Agni...The Secret Door

Krishanku

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Chapter Prologue

When Dimisha took the first step on this path, she had no idea where this would end. She just listened to her inner voice. A voice that was telling her only one thing.

"IN THE END, YOU WILL FIND WHAT YOU ARE LOOKING FOR,"

Before all of this, she was just a regular girl with simple dreams. She wanted to see the world, learn about people. She wanted to know if someone is good why that is, and if someone is afraid to be good, why it is.

She does not about her parents. Who they are or why they left her. She came to know about a family, by the orphanage she was bought up.

But life is not a bed of roses. It never goes with our plans.

An ordinary girl came to know that there was an extraordinary story behind her. After knowing that, she could not stay in the orphanage. Not that she did not like that place. That place was her life, her family. But, there was also another part of her life, unraveled, felt like a blank space. She could not live with that.

Bharata, a warrior whose fight was against some unknown forces. Most of the people are unaware of it. But, the reason behind humans or any other lives we see now around us is living only because of him.

Believe it or not, that's true, and Dimisha was his blood. As the heir of Bharata, she has some duty, some responsibility, to perform, and she happily accepted all of these.

Chapter 1

For outsiders, this jungle was the habitat of various wild animals, birds, and reptiles, they used to see in their tv channels. But they were unaware with the fact that that jungle was also home of human beings like them. In the middle of the dense jungle, there was a tribe who had had been living since a very long period of time. They were primitive by nature, depending on everything that nature gave them to survive. They were totally in dark about the fact that there was a civilization just a few kilometers away from their home.

Government also kept that fact hidden. According to them, it's best for both of them. That's how they kept them safe and protected.

Like other night , after having dinner they went to sleep. They had some fix rules and regulations like some of them had to watch their place while other was sleeping. There were five tribal people which had to do that duty that night. With big stakes, and bow and arrows they were roaming around the place.

It's a winter night, and there was a big fire burning to keep them warm. While walking around the place they passed a flux made of bamboos to each other. It contained a locally made wine. Taking a sip of it, they passed it to other without saying any word, just nodded their head. Maybe they were using some kind of sign language, any hidden gesture to communicate, to tell that everything is fine.

But, they had no idea what was there rushing towards them to give them the worst terror in the middle of their peaceful night.

When it started, no one thought that there was something coming for them to destroy everything they knew.

Maybe the danger is like that. They grab anyone without the slightest sound.

"It's just an earthquake" that's what they thought. It's common to that area. They felt that shaking often. They did not give much attention to it.

But, after some time it did not stop like other days. On the contrary, it reached its peak.

The shaking of the land got worse and worse. The bamboos, holding those huts were not able to stand still. They started to fall along with the roofs and walls.

People came out, shouting, feeling terrified. Some of them were carrying their children tightly.

Within a fraction of time, the jungle was echoed with the screaming, and not only those people were screaming, but also the animals and birds and every living thing in the jungle, even the diurnal one too.

Everyone could feel it, that something incredibly powerful was coming for them.

"What is happening?" One of them shouted coming towards a guard.

The guard kept looking at him with his eyes wide open. Words were not coming out from his mouth. It's a cold winter night, though he was covered with a layer of sweat.

Those were the people who did not know anything about the world outside the jungle. Their thoughts were primitive like an animal. They kill anything only for two reasons, when it comes to eat them or when they need to eat it. A long time ago, some outsiders tried to enter their territory, but it did not end well.

Stones, poison arrows, and stakes were their weapons, and the new threat coming for them, they could not stop it with all those.

At this time, only hope for them was Pradhan.

Pradhan was not a name. Its a title given to the head of the tribe. For them, Pradhan was the smartest and bravest man they had ever known. He saved them from infinite menaces before. Once, they remember, a tiger was hunting them one after one. They lost many of them. But, Pradhan was the one who killed that man-eater and saved his people.

They believe, he will come up with something this time too.

Everyone ran toward him.

"Pradhan, what are we going to do?"

"Pradhan, we are going to die, "

"Pradhan, do something,"

He was surrounded by questions...questions of which he had no answer. By looking at his face, it is hard to tell, but he was also scared like others. He had no idea what was going on and what to do.

"Everybody, calm down. It will over soon," he said, hiding his fear.

Pradhan's word could not able to give much impact on others. He himself not confident about what he said.

"Wait, something is coming. It's close, "someone said.

Everyone looked at him. Closing his eyes, he was trying to hear something.

He was right. There was something close to them. But it's not what they thought.

The land started to crack all over, like someone moving below the surface.

" Run, " Pradhan shouted.

"That's the only reasonable thing we can do." He thought.

They were waiting for him to say that.

Everyone started to run. They did not know where they were going. Just running and running as far as they could. Pradhan went with them too.

After some time, the situation seemed to be got calm. Shaking of the land stopped.

With heavy breathings, they kept looking at each other, trying to feel the situation. They were still in shock.

"I think it's gone," one of them whispered, touching the ground.

"Wait, don't go near it. It may be waiting for us,"

"But someone has to go,"

They were looking at each other, waiting for someone to make the first move.

"No one needs to go. " Pradhan spoke, "We will wait here until the sun rises,"

Everyone agreed not to go back to their place at night. Anyway, it's almost dawn. They decided to wait for the sun to rise. They sat down wherever they were, leaning to trees, or rocks.

After a long period of the fearful night, the sunlight touched the ground.

"Pradhan, I think we should go now," one guard said to his ear.

Pradhan was taking a nap, resting his head on a tree. He opened his eyes while yawning.

"We can go now. Tell everyone to move," he stood up and looked around.

"Pradhan asked everyone to walk with him, "that man shouted.

Those people were laying here and there. As they got the order, they stood up.

"But, keep your eyes open. The danger may not over yet," he said looking at them.

Slowly slowly, they approached their home. The guards were keeping their spears ready to attack if something jumps on them.

But, there was nothing which they could consider scary, except for the broken pieces of their huts.

The condition of the huts was not good.

Their eyes remained wide open to see them. All of them were scattered into pieces. The land had many cracks all over.

"It looks like those cracks are coming from that side," one tribal people said, observing the pattern.

Pradhan sat down and started to get a closer look.

"Yeah, you are right. Those are coming from that side. There must be something happened last night on the bank,"

"What will we do now, Pradhan?"

"All of you start to work. Build your huts again. Help each other," he ordered.

They began to collect the scattered pieces of their huts.

"Romeng," he summoned someone.

"What is it, Pradhan?" Romeng asked, rushing towards him.

"We have to go and see what happened last night," he said, keeping his voice low.

"Will it be safe to go there? This thing looks very strong. What if it is waiting for us?"

Romeng was terrorized to go with him.

"We can not sit like this. We have to do something. Otherwise, it will haunt us again. So, let's gather some of our men and go,"

"You want to go right now?"

"Yes, we should not wait. As time goes, it will get more and more powerful. It's better to crush it now,"

"But.." Romeng wanted to say something but stopped.

"You see those people, those families. They count on me. I can not let my fear stop me. You understand that?"

Romeng nodded his head and went to gather a few men to go with him.

Pradhan was standing there, looking at them. They were busy with their works. Some of the were making their huts, some others were preparing the meal.

He released a sigh.

Romeng was returned with two men.

Pradhan looked at them and said," Gaurang and Mirgang, has he told you where we are going?"

"We are going near the river to see what's there," Mriganag replied.

"Do you two agree to go with me?"

"Yes, we do. You are our Pradhan. We will follow your every order without question,"

"In that case, I don't see any reason to wait. Go and take your weapons. We will leave now. Bring my spear too,"

They immediately walked away and quickly returned with spears in their hand. They were also carrying bow and arrows.

"Pradhan, here it is, your spear," Romeng gave him a spear.

"You people keep doing what you are doing. We are going to deal with the cause of last night's attack. When I return, everything should be rebuilt,"

Giving them orders, he walked towards the river with his three companions.

Chapter 2

Seeing Dimisha back after such a long time, Mr. Nagar was so relief that he was not able to speak a single word. Just two drops of tears slipped down though his neatly shave cheeks. Dimisha had never seen him like this. She also got emotion from inside. But, she was that type of girl who did not like to express their emotions. Dimisha made a normal smile to hide her tears. She was good at it.

Mr. Nagar pulled her with his arms and gave her a tight hug. Dimisha held him back. She missed that place.

“I was so worried about you. Thank God you are alright,” he said, kissing her forehead.

She simply nodded her head, with a faint smile, and said, “I missed you,”

Her eyes were red and swollen, due to those sleepless rough night at the island.

This orphanage was her home. She grew up here. A few months before, she had no idea about her real family, her blood line. Mr. Nagar was the person who gave her the love of a father, and a mother. He took care of her like no one ever did. Though Dimisha found out about her real parents, but it could not replace him from her life, not even if they were alive.

He took her to his office.

"Are you going to stay here now?" Mr. Nagar asked Dimisha.

"Not for long. I am here for a reason, " she released a deep breath and looked away for a moment.

She was avoiding this obvious question. She knew she could not lie. He would knew it.

She spoke again, "I don’t know how to explain it. My whole life is changed now. The things I have been through, it completely altered the perspective of mine for life,"

"I know that I can not force you to come back. But, always remember one thing, no matter what, the doors of this orphanage are always open for you." while saying, he moved his hand on her back of the hand softly.

"And you will always be my father,"She looked at his eyes.

"Of course. I love you, and nothing can change that."

She smiled while her eyes become red slightly.

"Do you want to talk about what happened in Kimbala?" he changed the topic.

She looked away, hearing that word on her mouth. Her face turned pale.

"You would not believe me anyway if I told you. I did not believe those things either until I saw them with my own eyes. Trust me, ignorance is bliss. That river island is not like the rest of the world, you see." She replied, bending her lower lips.

"What about your parents? Did you find anything about them?"

"It's complicated. But somehow, I came to know that I am connected to a family of a warrior named Bharata."

"Bharata! never heard of him," he said, squeezing his eyebrows.

"He was not that kind of warrior we hear or see on tv and books. His fight was not against the usual things,"

Mr. Nagar gave her a look of surprise raising his eyebrows.

" I told you nothing usual you can find there," she shrugged, " don't worry I will be alright," she said agai, reading the state of mind of him.

"Whatever it is, I am glad that you are safe. That's all matters."

"Now, I have some responsibilities upon me. Some mysteries, some unanswered questions that I have to find out, " saying so, Dimisha mover her hand inside her bag putting it on her lap, and took out out a photograph

" Actually, I am looking for this place, do you know anything?" she gave him the photograph.

"It looks like an artifact to me," releasing a sigh, he replied," Sorry, I had no idea what this thing is. Where did you get this?"

"A friend of mine gave me. Look at the bottom corner. There is. a name, can you seen! " she said, scratching her nose.

He took the photograph closer to his eyes, and gave a minute look to that place where she was pointing, narrowing his eyes.

"Maybe there is a name on it," he mumbled indistinctively

Mr. Nagar took out his magnifying glass and looked throw it, bringing it to the light.

"Oh! You are right." His eyes were glowing while saying that," I can see it now. It's a museum."

"Do you know about this place?"

"It's on the opposite side of our district. Maybe, once or twice I took you there. Don't you remember?"

"I have to go there, and find the details about the artifact" she said, rubbing her palms.

Her breathing got faster, and face turned serious.

Mr. Nagar noticed the impatience inside her, though without giving much attention to it, he asked politely, "sure, When do you want to go? I can take you there,"

"Thanks, but that won't be necessary. I can go by myself,"

"In that case, you have to leave early. Can you tell me what is this all about? What is that artifact has to do with you?"

"Honestly, I am in dark as much as you. That's why I have to find that out. It was very important to a friend of mine, certainly worth someone's life,"

"Anyway, it's good to see you. You can stay here as long as you want," Mr. Nagar kissed her forehead.

"It's good to be back," she replied.

He left his office.

That night Dimisha could not sleep. She was thinking about the diary of Vivek, where she found that photograph. He mentioned multiple times about the treasure of hell there. The only lead she had was that photograph. Nobody knew what that treasure was except it's something evil, something bad. Vivek mentioned someone was planning to take that out.

"I have to find out what that is. You may rest in peace, my friend," she said in her mind and tried to have some sleep.

Dimisha woke up early in the morning. Mr. Nagar asked to take his car, but she preferred to go by the public service bus.

The journey took time more than she expected. It's almost evening when she was finally standing in front of the museum.

"Kameng museum, collection of ancient sorcery and mystic art," she read the title written at the entrance.

"Let's see, what do you have for, me Mr. museum," saying so, she entered inside.

A few people were there inside, and some of them presumably the stuff. Most of the families do not like to visit a witchcraft museum on holidays with their children. She looked around, searching for a welcoming face with whom she could speak.

A lady was working, sitting behind a desk. The round face and big lips of the lady were saying that she could help her.

"Good evening, ma'am," Dimisha said with her most appealing voice.

"Good evening. How may I help you?" she replied with a smile.

"I was looking for this item. Can you tell me where it is kept?" she showed her the photograph.

"I don't think this item belongs here. I have never seen it,"

"But, in the label, below it, mentioning the name of the museum,"

The lady brought the photograph closed.

"Yes, you are right. It's the name of our museum. Maybe it was sent to another place before I joined. I have been here only for six months."

"Is everything alright, Aditi?" a middle-aged man asked, standing next to her.

"Sir, this young lady is looking for this item," she stood up and gave him the photograph.

"Good evening, sir. My name is Dimisha," she forwarded her hand.

"Good evening," he shook her hand and said," I am the curator of the museum, Siranjiv Chaudhary,"

"What can you tell me about this?"

"Come with me," he took her to the office upstairs.

"Have a seat, please,"

"This is a very ancient object. I am surprised to see a pretty young lady like you looking for it,"

"Actually, it belonged to my father. He was a fan of all those things. He told me that he visited this place several times. I did not have a chance to know him very well. After he left me, I am just trying to know him," she took out a hanky and cleaned her tears.

"I wish I could help you. But that artifact was stolen a long time ago. Sorry," he offered a glass of water.

"Stolen?" Dimisha said with her mouth opened," Who would steal that, it does not look that expensive,"

"You are right. It was not expensive by any chance. But one of our employees thought that it has the power to destroy the world. That's why he stole it, to save the world,"

"You never tried to find him,"

"Of course we did. But, the police never able to find him. God knows, what he did with that thing," he released a sigh.

"Can you tell me anything about the artifact?"

He checked his watch and said," Okay, I have an hour,"

He started saying," that stone was like a spellbook for some ancient civilizations. The shapes, symbols drawn on those items were the spells. I don't know how far their beliefs were true, but there is a reason behind this thinking. According to them, whenever a sound is produced, no matter how intense, it forms a shape or a symbol on the object it strikes. That's what the symbols were saying..."

Dimisha looked towards the door, suddenly.

"You found this boring, I guess," the curator said.

"Not like that, I just felt like someone is standing there," she turned back to him.

Siranjiv moved his head to see if there was anybody.

A man came inside, holding a tray with two cups of tea on it. He put those cups in front of them and left.

"You are saying about the symbols," Dimisha said.

He took a sip from the cup and started his explanation again, "Every symbol represents a sound or mantra or spell, whatever you say. The guy I was talking about, he was obsessed with those symbols. He was trying to figure out the mantras from them. One day, he came to me, saying he found out the meaning of it, and it's extremely dangerous. I didn't pay much attention to it, and the next day it was gone, so he was,"

"Wow, this world is filled with crazy people. Do you remember his name?" she asked.

He looked at her with narrow eyes.

"Sorry, I am strictly ordered not to share any information regarding the theft. I hope you can find your way out,"

"It's okay. Thanks for giving me time, "

She left the room.

Aditi is still there, at her desk, busy typing something.

"Hey, it's Aditi, right?" Dimisha asked,

She turned her eyes from the computer screen to her.

"Hi, sorry, I forget your name," she smiled

"I am Dimisha,"

"So, you have found what you were looking for, ",

"More or less." Dimisha sat on the chair in front of her, "By the way, I wanted to tell you that I love your earrings. Can you tell me where you bought those? I want a pair like this for me too, "

"Oh! These," she touched her earring with a shy smile," My fiancee gave me on my birthday. I am not sure where he got these,"

"Aw, that's cute. When are you going to marry?"

"Maybe next month. Nothing is fixed yet. We have a lot to plan," Aditi was blushing.

"Congratulation in advance, "

Dimisha was good at this. Within a minute, she became very friendly with her.

"Thank you. Actually, you know what..." and there starts the description of her journey of love.

Dimisha was trying to show interest in her story. She kept going and going about how she met him, how he proposed her and everything. Dimisha was suffocating from inside with her talking. Not a single word was going inside of her head.

"That's very romantic. You are a lucky girl."

"You can say so, " Aditi replied.

"Hey, I need to ask a favor from you if you don't mind," she finally spoke.

"Of course, what can I do for you?"

"Can you check if there is any record about the item I was talking earlier?"

"I can make a try. Show me the photograph,"

Dimisha gave her the photograph. She looked at it for some time, squeezing her eyebrows and typed something on her computer.

"Here it is, there are some data about it," she moved the screen of the computer to her.

Dimisha leaned towards the screen. It was describing all the things that the curator told her. There were some photographs of it. When it was first brought to the museum and their maintenance team and other things. Finally, Dimisha saw someone in a photo.

"This guy, he works here?"

"Yes, he does. His name is Aryan. I think he was one of the maintenance team of the item,"

"Okay, thank you once again for your help," Dimisha stood up.

"It's very nice talking to you," she said.

Dimisha walked towards the exit.

"How can someone speak so much," she said, releasing a sigh of relief.

Getting out of the museum, she smiled and said, "Got you, Mr. Aryan."

Chapter 3

"Dear students and the faculty members, welcome you all to today's conference. It's a prosperous moment when we get an opportunity to have him as our guest. I don't think that man needs an introduction. We all know very well about Dr. Hemanta Biswas, a shining jewel to our society. We all feel proud of him. He helps this world several times with his precious inventions. It's a privileged moment when we have a chance to speak with the hero of our nation, Dr. Hemanta Biswas. Today, he is here to talk about his latest research which he named as NISKARUM...an universal cure. So, ladies and gentlemen, please welcome Dr. HEMANTA BISWAS,"

The auditorium was filled with the sound of clapping hands. Almost three hundred people were sitting inside. Most of them were students, the rest of them were apparently lecturers and professors or someone from his field of work.

There was a big banner hanging on the stage saying, 'Dr. Hemanta Biswas...guest of honor'.

Dr. Biswas entered the stage with a smile on his face and waving his hand. He was wearing a black color suit. His pointy shoes were shining like one could see it's the face on it.

He began saying, "Thank you all of you for your love and support. Without your love and support, it won't be possible for me to be standing here in front of you. So, without any farther delay, let's start our today's topic of discussion which is NISKARUM. Everyone may have heard of it. People, especially the media, are talking a lot about it recently. You may have hundreds of questions. I will try that when you will go out of this room today, you will go with all the answer you deserve to know,"

He paused for a moment and again got back to his speech," Virus, normally when we heard the word, something evil, something painful pops to our head. Isn't it? Pictures of People, dying in infections come to our minds, and that's not completely wrong, and not completely true either. As people of the modern scientific world, we know well that all the viruses do not cause harmful effects to a living cell. Some of the viruses are there, which are immensely helpful to our system. For example, you may have heard about vaccinia viruses. It belongs to a poxvirus family which is used to create the vaccine for smallpox,"

He removed the cap of the bottle and poured some water into his mouth. After making his throat wet, he got back to his speech.

"The world is a very mysterious system. After living thousands of years, we have failed to figure out what actually this blue colored ball is doing. For me, the lives on earth are like a jigsaw pattern. To survive here, we just need to match the pattern with each other. If nature built something that

can kill us, it also built something that can save us too. We just need to be just smart enough to find it out, and that's what I try to do. While walking on this path, I found out about a virus that can be used to cure all the infection...a virus which is the answer to all the questions. Think of a virus that can cure all the diseases, a virus that is programmed to kill other viruses. As I said, nature created the virus that causes illness and pain, and I reprogrammed those viruses and found the solution which is going to end all suffering of humans."

He pressed a button of the tiny remote controller, and the projection screen started to show some round-shaped green organism. He started to explain what that thing was.

Everyone in the auditorium was sitting with a notebook and a pen or with a tab. They were writing the points whatever they think is necessary. The projectile, running on the screen, showing the points of Dr. Biswas' speech.

One student from the middle of the masses raised his hand.

"Yes, my friend," Dr. Biswas said, pointing to him.

"Have you successfully tested that cure on any human?" he asked.

"We have not tested it on the human body yet. There are some legal issues we were facing. The good news is now we are allowed to test it on humans. The trial will start next week. But we have tested on several species, and the result comes positive all the time. So, it would not be hard for us to test it on humans,"

"Anyone else wants to ask something?" he gazed over the crowd, holding his hand to his forehead, covering his eyes.

Another student raised her hand and asked," Good evening, sir. I just wanted to know if there are any side effect test subjects faced,"

"Well, minor side effects were seen on them. Like weakness, indigestion, vomiting, mood-swing. But nothing serious that can say that this cure is harmful. All those side effects were because of the introduction of a new compound to the system. With time, we can overcome all these side effects too."

"Any more question?" he waited to see a raising hand.

"Sir, suppose, you have succeeded to construct the medicine which you are talking about, what will it be the price? I mean will it be affordable to poor people, because I think they are in need of this medicine most," another one from the crowd asked.

"That's a very relevant question, my friend." Dr. Biswas chuckled.

"Pricing the medicine is not completely in my hand. A lot of things mater while we come to sell it. But I can assure you that from my part of the deal I will try my best to keep the price as low as possible. Because I don't want someone to suffer only because of the unaffordability,"

The question-answer session went for a long time. He was making smart, quick, and interesting answers to every question. They were having a good time talking with Dr. Biswas.

When everyone was enjoying the sweet juice of the modern and advanced scientific world, on the other side of the same world a few tribal people were struggling with a new problem, which was beyond their level of understanding.

Pradhan, with his three followers, reached near the river expecting to find the cause of last night's terror. But, when they reached there, they found it hard to believe their own eyes.

"Are they seeing correct or is it some kind of magical illusion?" they asked themselves.

Their jaw was dropped after seeing the thing, standing in front of them.

It was a big black colored stone, almost five ft tall. They were standing at a distance from it. No one dared to go near it. It looked like a big black creature sitting with its arms closed. From where they were standing, the surface of it seemed very smooth, and the top of it had a round shape.

They stared to make noises with their mouth, and clapped their hands to see if that thing moved. But, it did not show any movements. Probably, those sounds made by them did not penetrated it's ears, if it had something like that.

Pradhan took a stake in his hand hit the ground hard several times.

But, the result was same. No sign of any behavior from that black monster like thing.

"What is this thing, Pradhan?" Romeng asked, making his eyeball bigger.

Pradhan was speechless too. He did not know what to tell to his people. His neck was dried.

"I don't know. I am seeing this for the first time in my life. It's looks like a big stone to me. Only thing I can tell with absolute certainty is that this stone is the cause of last night's attack," he said coughing.

"How do you say that?" Gaurang questioned him.

"What else could be the reason? Anyway, look at the cracks. All of them are starting at the stone, and then moving towards our place." he bent down to the ground.

At the bottom part, where that thing was touching the ground, there were some cracks on the lands in zig –zag pattern spreading to a far distance. Those cracks were developed all around the stone.

Everyone nodded their head.

"But, how this thing came here? Someone can't carry such a big thing,"

"I think, it came by the river," Mrigang said, pointing the direction of the river.

"That's not possible. From the way, it is standing, it looks like someone put it there," Pradhan disagreed with him, shaking his head.

"Who could have done that?" his eyes were furious.

"I think someone from the other side of the river. They are always trying to take the water from us,"

"This thing is bigger than an elephant,"

They were petrified.

"Search the jungle and see if there is anyone around," Pradhan ordered them.

They moved to another side of the jungle and checked every possible place where anyone could hide.

"Something doesn't feel alright," Pradhan said indistinctively.

"Yeah, I think so too. There is not a single bird here. otherwise, those trees have a lot of birds," Mrigang said, looking at the trees.

"Someone cursed us. We all are going to die," Gaurang sounded panicked.

