***Karan was a man in his late 20s, caught in the throes of life’s struggles. He had lost his job—a secret he kept from his family—and now worked as a bartender, though the bar and its patrons were merely figments of his imagination. Within this mental escape, he played multiple roles: himself, a neutral observer; the bartender, a source of positivity; Vihaan, a negative figure; and the intruder, representing random thoughts that disrupted his peace. Inside, Karan was conflicted, stressed, and deeply disappointed with his circumstances.***

***The bartender in Karan's mind was a beacon of positivity, a figure compared to Lord Krishna through subtle hints and names—Maddie (from Madhav), JD (Janardhan), Harry (Hari), and K (Krishna, Kanha). He was calm, insightful, and composed, offering wisdom and guidance to the patrons, reflecting Karan’s internal battles and realizations. The bartender acted as a mirror for Karan’s thoughts and feelings, ultimately guiding him toward self-realization.***

***Vihaan, a young man in his early 20s and a person struggling in his life due to a decision – whether to abort the baby or to keep it.***

***He represented Karan’s past, he is completely lost and stuck in a place just like karan.***

***The other bar patrons symbolized Karan’s past experiences or versions of himself, acting as a chorus that reflected the bar’s atmosphere and enhanced the main characters’ interactions and realizations.***

In the washroom, the bartender stood in front of the mirror, looking down at the sink. A glass of drink rested on the basin, and his phone rang persistently, filling the disappointed silence. When he finally lifted his gaze to the mirror, someone shouted from outside, “Log ruke hain, saale! Daaru pilane ke paise milte hain tujhe! Bahar nikal!”

He glanced at the door and took a step toward it, his face unseen, only his back visible.

Meanwhile, despite the monsoon season, the city was cloaked in a humid embrace. Heavy clouds shrouded the days, with frequent drizzles. Karan, stressed and confused, rarely smiled. Thousands of thoughts rained in his mind, and he sought relief in the bar he often visited. Sitting at the counter, he waited for the bartender to take his order. A young man named Vihaan, sitting two or three chairs away, sipped his drink while the bartender added more ice.

Orchestral music played on an old music player, and people hummed along with the rhythm, but Karan seemed curious about the music. It was a French orchestral piece. He slid his glass towards the bartender and asked, “Aaj kya lena pasand karenge, sir? Regular ya kuch special?”

Karan, his voice heavy, replied, “cocktails mein kya hai?”

The bartender smiled and said, “cosmopolitan, manhattan, sour whiskey, and martini.”

Bartender added, “ manhattan laga du sir? Vermouth fresh hai. “

Karan looked towards the bartender questioned.

Bartender replied, “ Sir manhattan banayi jaati hai whiskey, sweet vermouth and thode bitters se. Kya aap lena pasnd karenge. “

Karan said, “ hmm, ek manhattan chalegi. “

Bartender replied, “ sure sir! “

The bartender turned back, and took a glass to the table. Got a few bottles to mix and got the drink ready for karan.

He passed on the drink to karan and said, “ Here’s your manhattan sir. Enjoy your drink. “

Karan took the manhattan silently to him and looked down, seems like he is a bit sad or lost.

(A few seconds pause , bartender doing the chores, and nothing special)

Coin clanks / falls on the table. Karan looked towards his right side, and found an action interesting.

A man tossing up his coin expecting to get his desired result. He looked at the coin, heads on one side and tails on the other.

He tossed up the coin whispering “ head” a few times. The coin went up. Both karan and bartender looking at him and the coin flipped. It went in air flipping its sides, going down with gravity reaching the table surface. The coin falls. The guy who flipped it (vihaan) looked towards the coin and was a bit disappointed. It was tails. He said to himself, “ah koi fayda nhi hai iska bhi”.

He was taking his coin back but the bartender stopped him by keeping his hand on the coin , took it to himself and said, “aapke coin ki ek hi side hai sir”

He showed him, both the sides having tails.

Vihaan was shocked, “impossible, tumne yeh coin badal diya?”

The bartender said, “woh matter nhi krta sir”

Vihaan asked, “ phir?”

Bartender added, “aap jindagi se kuch aur chahte hai, and jindagi aapse kuch aur. ”

Vihaan asked, “mtlb?”

The bartender replied, “jindagi aapko jimmedariyo ke liye taiyaar kar rhi hai sir, and aapko who jimmedaari uthani chahiye jo bas ek glti se bani thi. “

Vihaan asked surprisingly, “tumhe kaise pata chala?”

The bartender replied, “main dimaag padh skta hu sir. Mujhe sab pata hota hai. “

Vihaan looked at him, questioned, his facial expressions asking him to read his mind and speak out.

Karan was listening to this conversation silently sipping his glass of wine.

The bartender replied, “agar uski iccha ho toh aapko abortion ka step leni ki koi jarurat nhi hai sir.”

Vihaan hmmed.

Vihaan asked, “ mujhe sab hard lag raha hai yaha se, and Humaare relation ka kya? “

The bartender replied, “ cheeze simple hoti hai sir, usko hum complicate krte hai, conditions ko blame krke. “

Karan interrupted from nowhere, “ so what? Reality ka saamna karke, jo relations hai who tod dene ke? “

The bartender replied wisely, “ Agar aise waqt mai relations tutne ki baat aaye toh smjh lena ki who kabhi the hi nhi. “

Karan ignores the bartender and resumes sipping his glass and said, “shayad tumhaari shadi nhi hui hai ab tk, kuch aasan nhi hota. ”

Vihaan asked, “ kya yeh sach mai itna hard hota hai? Shaadi krna, kisi ki jimmedaari sar pe lena, baccho ko paalna baap banna? “

The bartender replied, “ Zindagi ke bare mein aap aise sawaal pooch rahe hain jo aap khud nahi apnana chahte. “

He added, “ pehle aap who jindagi ko apnaiye, aapko saare jawab mil jaayenge. And koi cheez dil se kari jaaye toh kuch mushkil nhi hota. “

Vihaan hmmed.

