suddenly I heard a huge sound of a cracker bursting and the sky filled with the bright letters, '*Happy birthday! My Shakthi*'

"Happy birthday Shakthi," Gautham whispering in my ears.

I turned to face him. He was in his khaki shorts paired with a casual white shirt and all of the buttons were open, revealing his gorgeous abs. His hair was messy due to the breeze.

I checked my watch and it was exactly twelve. I didn't even remember that today was my birthday. I was so worked up with Maya's first day of school that I totally forgot about this.

"You did all this for me?".

"No! I did it for our neighbor," he taunted which made me giggle.

"Thank-"

"Thank *you* Shakthi! For coming into my life, turning it upside down, making me believe in love, for trusting me, for giving me a family, for giving me Maya, for all your efforts in our relationship. This is nothing compared to what you have done for me, by marrying this bipolar, mad man." He laughed.

"I never knew that you could be this romantic! When I married you for the first time, I thought that you were a jerk, which still you are, at times." I chuckled.

"But jokes apart! I don't know what I could have done in my life without you Gautham! Thank you for not giving up on me and marrying me again and-"

"Are we going to keep thanking each other like this or are you going to fulfill your promise," he asked. He always gets pissed when I thank him for re-marrying me again. But at times, I really feel lucky to have him accept me in spite of all my flaws. He makes me flawless.

"What promise are you talking about?"

"You promised me that you would complete the deed that we left incomplete in the morning," he said with a teasing smirk on his face.

"Oh! Mister millionaire! The birthday girl is not going to fulfill all your demands today!" I teased him by running a finger seductively over his abs.

He grabbed my hand which I was using to trace his abs and looked at our engagement ring.

"Did you have a look at this ring?"

"Of course! This is the one which you gave me when you proposed."

He smiled and removed the ring and held it out to me. "Read the inside of the ring."

'*You and Me-Forever*' just like the way I had it inscribed in his watch. When he first gave me this ring, these words weren't there. He was so good at giving surprises.

"This is the best gift ever Gautham!" I said and tears filled my eyes.

He claimed my lips for a mind numbing kiss. His lips smouldered mine in passion and love while his fingers wiped away my tears.

I held on to his neck and kissed him harder. "Forever ,Gautham," I muttered against his lips.

"Forever," he promised, but this time it would never be broken.

**--THE END--**

***Thank you for reading. Hope you enjoyed reading it.***

***I invite you to share your thoughts and reactions. [Click here to leave your review.](#)***