"That's not going to happen. We are here for a long time. This place belongs to us. No one can remove us from here. We will fight to our last breath for our place," Pradhan said heavily.

"But what about the stone. We don't know anything about it, and last night we all saw what it can do. We can not fight with such a thing,"

"We will destroy it. The mother goddess is with us," Pradhan said, raising his hands towards the sky.

After searching for a distance, they found nothing suspicious.

"Nobody is here. We should get back," Pradhan said.

"Get back, you mean to go to our home," Mrigang asked.

"No, fool, to the stone. We can not go home like this. We have to do something about it. Everyone is waiting for us to hear something good," he said with anger in his face.

They returned to the place where the stone was standing, scaring them.

"Don't get closer to it. We don't know what is hiding inside,"

They moved around the stone from a distance. It's a black colored stone, curved at many places. The surface of the stone was not smooth.

"Give me your bow and an arrow," Pradhan ordered Mrigang.

"What do you think of doing?" Romeng was startled by Pradhan's intention.

"We can not just walk round and round it. This makes no sense. let's see how strong it is,"

"So, you are going to shoot an arrow to it. You have lost your mind,"

"Do you have any other option except for shouting at me? If you do, tell me,"

"What if it becomes angry! You will make it worse,"

Mrigang was standing there, with his jaw touching his chest.

"What did I tell you? Give me your bow," he shouted.

Mrigang gave him his bow with an arrow, and took the spear, Pradhan was holding.

"Think one more time. That thing looks very powerful. It's impossible to destroy it with an arrow,"

"You can say that. Because people are not looking at you for help. The responsibility of their lives is upon me, not you," he said, clenching his teeth.

Pradhan made up his mind. No one can stop him if he once decided something to do. He fixed the arrow in the bow and pulled the string.

"Everyone, get back," he said, aiming it towards the black, magical stone.

Three of them took a few steps backward. Their hearts started to beat faster. Mrigang rubbed his hand to calm his goosebumps. Everyone thought that it was a mistake that Pradhan was going to do. But, no one was brave enough to stop him from doing that. He was the leader of the tribe, and all of them had to follow his orders.

He took a deep breath and released the string of the bow from his finger. The arrow was released. It moved towards the stone at its full speed. It's going and going, and when it about to strike the stone, suddenly it vanished within a blink of an eye. There was no sign of the arrow.

No one understood what just happened.

"You missed the target," Romeng was relieved that it did not hit the stone.

"That's not possible. I have never missed a target. I timed it perfectly this time. There is no chance of it," Pradhan said, squeezing his eyebrows.

"Then where did go? It did not hit the target. We would have seen it on the stone if it did that,"

"I think that stone ate it," Gaurang said slowly.

"What?" Romeng gave him a frown brow look.

"I think so too. I saw it, going towards the stone, and then vanished," Mrigang supported him.

"That's not a normal stone. It's a demon stone," his voice was terrorized.

"What are we going to do now, Pradhan? That thing is indestructible. It will be going to eat us all," Everyone's face was dried.

Pradhan was standing there like a statue looking at the stone. He was thinking about his people. How will he tell them that all are going to die? Those were his people. Looking towards him with the hope that he can protect them. But now, there was something ahead of them which was evil, stronger than they had ever seen.

"Pradhan?" Romeng waggled his shoulder.

"What are you thinking?" he asked again.

"I don't know. But I can not let them die. They trust me with their lives. I have to find a way," he released a deep sigh.

Chapter 4

It's the late-night when Aryan finished his work and walked out of the museum towards his home. The place where he lived was not so far from the museum. He preferred walking than any bike, or scooter. There was a charm in walking like on a lonely road at cold winter night, with his hands inside his pocket. Aryan liked the feeling of smokes coming out of his mouth while he releases a breath. In the yellow colored street light, it became visible.

Enjoying his own company, while whistling the tune of his favorite song on the lonely road, the only noise he could hear was the buzzing of beetles. It was the only music which felt like playing with his song. Aryan had become friendly with this noise after walking on the same road at the same time for years.

He walked almost half of the distance, but today an unfamiliar voice called his name from behind.

"Hello, Aryan,"

It was unexpected

That cold two words, coming out of the blue were enough to push the heart of Aryan to his mouth. Within a minute, his body temperature rises several degrees. He jumped feeling horrified and turned towards the way that voice was coming.

"Who is it?" He somehow managed to utter it while sobbing. He was trying to hide his fear behind his shouting,

"Sorry, did not mean to scare you, " A girl came out from the dark.

"Who are you?" he said, trying to make an angry face.

The buzzing coming from the dark of the beetles were not audiable to his ear anymore. Something jammed his ears. That girl, standing infront of him , also saying something, but only thing he could feel is moving her lips, no words was striking him.

“Hey, are you okay?” she asked, snapping her fingers.

“What do you want?” he asked, gulping to make his dry neck wet.

"We have met earlier today at the museum. Don't you remember?"

He looked at her face.

"Oh, you are the girl asking about the stolen artifact. What do you want from me?" he asked, crossing his arms in front of his chest.

"We need to talk. I have something important to ask if you don't mind," she said nicely

Aryan was surprised to hear that. It took a minute to process what he had just heard. Keeping his lips, slightly separated, he gave her a long look of surprise and then spoke,"Look, it's the middle of the night, and I am exhausted. You are beautiful, but I am not in a mood to talk. Try another time,"

He started to walk towards his home with quick steps.

"It's about a friend of yours, Vivek. I presume you remember that name," she said that name loudly, expecting to put an impact on him.

"Vivek? I don't know any Vivek. You are probably confusing me with someone else," he seemed nervous.

There was an unusual stammering in his tone.

"In that case, you would not mind if I gave the letter of Vivek to your boss," her politeness was gone. She became rigid and confident.

"Letter? What are you talking about? You have lost your mind,"

He replied with a smile, looking away, with an attempt to show that he was normal.

"Vivek asked me to give his friend a letter. I have not read it, but I am sure he mentioned the artifact he stole and about you in it,"

"You are bluffing. He would never do that,"

"So, you know him,"

"I did not say that," he said, shaking his head.

"You don't need to worry about anything then. See you tomorrow at the museum,"

Saying so, Dimisha went away from him.

"one…two…three…"she moved slowly away, counting her footsteps.

"Hello! miss...wait," he shouted from behind.

She did not get a chance to count to ten. She knew it.

Dimisha stopped with a smile.

He ran towards her.

"Did he really give you any letter?" he was panting.

"It’s much more complicated than you think. I have a lot of things to talk. You are the only one I know who worked with him. So I expect you will be completely truthful with me,"

"Can we talk somewhere else? I mean, it's kind of creepy talking with a girl in the middle of the road at midnight,"

"Let's go to your home then,"

"How do you know about my home?"

"It's later night. You are walking from your job. There is no pub or bar nearby. So, obviously, you are going to your home which is not so far from here,"

"I am positive now that you know Vivek. Only he can do these stupid and not to mention annoying tricks," he said, showing wrinkles to his forehead.

"We can discuss it in your place. What do you say?"

"This way, please," he said, waving his hand.

They made their steps to his home, and after a few minutes, they reached there.

"You know this is the first time a girl is coming to my home," he said, while pushing the key inside the keyhole of the door of his apartment.

"Put that thought in your pocket. I am here to talk. Don't flatter yourself," she said, giving an indignant stare to him.

With a clicking noise, the door was unlocked and they moved inside.

It's a small apartment, somehow one man could live. But all the furniture, starting from a small stool to the couch everything was spotless. It looked like he was keeping all the things by measuring with a scale. Everything was in its proper place.

"Have a seat. Just give a minute. I will be back," he said and moved to another room.

Dimisha moved a gazed to the room. There was a wall filled with a collection of photos of different places around the world. Those photos were of the pyramid of Giza, The Tajmahal, and all other ancient monuments.

"I like history," he said.

He offered a glass of water to her.

"Yeah, I can see that," nodding towards the photos, she replied.

"So, what was written in the letter. Can you show me now?"

"I would show you if I could. But that is impossible. Because there is no letter,"

"You lied to me," he shouted.

It felt like a bolt from the blue to him.

"You were not ready to talk. I had to do something," she replied shrugging.

"Then how did you know that I and Vivek know each other?"

"When I was talking to your boss, I saw you listening to us, hiding behind the door. Next, when Aditi showed me the photographs of the management team, I saw you and Vivek. That's why I doubted you. I was expecting you know something,"

"You tricked me!" his eyebrows we're about to touch the top.

"Not my best effort," she sat on a chair.

"Damn, girl, you are dangerous. Why are you here anyway? Are you with the police? Look, I have no idea where he is or where he kept the item. I have nothing to do with it." he moved to another side.

"Relax, I am not the police."

"Then why are you enquiring me?"

"You are taking me wrong. I am just here to know about Vivek. I want to know what he was up to,"

"I find hard to trust you. Anyway, we are not talking to each other for years. So, I can not tell you anything. Will you please leave now?" he showed the door.

"Vivek is dead,"

"One more lie. Aren't you ashamed of yourself?"

"You listen to me. I was lying to you only because you were lying too. Otherwise, you would never except the fact that you knew him. He is dead, and as of his friend, I have some responsibility to complete the task he started. It's up to you if you want to help me or not. But don't tell me that I am a liar. Because I never deny recognizing my friend who is in trouble," she shouted, standing up from the chair.

"Okay, fine. I can see you are angry. Ask whatever you want. I will help," he sat back in front of her.

Dimisha was staring at him making inward her eyebrows. She was breathing heavily.

"Have some water," he pushed the glass towards her.

"Why you were refusing to know him in the first place?" she asked after releasing a sigh.

"Isn't it obvious? You were asking questions about the item he stole. I am already in trouble. Police were suspecting me to be with him,"

"I was asking because...anyway, I guess, we got off on the wrong foot," she drunk some water.

"It's okay. I was just scared. You can ask whatever you want. I will help."

Dimisha was about to say something, but he spoke again, " first, you tell me how did he die?"

"It's hard to explain since you don't know anything about the encounters he did in life. In a nutshell, he was in a village, which is on an island named Kimbala. He was killed by some evil people there."

"Well, it's not completely surprising for me. The way he was behaving lately, I knew there won't be a happy ending. But, murder...that's too bad,"

"What was he up to?"

"I don't know. After his father went missing, he was changed. He put his mind into all those things magic, sorcery, dark art, and all. I tried to help him, but that incident, it broked him,"

"His father went missing?"

"Yes, one day he went for work and never returned. We tried to find him, but there was no sign of his father. Even, the police could not help us. He believed that his father was taken by a monster. He was very close to his father, his only family,"

"What did you do then?"

"I did what a normal person would do. I tried to take him to a psychiatrist. But, you know him, and then add insult to the injury that artifact came to the museum." he leaned back to his chair.

"Did he mention anything about Treasure of hell to you?"

"He mentioned a lot of weird stuff like this. Hell, heaven, fire, and many more. But I did not give much attention to it. I have some of his goods. I can show you if you want."

"Yes, please, that would be very helpful,"

"Wait a minute, " saying so, Aryan went to another room to grab his stuff.

Dimisha was looking at the way he left.

He was like a kid, not from the look, but from his heart. He was kind of a person, who could see the good in someone. It's rare in those days when people are busy to show others smaller than them. He was not into those races.

Aryan returned with a small wooden box.

"This box belonged to him. Nobody was allowed to touch it. I am flabbergasted when he left the box with me before he moved from here, "

He put that on the table.

"Moved? Where did he go?"

"I have no idea. I asked him multiple times, but he always said he needed some cold place to work. God knows what it means,"

The box had some designs made of silvers on it. Those designs said that it belongs to ancient times, though it looked new.

She opened it carefully.

There were some sketches inside it about some places, symbols, and a volcano. She looked all of it one by one.

"I did not know he was into tattoos," he said, looking at the symbols of the sketch.

"Those are not tattoo designs. Those symbols have deep meanings. He was trying to figure out something," She was looking at the symbols from all side.

"What meaning it can have?"

"If I knew the answer, I would not be here. Don't you think?"

"I am starving. I am going to eat something." He said, tapping his belly.

He moved to the kitchen.

Do you want anything?" he shouted from there.

"No, I am good," she replied, keeping her eyes on the sketches.

Aryan got busy in cooking. She could hear the sound of moving ladle and throwing something to the heated oil.

"You said, he left this place, and moved somewhere else?" she spoked from behind.

"Oh God," the ladle slipped from his hand, "stop doing that,"

"Doing what?"

"Speaking like this, out of the blue unless you want to give me a heart attack,"

"Sorry, I was out of the practice of these human behaviors,"

"It's fine. I had a long day. " he took the ladle from the floor and put it in the sink, and spoke, "What were you asking?"

"I was saying after he left this place, was he coming to his job?"

"Yeah, his precious artifact was there. He had to come," he moved the food to a plate.

"I have to find where he was living?"

"You want some? It's good," he offered some food.

"No, you can enjoy your food. But I have to take that box with me. It may help to find his place, Is that okay with you?"

"With the box, you can find where he lived?"

"I know someone who can do this kind of stuff,"

"Okay, take it, "

"Thank you, "

She walked out of the kitchen. Aryan put a mouth full of what he was eating and rushed outside following her.

"Are you leaving now?" he asked, chewing his food.

"Yes, I have to go," she replied, wrapping up the box.

"How will you go? You won't find any ride at this time,"

"Don't worry, I will manage," she walked to the door.

Aryan stood on her way, and said, "You can't leave like this. I think I deserve to know what's going on here,"

"These things are beyond your understanding,"

"Whatever, I am coming with you, and you are not going to stop me. I have been doing all the things you asked. Now, it's your turn to do something I am asking. Are we clear?" his face turned red.

"Is that your angry face?" Dimisha chuckled to see him angry.

"I will take that as a yes,"

"It's up to you. But I have to warn you, you are going to face your worst nightmares. You can not blame me for that,"

Chapter 5

"What is your name, son?" a tall guy , standing in front of the kid asked.

He was wearing a long white kurta, and a rudraksh mala was wrapping around his hand.

"Why do you want my name? There is no one to whom you can complain. I live my own," that boy replied rudely.

He felt exceptionally interesting to see a kid with such a rage. He may be seven to eight years old, not more than that. But, from his attitude, it could be said that he had seen the ugliest part of human life.

That boy was wearing a pant which barely touched his knees, and on top a shirt with many holes in it. Probably he picked it up from some garbage. No one could guess its original color. He was struggling to survive, fighting to feed himself.

"Why would I complain?" he bent down close to his face, and said with a smile, " do you think you have done something wrong? "

He did not answer. Actually, he was confused. That was the first time when he stole from someone and after getting caught the conversation was not started with a slap on his cheek.

"I just stole from you, " he said at last.

Though the attitude of that little one did not changed.

In real, he was the words he used to were rascal, bastard and all that kind of words, and he knew quite well how to react to those words; first run and then if possible attack them with his best weapon, small stones. But, someone calling him son, even after he got caught of stealing from that man was new to him. He did not know how to respond to him.

"You know what is it?" that tall guy asked, taking out the chain from the pocket of that boy's pants.

"No, and I don't care. Only thing that matters to me is that I can eat happily for three days if I can sell this, "

“You are a brave kid,” The man chuckled and asked, "What about you give it to me and I will feed you whatever you want, how about that?"

"I have got caught. So you will take it from me anyway, and I don't need your sympathy. I may have no family, no parents, but I can take care of myself, "

"You know, you are a smart kid."

"Just take the chain and do whatever you want, I told you I do need your sympathy," he said.

"You can keep it. It's yours." He took the chain, and tide it to neck of the boy.

The kid was flabbergasted. He could not understand what was going on.

"Now, we can go somewhere nice and eat something. What do you say! I am starving." he said to the boy, moving his hands over his tummy," At least you can show where we can find good food here. I am sure you know a place like this,"

On that day, the kid went with him. He ate with that stranger, properly in a table, not in a footpath. He learned that the world was not filled with bad people. Not everyone here was trying to do bad things. Some of them were good, kin –hearted too.

His life changed on that day. He got a name…

SURYA

It means the sun. Maybe, that name was given to him because of glowing tremendous energy he was holding inside.

And after several years, that locket was still hanging from his neck, and the man who offered him food on that day was still with him. Everyone called him Gurudev.

Surya became the part of something bigger, something secretive no one could possibly know.

"From now on, all of you are the part of the shrine, part of our secret society which we call the Ghost,"

Gurudev was telling about the history of the shrine to some kid which he found somewhere like Surya.

He was sitting on a raised platform made of stone while others were sitting on the grass.

"Today is your first day. I took you here because I can see the potential inside you to do something. Forget what you are. You are not a boy anymore. You have to devote yourself completely to the shrine, "

"What do you want us to?" A boy from them asked.

"I want to give you a purpose. Purpose, of your life."

No one understood what he said. Looking at their blank faces he spoke again, " most of the people you met earlier are doing something without knowing what they are doing these. They are doing something that they are not meant to do. Moving without proper direction, "

"Can you tell us about the secret society?"

Gurudev took a breath, thinking about what he asked in his mind, and then said, "I am not sure you are able to understand it or not. This is a hundred years old society which is like a shield to the lives on earth. There was a hero, named Bharata. He started a fight, a war. Before him, no one had ever thought of doing something like this,"

"What happened in the fight? Did he win?" one of them asked,

"I never told you the fight ended. It's still going on. This is a war which never going to end. He realized it soon after he jumped into them. That's why he captured them and locked them down one after one,"

"You mean inside the temple of pillars?"

"Yes, that's like a jail for all those bad things. Inside it, there are infinite numbers of pillars, and inside every pillar, there is something trapped. In simple language, a monster, or you can call it a demon. That's why he built that far away from the reach of humans. Most of them who knows about the existence of the temple of pillars, but they don't know what's inside,"

"Is it true that he was a uniped?"

"Yes, that's true. He lost his left leg while fighting with a demon. That's why he always used a crutch to walk. But, this does not mean that he was weak somehow. His strength was more than you can imagine, and the crutch, he used it as a weapon. There were many spells hidden inside it."

"Where is the crutch now?"

"Unfortunately, no one knows where is it. It got lost after his death,"

"You said that this is not going end. Why is that?"

"Those things we are against are like a virus, an infection. They feed on fear. So, as long we will have fear in our minds, they will be alive. The only way to wipe them out permanently is by creating the human race without fear, which is nearly impossible."

"If we know that we can't win, then what is the meaning of fighting?"

"We are fighting because this fight is not about winning or losing. This is about protecting what ours. We are the hope for the people outside,"

Gurudev saw Surya was waiting next to them. He knew why he was here.

"You can go and start your practices,"

He dismissed the lesson.

"Gurudev, you wanted to see me?" Surya said, coming closure to him.

"How are you doing these days? Are you able to focus on your work?" he asked very gently.

"Yes, Gurudev. My mind is in peace now,"

"Do you remember the first day of you in here?" He asked, with a glance of a smile on his face.

"I do. I was a different person then. I was broke, moving without any purpose in my life. I feel lucky that you found me, and made me a better person,"

"That person was already inside you. I just gave a chance to develop it. Now I am proud of my decision," Gurudev tapped on his shoulder.

"This is the new life you gave me. That's why I am fully devoted to you. I will do whatever you want me to do,"

"Your devotion should be for the shrine and our society,"

"Is there anything you want me to do?" he looked at him for an order.

"Yes, I have an important task for you. Come with me,"

They came towards the shrine from the open field and started to walk on the long corridor. Surya was following him without saying a single word. He watched Gurudev with his side-eye view. Though his face always had the same expression, whether it was something good or bad, that day there was something different about it. Surya could feel it at the moment he was summoned. He was said that there was something extremely important.

Walking through the stairs, they reached the first floor. Though it's a fort and from a birds-eye view no one could tell the difference, but every room was somehow different from others. This floor, has a series of doors, each leading a room with its own significance. One of them was kept for the research of new species found on earth. Another one is to create spells against monsters, and Surya's favorite room which is the combat training room.

They entered his room. A man was there, cleaning it with a mop.

"You can go now," Gurudev said to him.

Bowing to him, that man left.

"Have a seat,"

Surya was silent, but inside his mind, a lot of things were running. He was trying to figure out what was going on.

"Maybe there is something he will send me to hunt down," he thought.

Gurudev poured some juice to his glass from the jar and drank it.

"You must be thinking of what the emergency is,"

"Are you going to send me on a hunt?" he questioned him with a doubt in his voice.

"I want to send you to a place, but not to hunt anyone, not this time. This time you are going just for an investigation and if my information is correct, which probably is, then you have to bring someone to our shrine with proper protection."

"I do not understand. What investigation are you talking about?"

"Do you know about the place Kimbala?"

"Yes, it's where the temple of pillars was built. It's a river island,"

"Correct, and now I have got a piece of news about the temple. I was told that the seal was broken and someone entered inside it,"

"That's impossible. Only the heir of Bharata can enter inside it,"

"That's what I am afraid of. I think the heir of Bharata was there."

"If that's true, then isn't it good news?"

"It depends, who can find the heir. Because if some else found him, it won't be good."

"And that's why you want me to go there and bring him to our shrine,"

"You are one of the best. I can trust you for that. But remember, he is very special. So, bring him with respect and honor,"

"Don't worry, Gurudev. It's an honor for me that I am going to meet him. I will protect him with my life,"

"I know. Keep this as a secret until it's confirmed. I don't want to spread any false news,"

"I should prepare myself for the journey then," he stood up.

Gurudev also stood up. Surya came closer to him and touched his feet.

"My blessings are with you, VIJAY BHABA," Gurudev showed his palm to bless.

Surya got of his room with a confused state of mind. He did not know what to feel. He should be happy that Gurudev had given him such a responsibility, or he should be tensed that he had something big to do.

There were some boys practicing sword fighting. He stopped there for some time, looking at them.

Once, he was standing at their position. Whatever he is now, this is only because of Gurudev. Going to Kimbala was not be easy, but he had to do it.

"Hey, is everything okay? You look tensed." Riyaj asked from behind.

"Nothing, I have got a duty to perform. So, I want you to keep an eye on the jungle until I return," he replied.

"Sure, I can do that," he said smiling.

"Don't get over-excited. I am asking you just to keep an eye. if something happened, inform Gurudev. Don't get involve. Is that understood?"

"Okay, cross my heart. Where are you going by the way,"

"I can not tell you now." he shook his head.

"Is it a hunt,"

"Nope, not this time. Just an inquiry,"

"It would not take long then,"

"Not sure, the place where I am going is far from here, and the situation is critical,"

"I can go with you if you want,"

"That won't be necessary. You stay here and do your job,"

"Okay," he shrugged.

Surya entered his room and exhaled a sigh. His room was filled with weapons. Small knives, big knives, different swords were hanged on the wall. He stood in front of the wall, looking at those weapons. He was thinking about what to take with him. This time he was not going to need big, eye-catching weapons. It's just an inquiry. So it's better not to pull anybody's attention.

After Surya left, Gurudev got busy in reading books. He was reading about the Kimbala and the temple of pillars. He read all about that place many times before. Still, he had doubts that he missed something.

He was searching if there was the slightest possibility of breaking the seal of the temple without the hair of Bharata. If that happened, then the situation would be worse. There were thousands of demons trapped inside those pillars, and even one of them got out, no one would survive on earth.

Chapter 6

Dimisha was going to place where she she was hoping get some help to locate Vivek's place, where he was hiding the artifact. Aryan was with him. They were going by a bus, without exchanging any words. Those sketches made by Vivek were coming to her mind. She was certain there was something about those sketches and that box.

The wind, coming through the small window of the bus, was disturbing her hair. Sitting next to Dimisha, Aryan looked at her. Long, black hairs, touching her pinkish cheek, and while she tucked it behind her ears with two of her finger, it was really hard for Aryan to move his eye away. He was not sure that to find out about Vivek was the only reason he was with her.

Dimisha took out a rubber band and tied them behind tightly.

"What?" Squeezing her eyebrows, she said to Aryan.

He immediately moved his towards the other side, feeling embarrassed.

"Where are we going?" he asked, scratching his brow.

"When was the last time you have seen a ghost?" she asked back.

"Ghost, like a Ghost..ghost," he looked to other passengers if they were listening to them.

"Yes, just like that, when was the last time you saw one?"

"Fortunately, I have not seen one yet."

"What? You work in a museum full of magical stuff and never seen a ghost. You must be joking," she scoffed at what he just said.