The bartender added, “ Aur aap meri maane toh aapko yeh kr lena chahiye sir. “

Karan found it irritating and inturrepted their talk, “woh bacha nhi hai, kya tum uska decision usko lene doge”

He added, “kya karna hai kya nhi,yeh batana tumhara kaam nhi hai”

The bartender replied politely, “aap bhi bacche hi the sir, jab aapko kisine ne madad ki thi.”

The bartender silenced vihaan and said, “shayad aapki wife ne hi aapki madat ki thi sir, jisse aap kuch chupa rahe ho. ”

Karan looked at him suspiciously keeping his glass down. His face showed a questioned state of himself.

The bartender asked, "Kya aap theek hain, sir?”

Karan hmmed.

The bartender insisted, “Aapka chehra kuch aur bayaan kar raha hai, sir.”

Karan replied, “kya tum apne kaam se kaam rakhoge please?”

The bartender, ever polite, responded cryptically, “Kyun sir, birthday ka koi gift nahi mila?”

Surprised, Karan looked questioned and asked him, “tumhe kaise pata?”

The bartender, adding some wine in the glass, replied, “Aapko aaj ghar pe hona chahiye tha sir, aapke bete ke saath.”

Karan answered coldly, “Isse tumhara kya lena dena?”

Meanwhile,

Everyone in the bar stared at Karan, their gazes intense and unwavering. The bartender remained composed, “kyuki aap khush rahe sir!”

Karan looked around, realizing he was the center of attention. “Yeh sab mujhe kyun ghurr rahe hain? Yahan kya ho raha hai, koi batayega?” he shouted.

The bartender calmly said, “Jhooth dusro se chupaya jaata hai sir apno se nahi.”

The Bartender added after a few seconds silence, “Aur jaise yeh log hain, waise hi aapke khayal.”

The bar patrons stood in place, looking at him. “Are you accepting the situation, sir?” the bartender asked.

“Kaun ho tum aur kya chal raha hai yeh sab?” Karan shouted, panic rising. His heart rate quickened, and he started to feel anxious.

The bartender said, "yeh sawaal aapne khudse puchna chahiye sir. Aceept your life sir. “

Karan replied in anger, “ toh maine jindagi kaisi jeeni chahiye ab mujhe tum sikhaoge? Bar Mai kaam karne wala ek bartender? “

The bartender replied, “ agar itni hi nafrat hai toh kyu kar rhe aap yeh job sir? “

Karan’s phone rang again. He looked at the bartender, and for a moment, it felt like there were no other people around. The voices and the entire bar became silent. The other people including vihaan just disappeared. There were only two people, the bartender and karan. The phone rang persistently. The bartender handed him the phone, “Aapko utha lena chahiye, sir.”

It was Karan's wife calling.

Meanwhile,

The bartender stood in front of the washroom mirror—it was Karan, looking down at the sink. A glass of drink rested on the basin, and his phone rang incessantly. He remembered being kicked out of his company a month ago, something his family didn’t know. He had tried to find a job but faced constant rejections. The bar scenario was his mind’s creation, a way to force himself to reflect.

For money, he had been working in a bar, hiding it from his family. He felt lost, trapped in a void of nothingness. When he looked up into the mirror again, he felt blank, unsure of what he was doing with his life. The phone rang again.

“Log ruke hain, saale! Daaru pilane ke paise milte hain tujhe! Bahar nikal!” someone shouted from outside.

He looked at the door, took a step toward it, then stopped. He glanced back at the mirror, then at the wine glass, and pushed it into the basin in anger. His reflection shattered, mirroring the state of his life. With a deep breath, he took the phone in hand. There were many missed calls from his wife. It rang again. Meanwhile, a voice in his head resonated, “Are you finally going to make them happy?”

He thought to himself, the words echoing with newfound determination. Karan stared at the shattered reflection in the mirror, feeling the weight of his decisions and the lies he had been living under. The glass shards seemed to symbolize the broken pieces of his life, scattered and fragmented, yet there was a chance to pick them up and mend them.

The phone rang again, insistent and demanding attention. Karan took a deep breath, feeling the tension in his chest. With trembling hands, he answered the call.

***EXTRAS***

*“Hello?” he said, his voice cracking.*

*“Karan? Kaha ho tum? Kabse call rhi hu!” his wife’s voice was a mixture of concern and frustration.*

*Karan felt a lump in his throat. “I… I’m sorry. Mujhe kaam aagya tha kuch,” he stammered.*

*“uske birthday ke din toh jldi ghar aao, ” she said, her voice softening with disappointment.*

*“I know, and I’m really sorry. I’ve been… I’ve been struggling with a lot of things yrr,” Karan admitted, his eyes filling with tears.*

*“mujhe bataya kyu nhi yaar? We’re supposed to be in this together,” she replied gently.*

*Karan took a deep breath, feeling the weight of his secrets. “ maine job kho di ek mahine pehle, I’m working at a bar. I’m sorry maine yeh bataya nhi, but mujhe smjha nhi ki kaise batau, kis muuh se batau.*

*“*

*There was a pause on the other end of the line, and then his wife said, “ it’s okay, tum pehle ghar aao, dekh lenge hum kuch. “*

*Her words were a lifeline, pulling him out of the abyss he had been sinking into. Karan nodded, even though she couldn’t see him. “mai….mai aa rha hu ghar,” he said, his voice steady with resolve.*