"No one put it on the list of the eligibility criteria of the job that one must see a ghost to work in the museum,"

"In that case, you should feel lucky to meet me. It's time to see one."

The bus stopped with a scratching sound of brakes. His head hit mildly to the back of the seat in front of him. But it did not hurt him, not as much as what she just said.

“it's time to see a ghost, what it supposed to mean!” he sat there, with a confused expression.

"Don't be nervous. I am going to introduce you to a good ghost, Trust me. It won't do any physical damage," saying so, she moved from her head and said silently, “hope so,”

Saying so, she stood from her seat, and walked towards the exit door.

Aryan was looking at her. What Dimisha has just said, made him a little uncomfortable.

She was going to introduce him to a ghost!

Aryan had some doubts about the existence of ghosts, but he had no doubt in her sense of humor.

"She is not joking" he told in his mind.

He remembered how she almost stopped his heartbeat at that night.

"Are you coming?" she shouted.

“Yeah,” abnormally looking here and there for a moment, he got off from the bus with her.

"Are you going to tell me now where we are going?"

"It's a surprise,"

He looked away, rolling his eyes.

"Are you scared?" she asked with a chuckle.

"Nope, but I just don't like surprises, especially from you,"

"Don't worry. This one would be different," she said and looked away just to hide her smile.

"We are going to a hospital. Holy cross hospital...heard the name?"

"I don't think so, and I thought we are going to see a ghost. Why are we going to a hospital then? Friend of yours is admitted there?"

"It will be quite difficult for someone to go there for treatment. Because that hospital was closed for a long time due to a fire incident. No one survived from that fire. No one lives there now,"

"Why are we going there then?"

"Told you we are going to meet a ghost. That place is filled with unhappy ghosts."

They left the concrete main road that the bus dropped them on and took a dusty narrow path. There was no sign a life except those two.

"This place was not like this all the time. There was a time when this area used to be crowded. But after the incident, rumors were spread that place is haunted. People were talking about seeing someone inside the hospital. A girl who died there,"

"So it's just rumor, there is no actual ghost, right?"

"You will see when you got inside," she replied with frowning lips.

"How do you know so much about all these things, anyway?"

"How can you tell the difference between a fake and an original artifact which is hard for others to detect?" she made a whataboutery question.

"I don't say I am an expert on these. When I joined the museum I had no idea about any of these things. With time I discovered those stuffs,"

"Same goes for me as well. I had some practice too and more importantly, my brain works a little faster than yours," she shrugged her shoulders, looking at him.

He smiled a little.

Finally, they set foot on the campus of the burned building. It's hard to tell that there was a hospital once. All they could see was a burned building. The walls were broken, and the bricks were shattered all over the place. Trees and long vines were covering the remaining part of the building.

They moved closer, watching their steps and stood in front of a door like appearance which is supposedly the entrance of the hospital a few years back. Dimisha stood for a minute , looking at the door.

"What are you looking? A doorbell?" he asked.

"You are funny. I hope they are going to like this. Because whatever they don't like, they tear apart." she said with a cold-hearted voice, slightly bending towards him.

“What do mean by THEY?”

She did not wait there to answer his question. Releasing a deep breath, he also moved inside.

The inside of the building was dark and cold. An acidic smell was all over the area. Getting there, she looked towards the roof. Some broken pieces of it were hanging there.

"Let’s go this way, " saying tso, she moved towards a corridor.

There was a long hallway between a series of rooms that used to be wards when the hospital was alive. Some of those wards have no sign of doors, others were half-burned. They were walking between those wards cautiously without making any sound of footsteps.

"Dimisha," he screamed, “ I think I saw someone there.” The voice echoed in the empty hospital.

Aryan saw someone, or something inside a ward, sitting on the floor with its knee touching the chest like it is feeling cold.

"See what?" she whispered.

"I am not sure. I think there was a little girl sitting there," he looked back towards it.

No one was there. Probably the fear got into his mind.

"Never mind, I may be...," he looked toward Dimisha, but she was not there.

Just a second before she was standing right next to him and now...

"Dimisha?" he called her name.

No reply from her. His breath was getting shorter. He could smell the danger he was in.

He could sense it. He was not alone in that place. An unknown was there.

"Go away, you do not belong here," a cold voice spoke from behind.

A sensation passed through his body. He slowly turned towards the voice.

There was a girl who was standing at the end of the passage of something that looked like a girl. It's not Dimisha. He was certain about it. She was wearing a white-colored frock. Her whole body was covered with ashes. He could not see the face as it's covered by her long messy hair.

He took a gulp and somehow spoke, "Dimisha, it's not funny,"

That girl was moving towards him. She bent her head slightly towards her left. Aryan could hear the sound of cracking of her bones.

"You are going to die," she said again, pointing a finger to him.

Aryan's whole body was shaking. He was trying to remember everything he learned that was related to a ghost. He closed his eyes and started to pray whatever he could recall. But it's not doing any help. He could feel she was getting closer. He tried to run but his legs were not ready to move, they were stuck to the floor. His face was covered with his tears.

Hot air touched his face. It's her breath. She was just in front of him. He opened his eyes. She was two inches away. Her red-colored eyes were staring at him. She shouted loud enough opening her mouth so wide that his head could fit inside.

Aryan failed to stand still. He felt back. He was trying to crawl backward with his elbow.

"You will die, " that girl held him from his left leg and started to pull away on the opposite side. He was kicking hard as much as he could. But she had no impact on it. His hands were moving here and there, searching for something to hold. He tried to press his nails against the walls to stop dragging.

Suddenly, Dimisha came from a ward and stood in front of the girl. Before she could say anything, Dimisha punched on her nose.

She left his leg.

"Damn it, Dimisha. I told you not my face," the girl said, holding her nose.

Aryan was not understanding what just happened.

"Did she just punch on the face of a ghost or I am hallucinating!"

He was looking at them, laying down. His chin was touching his chest.

"Are you okay?" Dimisha gave him her hand.

He stood up, holding her hand.

"The ghost..she..was..she..was trying to kill me," he was not able to speak.

His body was still shaking.

"No, she was not going to kill you. She was not a ghost,"

He looked at her. She was smiling. Her ghosty appearance was changed, and become a normal person.

"Aryan, meet Maya. She lives here. She keeps away everyone from this place so that she can live here happily,"

"You know Dimisha, " Maya spoke, "There was a couple came here, making out, last week. I scared them so bad that..you should see their face, "

Maya laughed, like a 'normal person' this time.

"Is she trying to crack a joke?" Aryan asked himself, looking at her. He was trying to say something but did not know what to say.

"Hey," she waved her hand," Sorry, for that. I could not help myself when I see a human around,"

"All this was a prank?" his eyes were wide-open.

"I was going to die,"

"No, you were not going to die. But I thought you were going to pee on your pants which you didn't."

He was breathing heavily. His face was still pale.

"Why were you here, Dimisha?" Maya asked.

"I need your help,"

"Of course, come to my chamber," Maya walked way.

"Maya, you are not a doctor. So, stop acting like one,"

"Well, you are in a hospital seeking help. A doctor would be more realistic,"

"She was an actress before," Dimisha said silently to Aryan.

They moved inside a room.

Maya put on a stethoscope on her neck and said, sitting behind a table, "Have a seat. Tell me about your problem,"

They sat in front of her.

"Relax. I am not going to bite you," she said to Aryan, as he was still staring at her.

"Just tell me one thing, you are dead or alive?"

"Oh! she is alive like you and me. But, due to some of her talent, she can not fit into the outside. You will see,"

"I have seen it already. It's not a surprise for me that she could not live outside,"

"I think you need an MRI,"

"Honestly, if you don't get out of this character, I will smack your face, and this time the damage will be permanent,"

"Okay, you are not impressed with my acting. What can I do for you by not being a doctor?"

Dimisha took out the box from her bag and gave it to her.

"I want to know about the owner of this box. He used to live somewhere alone, try to find that out for me,"

She examined the box, "This looks old. It would be hard for me if the owner was not touching it for a long time,"

"I know you can do this, Maya,"

"I can try, but I can not say anything with certainty,"

Maya took out a tiny bottle fixed with a dropper cap from the drawer.

She gave a bunch of white papers to Dimisha, saying, "You know when to change the page,"

Dimisha nodded her head. Then she gave a few drops of the liquid from the bottle to her eyes and leaned back to her chair with the box on her lap. She closed her eyes and her hands were on the box.

Dimisha knew what to do now. She poured some drops of the same liquid to the paper. The drop was not soaked by the paper. Instead, it's moving round and round on it.

"What is happening?" Aryan asked.

"She is searching inside his memory,"

Suddenly, the drop stopped moving and made a drawing on the paper.

"Holy crap! It's my room," Aryan shouted.

Quickly Dimisha changed the page and pour some liquid into a new page," Try to go deeper,"

Again it made a drawing.

"I think it's the museum," he said.

"It's not helping. We need something else," She said, biting her lower lip.

She changer the page again.

"Look, it's making another one," his eyes were glowing.

Slowly slowly it drew the front view of an old apartment.

"Brahmaputra Apartment," Aryan read the letters written on the building.

"You know this place?"

"Yeah, I know that place," he said, looking down.

"Can you take me there?"

"I can, but it's not nearby,"

"Wherever it is, we have to," she released a sigh.

"Finally, we found something," she waved happily," Maya, it's okay. You can come back now,"

Maya opened her eyes.

"Did You found what you were looking for?"

"I am not sure. But I have got a lead. Thank you so much for your help."

"Any time, girl, "Maya smiled, "What's his story by the way?"

"That box I showed you belonged to a common friend of ours. He is trying to help," she replied, looking at him.

They had eye contact for a moment, and quickly they removed their eyes from each other.

"Okay, I have to go now," she put back the wood box in her bag and stood up to leave.

"It's nice to meet you Aryan," Maya extended her hand towards him.

To see her moving her hands towards him, he just startled. He immediately moved back.

"Still afraid of me, huh?"

"Oh! I am sorry," taking a gulp, he shook her hand.

His hands were cold. She could feel, he was in shock.

Dimisha and Aryan walked out of the building. Getting back to the open-air, he felt better. He took a breath relaxing his muscles.

"Sorry for that, " she said.

Chapter 7

The moon at the sky was partly covered by the cloud. The whole cemetery was covered with strange white mist, making it more difficult to see through. That mist was so dense that moonlight was not able to touch the land. Vinasha was moving here and there impatiently, trying to see what's going on inside, stretching his neck. It's taking more time than he expected. Those few minutes, he spent waiting outside were felt like the most difficult time of his life. If he could, he would go inside the cemetery, but there was something, that was blocking him, not letting him enter. That's why he took the help of her, Mandakini.

Mandakni, inside the cemetery, put the slab back to the grave like it was before. Standing there for a minute, she observed all the corners of it closely to see it was properly placed or not. She did not want to leave any clue of her presence which led to her by any chance. She erased the mark of her footsteps from the soft part of the land, wiping with her leg on it.

On outside, he was doing what he best could do during that moment of time; listening to every detail of the slightest noise coming out from inside.

Mandakini was witch, known for all the dirty works. Only thing she cared about the price. If it fitted with her demands, she would do it, no matter what. Vinasha knew, he chose the right person to do the job. Though he could not calm himself until he saw it with his own eyes.

While Mandakini was certain that she completely removed all the possible signs that could indicate to someone of her presence, she came out of the cemetery. He was eagerly waiting outside the boundary of the cemetery for her, rubbing his palm, walking here and there.

As that woman got closer to the gate of the cemetery, she became visible to him. He was looking at her face. He was trying to figure out whether she was able to do it or not. But, her face was hard to read, a neutral one in the scantly lighted night.

"Did you find it?" He walked fast to her and asked with excitement on his face.

"Living a task incomplete is not my style. I do not need to tell you that, do I?" she sounded cold and at the same time confident too.

"Just answer the question," he asked again. This time his voice became rude.

His chest was moving up and down fast.

"Of course I found it, otherwise I would not be here, standing in front of you," she smiled with a wink.

"Really?" a sigh of relief came out of him to hear that.

" What are you waiting for then? Show it to me...fast" he spoke again.

She could feel the blood rushing through his vain.

Not tasting his patient any farther, she handed him the thing for which she was sent inside that palce. It's looked lik an ancient scroll.

Just a glance of it had turned him to a statute. For some time, he just kept starring at it. His eyeballs were like getting out of his face.

It's a small scroll, not more than six inches, enclosed in both ends. Some symbols were entrusted all over it. From the look of it, it could be assumed that that thing he was holding was more than hundred years old.

"Can you believe it! I am holding the map. No matter how hard they tried to hide it, but finally, it came to me. Master will be very happy," his eyes were glowing with the feeling of joy and excitement while saying that.

"Tell your master that you have done a great job of waiting outside, while I was doing all the hard work and heavy lifting and taking risk for my life,"

"What are you trying to say?" he looked at her with anger in his eyes.

"I am saying that I have done my part of the deal quite well. So, it's your time to do your part," she replied, shaking her head.

"You do not need to remind me that. I do not lie like you humans. So, you will get what you were promised. But your job is not done yet. You have something else to do," he said, squeezing his bones of the jaw line.

He was moving his hands over the scroll, trying to feel the marks on it on his fingertips.

"What are you talking about."she spoke with an enraged tone," You told me to find the map for you, and I did it. My job is done. I don't like breaking the deal,"

"That was not the deal. The deal was to help my master to get what he wants, and this map is just a part of it. He is going to need some more items," he took a step towards her and spoke pointing a finger at her," Don't try to play smart. You will get what you want only when you will do what you are told to do,"

She was looking at him with a scowl on her face, for some time without uttering any word. Then she looked away, blinking her eyes for several times, and then said him, "Speaking of your master, how is he anyway?"

"His body is healing. Though he needs some more time,"

"I heard some girl make him loose, is that true?" she chuckled.

"Make your words very carefully, Mandakini. You are talking about the lord. So show some respect,"

"I have nothing to do with your master. I am just curious about the girl. I mean she must be quite special to do that,"

"That's not your concern. Keep your focus only on helping him. It will be good for you too if he gets back his strength, and about that girl, she will pay for what she did. That girl is alive only because my master wants her to live,"

“Okay, fine,” she shrugged, "What do you want me to do now?"

"I will tell you when the time comes. One more thing, did you remove your tracks from the grave? I don't want anyone to reach to me following your steps,"

"You can relax. I know my job very well. No one will come, following me or you,"

"Okay then, I will contact you. But, for now, keep yourself underground. Don't do anything stupid,"

"I live underground anyway. You don't need to tell me that," she nodded her head.

"Good. I know how to find you," saying that, Vinasha walked away and got lost in the dark.

Vinasha was very happy. The day had come for which he was waiting for a long time. He got the map. His master would be very pleased to hear that. He could not wait to tell him that. With the excitement, to show his master the map, he entered the secret chamber where Ashtiyuj was resting.

"My lord, please accept the regards from your loyal follower Vinasha," he bowed to him.

"Vinasha, tell me that you here to give me the good news," Asthiyuj said in his roaring voice.

"Absolutely, my lord. I have got a map. Here it is," he took it out and gave him.

"You have done a great job. I knew you would not fail me,"

"I am honored to hear that, “he bent his head a little and asked again, “How are you feeling? Do you have some improvements in your condition?"

"I am healing, but it's not fast enough. I need fire to get my powers back." Asthiyuj roared.

"I know, master. That girl was able to cast you out from a human body. That's not ordinary magic. Those wounds are very critical. It will definitely take some time,"

"I can recall that incident in every second of my life. Me, Ashthiyuj, the most powerful creature on this earth, has defeated by a small girl, a pathetic human,"

"My lord, she is not just a girl. She is the heir of Bharata, the man who has locked you inside the temple of pillars for hundreds of years. We should not take her lightly,"

Vinasha's saying was reacted as fuel to his anger. Ashtiyuj roared loudly and threw the table kept on his left side to the wall.

It broke into pieces, with a smashing sound.

"That bastard once tricked me to trap inside that cold pillar and now his stupid little heir. I will destroy her. I will make her life so painful that she will beg me for death. " Asthiyuj's eyes turned red like burning cinder.

"Calm down, my lord, calm down. You should save your strength, "

"Don't tell me to calm down,"

"I can feel it, what's going inside you. There is a fire of revenge that is also burning me from inside. That old man has made us prisoners in our own world. He forced us to run, he forced us to hide and live like slaves. All these years, I was waiting for the moment when I will get my revenge." Vinasha was bitting his teeth in anger.

"We will get our revenge. Everything has planned perfectly this time. Bharata or his little slut won't be able to stop us. We will bring the fire of hell to the surface. This earth will burn again in the fire, and we will free our brothers and sisters from that trap."

"Right master, those humans must get what they deserve. We have to show them that they belong to our feet. When I would see them crawling, pleading for mercy, only then I will find my peace. "

"That day is not so far. But, You have to do exactly what I said. There is no place for mistakes, you understand that? " Asthiyuj asked.

"I know, my lord. I am making every step of mine with proper precaution as you have suggested."

"What about the 'Kaal Grahi' stone? Have you place it as I said?", Asthiyuj asked.

"Yes, I have placed it exactly where you have said. "

"Good, that stone is a great destroyer, the most powerful one. It can extinct an object from this universe within a blink of eyes. Humans think that they are smartest of all. No one can do anything

to them. This time they will see what we can do." Asthiyuj pointed his index finger in the air while saying.

"This is just the first part of my entire plan. When the stone will expand its power, it will react. The fear of death always makes those humans vulnerable, and it will lead them to do the mistake. They will make the biggest mistake of their life and the doors will open for us." Asthiyuj stood up and laughed loudly.

But, as he has stood up from his stone chair, his legs were not able to carry his whole body weight. It felt like there was someone who was pulling him from the back of his head. Some kind of pain was raised in the knees and hip portion of Asthiyuj and finally he fell on the ground.

"My lord," Vinasha shout out while running towards him.

He held him with both of his hands and helped him sit on the ground. Asthiyuj leaned back to the leg of the chair.

"My lord, your health condition is not well. You should be resting." Vinasha sounded very concerned.

"Your wounds are not healed completely. You have to have some patience," he said again.

"I know, I know. But I lose control whenever I think of those humans. It's like every second is hard to live seeing those human celebrating"

"Don't worry my lord, this is not going to last longer, neither our pain nor their celebration. It's just a few days when they will be cry blood, "

Asthiyuj nodded his head. Vinasha helped him to sit back on his chair.

"My lord, This body is not capable enough to keep you warm. I think it's time for you to take samadhi for some time," he said with raising his eyebrows.

Asthiyuj gave him a tensed look to hear that.

"It will help you to gain back your strength quickly. You do not have to worry about anything else. You can trust me," Vinasha assured him.

"Is everything ready to do it?" He asked.

"Yes, my lord. I have brought everything that's going to be needed," he reassured him.

"Then, let's go. I will have some time in Samadhi. "

Asthiyuj and Vinasha both walked towards another chamber. It's a bathtub in the middle of that chamber.

"My lord, you just lie down in it and I will do the rest," he said pointing towards the bathtub.

Asthiyuj walked towards the tub and lied down into it facing upwards. He was fitted like a glove inside it. After he got inside, Vinasha moved towards a curtain hanged on one side. He removed it. There was a herd of a goat tied up. As he removed the curtain, their loud baas echoed every corner of the chamber.

He pulled one of them through its rope and brought it in a higher platform from the bathtub. The goat was shaking and baaing. Vinasha took out a big ax in his hand and chopped the head of it apart. The blood started to flow from the neck portion of the goat. He held the body of it and moved towards a slope. The blood, coming out from the goat was flowing through the slope and filled the bathtub where Asthiyuj was resting. He did that process again and again, and finally, Asthiyuj was completely covered in blood.

Chapter 8

Surya heard all about Kimbala from Gurudev multiple times but never been there. He was not sure which path would be the safest for him. This was the first time when he was going to that island.

He read books as much as he could about Kimbala, and it's location. But he realized it soon that those books needed some up-gradation about the facts written on it. Things were changed a lot.

This journey took time longer than he anticipated. Those people to whom he was asking the directions they were not smart enough either. Some of them replied to him with their anger, fear for that place, or just polite expression of not knowing about the place. Surprisingly, some of them showed him the direction, hiding their lack of knowledge, which was an insult to the injury.

Finally, he reached a place just next to Kimbala. Kimbala was a river island and the only way to be there was via a boat. The place where he was standing, was separated from that island by the river. A boat was the only option.

Surya searched everywhere a boat to hire. Maybe that was the resting time for all the sailor men or everyone went on a vacation at the same time. There was not a single boat to hire.

He kept walking on the sandy bank.

Finally, his eyes found peace. There was a tiny boat, he could see. He moved his legs faster towards that boat.

"Is this your boat?" Surya asked the man sitting on it.

He was busy watching the river. The reaction in his face explicated that his river watching moment was abrupted by Surya, and he did not like it at all.

The man looked Surya from head to toe and said," Do you see anyone else here?"

He got back to his moment.

"I must go to Kimbala. Can you take me there?" Surya asked again.

"Nope, I can not take you there by any chance,"

"Why not? Your boat seems okay to me,"

"It's not about my boat. It's you. You won't be able to pay me,"

"How much do you charge? Just name your price," Surya said.

He moved into the boat and sat inside.

"Hey, man, what are you doing? Are you insane? I have told you already I am not going there. So get the hell out of my boat."

"Listen, for me, it's a matter of great importance, and you are going to take me no matter what."

"I have another option for you. Jump to the water and swim to that weird island. I am sure you can swim. The water is cold, but you will be fine. It's in that direction." he said, pointing his finger to his left.

"I can pay double if you want, or some in advance. What do you say?"

"If we go there we won't be able to return alive. It's okay if you want to die, but I love my life. I am not ready for it,"

"Look, I can completely understand your fear. That place is dangerous. Normally, people avoid that kind of place. But you will be with me. No one will hurt..."

The sailor man stopped him in the middle and said," no, you don't understand. I am not afraid of that island or any of the people living there, but to that thing in the water. Something has happened recently. No one takes there boat to that area,"

"What do you mean? What happened in the water?" Surya asked.

"They say there is something in the river, a monster. I have no idea where all those creeps come, but it was not there earlier."

"What kind of monster you are talking about?" he was curious.

"I don't know. I have never seen it. People say that whenever they saw that thing, they lost control, and automatically moved towards it to become the food,"

"What is your name?" Surya asked, exhaling a breath.

"Sahid, What has to do with it?" he sounded irritated.

"Look, Sahid," Aryan came closer to him, " I have spent my life fighting with all those things. I can promise you that I won't let anything happen to you. Trust me,"

Sahid was about to say something, shrugging his shoulders. But, Surya spoke again, "Besides, if you take me there, I will tell you how you can protect yourself from that thing. It will definitely be a boon to your business, isn't it? Everyone will hire your boat,"

"Fine, I will take you there." he scratched his head," But, if anything happens to you, I am not responsible for that, and you have to pay me extra if there are any damages to my boat."

"Agreed," he said.

Sahid pushed the boat to the river, and then sitting inside it, he started to strike the water with his ore. The boat started to move smoothly towards the island.

Some time of silence was passed, except for the sound of fast-flowing river water.

"What's under that hood?" Sahid asked, breaking the silence.

Surya did not give much attention to his question.

"What's wrong? You have got a big ugly scar while fighting with some monster?" He teased him.

"It will be prudent if you can keep your mind and eyes in the river instead of questioning about my fashion sense and my skin,"

"I took several people to Kimbala. All of them were very weird. But you are the weirdest one, you know that" he was moving the ore sometimes to the left, and sometimes to his right.

"That's because I am the only one who is capable of saving you from the monster. So keep your mouth shut,"

"Yeah, time will tell that you are really that good like you have said or you were just bluffing. If I die, I will not spare you,"

"sshhhh," Surya stood up, sensing something.

"What's wrong?" Sahid was also panicked.

"There is something, I can feel it. It's coming here," he whispered, "close your eyes and don't open until I tell you. Don't even move. Put the oar up."

Sahid closed his eyes and tried to remain still, like a statue. He was even trying not to move his chest while breathing. The boat was moving slowly by the current of the river. Sahid was feeling like everything around him had stopped moving. There is not the slightest sound. The surrounding became pin-drop silence.

"hisss," Sahid could hear this.

A cold, heart-stopping sound.

It's so close to him. His legs and hands were shaking, and the heart was beating like a drum. He wanted to open his mouth and breath as much as the air he could. Somehow, he was sitting with his lips pressing hard.

"hisss," again the sound was heard. This time it got closer.

Sahid could feel something was looking at him. The warm air coming from that thing was touching the skin of Sahid. Suddenly, his body was started to feel very heavy. Tears were coming out from his eyes. His nose was getting blocked due to snot, making it harder to breathe.

"Sahid," someone touched his shoulder.

This time he forgot everything. He felt like it's going to eat him now. His mind was totally blank, and a shout came out from his mouth automatically.

"Help...help...save me," he moved his ore in the air forcefully to hit whatever it was.

"Calm down, calm down. It has gone," he said, grabbing his hand.

Surya was standing in front of him. Sahid looked at him for some time. He was still wondering if this was real or not.

"You are alive,"

"What was it?", Sahid sounded petrified.

"Something you don't want to know about,"

"Is it dead, have you killed it?" Sahid was asking breathlessly.

"No, but I pushed it away,"

Sahid looked back.

"Don't worry, it's not following you," he said, with a smile on his face.

"Now, how far we are from Kimbala?" Surya asked sitting on the deck.

"Not so far, we are about to reach, "

Sahid gazed around to find out their location.

"We are already late, move fast,"

He took his oar back and started to move it in the river. The boat was back in its speed.

Finally, after some time, the boat touched the surface of Kimbala.

"How much are you going to charge for the trip?" Surya asked, jumping from the boat.

"Wait, wait. You can't get rid of me like that,"

"What do you mean?"

"You said that the monster is still there. It's not dead. I am not going back alone. I have felt that thing, and it gave me a near-death experience,"

"Then, wait here until I get back,"

"I take this as the safest option for me," Sahid tied up his boat.

Surya was approaching the village. Though it's day time, due to the tall trees, it felt like evening. He was moving inside and inside through a narrow path. Only trees he could see, not a sign of a single human.

After walking some time, he found an open area and lines of huts. He remained still at his position, observing the place.

It's strange not a single person was there in the middle of the day.

But...

Something was happening behind his back.

A villager was walking towards him from behind with slow and silent steps holding a heavy bamboo stick. He did not want to alert Surya with his presence. When he got Surya in his range, he raised the stick above his head clenching his teeth.

He was about to hit his head.

Just a second before the stick to touch Surya's head, he turned back and holds the stick. With his other hand, he pushed the man in the chest with his open palm. The man fell to the ground.

"Don't even think about it," Surya said, holding the stick to the face of the man.

"Who are you? What do you want?", the man cried out.

"I am not here to cause any trouble,"

"Let him go," Someone shouted from behind.

Surya turned towards him and saw two men were grabbing Sahid by his hands. One of them was putting a knife on his neck.

"Hey man, you have a very unique style of welcoming your guests. I like that." Sahid said to one of the men holding him.

"Shut up, another word, and I will rip your tongue from your mouth," the man holding the knife shouted furiously.

"And you, what do you want?" he shouted again to Surya.

"I am looking for someone who can tell me about Bharta,"

"What is it you have to do with Bharata? Who are you?"

Surya raised his sleeve of the left hand and showed the tattoo on his forearm.

"The mark of the GHOST," one of the village people said with widening his eyes.

"So, can we talk now without anyone getting hurt," he asked.

"Sure, I am Gagong be. Sorry about that. I was not able to recognize you," a man with a long bore came closer. He sounded welcoming this time.

"It's fine. There is an emergency. That's why I am here,"

"Hey, guys, there is still a knife on my neck," Sahid shouted.

"Let him go. He is not our enemy, "Gagong ordered the man, holding the knife.

The knife was removed.

"You could have just asked that instead of putting a knife on my neck," Sahid said, rubbing his neck

Chapter 9

Pradhan returned to his place with his three companions from the strangest and most scared experience of his life. He was still trying to process what he saw back there in the jungle.

Was it some kind of indication that their god is angry with them or a black magic cast to destroy them? He was asking that to himself again and again.

Pradhan was predicting all the possible circumstances that could happen in the upcoming days. Some kind of magical stone was eating their place and, Pradhan had not a single clue about it. His ears were buzzing with the cryings of their people.

"We have made you our Pradhan, we trusted you, and this is what you have done to us?"

"Pradhan?" Romeng pulled him out from his nightmare thoughts.

"Are you okay?" he asked again.

He did not say anything.

Romeng knew he was not okay. He could see his face became pale and dry.

Everyone was doing their given work at the moment Pradhan had reached. Someone was busy building their hut back, which was torn apart in last nigh calamity. Two of them were rotating the stick with pork fixed above the fire. They were unaware of the depth of the problem they were in. But as they saw Pradhan, they left their task and surrounded him.

He could see their eyes, asking questions about what he had seen. But, Pradhan had no idea how to reply to them. What he was going to say. He was still in dark.

"Bring the crown of mine," he ordered to Romeng.

"Yes, Pradhan," Romeng replied nodding his head.

Romeng knew where that thing was. Quicky, he went to bring it for Pradhan.

It's a special crown. Only the head of the tribe could wear that on some special occasions, like during the time punishing someone, making any decisions or resolving an issue.

Pradhan's order to bring the crown raised tension in the hearts of those tribal people. They were looking at each other.

"What have you done?" one of them asked whispering to another.

"How can you tell that it's me?" he replied," Maybe he has something to announce. It's not always someone is getting punished when he wears the crown,"

"But he seems very angry,"

They were blaming each other for something.

By the time, Romeng brought the crown to him.

It's looked like a flat cap with a pair of the beak of hornbill attached to it. The color of the upper beak was yellow and the lower one was white. He wore the crown and sat down on his big chair made of bones.

"Is everyone here? I have a serious announcement to make to all of you," Pradhan said to all standing in front of him.

They released a sigh of relief after hearing the word announcement instead of punishment.

"Thank God," some of them said, putting a hand on the chest. "See, I told you. It's not always about punishment. " the guy said joyfully.

"But, it's not time for you to relax or celebrate. We have a serious and not to mention dangerous situations ahead of us. The last night's incident was nothing in front of what's going to happen with us next. It was just the beginning,"

All the relaxing expressions on the faces lost in an instant. Their anxiety and fear were pumped back.

"What is it, Pradhan? What are you talking about?" an old man asked.

"I am talking about the thing that happened last night, and the cause of it. We have found what it was, but unfortunately, that thing is indestructible. There is some kind of black magic inside that thing,"

"Black magic! What are we going to do now!" a mother said, holding his baby tightly in her arms.

"Who could have done that?" another one shouted in anger.

"Oh God; please help us," an old lady cried.

"Surely, those who live on the other side of the river have done this," another tribal people said pointing his finger in the air with anger.

People started to talk indistinctly. There was a raise of furor among them. Everyone was sharing their opinion.

"Everybody keeps quiet," Pradhan said in a louder voice to overcome the hue and cry.

They stopped talking. Their attention was back to Pradhan again.

"That thing is looked like a stone, coming out from the ground. I have tried to hit it with a poison arrow. But, the stone is not getting a scratch. " he was explaining his recent experience.

"The arrow was not even able to touch the stone. It's like the thing has turned the arrow into dust," Romeng said with his eyebrows raised.

They were horrified to hear that.

"What is in your mind, Pradhan? Do you have any idea how to get rid of that thing?"

"I am not sure. It's the first time I have seen something like this. But, if it's black magic, then only another magic can break that stone"

"What are you suggesting?"

"I think we have to go Chandika cave and pray to help us," he said.

"What are you saying? You know it's not the right time to open the cave,"

"I know, I know. Our goddess is sleeping now. It's her resting period. But this is a different situation, and we do not have any other options. I am saying this after thinking about all the possibilities and trust me if there was any other option left, I would definitely go for that," he said with terror in his eyes.

They were silent. They were not feeling good about the fact of going to the cave. But, Pradhan was also right. They had to do something about it.

Their minds were perplexed. It's hard to make a decision.

"Then, what do you say? Does everyone agree with me?" he asked again for assurance.

"What if our goddess will become angry with us for disturbing her and she cursed us," Gaurang was hesitating to say. But looking at the gravity of the situation, he moved his tongue.

Everyone looked at Pradhan. He could see no one was talking, but everyone was agreed with him.

"That's not going to happen. She is looking at us from there and she knows that we are in great trouble. "He said pointing towards the sky.

"So, what do you say?" Does everyone agree with me?" He said again.

They looked at each other if someone had any other option. But, their knowledge was limited while fighting against the dark magic. So, finally, everyone agreed to go to their goddess.

Chapter 10

Dimisha took out the picture made by Maya and compared it to the real apartment--

"Brahmaputra Apartment, " she said, standing in front of it.

They were matched, except for the fact that, in the picture, it looked much cleaner and the color was bright.

"Damn, this place has changed a lot. Earlier, those walls were not covered in dust."

The walls of the building lost its original color. Some parts of the walls were broken too. They could see the pipelines throw these holes on the wall.

"Let's see, how much it changed from inside,"

They moved inside.

To their left, there was the lift, and a notice attached to it.

OUT OF ORDER

"That's convenient," Aryan said.

"Let's take the stairs,"

Dimisha was not surprised to see a lift that did not work. Anyone could tell, after seeing the building that it was shouting, crying for some server maintenance.

"Looks like we are going to have some workout. Anyway, we are lucky that the lift is damaged before we have entered,"

"It's good to know that you are an optimist," she was reacting with her frowning eyebrows.

They walked up through the stairs covered with grime.

After some quiet walk, they reached the third floor. Aryan's forehead was starting to get wet by the sweat coming out.

"We have some company, nice,"

A man was smoking, sitting on the stairs of the floor. He was wearing just a boxer, reveling the tattoos on his body. They crossed the man without paying any attention to him.

"Hey sweetheart, want some weed?" he said from behind.

Dimisha was expecting something like that. Being a girl, it's not a new thing that a stranger passed comment to her. She did not show any reaction to him.

"Jerk!" Aryan muttered.

"Choose your enemy wisely," she said.

"Sorry, what?"

"I am saying your life depends more on your enemies than your friend,"

"What are you talking about?"

"You got angry with that guy,"

"Yeah, he was commenting you,"

"I know. I can hear that too. What do you think? I can not break his nose! I can do worse. But it's useless for me,"

"Don't you get angry?"

"I do. But I know when and how to use the strength of my anger. Smart people are the ones who can learn something from their enemies too. An enemy without purpose is like garbage to himself and to the others. So, chose carefully with whom you want to pick a fight,"

"Wow, is that some kind of rule they teach you in the magic world,"

"No, I learned it in the world you and I are standing right now, and nobody taught me this. I learned it by myself,"

They reached the seventh floor of the building.

"This is it. It's his floor. " Aryan said with relief by putting his step on the 7th floor of the building.

"I think so too. But which door I have to knock," Dimisha was looking at the doors of all the flats.

"We should ask someone,"

"It's 709,"

"How do you know?" Aryan seemed surprised.

"Look for yourself. The door of that apartment has some special design cut on it. Ring any bell?"

"Those are the same design as the artifact," he was flabbergasted.

"I am sure there is no other person who is interested to have the same decoration on their doors,"

"Wow, you have some gifted eyes."

They stepped towards the flat with some distinctive arts on the door of it.

Sound of high volume music playing was coming out from the next room.

"How are we going to enter?" Aryan was trying to open the door, holding the doorknob.

"Move," Dimisha said,

Aryan walked aside. Taking a deep breath, she slammed the door with a powerful kick.

The lock was broke. Hinges were making slight sound while the broken part of the door was moving hanging on them.

"Oh my God," Aryan shocked, seeing her like this. His jaw was about to touch the floor.

"What? You have never seen a girl kicking?"

"I can see my death by a heart attack. I have no doubt in that,"

"Don't worry, you will get used to it soon,"

"What will you do if somebody calls the Police, and we will be ended up in a prison cell. You know, the toilet is just next to your bed in prisons."

"Relax, nothing like this is going to happen. Can't you hear the music?"

"Yeah, what about it?" Aryan replied without getting what she was implying.

"They are having a party with drugs, alcohol, and sex. So, everyone is too busy to notice us,"

"How can you be so sure about that?"

"Just knock at the door and see for yourself. You will know the truth," Dimisha entered into the flat of Vivek after saying that.

Aryan stayed for a moment with his mouth wide open, looking here and there, and then he also entered inside.

"Definitely Vivek lived here," He said, pushing the door back.

"What do you mean?"

"I mean, look at this place. Only that man could be this messy,"

"We are here on purpose, and examining your friend's discipline quality is not one of it," Dimisha was starting to move the things, searching if she could find anything useful.

The windows were covered with heavy black colored curtains. Not a single beam of sunlight was coming inside. Dirty clothes, pizza packets, books, some paper notes, and a lot half-burned were spread all over the floor making it hard for them to step on it. There was no furniture in the room, just a couch, a study table, and a rag with books.

On one side of the wall, there was a paper fixed into it where the English alphabets were written randomly all over it. The letters were just written here and there. It's not making any meaning.

Dimisha was reading the books, and the notes one by one. All of them were about black magic, witchcraft, and sorcery.

"Dimisha, does this mean anything to you?"

She looked at Aryan. He was looking at the air conditioner attached to the wall.

"What?" She asked.

"There are two air conditioners in the flat. I don't think this climate is that hot to need two air conditioners," He turned towards her.

Dimisha stood up and looked at both the air conditioners.

"You are right. There is no need for two ACs."

She thought something, looking at him and then moved to the AC on her left. It's impossible for her to see the top side of it. So, she stood up on her toe and moved her hands over it. There might be a possibility that something important hidden behind it. Otherwise, no one would use two air conditioners.

Seeing Dimisha what she was doing, Aryan also went near to the other air conditioner and searched it.

"Have you found anything?" Dimisha asked from behind.

"Nope, there is nothing here. It looks pretty normal AC to me," he replied.

"But, it has to be something. I can not believe he was using two ACs just for fun," Dimisha walked here and there, thinking in her mind.

"Maybe he was mentally sick, because of all those magic craps,"

He clasped his hands to remove the dust.

Dimisha did not reply to anything to him. She just went to the table and picked up a book.

She was flipping the pages of it, moving her eyes over the lines written on it.

She knew Vivek very well. He was not in a habit of talking so much with people. Some people found it rude, and others found it insane. But Dimisha knew he was not like that at all. He was up to something. Otherwise, no one would spend his life on such an island filled with things that only seen by people in their worst nightmares.

"You have not told me how you and Vivek have met?" Aryan also picked up a book and pretended to read it.

"It's hard to explain. You would not believe me anyway. Think it like we were working on the same case,"

"Were you two dating?"

Dimisha gave him a huffy look, sulking her face.

He could see the reply written on that look.

"Just asking," He shrugged.

"Do you have a boyfriend?" he asked again with a side-eye look to her.

"Seriously? Is that what's going on your mind right now, whom I date?" she threw the book to the table, feeling annoyed.

Perhaps, Aryan thought his behavior made her angry. But, she was not giving much attention to the obvious but unwanted question popping in his head. This was not a real problem for her. The reason for her sulky behavior was because she could see a dead-end. When she arrived, she was hoping to find something which led her to some answers. But, after seeing this room, she was disconcerted.

"I am just trying to make a casual conversation." he was scratching his back of the head.

"At least, keep your mouth shut if you can't help,"

The book slept through her hands. The hard binding of that heavy book made a thudding sound while it hit the floor.

Blood in her vain was rushing abnormally. She was angry. She did not know whom she should be angry with. She was trying to hide her feelings with a calm and casual face. But the mind was rebelling against it. It was telling her to punch the walls, through the books all over, shout like a crazy person.

With a sigh, Dimisha bent on her knees to pick up the book. As she bent down, she saw there was something affixed to the table. She felt a tingling sensation on the back of her head as she saw. Quickly, she slid under the table on her back.

"So, you are here, and I am looking all over for you," her usual smile which painted her as a confident girl, was back.

She removed it and got out of the table.

"What is it?" Aryan asked with excitement.

"Don't know. Looks like a hard transparent piece of plastic with a message," she replied, stretching her neck side to side.

"Do you understand what it is saying?" Aryan came closure to see the message.

"Read what is not written" he muttered, reading the message.

"What does this mean?" Aryan asked her.

"He is trying to say something,"

"But what?"

"Look, this line is written again and again all over the page. But the spacing between the words is not the same in each time," She was pointing the piece.

Aryan took the piece of plastic from her and tried to find out. Dimisha sat down on the couch resting her elbows on her thighs.

"Read what is not written," she was repeating the sentence on her mind.

"Are you sure this sentence has some hidden meaning?"

That question felt like a strike of hammer to her head. She gave a furious, hooded look to him.

"I mean, look at this place. A mentally stable person can not live like this," he said again.

"He was not insane. I am sure he is up to something," Dimisha said loudly.

"Really? Two ACs in a small room like this, and some writing English alphabets on the wall, those things look normal to you?"

"What did you say? Crazy alphabets on the wall?" She stood up from the couch.

"Well, I was not using the word crazy," he stammered.

"No, you are right. It is crazy," Dimisha said, feeling enthusiastic

"What are you talking about?"

"I know how to decode the message,"

"How?" Aryan was also excited.

She took the plastic piece with the message and put it just over the place where the English alphabets were written.

"Can you see it?" She asked with a smile.

Aryan was coming fast towards her to see what she found.

"This is incredible," He was surprised too.

Due to the transparent plastic, only some of the alphabets were visible, written on the other page.

"This is how we are going to read what is not written," Dimisha said.

"Do you know what it is saying?" He was finding it hard to construct a word from those letters.

"Quickly, write it down. I am going to read it for you,"

Aryan nodded his head and picked up a notepad and a pen from the table.

"Go ahead, read it,"

Dimisha started to read the letters one by one,

"A Z R A D D H E Y A"

"What is this, Another riddle?"

Those words meant nothing to him.

Dimisha took the notepad from his hand and gave it a look.

"Can you read it? I don't think this is a word of English," He was biting the tip of the pen.

"No, it's not English," she said.

"Then what is it?"

"It's a Sanskrit word,"

"Wow, Vivek knew Sanskrit, that's cool,"

"The world, he was living in, Sanskrit plays an important role."

"So, you can read it, right?"

"Yeah, I know what he meant." she paused for a moment and said," It means 'not fit for funeral rites'.

His cherishing face was lost to hear this. He was expecting something more rigid, something with proper meaning which came under his area of knowledge.

"Apparently, he was talking about himself" he moved away.

"There is no need to feel depressed. Everything here is not cloud, there is some silver lining too. He was showing us a place,"

Chapter 11

"I told you, it's completely sealed. No one can go inside."

"I can't sleep until I see it for myself, " Surya said to Gagong, sounding rigid.

He found it hard to believe his words. He said again,

"I can not take any chance. If something like that already happened, it means there are some loose ends that I need to fix. I have to go there, "

"You want to go now?"

"Yes. Right now, "

"But, ..."

"I don't understand what's your problem? Why you don't want me to go there?"

"Just because it's not safe to go at this time. Anyway, if you insist, I will take you there,"

Gagong could not deny him. He had to take Surya there.

After a long walk through the forest, they reached THE GREAT TEMPLE OF PILLARS.

It was at the top of the long series of stairs.

Both of them first bowed, sitting on their knees at the bottom of it and then walked through it to the temple.

The stairs of the temple had a unique appearance. They were not similar to stairs which commonly used. Instead of stairs, it would be appropriate to say that some stones with plain surfaces were placed in just a tilted ground.

Reaching in front of the temple, he checked in all possible ways he could until he felt satisfied.

"What do you think, now?" Gagong asked, standing next to him.

"It's safe. All the spells are guarded,"

"Told you so."

"No reason to cherish too much. Tension is not averted yet. The key to that door is out there, roaming unsafe without realizing the danger,"

"What do you mean?"

"Tell me in detail about the heir of Bharata. Everything you know,"

"It's getting dark, and if we don't get back to our place we may become someone's food. We can talk there,"

"Let's go," Surya said, looking towards the sky.

They made their steps back to the village.

Gagong took him straight to a room where they could have an uninterrupted discussion.

On the other side, Sahid made some new friends there. Though Surya warned him not to do anything stupid, he could not say no to those people, and their offer for a drink.

"It will be very disrespectful to those nice people if I say no to them. I will have just one glass of it. "

His method of convincing himself.

That was a locally made drink, smelled like rotten rice, but it was strong. After having two-three glasses of it, he started to tell them his story of bravery that how he fought with the river monster to bring Surya there with a lot of extra spices.

That moment Surya was not thinking about him. All his focuses on the heir of Bharata. Keeping a kerosine lamp on the table, Surya and Gagong were making their discussion. The process of discussion was more likely one-sided, where Surya asked the questions and he answered.

"She was just like others. A young beautiful girl, scared, but stubborn to find what she seeks. She was here with pieces of a broken crutch, trying to find the details about it. No one knew that she was the blood of him,"

"Why did she open the temple?"

"She was not the one who opened the temple…well, not willingly. She was unaware of all the secrets. Someone tricked her to open that door. At that time, she had no idea whose blood is rushing through her vain."

"Why did they used her to go inside the temple?"

"They took a demon out from it. Some people in our village were secretly planning to have a life without death, life with tremendous power. They manipulated her. If Dimisha was not there, we would not be alive. She somehow killed that demon. She proved herself a true heir of Bharta,"

"Did she tell you the name of the monster?"

"It was Asthiyuj."

"Asthiyuj !" Surya was shocked. He felt like the blood of his whole body was pumped to his face, "that's not possible,"

"It's true. I saw it with my own eyes,"

"But no one can kill him. The only thing we can do is to trap that demon inside the temple."

"I saw her removing that demon from the human body it was possessing,"

"Removing him from a body has made the situation worse," Surya shouted, punching the wooden table.

"I know. She told us that. She also said something about the treasure of hell,"

"What did she say about that?"

"I don't remember exactly. But she went after it. I know that for sure,"

"I have to find her. Her life is in danger. Asthiyuj will try to possess her body to get inside the temple so that he can release all of it,"

Surya stood up.

"How will you find her?"

"I have an idea where she can go,"

He stood up.

"Are you leaving now? It's not safe to go at night. At night, this island become..., "

"I know all about it, and I don't care,"

He was not ready to hear what he was saying.

He came out immediately and searched for Sahid.

By the time, Sahid forgot where he was. He was in deep sleep near to the fire.

"Sahid," Surya called him, standing next to him.

But, no response

His snoring could be heard from a far distance. Probably, he was dreaming where he was a great warrior and fighting with someone to save to world.

Surya called him several times. He tried to shake his body too. There was a pause in his snoring for a moment. He changed his position and again the music continued.

"Fool," Surya mumbled.

Gagong walked to him and said," Listen, just wait for the night. You can leave as soon as the sun rises,"

Surya knew he had no option. It's useless to try to wake him up. He simply nodded to Gagong.

"Come with me. I will show you a place to rest for the night," Gagong said with a smile.

He took him to a hut and lighted up the kerosene lamp inside it. There was no bed inside. But it's not a problem for him. Surya spent many sleepless nights inside the jungle. It's more than enough to have a roof at top of his head.

"Rest here," saying so, Gagon left.

He lied down on the floor and made a list of things in the mind he had to do in the morning.

He slept for a few hours.

It's almost dawn when Surya woke up. He immediately moved outside to see his sailorman.

Sahid was still sleeping. Aryan took a glass of water and threw it on his face.

"Who is it?" he sat down, shouting.

It was Surya, standing in front of him, clenching his jaw. Sahid's face becomes pale like he saw a ghost.

"Oh! you woke up. last night you were into something important. That's why I have decided not to disturb you and slept here for the night," he said with a smile.

"Let's go. I don't have time for this,"

Surya was not talking much. He just walked towards the boat. Sahid could see he was angry.

"Should not we say good-bye to them?" he said trotting to him.

"I have said whatever needed. The man who was holding a knife to your neck, I said to him to cut the neck of yours without waiting. I won't stop him this time. So, you can go back if you want to say good-bye,"

"Initially, I thought those people are very savage. But they turned to be friendly," Sahid said with a yawn.

"They are afraid of outsiders,"

"By the way, what was it, you have shown to them on your forearm?"

"None of your concern. Just appreciate me for saving your neck,"

"Is this some kind of mark of any secret society?" Sahid was not taking seriously what Surya was saying.

Surya grabbed his collar tightly with both hands and said, pushing him to a tree with aggression," listen, you little fool, don't put your nose in things which are beyond your understanding, do you understand that?"

"Relax, dude, I was just asking, there is no need to be rude,"

Surya left his color.

"I am already running out of time because of you,"

"You have spent nearly a night with them and see, their aggressive nature is spread to you,"

"You can't shut your mouth, right?"

Sahid did not say anything in reply. He just shrugged with a smile.

Surya turned his head from him and started to walk.

After some time, they reached their boat. Sahid quickly started to unlace it. Surya sat inside with the ore holding in his hand.

"What do you think you are doing?" Sahid threw the rope into the boat.

"This time, I am sailing," Surya replied gravely.

"No freaking way, this is my boat and I am not letting anyone do that to my boat," Sahid stepped inside.

"Do you want to fight that river monster or not?" Surya questioned.

"Fight? What are you talking about? I am not a fighter."

"I am going to teach you a very simple technique with which you will be able to protect yourself from that thing. But you can't do both sailing and protecting. So, what do you say?"

Sahid was feeling perplexed by Surya's saying. He wanted to know the trick. But, he never let anyone touch the ore of his boat.

"Hurry, we do not have all day," Surya pressurized him.

"Fine, I will do it. But be careful with my boat,"

"Don't worry, It's not my first time sailing a boat,"

"What is the trick you are saying?"

Surya chuckled and took out a medium-sized mirror with a wooden designed frame and gave it to Sahid.

"A mirror, this is it. No sword with a special power," he said checking the mirror," It looks like a normal mirror to me,"

"The monster, that is haunting you is a snake with five faces. Its specialty is that it can hypnotize anyone whether it's a human or animal or a bird. That's how it gets its food. If you see towards the snake, you will be unknowingly driven towards it and eaten by that thing. So, whenever you see, that thing, that monster, show it the mirror. As it will see it's own reflection, you will be saved from getting hunted."

"You are not planning to get me killed, are you? If you don't have money to pay me it's okay,"

"If I wanted to kill you, I won't be needing such an elongated plan,"

Surya was moving the ore on water and the boat moved at a steady speed. Sahid was playing with the reflecting light of the Sun of the mirror.

After some peacefully sailing,

"Sahid, it's coming. Towards your left," he said whispering.

Sahid stood up and get ready to show the mirror. There was a movement in the water, making circles of waves.

His breaths were getting heavier, making it hard to breathe. He was licking his lips, repeatedly.

"Don't be afraid, you can do this," Surya stopped moving his ore.

Sahid nodded his head to him. His palms were starting to sweat making it difficult for him to hold the mirror.

Slowly slowly, the snake came out from the water. A sensation was spread all over his body. His hands and legs were shaking. Somehow, he was holding the mirror covering his face, just like Surya said to him.

It's just one hand distance from him. Sahid could feel the air released by the snake. The mirror was getting heavier and heavier for him, unable to hold it any longer.

"Oh god, save me, I will go to the temple every day. Just get me out of this situation. Please don't let me die"

He was saying in his mind with the eyes closed.

The pain was starting to grow in his knees. His legs would not be able to hold him standing for much longer. He was going to fall on the river. Within a minute, he would be inside its stomach.

These few minutes were like years to him. He had no more strength to hold the mirror. More he heard the sound of releasing air by the snake, more he feels strengthless.

"Sahid,"

"Sahid,"

Surya was calling him, but the fear blocked all his senses.

"Sahid," Surya was shouting.

Sahid opened his eyes.

"It's gone, you can drop down the mirror now,"

He put the mirror down and looked all around. It's hard to believe for him that he escaped from that monster. He sat down, feeling dizzy. The emotion that was going inside him, it's hard to explain. He was crying as well as laughing at the same time.

"Are you alright?" Surya asked.

Words were not coming out from his mouth. He was feeling his neck very dry.

"Have some water," Surya throws a water bag made of sheepskin to him.

He grabbed the bag and keep drinking water as much as he could.

"I am alive," he said, exhaling heavily.

"I thought you are going to blackout. But you have not gone that low," Surya teased him.

"Blacked out, I am lucky that my heart is still beating,"

For the rest of the journey, Sahid was sitting like a statue. Surya was sailing. He thought it would be better not to hand him the ore. It would take time for him to get back to normal. Finally, they reached the bank.

"I have promised to pay you double. So, how much I have to pay?" Surya asked, getting off the boat.

"You do not need to pay anything,"

He was giving him a surprised look.

"I know, I was scared out of death just a few minutes before. But I am feeling great now. Like, my fear is gone forever and this has happened only because of you. Without you, it was impossible for me to marmalize that monster. Thank you very very much, "

Tears were coming out from his eyes.

"That's what I do. I save people from evil things. No need to thank me. Best of luck," Surya replied in his usual heavy voice.

Saying this Surya left. Sahid was looking at him with the mirror in his hand.

Chapter 12

The situation looked heavy. Everyone was talking about what Pradhan was going to do.

"I don't know what Pradhan is thinking. But I am sure this is not going to end well,"

Some of them did not agree to his idea to open the cave before the time. They did not dare to speak in front of him, but they could not help themselves from expressing their suppressed thoughts about it on his back.

"Pradhan is a clever man. He knows what to do and when to do. If he decides to go to that place, there must be some reason behind it. We should not doubt his decision. After all, we chose him to be our head,"

"But, what if our mother goddess gets angry. It's her sleeping time. We should not forget that,"

"We are going to die anyway. You were there when he was talking about the monster waiting for us at the riverside. It's coming for us, "

"Pradhan seems tensed. I have never seen him like that. It has to be something really scary to frighten him away,"

Pradhan came out from his hut. Everyone stopped talking and started to look at him with an expressionless approach.

He knew every one by heart. He could hear what they were trying to say. Though he pretended like he could not. He knew well that if he had shown a slight loss of his grip, they would have succeeded in stopping him from going which he did not want to happen in any case.

"Is everything ready?" he asked.

"Yes, Pradhan, we packed everything like you said," Romeng replied.

"Check everything one more time, We can not afford to come back from the middle of our journey to get the things,"

Romeng nodded to him and took a look at all the bags just to make sure there was nothing left behind.

"Everything that is going to be needed is in the bags. We can go now," he said.

"We can proceed then," Pradhan released a heavy sigh.

"Think once again, should we go there at this time?" Gaurang said, fixing his bow in his back.

Pradhan gave him a stare showing his anger. He did not like it to say in front of everyone. They were already in fear. Gaurang was just indulging it.

"We have discussed this already. I know it's not a good time to disturb her, but what else we can do! We can not just sit putting hands-on hands and expect to evade the problem by itself. You know that's not going to happen," he was trying to be rude.

"Yeah, I can understand what you are saying. Though it does not feel good,"

It's not like Pradhan was happy about his decision. If he could, he would defiantly avoid it. But that problem was something which he had no idea how to deal with. His only hope was their mother goddess. They believed she had been protecting them from the beginning.

"Don't worry, everything will be alright," Pradhan gave a gentle tap on his back.

"What if we have to leave this place forever?"

"That's not going to happen. Mother Goddess won't do such a terrible thing to us. We will leave here and see our children grown up in this place,"

Gaurang did not reply to anything to him. He just shook his head, looking towards the ground.

"I can understand your state of mind. It's not like that I am not afraid. My heart is shaking too. But if I showed my fear to those people counting on me to protect their lives, they will lose their hope of life too," he said.

"Pradhan, she is here," Romeng said.

Both of them looked towards an old lady coming towards them with a dish made of clay. The lady just stopped in front of him, face to face. She threw some flowers on him from the dish and then gave him a tilak on his forehead with some red substance.

This was a ritual they perform when someone was about to go out on purpose. They believed it's going to protect them if any danger comes on their journey.

The whole tribe was standing there. Everyone was looking at them.

"I know what you are thinking. But don't worry. We will return with good news. The black magic, the spell whoever done this, he will get his punishment for sure. " he looked at everyone, and said again, "One more thing, don't you ever go near to that stone until we return. Mark my word. It's very dangerous, and you will lose your life if you do so." Pradhan made a speech to all.

"Son, the path to the Cave of Chandika is not safe especially, at this season. You know that very well. The region, you have to go through is the habitat of hungry predators. So, please, be careful." tears started to flow from the eyes of that old lady.

Another lady, standing nearby, took the dish from her. She was wiping her tears with her hand. Pradhan hugged her and rubbed her back. He was trying to say something, but the situation was making his heart heavy and difficult to speak.

"We should go now," he said to his companions.

They took their bags and started to walk with Pradhan. His people were looking at the way they were moving. Pradhan or any of his companions did not look back. That was another belief of those people. According to them looking back while going somewhere brought misfortunes.

After some time, they were lost from their eyes. The dense forest swallowed all four of them.

They were moving forward by making their own way.

"It's going to rain soon. We should have left earlier," Mriganag said, looking towards the dark cloud in the sky

Everyone looked towards him, and then they also looked up. The dark cloud was covering the blue sky slowly slowly.

"Yeah, you are right. Maybe they want to tell us something,"

The big piece of cloud appears like a huge monster to them.

"There is time for that. It's not going to rain any time soon,"

"Walk faster, We have to reach there as soon as possible," Pradhan said, showing ignorance to their fear.

They shared a look and fasten the speed of their walking.

"What do you think, Gaurang? Who could have done that?" Romeng whispered.

"My doubt is the witch, lives on the east side. She is capable of doing this kind of magic,"

"But, nobody has seen her for many years. Some say that she is dead."

"That's not true. Nobody has found her dead body. She was hiding, practicing her magic to destroy our river,"

"Maybe Gaurang is right. We all have seen the power of the stone, what happened to our weapons. It can not be destroyed. It has to be some magic of a witch,"

"Maybe, someone from the other side of the river is helping her to do it. I have heard that she can make immortality herbs,"

Suddenly, Pradhan stopped, raising his hands. Three of them moved their head to each other asking what was going on. But no one was getting any sense.

"What is it?" Gaurang muttered moving closer to Pradhan.

"Something is coming towards us, very powerful. I can feel it," he said, touching the ground.

He was sensing the vibration of the land due to hitting by something strong.

He bent down slightly and moved his gaze to see if there is something near them.

"Oh, mother goddess," his voice was traumatized, "quickly, climb up. It's coming towards us,"

All of them climbed to the trees near them. They did not wait to ask what it was. Everyone was petrified by the way Pradhan told them.

The sound was clear now.

They could hear it, the footsteps of something very strong.

A herd of buffalos with big horns was running. They could see them from the top of the tree. The vibration of striking the land by the feet of buffalos could be felt by Pradhan and others. If they had not on trees, they would have probably hanging in their horns in pieces.

"This is a big herd," Gaurang said.

Pradhan nodded at him. They waited there, sitting on branches of trees to pass them all. It took some time. Dust was all over in the air.

"We can get off now," he said to all after making sure no one is left.

One by one, they all got back to the land. The herb left a smell of them behind. They were familiar with it.

"It's not a good indication, maybe they do not want us to go," Romeng said.

"It's not the first time we have seen a herb of angry buffalo," Pradhan sounded annoyed.

After some more walks, they reached near to see the place, the cave of Chandika.

The cave looked like a single piece of a tremendous rock. Some small trees were growing in the cracks of it.

"At last, we have arrived before the sunset," Pradhan released a sigh of relief.

"What should we do now, Pradhan? Should we go inside?"

"No. not now. It's evening time. This time getting inside the cave is not good,"

"Then?" Gagong waited for an order.

Pradhan kept looking at the cave for some time.

"Pradhan," he asked again.

He got his eyes off from it.

"What do you want us to do now?"

"We will wait here for the night and tomorrow as the sun rises we will enter.", he sat down on a rock near him.

"Come on, what are waiting for? It about to get dark. make some fire," he ordered clapping his hands.

As he ordered, they started to collect some woods and lit it.

The sun left them alone soon and it becomes dark all around. The darkness of that night was denser than other nights.

Chapter 13

"Sir?" Ayesha said, pushing the door slightly.

"Ayesha, do I need to remind you that I hate being disturbed in between my work?" Dr. Biswas was observing something through his microscope.

Ayesha was expecting this kind of response from him. She had been working with Dr. Biswas as his assistant for a long period of time. He gave her a list of works on the day of her joining to do daily, and one of them was to keep him safe from social gatherings, and unwanted conversations.

She turned out to be good at her job. She knew very well when to make a coffee for him which was in every half an hour, and lie to people about his sickness and so not to disturb him. Though, that day she failed to do so. That seemed to be an urgent matter.

"I know sir, but this is important. Those two people are waiting outside, they are from..."

"Whoever they are, tell them I am not available right now. Do what you are hired to do," Dr. Biswas said without letting her said what she was saying.

"Sir, I was saying that they are from DRDO,"

"DRDO?" He was surprised.

It made him took his eyes off from the microscope.

Persons from defense research was not expected. He started to think of any possible reason for their visits at his doorsteps.

"It could be an invitation for any conference or maybe someone put an inquiry to my new research"

His lips were frowned automatically thinking about all the talking he had to do.

"Sir, what should I tell them?"

Ayesha was still there, popping her head through the door, waiting there for an order.

"What are they saying? What is the purpose?"

"Nothing, they are saying that it's an extremely confidential and highly important matter. They only share it to you not your assistant,"

"Fine, tell them to sit in my office. I will be there," he said reluctantly.

"Okay, sir," Ayesha smiled nodding her head and left.

Dr. Biswas took off his white coat exhaling a heavy breath. He put some hand sanitizer and cleaned his hands before getting out of his lab. Looking at the time, in his watch, he moved towards his office.

Two men with army blazer were sitting inside the office.

His office looked smaller than it's actual size due to files, and books scattered all over the place. He noticed that they put a box full of files on the ground which was in the chair earlier on which one of them was sitting.

Once, he remembers, he had an argument with Ayesha, a spicy one, about his mess, he told her that everything in this universe had a tendency to increase its spontaneous behavior, and he was just accepting this rule.

They stood up as they saw him.

"Hello, professor. I am Major Ajay Singh and he is Captain Aniruddha Kashyap," one of them introduced themselves. He extended his hand towards Dr. Biswas with a smile.

Dr. Biswas knew that type of smile very well. He named it 'air-hostess' smile. A smile that was made just for professional courtesy.

Dr. Biswas shook his hand with them. He had an idea that they were here for some help. They were behaving too friendly which was quite unusual for a person of that profession as far he knew.

"It's an honor to meet you, sir," Captain Aniruddha Kashyap said while shaking hand.

"Please, have a seat," he said ignoring to Captain.

"I know, you are busy. But trust me, if it's not important I would never bother you," Major Ajay Singh said.

Dr. Biswas was just waiting to end that introduction and formal talk session so that they could speak about the cause of their showing at his office.

Sooner is better

"I am sure about that. Otherwise, People from Defence Research and Development Organisation would not be standing on my doorstep. So, gentlemen, what did I do to owe your presence?"

Dr. Biswas rested his arms on the table.

"Well, Professor, a situation is raised where we deeply in need of your expertise. We hope you can help us out in that,"

"There you go. I am waiting for you to say this," he thought.

"What situation are you talking about?"

"We are here to talk about one of your past research projects. It's about Gravitime,"

The word gravitime triggered some of his old memory which he tried not to remember.

"Professor, what can you tell us about that research?"

"Is this some kind of inquiry to my old project?"

"Absolutely not. The situation pushed us to change our belief in Gravitime. That's why we are here,"

"I am positively flattered to see that you are interested in my research. But I have to say there is a minor inadequacy in your knowledge. Gravitime, you are talking about, is an incomplete project. The funding was stopped in the middle. They said that was an unrealistic project, like a science fiction comic book," He replied with a sarcastic smile on his face.

"I am well aware of your issues, professor. But it's not the time to dwell in your past life tragedy. A new kind of threat is shadowed upon us. Life of everyone on earth is in danger,"

"Hold on for a sec, if I can hear you correctly, you are saying that our world is in danger, and you need my help to save it, I never expected that,"

He laughed with his mouth wide open.

Ayesha came in. She was holding a cup of coffee which she put on the table in front of Dr. Biswas.

"Would you like to have some coffee?" he asked them.

"No, thanks," Major Singh's immediate reply.

She left the room.

"Professor, there is a threat which is telling us that your research was not science fiction, not anymore. It probably comes alive," Major Singh looked at his companion and indicated something with his eyes.

Nodded his head in response, Captain Kashyap opened the small size suitcase, he was carrying. From a pile of files, he took out one and forwarded it to his Major.

"Professor, just take a look at this for once, and you will understand the gravity of threat rotating upon us." Major Ajay Singh said.

Dr. Biswas took the file from his hand though he did not want to, and put on his reading glass. He started to flip the pages of it.

There was silence in the room for some minutes. His face was becoming pale more and more while he saw the reports of the file. He knew what it is. The data was telling him clearly the level of tension of those two people sitting in front of him.

Major Singh and Captain Kashyap looked at each other.

"What do you think, professor? The data we found is matched with your paper, right?"

"Probably you are right. It may be a gravitime. But the figures are much bigger than my research,"

"What do you say? Can you come with us and take a look at it?"

"Are you in charge of this case?" he asked Major Ajay Singh.

"Yes, I am handling the entire operation," he replied.

"Have you seen it, the thing, by yourself?"

"I have seen it. It looks like a normal stone to me. But it's not," Major replied nodding his.

"When did you find the stone?"

"It's been 12 days. We are trying many methods to control or to destroy that stone. But our weapons, our scientific expertise is useless in front of it. That thing is an indestructible one."

Dr. Biswas released a sigh.

"If there is really, any gravitime particle inside the stone, then you can not destroy it like other earthly materials,"

"I know Professor. That's why we are here. One of our fellow scientists has strongly recommended you. He has read your research on gravitime and said that if there is someone who can get us out of this situation, then it is you. "

"Oh! I doubt that. It's shocking for me to see such a huge size stone. I can't even tell from where it came in the first place?"

"We hope you can tell us. We are counting on you. The whole world is counting on you," Captain Aniruddha Kashyap said.

"I have told you already that my research on Gravitime particle is incomplete due to the reason known to you very well. So, it will be prudent if you don't put much hope on me, "

He closed the file and pushed it to them.

"There is no alternative for us. No one out there who can compete with you while it comes to Gravitime,"

Dr. Biswas did not reply anything to him. He was sitting silently, tapping fingers on the glass of the table.

"Professor, this is a very delicate situation, and we are running out of time. I don't know how long we can hide the mater from media and the public. You can imagine what will happen when the news spread. So, we have to hurry." Major Singh said, bending forward to put his hands on the table.

Dr. Biswas looked at him and said," don't be so rush. The matter you are dealing with is a devilish substance, and no need to mention that the slightest miscalculation is more than enough to ignite the apocalypse."

"What are you suggesting us to do then?" Captain Kashyap asked.

"I would be a fool if I suggest you with anything with the limited knowledge I have. To be honest, I know nothing,"

He leaned back to his chair.

"Look, I have done some research on Gravitime particle. That's true. But the research I did is of primary level. I have never anticipated that one day I will be able to see a real object with a Gravitime particle inside it and shockingly this big,"

"So…" Major Singh was trying to say something.

"Honestly, I have always imagined Gravitime particle as necessary to us, for everything that comes to existence in our universe. But this new circumstance is turning my whole world upside down," he said again.

The way Professor expressed his point of view for Gravitime particle blew off the light of hope of both of them. They were expecting some rigid solution from him.

"At least, you can come with us to see it, maybe you come up with an idea. You never know,"

Major Singh said raising his eyebrows.

He was finding it hard to believe Dr. Biswas could not help them.

"I don't think so. I am working on something else currently. You may have heard of it. My whole focus is on my current project, so sorry," he stood up from his chair.

"Professor, think for a second. Take this as an opportunity to prove that you were right about Gravitime. You have physical evidence now. You can get your pride back. Don't you think you can save a lot of people as well as your old research," Major Singh said walking to him.

His mind was in a bemused state. He did not know which way he should go. He should go with them to gravitime, or he should continue his research on the new virus he found. There was a new specimen, and he had to taste it on humans. Without him, it would not be possible.

On the other side, he got an opportunity to complete his research which he left in the middle. Suddenly, the face of Neelam came in front of his eyes. The smiling face of her telling him something in his ear.

"Okay, I will go with you, but I can not promise anything," he said to Major.

Major Singh made a smile of relief.

"Thank you, professor. Thank you very very much,"

"When can we leave?" he asked.

"Whenever you are ready. We will take you to the place,"

"In that case, we will leave today. I have something to do. As I am done I will give you a call. Is that okay?"

"Sure, here is my number. We will be waiting for your call," he said, giving his card.

They left his office.

He took out his phone and dialed a number.

It's ringing.

He was thinking about what to say, holding the phone to his ear.

"Hey Dad, what's up?" the voice from the other side replied.

"Where are you right now?"

"Just reached home. Why? Is everything alright?"

"Yeah, everything is fine. I just need to tell you something. Can we meet?"

"Sure, I can come to your office,"

"No, you don't need to come. I am on my way home."

"Okay, then. See you, bye,"

The line got cut and Dr. Biswas left his office.

Chapter 14

Dimisha was following the lead she got from Vivek's house along with Aryan. They reached the place indicated by those letters.

It was a graveyard. But not the usual one. This one did not fit with the definition of graveyards normally people have in their minds.

It's later night, and that place was far away from the crowds. No one would like to stand near it, especially at this hour of the night.

But, Dimisha had seen worse things than something that probably could be in the graveyard. Besides, her mind would not let her rest until she got her answers.

"What is this place?" Aryan was not feeling good about it.

He had no idea that they were standing next to a burial ground. Dimisha preferred not to reveal all about it before they had reached. Otherwise, he would be annoying her whole way.

"It's a place from where the journey starts…the journey to another world," she said without looking at him.

"I don't get it. What world are you talking about?"

"The world we go after our death,"

He kept looking at her for some time.

"ARE YOU INSANE? This is a graveyard. Why haven't you told me earlier?" he shouted.

"sssshhh…they are sleeping. You don't want to wake them up."

"Haha…Very funny, "he lowered his voice.

"Can you tell me why we are here?"

"Because of the clue, we found at Vivek's house. Don't you remember?"

"Yeah, some random letters. But, why do you think that the letters of Vivek are pointing us to this place?"

"Do you remember the word we have deciphered earlier?" Dimisha was questioning back.

"Yes, I mean not exactly. I can remember that it was a Sanskrit word. But I have found arduous to pronounce it. Sanskrit is not my favorite subject,"

"AZRADDHEYA," Dimisha pronounced it.

"Yeah, that's the word," Aryan was saying this as he can recall.

"Sanskrit is a very complicated language. The same word can explain different meanings, depending upon the manner of saying it and the possible explanation of this one is not fit for funeral rites,"

"If it's not fit for funeral rites, then what are we doing in a cemetery?" he was asking, finding tricky to connect the dots.

"This is not the usual cemetery you see in your life. This one is for the people who sacrificed themselves for greater goods. But, due to the lack of knowledge, and insanity, they were killed by some skeptical people of the society. They called them they were not fit for funeral rites. They sinned a lot. So, they were buried here,"

"Are we looking for someone specific in here?"

"Her name was Dristi, a girl with angelic beauty. The story says that everyone, during that time, wanted to have her. But she sacrificed herself to the temple as a Devdasi and took the oath of purity. Nobody could touch her. But, the tragic, as well as the weird accident, had happened. She was having a baby inside her. When the news spread, she turned out to be the most hated girl in everyone's eyes. People called her a witch. Temple had closed the door for her, cursing, she will be going to burn in the fire of hell forever. According to her, she was a pure, virgin girl. She had no idea how she got the baby."

"How did she die?"

"She is not dead. She was burning in the fire of hell,"

"What are you trying to say?"

"There was a process of testing someone's purity. She had sit on fire, and if she was telling the truth then the fire would not burn her,"

"Are you serious?"

"Strange that you have not heard about it before. Anyway, as you can presume, they made her sit on fire and it burned her. The reason, people found, for that was she was lying. So she had never got a proper funeral,"

"Was it true? Was she really pregnant?"

"Yes, she was,"

"So, she broke the oath of purity!"

"You are wrong about that part. It's not a baby she was having by the process of a normal couple does,"

"That's absolutely preposterous. How could it be possible?" Aryan said in the middle.

"You are born in this modern world. You tell me, is it completely impossible to have a baby without making a sexual relation?"

Aryan looked towards the ground, thinking.

"You mean surrogacy?" he sounded doubtful.

"Yes, of course,"

"But, during that period of time how can someone possibly know about any advance scientific process,"

"Surrogacy is not new. It's known to many scholars in ancient times. There is evidence of that if you search history."

"So, whose baby was it she was carrying?"

"It was a mystery. No one knows exactly the answer,"

"That's weird. What happened to the baby? Was it also dead with its mother?"

"There was no mention of the baby anywhere. People tried to find it out. But there was not a single sign of it,"

"It means her grave was inside," he said, looking towards the cemetery.

"Correct," Dimisha replied.

He was staring towards it. He took a gulp.

"Listen, if you don't want to go with me, it's okay. I can understand. You can wait here. You have helped me enough," She said again.

She could see the dry face of Aryan in the moonlight. He was frightened to go inside. She could feel that.

"No, no,no....." Aryan said with a little loud voice," I like being with you,"

"What?" she asked, making a face.

"I mean…I mean I like this all mystery and puzzle-solving things, It's dangerous. Though I find it is attracting me. Besides, what is the difference between standing just next to a cemetery and going inside. " he replied, rubbing his hands.

"If you insist ." she shrugged and said, "We should move now,"

"Let's see what the grave has to tell us," Aryan nodded his head and started to walk with her.

Both of them entered the cemetery.

There was a boundary made of iron bars that separate the cemetery from the rest of the place. An entrance gate was there too, but there was no name hanging on it.

Aryan looked at the tall, huge trees. It felt like they were looking at him too, and going to grab him with their long branches.

"Is it me or those trees have something unusual?"

"Don't worry. They are not going to do anything you don't like,"

"I doubt that. " he looked around and said again, "Why it's cold inside, "

He asked, rubbing his shoulders with both of his hands.

"Fog is dense too. Watch your steps," Dimisha said, pointing towards the land through the torchlight.

The fog around the place was abnormally dense. It's making it extremely difficult for them to get a clear vision. They were moving forward slowly with baby steps.

"Be careful, those tree roots are spread all over. You don't want to break your ankle. There is no hospital nearby,", Dimisha said.

"How can we suppose to find the grave we are looking for?" Aryan was wiping his hand to remove the fog to see.

"It has to be somewhere in the middle of the ground. We have to look around the place. It's my first time here,"

"You are here for the first time. But, the way you are talking about it, I thought you have been here before," he gave her a surprised look.

"I read about it,"

They were moving their torchlight all around to see where they were. Suddenly, Aryan started to feel a cold blow of air on the back of his neck.

It's maybe the fog.

Without much attention, he rubbed the back of his neck. He felt that on his fingers this time. It's like someone was blowing air with his mouth standing behind him. Aryan turned back to see what it was.

WHAT THE HELL!!!

There was something at just one-inch distance from his face. It's defiantly a living thing, and for sure, he had not seen it before. His mind became empty. Both of them staring at each other.

An uncontrolled, and ear-deafening scream came out from his mouth. The scream was coming deep from his stomach. He was feeling like he was going to vomit his heart out.

There was a creature in front of his eyes.

Even the bravest of the bravest one would not be able to stand still if they saw something like that without any warning. Aryan's behavior was quite normal. The creature had no body, just a completely spherical shaped face with big black eyes and a tiny nose. It had no ears. Instead of ears, it had flaps, with which he was flying in front of his face. It was hard to tell about the color because of the moonlight.

As the light coming from the torch fall on the face of the creature, it had started to scream too. The screaming of that thing sounds like a baby. Immediately, it flew and hidden behind a tree.

"What's wrong with you? Why are you shouting like that?" Dimisha was running towards him.

"Have you seen that thing?" Aryan was pointing its torchlight towards the tree.

Though the environment was cold, he was sweating like a man standing in the sunlight in hot daylight in summer.

She looked towards the way Aryan was pointing and saw it too.

"It's not a thing, it's a species. We call them Kuwalif," She pushed his hand to move the light away from it.

Aryan was looking at her with his eyes widening as much as he can.

"Is this real?" his voice was shaking.

"Relax, it's not going to do any harm to you. It's just trying to play with you,"

"Playing with me? It has nearly killed me. I was about to get a heart attack,"

"Oh come on, stop crying like a baby. You are fine. The way you shouted it also got scared, look," she aimed at Kuwalif.

Kuwalif was looking at them, hiding behind the tree, blinking his big black round eyes.

"Hey, little fella, don't be scared," slowly she moved towards the species.

"Come on, come to mummy, don't be scared,"

"Dimisha, don't do this," Aryan whispered from behind.

She was not listening to him. Instead, she sat down near to it and opened both of her arms. First, it moved back a little. But after a moment, it jumped into her lap. Aryan was standing there, looking at all those things. He was still finding it hard to believe what he was seeing.

"Aww, look at it. It's so cute, isn't it?" Dimisha said while tapping the head of it.

"Clearly, we have differences in the understanding of the meaning of the word CUTE," he exhaled a heavy breath.

"I should have known that it will be here," She said again.

"Does it live here, in the cemetery?"

"Yes, the fog around here, does not look unusual to you?"

"What about it?"

"Kuwalif has a special talent. They can create fog while blowing air through their mouth. This fog around us is made by them,"

"THEM? How many of them are here?" Aryan looked at his back fearfully to check if there was no one else flying there to scare him one more time.

"I don't know, it's just a baby. some of them are bigger in size,"

"Excellent, "Aryan took a gulp, licking his lips.

"I told you, they don't hurt any human," she carried it closer to him.

His breath was about to stop to see her bringing closer to him. He still found it uncomfortable to stand near to it. Kuwalif flew from her hand and got closer to him.

"It likes you. Come on, You can touch it,"

He looked at her. Making his lip wet, he gently touched its head. His hands were still shaking.

"See, told you so," Dimisha said smiling.

Aryan's heartbeat was getting back to normal. A smile with a little nervousness flashed on his face.

"Now, let's go. Don't enjoy it too much. The grave must be on that side," Dimisha was pointing towards her right.

They searched the place for some time, and finally, found it. It's to the right side of the cemetery.

The concrete made grave.

"NO NAME," She was reading the writings on it.

There was no date on it, just that two words.

"Come on, give me a hand. We have to see what's inside," She was trying to push the slab from it.

"It's time to find out what surprise is waiting for us inside a grave," he joined her mumbling.

Kuwalif was flying just next to him.

After some efforts, the slab moved slightly with a sound of scratching.

"I knew there would be something like that," She said, peeking inside the grave.

"What is it?" he sounded very enthusiastic.

"We have to move it," Dimisha was pushing the slab again.

They had made the space enough for a man to go inside by removing the slab.

"Holy crap, these are stairs inside it,"

"Let's go and check where those stairs go," Dimisha said putting her first foot on the stairs

Chapter 15

Dr. Biswas drove to meet his daughter. The perplexity of the situation was squeezing his brain from inside. He was thinking about how would he break the news to her. He knew the reaction of her won't be easy to watch. Though, he had to do it. He must convince her.

"Princess, I have to tell you something….."

He was rehearsing the sentences he was going to say, by repeating over and over, sitting in his car.

He understood his daughter, her likes and dislikes very well. Though, every time he had to tell her something, which he presumed not to be liked by her, he needed an adequate amount of time to make his lines sounded genuine.

After almost half an hour's drive, he reached her house. He stayed in the car for some moments questioning himself that was he doing good!

"Hope I am not going to lose the precious gift I got because of my past life ghost. God help me!"

But, finally, with a long breath, he stepped out of the car and walked towards her home.

He was about to press the doorbell, but the door got opened before he pressed it.

A beautiful girl with a heart-melting smile was waiting at the door. The smile…he could do anything to see that on his daughter's face.

She just looks like her mother

After Neelam, his beloved wife and the mother of the girl standing in front of him right now passed away, he took care of her. It would not be wrong if said that in reality, Prastuti took care of her father. She was the reason for Dr. Biswas getting out of his pain.

Prastuti turned out to be a smart, talented, and caring daughter. She was gifted with both academic and social skills.

"Hey, dad!" Prastuti said.

"Hey," he responded with a smile.

"Come on in,"

Dr. Biswas got inside.

"You sounded urgent on the phone. What is it? Is everything alright?"

"Yeah, everything is absolutely fine,"

He was still not confident about telling her.

"You want something to drink?"

"Water would be fine, thank you,"

Prastuti moved towards the kitchen.

Dr. Biswas took out his hanky and wiped out the drops of sweats from his forehead.

"What is it you want to tell me?" she asked, forwarding a glass of water.

He was like in a desert without water for a month. He drank it in one breath.

"This looks heavy. I have never seen you stalling before," she said, sitting down in front of him.

"What?" he said, tried to act like a normal person," I am not stalling. Who said I am stalling,"

Prastuti gave him a long hooded stare. She was not saying anything, but he could hear something in his ears,

"You can't lie to me. You know that. So, don't even try."

"Okay, fine. I need to tell you something. But, You have to promise me that you will listen to me calmly,"

"I knew it." she said, shaking her head," I knew it. It's about that single mother. That one you introduced me earlier, isn't it? The way you were looking at her I realized at the very moment that something was going on between you two,"

"What? What are talking about?"

"It's okay, father. I am happy for you. After mom, you have become so lonely. I am happy for you that you found someone,"

"Okay, I have to stop right there. I am here to talk about something else, and for the record, I am not seeing anyone," he waved his hand.

"Really?" she replied, making a face, " You don't need to hide it from me. I can handle this kind of stuff. I am matured now,"

"All you are is just delusional. There is nothing to tell you like this,"

"Then what is it you want to tell me?"

Dr. Biswas exhaled a sigh and leaned forward resting his hands on his thighs.

"Two persons from defense research were there in my office. They were asking my help on a very serious matter,"

"What matter?" her face turned serious.

"The matter is confidential. I hope you will keep it that way,"

"You are scaring me. What is going on father?"

"You remember Gravitime, Your mother and I was working on,"

"We agreed we are not going to talk about it,"

"Yeah, I know. But, those people have shown me something that made me change my mind. There was a gravitime particle on earth which is causing trouble. It appears like a threat upon us, and they have no idea what to do. That's why they came to me,"

He looked at her daughter's face. It was expressionless. Dr. Biswas saw this face before. It was like a volcano going to erupt.

"Say something," he spoke again.

"What is the point of me saying if you already decided," her rude reply.

"Don't talk like that. You know I do care about your opinion. You are the best thing that happened to me. We are friends,"

"Yeah, I can see that," she made a sarcastic smile and moved away to the kitchen.

Dr. Biswas followed her behind.

"Where are you going? At least don't go in the middle of our conversation,"

She was not replying. She was just moving the utensils from here to there, pretending to be busy.

"I know you miss her," Dr. Biswas said, standing in the kitchen," I miss her too. That's why I thought to take the project,"

Her hands stopped moving. Tears were making her cheek wet.

Dr. Biswas moved her face towards him, and said," See, if you don't want me to go, I will cancel it,"

"I miss her a lot," she said with a sniffling voice.

"I know, princess," he pushed her head to his chest," What do you say, should I go?"

"When will you be leaving?" she asked, wiping her tears.

Dr. Biswas chuckled, and said," as soon as possible,"

"Where is this place?"

"It's somewhere inside a forest,"

"Fine, but take care of yourself,"

"Don't worry. What can happen to me? I have such a caring daughter,"

"I am serious,"

"Don't worry, I will be alright,"

"I know. I am just worried about you. You know what has happened to her. I don't want to lose you,"

"I will always be with you. I love you, my princess,"

"I Love you too,"

Dr. Biswas kissed her on her forehead and moved to another room.

He took out the card that Major Singh gave him, and dialed the number on his phone. It did not go long in ringing.

"Professor, I was waiting for your call," an enthusiastic voice said from the other side of the line.

He knew it's Major Singh.

"I am ready to go. So, you can pick me up whenever you are ready," Dr. Biswas replied calmly.

"I will be at your place in fifteen minutes,"

He cut the line.

He wrapped up a few things which he thought to be needed. They did not make him wait too long. Army men are serious about their timings. As he heard the sound of the doorbell, he got his bag and walked towards it.

"Good afternoon, sir. We are ready to go, "

It's the other one who came to his office.

Dr. Biswas nodded his head and walked towards their car.

"Take care of yourself," Prastuti said from behind.

"You too, Princess,"

"Let's go, gentleman," Dr. Bisawas said sitting inside the car.

"It will take four to five hours to reach the spot. You can relax for some time," Major Singh said, sitting on the driver seat.

Captain Aniruddha Kashyap closed the door for him and himself sat next to Major Singh.

The car started to move towards its destination at a steady speed.

"Can you show me the file one more time," Dr. Biswas said.

"Sure, sir," he forwarded the file to him.

He took it and started to read all the details about Gravitime stone they found yet.

"It's completely a confidential matter, sir. we are not allowed to let any civilians know about it," Major Singh said, looking at him through the back view mirror.

"I am not sure how long you can keep this matter curtained from the reach of media and if somehow, they come to know about it, the news will spread like wildfire,"

"We have strict orders to avoid media as much as and as long as possible,"

"Chaos will start when people come to know about it and what this gravitime stone can do,"

"Sir, may I ask you something if you don't mind?" Captain Kashyap looked back from his seat.

"Go ahead. We will be seeing each other's face for a long time,"

"How did you come up with the idea of Gravitime? "

His face turned white to hear that. He looked outside through the window putting his hand in his mouth. They were on a high way. Both sides of the road had farming grounds filled with yellow colored mustard flower. But Dr. Bisawa was not looking at that beauty. Pictures from his past started to poke his emotions.

"It's okay Sir if you don't want to tell. I am just asking," he could see Dr. Biswas feeling disturbed.

"Captain, you will speak only when it's necessary, is that clear?" Major Singh said with a heavy voice.

"I am sorry sir, I did not mean to," he apologized decently.

"It's almost twelve years. I was young, stupid, and not to mention crazy too. The praising of my success blindfolded me." Dr. released a sigh and closed the file.

He started to say again," I was researching on a species found especially on Himalayan region and accidentally I have discovered a cave. No one has any idea about the existence of that cave. Me and my partner, my wife, were excited to see that."

"What cave?" he asked with excitement.

"The cave was not known to many people. Some people use to say that there is a passage or gate kind of thing inside, which can let us straight to hell. But, I did not give much attention to all metaphorical stories. They said, there was a shield area inside that cave. No one has ever been able to visit there. Whenever someone tried to break it or even touched the shield, it vanished, like never existed,"

"Vanished, I don't understand."

"The area was covered with a very unique type of stone. If we touched that stone with anything, it just erased. After some research, I was able to come up with a theory. I named it gravitime stone. Not as powerful as this one, you have found recently, but both of them have similar properties."

"Have you been into that area later, the stone was blocking?" Major Singh asked.

"Nope, I am still in the dark about what's behind the stone. I wish I could have completed my research on that. It's still a mystery to me,"

The car had given all a sudden jerk.

"Sorry, professor, we are entering the jungle. No roads from here,"

Dr. Biswas looked outside to take a view of the jungle. But, he was not able to look very far through the dense forest, covered by trees of different heights. A huge number of monkeys were there, hanging on the trees, jumping from one to another. They were screaming, taunting to see their car. It's a completely new moving thing for them.

"We have to walk from here," he said, turning off the engine.

Dr. Biswas pushed his head out lowering the glass of the window of the car. There was a temporary check post built by the army.

"How far ?" He asked.

"Almost a mile, sir,"

Captain Aniruddha Kashyap opened the door of the car for him, and Dr. Biswas got out of it. He was stressing his hands with a long yawn.

"I am getting old, I guess,"

Both of them moved their lips in a manner to smile to see him like this.

They started to walk through the green. Watching the steps, and moving the leaves hanging from the trees with his hands he moved forward.

"Watch your head. Those are very sharp, " Major Singh said looking back to him.

The branches of trees are blocking their way. They had to bend to move forward.

"Sorry, for the inconvenience, Professor,"

"No, it's fine. I like this…far from the crowd of our polluted city," his voice was suppressed because most of his strength was focused on moving his body without bumping his head.

"We wanted to clean this area. But we have a strict order not to do any harm to the resources,"

It took time to reach the base camp.

That region did not have a dense forest like the place left behind. Some camp houses were there, and a busy troop of army people. Some of them were wearing army camouflage uniform and some are not.

Seeing Major Singh standing there, an army person marched towards them and saluted. He saluted back.

"What is it, officer,"

"Sir, we have a situation," he said.

Chapter 16

Several days had passed and Asthiyuj was still in his healing process, plunging under the blood, trying to recover from his wounds that he got from his last encounter. This was taking longer than he was expecting.

The cold environment out there was making the situation even harder for him. It was vulnerable to his conditions. He had to keep himself warm as much as he could. He needed fire. He needed heat. Higher the heat, better for his condition.

"Master, wake up," Vinasha was calling his master politely, standing next to the tub he was laying.

He knew the condition of his master's health. He was weak. He needed time. Though it's not good to remain unknown from the episodes going on in the outside world.

He held his tongue for a moment to think

"Should I give him a few hours more!"

Vinasha, his loyal follower, was taking good care of him. He was doing whatever he could to cure his master. Like Asthiyuj, he also wanted to see the surface like it was before...fire everywhere. There was no stone left unturned to make it possible.

Asthiyuj was showing no sign of any response to his call. He called him again, and this time he raised his voice a tiny bit hoping to be a better impact on his master. Vinasha was staring at the tub, without blinking his eyes. It's filled with blood and his master's body was hidden under it.

After some continuous woke up call by Vinasha, a groaning sound came out from the depth of the tub, forming a number of bubbles. Vinasha got his breath back to hear that sound. He felt relieved.

"Master, it's time," Vinasha said with a meek voice.

The level of blood in the pot Asthiyuj was sleeping was getting lower bit by bit.

Finally, his face became revealed.

When the blood was completely soaked up, Asthiyuj opened his eyes. With a big roar, he sat down from his position. The blood-covered all over his face was also absorbed by the skin and his red-colored body was revealed within an instant.

"How long I have been sleeping?" Asthiyuj asked without looking at Vinasha.

"Master, you were in Samadhi, It has been ten days."

"Ten days?" Asthiyuj was not expecting to hear that. He was shocked.

"Yes, master," Vinasha nodded.

"I have never been in samadhi for such a long period,"

"I know, my lord. Maybe because of the wounds you got,"

He looked at his body, groaning mildly.

"It's getting cured,"

"Yes, this method is working,"

"But not fast enough. We need to make it faster, " he sounded unsatisfied.

"I will talk to her. See, what she can do!"

"What about our plan, is everything moving as we have anticipated?"

"Absolutely Master. All of our abets are moving softly without any hindrance. The stone we put there is doing its magic. It is pulling the attention of humans as we thought,"

"You have performed well, Vinasha," his tone was indicating a sound of satisfaction at his work.

It's a proud moment for Vinasha to hear his master was happy with his work. He had to stop his vocal cord forcefully to make any roaring of elation.

"The one and only purpose of my life are to serve you, I will do whatever I can," he replied with a vacant, expressionless face.

Asthiyuj got off from the tub.

"That time is no so far when you can roam around on the surface of the earth without worrying about anything," Vinasha offered him a long black coat to wear.

"I can feel it. We are getting closer. My powers are coming back. Soon, we will meet our brothers. The earth will be our once again,"

"What do you want me to do now?"

He looked at him for some time. Vinasha was standing, looking towards the ground.

"Come with me," Asthiyuj moved to another room and he followed him.

Asthiyuj said, sitting down on his big stone chair,

"The man, I have told you to keep an eye on, what is he doing now?"

"You mean the man of science?"

"Yes, that one, what is he doing?"

"Like you said master, he is there examining the stone. He thinks he can destroy it. Those humans think of themselves as the smartest of all," Vinasha scoffed.

"Yes, they do. But you have to burry your anger towards earthly beings for some time,"

"I don't understand what you are saying,"

"You have to go to the surface,"

"What are you saying, master? You sure about that?" Vinasha's mouth remained wide open to hear that.

"Don't try to question me. You are standing in front of your master," Asthiyuj groaned loudly.

"Forgive me, master. I did not mean to. You know, I can not dare to do that," Vinasha said sitting down on his knees.

"Good, I do not want to have any doubts on your mind about me or my decisions,"

"I can assure you, the day when there will be any doubt or disregard raises inside me for you, that will be the last day of my life."

"Stand up, you have bigger things to do."

Vinasha stood back again on his feet.

"Have I done anything wrong?"

"No, not yet. You would not be standing here if you did something that I don't approve,"

"Then I do not understand the reason for sending me to the surface. Why are you giving me such a punishment?" Vinasha was saying without looking towards his master.

"Sending you to the surface is not a punishment. It's part of my plan. You being up there is the key to what we want. Do you understand? "

"Yes, master. I apologize for my previous misbehavior. If it goes like that, then I would happily go to the surface,"

"That's what I want to hear, your master is counting on you,"

"What is it you want me to do up there? Whose life do you want me to take? Name that creature and his life is yours," Vinasha said, biting his teeth. His eyes became red.

"Calm down, calm down. I know the fire burning inside you. But this is not the right time for you to get angry. I have told you already to hide your anger for some time." Asthiyuj was showing his palm of the right hand while saying.

Vinasha was quiet. He was standing there, and trying to get back his normal heart-beat. He wanted to ask about the purpose of him, sending up to the surface.

"Listen to me carefully what I am about to say. You have to move to the surface and make friends with them,"

Vinasha's gave a sudden look towards Astihyuj with his eyebrows squeezed. He was not expecting something like this.

His brain was accosted with different thoughts regarding what he had just heard.

"Making friends with those filthy creatures," he thought in his mind

"I know what you are thinking. But, as I have said to you, it's a part of my plan and I want you to take it as pivotal to this whole disposition. You have to do it with great precautions without letting anyone have the slightest doubt on you."

"If it's that important, then I can swear it with my life. You would not be disappointed by any chance. I will make friendship with those filthy, brainless creatures," Vinasha touched his chest with his fist.

"Master, do you have someone in particular in your mind with whom I have to be friends with?" He asked again.

"Yes, I certainly do. I am talking about those people who are trying to destroy the Kaal grahi Stone. Can you do it?" Asthiyuj was saying, staring at his eyes.

"You know very well, master that I have never said no to you. I will do it with great pleasure,"

"Good, in that case, you should start preparing to act like a human. You have to adapt their nature, how they behave with one another, their likes and dislikes everything. You have to be one of them."

"You can relax. Making fool these humans is not a hard task for me."

"Go and prepare yourself to be a human,"

"Yes, my lord, " Vinasha kneeled in front of him and then left.

Chapter 17

"Holy crap, what is this place?" Aryan was making a jaw-dropping expression to see the secret underground chamber inside the cemetery, as he had never seen anything like this before.

"It looks like a secret dungeon to me, built to hide something," Dimisha replied, looking around the place.

The dungeon looked like it's made of ancient red bricks. It appears blackish in the light of their torch.

"Hide what?" He asked precipitously.

"That's what we are going to find out," she said, without looking at him. She was busy in examining the drawings made on those walls.

The walls were covered with rock-cut designs of humans, ashrams, devotees, and many more. Like it's telling stories of their time, someone was trying to tell them through these arts.

She made a blow with her mouth mildly to remove the dust from a place. It's the drawing of a girl.

"What is it? Have you found anything?" Aryan asked, throwing the light from his torchlight on that structure.

"I think it's her. The girl, I was telling you earlier," Dimisha brought her face closer to the art on the wall.

"You mean, Dristi, the devadasi,"

"Yeah, that girl, this art was talking about her story,"

"But, Why is she standing on fire?"

"She is not standing on fire. People made her jump on fire. I told you already, this is how they check the purity of a girl," she said with a dry expression on her face.

"Where did they get those ideas!" he made a frowning face to say it, "It's hard for me to believe that kind of mentality really existed. Peoples were considerably savage on those days, "

"Hey! We are not here to discuss the ancient rituals. Don't get side-tracked," Dimisha walked away to examine another art.

Aryan kept looking at her for a moment with his mouth wide open.

"I felt like I know her, "

It's bemusing the way he said that.

"Know her? How?" Dimisha was a little confused.

"I can not tell you, but there is a connection,"

"Okay, Mr. Connection, let's get back to our purpose, "

He kept looking at that art for some time, and then asked, " how can I help? All I see is nothing but drawings on those walls,"

"Honestly, I don't know either. I am expecting any clue or something that can tell us about the treasure of hell,"

"Do you have anything to help, Mercury? Do you see anything?" Aryan was touching Kuwalif with his finger.

"Mercury?" Dimisha said, narrowing her eyes.

"Yeah, it's cute, right?"

"A few minutes before, you are scared out of death, and now you find that creature cute,"

"That was a different scenario. Now, We have developed great bonding between us. What do you say, are we friends?" Aryan smiled looking towards Mercury.

Mercury was cooing with a baby smile, coming closer to Aryan. He was reacting as he could understand him.

"See, he likes me," Aryan said.

"But why Mercury?"

"I have recently read an article which says that Mercury is the closest planet to the Earth. That's why you know, I and he are closest," he waved his hands to explain.

"You are much weirder than I thought, "Dimisha looked away with her eyes rolling.

"Don't mind her. She didn't mean it," he said to his new friend.

"Can we just focus on things we are here to do?" Dimisha said, scratching the dust stuck in another art.

"Okey Dokey" he shrugged.

Aryan walked towards the front wall. Several rock-cut arts were there. Some of them lost their original shapes due to decay. Others were hard to read. They were seemed confusingly mixed, one over another like the artist had to draw a lot of arts on a small wall.

"This is not correct," Aryan muttered looking towards the statue of Durga cut on the front wall. He touched it with his hand.

She looked at him for an instant and again got back to what she was doing without putting any interest to him.

Suddenly, there was a sound of moving something heavy that stroke their ears. They looked at each other with excitement.

"What did you do?" She asked.

"Nothing, I am just...., " he was pointing toward the Durga statue, "come here, you should see this,"

Dimisha moved towards him immediately.

"Look, we all know that, Durga has ten hands and the ten hands of her holding something specific.", he started to explain," For example, you will always find her, Trishul, holding on her hand. The three spikes of the Trishul are the depiction of three properties of anything finite and destructible in this universe which are Sattva, Rajas, and Tamas, meaning Purity, Activity, and darkness. Basically, Maa Durga is in control of all these things."

"I know all this stuff, but what is with this statue?" Dimisha was pointing with her face.

"Look closely, " a smile of pride was glowing on his face.

"There is a 'Sudarshan Chakra' always in her top right hand. But here..."

"Here it's not in the top right hand. It's in the third number," Dimisha spoked in the middle.

"Correct, that's why I have tried to move the hands and see it moved, slightly,"

Dimisha was staring at him with a smile.

"What?" he said.

"You are not completely an idiot,"

"What can I say, probably you have underestimated me and my genius mind," Aryan said, brushing his hairs with his fingers.

They shared a look with a slight smile on their faces.

Mercury flew to his shoulder while cooing.

"Let's push the hand completely to the proper place," Dimisha said, clearing his throat.

She extended her hand towards the statue of Durga and started to push it upward, to its proper position. Aryan joined her too. He put his hand over her hand and helped her to do it.

Aryan could feel the long and thin finger of Dimisha on his palm. Dimisha was about to say something but, something stopped her from doing it. Though her eyes were not on him, she could feel it, Aryan was looking at her from the side of his eyes. She pretended like she was aware of it.

Slowly slowly, the hand of goddess Durga holding the 'Sudarshan Chakra' moved where it should be. The moment when the hand reached its place, precisely at the same moment, the corner part of the wall moved with a sound. It opened like a door.

Without any delay, Aryan and Dimisha walked quickly to see what was there on the other side of the door.

"Damn, a secret place inside a secret place," he shout out.

"There was something inside it," Dimisha said.

"What do you mean by there WAS?"

"Because it's empty now,"

"Maybe, another secret place is hidden inside it,"

"I don't think so. You see this small gap inside it. It's used to keep scrolls with hidden messages,"

"What kind of message? You mean something written about the treasure of hell?"

"The question you should be asking is where it is now. Because it must be something with supreme value and remarkably secretive and losing that thing is not a good sign,"

"What about Vivek, he knew about this place. Maybe he had it. It's not impossible."

"Maybe, but doesn't feel like it though," Dimisha said scratching her forehead.

"What makes you...."

"ssshhhh," Dimisha stopped him without letting him finish what he was saying.

"What is it?" he asked, whispering to her ears.

"Someone is coming," Dimisha was trying to listen to the minor sounds.

"Go, hide your self," she ordered.

She took out some light chocolate-colored seeds from her bag and threw it on the floor at the entrance to the dungeon.

"Come, Mercury," Aryan and Mercury hid themselves at the darkness of a corner.

Chapter 18

"What's wrong, soldier?" Major Singh questioned with his firm voice to the officer standing in front of him.

The officer looked tensed.

"Sir, it's the tribal peoples. They are getting aggressive more and more with time. It won't be easy to control them for longer. Today someone threw a spear to us. One of us got hurt too. I think we should take some actions,"

" Absolutely not. We can not do any harm to the natives. We have strict orders."

"But sir..,"

"Deploy some of our men on that side. Don't let any of them cross the boundary. That's your responsibility. I have a bigger headache to be taken care of,"

"Right, sir,"

"You are dismissed,"

That soldier saluted again and left.

"Tribes, huh?" Dr. Biswas was standing there, listening to their discussion.

"I am so sorry, professor. Would you like to have something, tea, coffee? We are all sorted here."

"No, thank you. All I want is to see that Gravitime stone. Can you take me there?"

"Of course, Captain Kashyap will take you there. Just don't get close to it. We still unable to calculate its exact range of it,"

"Don't worry, that thing is not new to me at all," Dr. Biswas smiled slightly.

"Captain, escort Dr. Biswas to the stone,"

"Sir," Captain Kashyap replied with attention pose.

"This way, professor," he waited for Dr. Biswas to walk.

He nodded to him and started to walk.

They reached the place after some time. There was a camp with a complete setup, established to monitor that stone by a crew in every second.

The stone was far from them. It looked smaller than he presumed. Probably, due to the distance. From the place, they were standing, it's hard to get an idea of its actual size.

"Professor, you can see it here,"

Professor moved his eyes towards the computer screen he was showing. An officer working there stood up and offered his chair to the professor.

Adjusting his spectacles, Dr. Biswas sat down and kept looking it from the possible angles he could.

"Oh my God," making the stress marks on his forehead he said, " I was not expecting this,"

"What do you mean?" Captain Kashyap was a little shocked to see his reaction.

"I mean I have never imagined the gravitime stone that big and such an extended range,"

"This place was filled with a dense forest earlier. But now, not a single particle does exist. Anything that comes to its range, it has got lost, "

Captain Kashyap showed him some satellite pictures of that place while it was filled with greenery.

"You can see with this," he said, offering Dr.Bisawas a pair of binoculars.

It looked like a big black monster was sitting with wearing stone skin.

"It's alarming. How did it get here?" He muttered, biting his lower lips.

At that moment, the wireless of Captain Kashyap started to make a sound.

Dr. Biswas' attention moved towards that.

"Excuse me, Professor," he moved away from him to answer and,

Dr. Biswas again got busy in observing it.

"Professor, you are needed for briefing," Captain Kashyap said.

"Briefing?" he asked, putting down the binoculars.

"Right, sir. We are hoping you could explain this Gravitime stone to our research team. Chief thinks it will help us to find a solution with lesser time,"

"I am not in a mood to give a lecture to anyone. But, ... Let's go, " his reluctant reply.

They started to walk back to their base camp.

It was about to get dark. Professor looked at his watch.

Half-past four.

"We are in the middle of a dense forest. Here nights are longer than days, " he understood what the professor was thinking.

"Yeah, I have noticed,"

As the sun got lost in the west, the environment of the jungle had shown a drastic change. A freezing breeze touched the skin of him and made him shiver. Big, artificial lights brought by the army was giving the lives of the jungle a strange and scary experience.

They reached their camp after a few minutes of the walk where Major Singh was waiting for them eagerly.

"Have you seen it, professor?" he asked, reaching to him.

"Yeah, I have,"

His face looked dry. The picture of the stone, he had just seen was coming to his mind. A storm was playing with his mind.

"So, what do you think? Does it go with your previous encounters?" Major Singh was very enthusiastic to have the professor with them.

"It is showing some behaviors which resemble the data I collected. But I can not tell you with absolute certainty. I have to check all the reports first,"

"Very well. I would like to tell you that we have prepared a research team to assist you."

"Before you say anything, I must tell you that I am not much of a team player. I will prefer to work along. I don't need any team to assist me," he said, cleaning his glasses with the hankie.

"Don't worry, Professor. They are not going to make any hurdle to your work. They will follow everything you have said,"

He was about to say something but, Major Singh spoke again," If you don't mind, just meet them for once, please. I chose them from the smartest of all."

"Let's give it a try," he said, frowning his lips.

"Thank you, Professor," he replied, nodding his head.

Dr. Biswas, along with Major Singh, moved towards one of the tents. Two guys and one lady were sitting inside, waiting for them. As they entered inside, all of them have stood up to greet.

"Guys, meet Dr. Hemanta Biswas, the man who is gifted with an extraordinary brain. I don't think he requires an introduction. All of you know him very well. He is here to help us with the gravitime issue," Major Singh introduced him to all.

"There is no need for any sarcasm, officer," Dr. Hemanta Biswas chuckled.

"It's an honor sir," one of them said with excitement.

His face turned red to see Dr. Biswas standing in front of him.

"Professor, Let me introduce you to your team. Biplab Bharadwaj, Himanshu Chauhan, and Pratiksha Barman,"

Everyone shook hands with him while their names had been said by Major Singh.

"So, sir, we are hoping if you can tell us something about this chaotic thing. We all know you are familiar with it," Pratiksha said.

He sat down on the chair with a release of heavy breath. Others also took their seats, looking at him steadily.

"I don't know where to start," he stated, scratching his forehead with his thumb.

He was looking down towards the table, tapping his fingers on it and biting his lips for a moment.

"Let's try to understand this way. We all know that our life is made of five elements, right?" he was looking at them for an answer.

They did not show any response to him.

" I know what you guys are thinking. It sounds like a religious textbook. But try to think outside the box,"

Everyone nodded their head.

"The four of those elements are land, water, fire, air, but what is the fifth one? Some people say it like the sky or space. But, if you ask me, it's an ambiguous answer. We are going nowhere with that. So, can anyone tell me what may be the fifth element?"

"Aether," Major Singh said.

Everyone's attention moved towards him.

"Not a worthy inclusion. There is no data to prove that theory." Dr. Biswas said shaking his head side to side.

"Some people, as well as some mythology, will say it as God's breath as the fifth element. But it's not going to help us either,"

"So, what is it, sir?" Himanshu asked.

"That's the thing. It's everywhere around us. We can not see it, but we can feel it. We won't come to existence without that element," He was moving his hands here and there while explaining.

Dr. Biswas opened the bottle of water and drunk a little from it. Putting the half-empty bottle back on the table, he started to say again," It's gravitime. That's the fifth element, hidden from everyone,"

He was looking towards everyone to say something.

"This is the exact reaction I got when I said it to my superiors, empty face," Dr. Biswas said, putting his one hand in his pocket.

Everyone giggled at the way he said.

"Gravitime, what does it do, sir?" Biplab asked.

"To answer that question of yours, first I have to tell you what is time and how does it function? One more thing, when I am talking about time, do not get confused with the ticking clock. That's not what time really is. It's more than that,"

Everyone nodded their heads, and Dr. Biswas stood up from his chair.

Clearing his throat, he started to describe again," Whenever this big bang happened, our universe was created, those planets, stars and everything we see or know now-a-days. But with all those, one more thing was created which we call now, TIME. This time is like a big, invisible elastic-like stuff spread in every corner of the universe, even in this tent surrounding us. The only thing that can put an impact on this elastic material is Gravitime. We can not see Gravitime, but it exists in everyone and everything."

"So, what does it do, professor?" Pratikhsa asked.

"I am reaching there. " Dr. Biswas said, gulping some water.

"Okay, now, what am I going to say is the crux of all. Gravitime can bend the time surrounding us and make it slow. If someone possesses Gravitime with a very potent force, then that person will live longer than some who has Gravitime with less potent power, "

"So, you are saying that my grandma is a hundred years old lady because of the Gravitime," Himanshu questioned.

Everyone laughed insignificantly at his question.

"Exactly, the cells of your grandma is not getting older like others, because of a powerful Gravitime force. Time is passing slower for the cells of that lucky lady," Dr. Biswas said, showing his palms in the air.

" We all know there are planets in the universe where time passes slower than earth. You can spend one hour there, and get back to earth where a hundred years have passed. But you will remain the same. Your cell won't get old like a hundred-year cell. Why is that! Because for your cells and mind it's just one hour,"

"What about the situation we are facing now, is it something to do with Gravitime?" Biplab asked

"Obviously, that's why I am here. The stone you are seeing has a very robust anti-gravitime force. It can push the gravitime away from anything that gets closer to it. As a result, the time passes instantly for that thing, and it died."

No one was saying anything.

"Feel free to ask if you have any doubt," Dr. Biswas sat down on his chair, stretching his neck.

The room became pin-drop silent. He waited some time for any question, and then said," Major, I am going to need a place to work,"

"Of course, we have sat up a workplace for you,"

"Gentlemen, you may go now," he said anew.

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"First, the stone, the dark magic, and now those people with their devilish weapons. We all are going to die soon, "

Tribals were scared. They were starting to lose their hope.

"I wish Pradhan was here to see all those, "

"Don't worry. Pradhan knows what to do. We can trust him, "

"I am not doubting on him. But what if our god wants us to be dead for our sins, then what?"

"Sins! I don't understand What are you trying to say, "

"We take lives for our hunger. What do you think? Is not that a sin? "

"That is not a sin. They are the gifts from our god so that we can live, "

"I thought like that too. But now..."

"Now what?"

"What if we are the gifts for someone else's hunger. Those people out there, wearing green color skin think of us as their food, "

Everyone's heart got cold to hear that. They were not saying anything, but from inside this thought gave quivering sensation to all. That's not completely impossible. They may become the food of someone.

"We are overthinking." One of them spoke, breaking the silence, "There is nothing like this going to happen, "

All others looked towards him.

Hiding his fear, he spoke again with a voice of confidence, "look, Pradhan is on his way to the cave. Probably he reached there and started praying. Soon this problem will be over. But, until he returned, we should not go any closer to them."

They tried to believe what he said, feign to support him. But, from inside everyone was terrified.

Chapter 19

Dimisha slowly moved backfoot and hid in the dark with her eyes fixed at the entrance. She was absolutely certain that someone or something was approaching them.

"One...two...three..."

Aryan was counting the seconds passed in his mind.

Finally, they could hear clearly the footsteps of someone moving towards the dungeon. Aryan's heart was reacting to the situation. In the dark, his eyes were looking for Dimisha.

After waiting for some time, they could see someone standing at the top of the stairs. Though the complete structure of the being was not visible from where they were hiding, but from the appearance, it could be expected that as a human...a male.

He was wearing high ankle shoes.

He waited there for some time, looking at his surroundings.

Probably the misplaced of that slab was giving him a warning.

He was sensing the environment.

That man, finally, walked down. With slow and careful steps, he put his foot inside it.

Dimisha could see him now.

He was a strong muscular man wearing a long black unbuttoned coat with a hood covering his face. Just moving his head, that man took a look around the dungeon.

Hiding behind the shadow, Dimisha and Aryan were waiting to see what he would do. She was trying to think who he was and what he was looking for.

After some time, he moved his legs to go near to another side of the dungeon.

No matter how observant that man was, but he failed to see what was laying just below his foot.

As he stepped over the seeds thrown by Dimisha, some roots had protruded from them and before he could do anything, it tied him tightly all over.

She was good at hunting her enemies, there was no doubt in that.

Those roots pulled him down towards the ground with full force. They were grabbing him all over like snakes. An ordinary man would have broken his bone by then. But he was somehow standing on his knees.

"That was easy," Dimisha muttered with a smile.

She moved near to the man and without any delay, she removed the hood from him.

The face revealed. A man with a strong jawline was looking at her biting his teeth.

"You can stop doing that unless you want to break your teeth. We are not going anywhere until I get my answers," Dimisha said to him with a calm attitude.

Aryan came out too from behind.

"I am not telling you anything," that man said. He was trying to move his hands to set himself free.

"Let's see how strong you are," she was not showing any anger.

She was acting like it's part of her daily life.

Dimisha moved her hand in the air, pointing towards the seeds, and immediately one root tied him from his neck.

"What?" She said to Aryan, who was looking at her like a scary thing.

"You are a badass, you do know that, right, Dimisha?"

"Not my best effort, " She shrugged to him.

"Dimisha?" That man said with a suppressed voice.

"You don't like that name?"

"No, I was looking for you. My name is Surya and I am not your enemy,"

His face was turning red. He was barely breathing. That root was making its grip tighter.

"And why were you doing that?" She asked again.

She was not giving much attention to the fact that he was going to pass out soon.

"To protect you. Your life is in danger, " he spoke somehow.

"Between you and me, if there is someone who needs protection, then it's not me for sure. Don't you able to find that out yet?" She replied lightly pointing towards the roots grabbing Surya.

" It's true. I am sent here for you,"

She got closer to him, and said, "You better stop making stories and start to answer my questions, "

Her voice changed this time. Her calm attitude got lost and a new Dimisha came out, filled with anger on her eyes.

Aryan was shocked to see her this side of life. He had not seen it before.

"A little hard for me to talk without breathing," he was choking.

"That's not going to happen, "Dimisha chuckled, looking away.

He was waiting for that opportunity.

Within an instant, Surya freed himself from those roots, and before Dimisha could do anything, he grabbed Aryan from behind with a knife on his neck.

Aryan's neck was touching the cold steel part of the knife.

"I am not here to hurt you. Just let me prove it to you,"

"How are you going to do that? By putting a knife on his neck? That's not going to help," Dimisha said, concentrating her eyebrows.

He pushed Aryan away and put the knife back. Aryan somehow able to manage from falling.

Her eyes moved automatically towards him for an instant and then got back to Surya.

Surya moved his sleeve up and shown her the mark on his forearm.

"The mark of the ghost," she said indistinctly.

"You recognize this. Can we talk now calmly where you don't use your silly, childish tricks and I don't need to put my knife out,"

"Silly, childish tricks...how is your neck, huh?"

Surya looked away, with a chuckle.

"What's going on? You know this guy?" Aryan came closer.

He did not understand what just happened.

"For now, let's hear what he has to say,"

"What did he show you in his arm, anyway?"

"It's a mark of an ancient society. I heard about them, but never met anyone, well...not yet,"

"You trust him just for a tattoo. Anyone can make it. Don't make fool of yourself, "

"It's not a tattoo. It is the holy mark of our shrine. Only a true follower can get this, " Surya spoke in the middle.

"The owner of it can control this. They can show or hide it at their willing, " she explained.

"Dude, next time show whatever in your forearm before putting a knife on someone's neck," he said again, rubbing his neck

"Sorry, but I am half to blame for that. Your welcome made me do this. " he smiled.

" Is there any cut on my neck? Do you see bleeding?" he was showing his neck to Dimisha.

"Don't over react. You are absolutely fine. There was nothing on your neck,"

"Damn, what do you eat, dude? Your hands are as hard as a rock," Aryan was massaging his neck.

"Don't call me a dude. I have a name which is Surya,"

"You are saying it like it means a lot...DUDE,"

"My name is given by the great..."

"Okay you two, this is not a proper time and place for cockfights and you...you can start to tell me why you were looking for me"

"Your life is in danger. That is why I am here,"

"Yes, yes. You told me that already. Anyway, I am able to find out that little fact of my life by myself. You don't need to tell me that,"

"I have no doubt about that. I am the alive evidence," Aryan added.

Dimisha looked at Aryan with a squinted face.

"My lips are sealed. No more words from me. You can keep continuing with your meeting,"

"Good," she said, closing her arms.

"So, is there anything else you can tell me except the song you are singing that my life is in danger," she looked back to Surya.

"My Gurudev told me that the heir of Bharata was found. That's why he sent me to take you to our concealed place. Because you are very precious to both us and those monsters out there, they know that. They will definitely try to kill you for your blood,"

Dimisha was looking at him. Those things he had just said was not able to give any surprise.

He paused for a minute and then said again," I have been to Kimbala, expecting to find something about his heir, and there I met a man, Gagong be. You are familiar with that man, I guess. "

"Yeah, I know him,"

"He told me that. He also told me all about you that how come you reached that island and your encounter with Asthiyuj. Also, he informed me that you were looking for the treasure of hell. That's why I thought you might be here under the grave of Dristi,"

"That means I was right. This place is connected to what I am looking for. What do you know about this place? What is hidden inside it?" Dimisha raised her voice.

"It is said that there is a map hidden inside. The map leads to the gates."

"Gate? What is on the other side of the gate," Aryan asked.

"No one can tell exactly. Only thing I know that the gate through which all of them can come to the surface,"

"Who can come?" Aryan asked.

"I will tell you later," she said.

"Whatever it was, the map or not, but it's not here. It's stolen. We have missed the boat," Dimisha walked towards the secret chamber.

"What are you saying? Do you know what does it mean?"

"Yeah, someone is trying to open those gates,"

"It must be a human. Demons can not come to this place. Kuwalif keeps the temperature of this place low, making it hard for them to survive."

"I think so too, but the question is who could have done that?"

Surya examined the chamber minutely.

"Let me try something," he said.

Saying so, he took out some black colored thin and long sticks from his bag.

"You better get back," he said, burning those sticks.

Within a minute, that room was filled with smoke, and the smoke took the shape of a human.

It was moving around the dungeon.

"What is he doing?" Aryan asked.

"He is trying to see who was here,"

"How? By burning those sticks?"

"Yes, It can sense the body heat. That's how we are going to know who was here,"

"Like a thermal reading?"

"You can say that, "

"Cool, " Aryan felt amused.

The shape appeared in the smoke first moved here and there inside the room randomly and then, finally it stepped towards the statue of Durga. Surya walked near to the appearance to get a close look.

"I think, I know who has got the map," He said looking towards them.

"You have found something?" Her eyes were glowing.

"Indeed,"

The smoke faded away after some time.

"Can you tell where it is, now?" She asked again.

Surya did not reply to her question. He was just looking towards the statute with his serene eyes.

"Hello, Are you listening?" Dimisha waved her hand in front of his eyes.

He stared at her.

"It's an insect named Vistur. They are tiny but intriguing characters. They have a unique feature. Whenever they are left free, their skeletons got expanded, until they burst."

"These things are getting weirder and weirder," Aryan said.

Both of them gave him an annoyed look.

"Yeah, I know about Vistur." She got back to Surya," That's why they live in narrow gaps or cracks. But why are you telling me about it?"

"Because someone brought them here and left open. Can you tell me why?"

"To find the gapes,"

"Correct, gapes of the door, gapes of the liver of the hands and all. As they are freed, Vistur entered all the narrow gapes immediately to stop their body from getting exploded,"

"That was smart," Aryan said.

"Yes, it was, " Surya said, looking towards him.

"But, so far I knew, it's not easy to capture them, right?"

"Only a few people have this skill to catch them and examing the shape in the smoke, I can tell, who was that one," he was cracking his knuckles.

"Great, who was it? We must find him."

"No, we are not going after anyone. You are coming with me to our Shrine. That's I am ordered to do,"

"Oh, come on. Keep this away," She rolled her eyes

"You think this is a joke,"

"You listen to me. Someone out there, who has the map to the treasure of hell, and if they open the gates, there will be no world to save. Do you think Bharata would have wanted that?"

"We can find the map, but you don't need to go there,"

"I am going to find him, with or without your help. Your order is to protect me, so come with me."

Dimisha walked outside the dungeon.

Aryan came closer to him and said politely, "By looking at you, I can tell that you don't know much about a girl. So, take my advice. She is the most stubborn girl you have ever met or going to meet in the future, probably," he tapped his back, " you can not stop her from doing what she has decided,"

Chapter 20

"May I come in, sir?" Biplab asked pushing himself inside the tent where Dr. Biswas was working for hours, trying to find a way.

He was feeling like someone put a mountain on his shoulder and it's getting bigger and heavier with time. He was working day in and day out to come up with something.

The voice of Biplab hit him like a thunder strike on his head. The anger level was just about to touch its maximum level.

"You are already in," Dr.Biswas replied, clenching his teeth. He did not bother to move his head towards him.

Biplab took a gulp and waited for a moment. Probably, waiting for Dr. Biswas to welcome him with a lesser annoyed face. He moved his eyes around the room.

It's a mess. Someone needed a cleaner.

Professor was drowned in files and calculations of all the data related to the stone. Books, notes were spread all over in his desk and bed. The walls were decorated with sticky notes. There was a coffee mug at the corner of the table.

"If you want, I can come back later," Biplab said and moved towards out.

"Why on earth I would want that? I don't want you here this time either, "

His face got dry and pale.

"I am extremely sorry sir, I thought..."

Biplab stopped talking as Dr. Biswas looked towards him, with an extremely grumpy expression all over his face.

"There is no need for your sorry here. Damage is already done."

He decided to leave.

Judging by the mood of the professor, it's best for him to do that or it will make worse.

With silent, unnoticed steps, he left towards the door.

"You have five seconds to tell why you are standing on my head, and it's better to be important," Dr. Biswas said, turning his head towards him.

Biplab can see his eyes.

It's red, swollen.

Hairs are messy. Some of the buttons of his shirt were not locked.

He looked like a homeless man who has not slept for days.

Professor started to rock his chair on its back legs, looking at the roof.

"Sir, I am here to discuss something about the stone," Biplab stated, stepping towards him.

"First, filled it up," without giving much importance to what he was saying, he forwarded him his coffee mug.

" Sure sir, " Biplab took the mug from him politely, nodding his head and poured some coffee into it from the flux.

"Okay, go ahead, before I kick you out, speak why you are dancing on my head, "

"Sir, I think I have found something."

"Oh, really?" He gave a sarcastic smile.

He was touching his forehead with the hot coffee mug.

Biplab was a little nervous to speak in front of him. His mind goes blank for a moment.

"Hello, " Dr. Biswas shout out to see staring at him with his mouth open.

Biplab blinked his eyes two-three times, shaking his head.

He cleared his throat and then spoke, "Sir, You have said earlier that we are made of five elements, and the fifth one is time, "

"You don't need to come here to tell me that. I can remember fine what I have said,"

"No, sir. That's not what I mean. I am just saying that what makes them stay together. I mean all those, five elements must have something that is binding them together. "

"What are you trying to say?"

"Sir, I have done some digging and found this," Biplab paused for a second.

"May I?" he asked, pointing the pen and the notebook on the table.

Dr. Biswas nodded his head, and he started to draw something in the notebook.

There were five small triangles and four waves like shape connecting them.

"Think of these triangles as our elements, and those waves as the energy binding them. Depending on the types of binding it gives life different shapes, different nature,"

"Okay, you have got my attention. Go on, " he said, slightly bending forward. He was resting his one arm on the table with fingers on his face.

"Sir, here, in the structure, those waves are the energy waves which is connecting all those elements. In ancient books, you will always find explanations about souls. According to the old sayings, those souls are some kind of energy without any shape or structure, and here we are. It's completely valid. We can relate this to our findings. Because, those energy waves, binding all the elements are nothing but souls. Like souls, waves don't have any proper shape or structure."

He was looking at Dr. Biswas with hopeful eyes, expecting to hear something good or in his case a sentence with less anger.

"Your argument is not entirely useless. Maybe it can connect the missing dots...perhaps. There is a possibility that something is binding all theses elements, soul or energy wave, whatever it is maybe our key, "

"Thank you, sir." he giggled.

"I will look into it,"

"That's why, sir, I am thinking, if we can..."

He stopped at the sound of coughing of someone. Both of them looked towards him.

It's Major Singh

"How is it going, professor?" he asked standing behind them.

"I think we have found a hint to move, "

"I will discuss it later. You may go now," he told Biplab.

"Right, sir,"

He left the tent.

Major was looking tensed.

"Surviving on coffee with sleepless nights, huh?" he said, moving around his gaze at the condition of the room.

"What can I say? Felt like back to the grind," he shrugged, " I don't think you are here just to check my coffee mug, right?"

He did not reply. Just made a fade smile, and came closer to him.

"Have you come up with any result or something?" Major asked, taking a pen from the table.

"Not yet. It's like we are stuck in between a physical and a meta metaphysical world,"

"We are running out of time, professor. You need to hurry in whatever you are doing,"

"I am totally aware of that. But our fight is also against the time. It's not easy,"

"You heard already, about the tribe, native to this place,"

"Yeah, What about it?"

"It's getting harder for us to keep them calm. They are fighting every day to get near to the river,"

He was opening and closing the cap of the pen repeatedly while saying. Professor was not saying anything but, the ticking sound made by it was exceptionally difficult for him to bear.

"How much would it be problematic to control a barbarian bunch of people for an advanced army troop?"

"That's the problem, professor. We can not control them,"

"What do you mean you can not control them?"

"It's an order from above. We are ordered not to do any harm to them. That tribe belongs to some kind of UNSECO list. So, any sort of loss to them will make our government accountable in front of international powers. You know all those stuff. How it works!" He released a sigh.

"Ow, mater is serious,"

"Yeah, and complicated too," he replied, bringing the stress marks on his forehead.

"So, what do you think of doing now?"

"I am up in the air. This is the first time when I am facing something like this. I don't know what to do, professor. You better come up with something soon."

Major Singh noticed that, instead of looking towards him, the professor was staring at the pen in his hand. He stopped doing what he was doing with it and put it on the table.

"I am trying. But I have told you already, we have to make every step of ours with great precautions. The slightest miss calculation will..."

"Yeah, yeah, the slightest miscalculation will bring chaos. I know that. I have heard that from you before. But I am expecting more than that from you,"

"Look, if you want an instant solution, then I can not help you. It will be better if you find someone else, someone who speaks your language,"

"Oh no! professor. You are getting me wrong. I am not putting any pressure on you. I am...I am just saying that the lives of many people are in my hand and I am counting on you for that. I apologize if you feel..."

"It's fine. I am slogging away day and night for a rigid solution."

"I have no doubt about that. I am just perplexed...maybe a little scared too. My ears are dying to hear the sound of joy from you,"

"What did you say? Sound?" he spoke in excitement.

"Yeah, I mean..." Major was confused.

"Sound, there it is," he said, shouting.

"What are you talking about? Are you alright, Professor?"

"Yes, I am completely alright." he jumped out from his chair and started to move here and there with rubbing his palms abnormally. The chair fell on the ground.

"Sound, now I know, from where it is coming. Spectacular job, doc. Spectacular job," he mumbled.

Then, he started to throw the files hither and thither, after giving a giving a quick scan to them with his eyes.

"Where are you?" he was talking to himself.

Major Singh was standing there, watching him strangely.

Just a few seconds before he was angry and exhausted and now jumping here and there with excitement.

"Professor, what's going on?"

"I will tell you later. But, for now, you have to leave me alone,"

Major Singh did not say anything to him. He left him, alone as to be asked.

Chapter 21

After a long debate, Surya realized that it's not possible for him to convince Dimisha to go the shrine. That's why he decided to tell her about the thief, that one who stole the map and go with her. At least he could protect her like this.

"Are you certain about that? Better not to be a trick of yours," Dimisha asked.

"I am not a liar," Surya replied with his heavy voice.

"Let's hope that's not a lie too, " Aryan passed a teasing comment, looking away.

Surya wanted to say something, but he just gave him a stare filled with anger.

"Only one way to find that out," She said again.

"I am still not sure about it. It's a mistake taking you there."

"We should go, "

They came out of the cemetery.

"Is he with you?" Dimisha asked, to see a man waiting outside.

"Yes, he is going to take us, "

"Wow, a cart. That's amazing. I have never been in a cart, " Aryan was exhilarated.

"We are not going for a picnic, " she said, " so keep your amusement under control,"

"Are you sure you want to take him with us, "

"Us? There is no us with you two. I and she were in this search for a long time. So, if there is someone who is needed to be eliminated, it's you, "

"You two need time to plan the journey?" She asked in her sarcastic way.

"Let's go, " Surya moved towards the cart, and started to chat with their rider.

Dimisha and Aryan looked at them for a moment. Shaking her head slightly she also moved towards it.

"Come, Mercury. Don't be scared. It will be fun, " he said to the Kuwalif flying near to his shoulder.

He also walked towards the cart.

"Are we ready to go?" The man nodded them with a smile and asked.

"Yes, move fast. You know where to go," Surya ordered him.

And the wheels started to spin.

It's an open cart, pulled by two huge white oxen with big horns. The horns were making a shape, looked like -U. The man who was riding the cart was making strange noises by his mouth. It's like he was communicating with his oxen in his own way. There was a very slim and long stick in his hand, and sometimes, he used to bit those oxen with the stick mildly.

Dimisha rubbed her eyes with both of her hands and leaned back. She was trying to relax for some time. It was a long day for her.

There was complete silence.

The only sound coming to her ears was the sound made by the rider of the cart.

"Is Mercury a vegetarian?" Aryan broked the silence.

"You know what I miss the most?"Dimisha stared at him lowering her head.

He did not say anything. Aryan knew it's not a question. It's a bullet shot without a gun.

He just shrugged.

"A moment of silence. That's the most desirable thing for me at the current situation,"

"I think he is hungry," he told again.

"Who is he, your new pet?" Dimisha said, resting one leg over another.

"I told you, we have a bonding. I can not make you understand that,"

"Don't worry. Your friend can eat by himself. You do not need to feed him,"

Aryan looked at Mercury. He was looking back at him with his big glittering eyes, flying near to his shoulder with his tiny wings.

"I have never seen a Kuwalif making friend with humans," Surya said.

"What can I say, my heart is quite transparent with lots of love holding inside it, and he can sense it," Aryan put his hand over his chest.

Dimisha chuckled, moving her eyes away from them.

"You people don't know anything about love. If there is anything you want is the collection of accessories which makes you feel stronger than others,"

"What kind of stupid theory is that?" Aryan frowned.

"Tell me, what you all do in the entire life. From the moment of birth, the whole thoughts of a human mind revolve around how to make money so that you can buy goods to live a life filled with comforts, "

"Where do you get all those ideas, man?"

"Oh, wait. that's not the end of the greed of you, people. Those goods of comforts they collect, it has to be more in numbers than the peoples surrounding them. Then they can feel peaceful." Surya said, turning towards him.

"Dude, some of the humans may live like that. But it does not mean you can blame all of them. Besides, trying to prove oneself better than others is not completely a bad thing. It's called competition. It's the key to progress,"

"That's the key to cannibalism. I have seen people spending their whole life just to prove themselves better than others, and they call it a success. If someone can make money more than others, your society considers him a successful man. No matter how do they earn that money. Everyone will follow them like sheep. The truth is that they are lost. They don't know what they want in life. They never asked themselves why they have created. Because they are so busy paying their bills,"

"Let me remind you that you are a human too. I think you forget that part while researching about human lifestyle,"

"I am not lost like others. I was bought up by a holy society and lucky enough to see the truth,"

"Perhaps, you never fell in love. That's why you hate all humans. If you ever felt love, you would know how beautiful a human life can be. Because love is the actual truth of humans. We can love one another, care for each other, and creates lots of beautiful things. What you have seen is just a bunch of stupid peoples with some perfunctory minds,"

"You should need to look around,"

"Okay, you two," Dimisha spoke with a frustrated voice, "keep your research on human psychology for later."

"Mr. enlighten one," Aryan muttered, looking another side.

All of a sudden, the cart got slightly inclined, with a jerk. Their hands automatically moved to hold the objects nearby.

"Surya, we have reached," the owner of the cart said, peeking back.

"Thanks, Abdul," Surya replied, jumped from the cart.

After Aryan got off, he offered his hand to her to help. But, Dimisha got off by herself. She was deluding as not even saw him. With a smile of embarrassment, he pulled his hand back and scratched the back of his head.

Surya moved towards Abdul and said," Thanks for the ride,"

"No need to thank me. You have already done enough for us and our village. You can call me whenever you want. I am ready to help you anytime," Abdul smiled.

"Take care of your family," Surya smiled in return.

The cart started to move again. They stood there for a moment to see it disappear.

"Does she live here?" Dimisha asked, looking around the place.

"We have to walk from here,"

"What is this place?" Aryan questioned, looking around.

"This place used to be a lovely village. But, something evil happened one day, and every single person in this village was found hanged by the trees around here. Nobody knows, the reason behind this mass suicide. " he pointed to the tree they were standing near, " including this one,"

Aryan moved his gaze around while rubbing his shoulders. There was a cold, deadly vibe radiated from the area. An unexplainable pain was making their hearts heavy. They could hear someone shouting, a baby was crying.

"Don't lose your focus. This place is haunted by the spirits of the villagers," Surya said to Aryan.

"I don't like this place," he was panting

"Nobody does, it's not safe for us to stay here very long. So we must hurry. If you see anything scary, don't get panic,"

"Stay close to me Mercury,"

"How is she surviving here?" Dimisha said.

"Don't forget, Mandakini is a witch. A thousand-year-old witch and the best part is she is blind. That's what makes her easy to live here."

They started to walk through a narrow path, of which both sides were covered with damaged houses.

"Oh my god! I am going to vomit now," Aryan coughed, disgusting,"

There was a dead dog on their path with its stomach ripped apart. The blood was clothing around the area of the dog. Some crows were eating the intestine. The smell of rotten organs of the dog made Aryan was having a feeling like someone was steering his stomach from inside.

"Don't look at it. You will be alright," Dimisha said, massaging his back.

He somehow moved forward, holding his lips closed tightly. Mercury gave him a blow of cold air on his face.

After covering a distance, they found a small house that seems less damaged than others.

"This is it," Surya said, looking at Dimisha.

"Are you alright?" She asked.

Aryan nodded his head, covering his face with his hands.

"You can stay outside if you want," she told him again.

"No, it's fine. Inside of the house would not be worse than here," he replied, taking a long breath with his mouth.

"Wait, let me go first, "

Surya pushed the door of the house. It opened slowly with a long creaking. He nodded to them, and all of them got inside. It's dark. Some candles were burning. On one side, there was a long rack with some glass jars on it. Those jars were filled with flesh, organs, and liquid. Some vines with pink flowers were covering the opposite wall. The flowers had shrunk immediately as they entered.

"Nobody is home?" Aryan said, looking towards Surya.

"Who is it?" Someone spoke with a stone-cold voice.

A mid-aged woman walked nonchalantly from another room. She was holding a stick, using to walk by moving it on the ground.

"Humans, it's been long I have not smelled fresh meat," she said, raising her head, trying to smell the air.

"Mandakini, I have something to ask," Surya said with his heavy voice.

Mandakini was walking forward and stood in front of Aryan.

"A freeborn, what a surprise!" she was touching his cheeks with her long nails.

"What? he is freeborn?" Surya glanced towards Dimisha.

"I have no idea,"

"Of course, he is. I can smell their blood from a far distance," Mandakini was taking a smell of him.

"Listen, aunty,"

"Try Grandma. She is older than you think," Surya said to Aryan.

"Okay, Grandma, You must be mistaken me with someone else. Maybe you are confused because of the deo I am wearing," he said with a nervous smile on his face.

Dimisha came forward and removed her hand from Aryan forcibly.

"We are here to ask you something?" she said.

"Surya," Dimisha signaled him.

"We know you were at the grave of Dristi. What were you doing there?"

"You know well about that, don't you" she laughed, moving away from them.

"You have stolen the scroll?" Dimisha asked.

"Yes, I did,"

"Where is it now?"

Mandakini sat down on a chair, putting her stick on its arm.

"Mandakini, where is it now? Surya was losing his temper.

"I gave it to its real owner,"

"Don't make me hurt you. You know I can make you talk easily,"

"I gave it to him," She was looking towards the roof, tapping fingers on the arm of the chair

"To whom?" His eyes became furious.

He was losing control to see her carefree attitude.

"You already know him." She moved her towards Dimisha and said, " Don't bother to find him. He is coming for you, anyway,"

"Oh, you bitch," Dimisha hustled towards her, clenching her teeth.

Mandakini took her stick on her hand and blown it, aiming towards Dimisha.

"Dimisha," Surya shouted.

Aryan pushed Dimisha away with both of his hands. Her legs had got twisted and slipped on the ground. Surya paused for a second, looking at them and then threw his knife towards Mandakini.

But it's too late.

She was gone by then. The place where she was sitting is covered with smoke.

"Are you alright?" Dimisha asked Aryan.

"Yes, absolutely. Just feeling hot. Maybe because of the weather," his voice was shuddering.

He smiled faintly. A film of sweat covered his whole body. His eyelids got heavy, making it hard for him to keep them open. Within a minute, he lost his strength and fallen to the ground.

Chapter 22

Dr. Biswas gathered them all his team immediately. He came up with something which he wanted to explain to everyone.

After almost fifteen minutes of the lecture, his team was still looking at him. Their confusion with the current problem was not changed.

"Sir, I am not sure any of us is getting what you are trying to say," Pratiksha Barman was looking at others for the support.

The rest of them was not saying anything, but their expression of separated lips was radiating the same state of mind as her.

"Try to think it this way, " Dr. Biswas sat down on his chair, resting his elbows on the table.

"I have already told you about the gravitime, right? About the existence of it in every single thing. We also experienced the fact that what it can do. But, I want to ask you how it is attached to all the objects. What is it that's binding gravitime to an object?"

"We hardly can digest the fact of Gravitime, and you are asking a deeper question. Not everyone is genius as you, doc." Himanshu said, leaning back to his chair.

He winked at Pratiksha while saying. She turned her head towards Dr. Biswas and asked," Sir, it's quite subtle what you are saying. Can you simplify it as you know we are new at this gravitime thing?"

He nodded his head and coughed slightly, holding his fist in front of his mouth.

"Let's not make any subtle anymore. " he smiled at her and said, " this is the simplest way I can tell. There is an invisible string of energy that is binding this gravitime to the particles. We can not see it, but we all have this energy string. That's it,"

"Is this new finding of yours, will going to lead us anywhere?"

"Yes, of course. The key to the solution of all our problems is hidden here," his eyes were glowing.

Dr. Biswas stood up and turned on the projector. The screen, in front of them, was showing some graphs and other data.

No need to tell that these data were about that stone.

"Those are all the behavioral pattern of the stone. Look at them carefully. They are following a repetitive pattern. Can you see it?"

All of them were trying to find out what he was trying to show with narrowing eyes.

"Sir, I think those data are about some waves," Biplab said, biting the tip of the pencil.

"Exactly. All of these are talking about some waves. Listen to me carefully. " Dr. Biswas cleared his throat, "whenever we throw something towards that stone, that object is erased totally from the time. But that's not all. It's just the result. The cause of this phenomenon is the collapse of the energy string that is binding an object to gravitime. When this string, the binding energy, is broken, gravitime is completely removed from it. No more attached to the object, and the rest of that part is known to you all. "Dr. Biswas exhaled a deep breath.

"Sir, to break that binding energy from any object, it must be something remarkably strong," Biplab said.

"Yes. You are right. To find out which exactly is causing all this, I have done some research and found out this." he pointed towards the screen.

The screen was changed.

"There is an amount of energy which is radiated, in a specific frequency which can hit on the exact point," he stated.

"Are those the data about the energy radiated by the stone?"

"Partially. Let me explain it to you. When the energy radiated by the stone hit the energy string and brake the string there is something left in space, and this data is about that resulting energy." he paused.

"What happened to that energy. I mean, there must be some kind of effect by this energy left free in space. But we can not see anything like this?" Himanshu said, moving his hand in the air.

"That's because you are trying to see it. This is something that you can't see. It's not the work of eyes. It's the work of ears," Dr. Biswas smiled, touching his chin to the chest.

"What are you saying?" Pratiksha asked.

"What I mean is that the energy is transferred to a vibration, a sound, beyond the capacity of a human can hear."

"Let me make myself clear, sir. There is something called gravitime, attached to a subject with a string of energy, which can make time slower passing near us, and this is the secret of anything to live to pass the time," Biplab's voice was tailing off

"Go on," he said, raising his eyebrows.

"Now, this stone is breaking the energy string of any object that comes closer to that, and as a result, that object can not live in the time, and diminished. But while removing gravitime, they produce some kind of sound wave, am I correct?" Biplab finished saying all this in one breath.

"Great, you have made all the points crystal clear."

"But, I have something to ask," Himanshu was raising his hand over his head.

"Yes, Mr. Chauhan. Ask whatever you want, and you don't need to raise your hand. This is not a classroom."

"If this stone does exist, which is true as we can see, then that stone must have some gravitime into it, isn't it?" he was cracking his knuckles.

"Of course. It is having some gravitime. That's why it exists, and this gives us a chance. We are going to fight fire with fire." Dr. Biswas punched the table. He was breathing heavily with his eyes red.

Everyone was looking at the professor. He was shuddering in excitement. They could see it in his eyes.

"Sir, if I am not wrong, you are suggesting to destroy the stone by removing it's gravitime, correct?" Pratiksha asked.

"Right, we are going to strike it with a much higher frequency than the frequency it's striking us and if we have got lucky, within a second the stone will turn into fine dust,"

"Sounds like a plan," Himanshu shooked his head.

"But, before that, we have to make some calculation. Find out the exact intensity of the thing. I make all the points clear. Everything about it is in the file. So,...." Dr. Biswas looked at all of them with his eyebrows raised.

"What are you waiting for. Move your muscles. I do not want any mistakes," he told again.

Everyone stood up immediately and left the tent in a hurry, grabbing their stuff.

While all of them were out, he sat down on a chair. He released a sigh with his head holding low and took out a photograph from his pocket.

"This is for you, my Neelam. I still remember that day when we first met. It's like yesterday. It's my fault, our daughter is raised without the love of her mother. Please, forgive me,"

He did not know how long he spent like this, watching her photo. A commotion out there broke the moment he was leaving on.

He got out of his tent.

The situation looked serious. Some of the soldiers were running towards the jungle. Dr. Biswas looked around for Major Singh. But he could not find him.

He also walked towards that side where the soldiers were running.

"Sir, you should stay in the tent, " one of the soldiers said.

"I am fine. By the way, what's going on?"

"Someone has been attacked, "

"Attacked, who did that?" He sounded worried.

"Not sure, sir. Our doubt is on those tribal peoples."

"Is everyone okay?"

"Sir, we will let you know everything. But for now, I have to take you to someplace secure, "

"I am surrounded by dozens of soldiers with guns. I am fine. You can go and do whatever you were doing."

By that time, Major Singh arrived and with him, also Biplab, on a stretcher.

He was bandaid over his forehead.

With quick steps, he moved towards him.

"What happened? Are you alright?" He asked Biplab.

Biplab was weak. He did not have the strength to speak. Though he nodded his head slightly.

" You should not be here, professor?"Major Singh said.

" What is going on here?"

"Judging by the injuries it looks like the tribal group attacked them"

"Them? Who else is hurt?"

Major Singh was hesitating to speak about the incident.

"Come on, don't try to hide from me. I have the right to know what the hell is happening, "

"Well, it's one of your team members, "

"Who?"

"Pratiksha Barman, "

"How is she?"

"She could not make it. The injuries were deep, and she lost a lot of blood. We are lucky that we are able to save him, "

"Oh my God!" Dr. Biswas' face got pale.

" I told you, professor, the situation is getting worse. We have to finish this as soon as possible."

He did not reply to anything. The face of that girl was flashing in front of his eyes. She did not deserve to die like this.

He was feeling cold.

Chapter 23

Everything was changed within a fraction of second. Aryan was unconscious since that dart hit him. The poison spread quickly all over his body.

"Surya, we have to do something," Dimisha said.

Her voice was shivering.

"I am not sure about the poison she used, "

"He is dying, "

"We have to go to our shrine as quickly as possible, "

"Oh, come on. Can you, for once, not think about me taking there?"

"No, That was not my purpose of saying that. Look, at his condition. It will be worse if someone treated him without knowing about the poison. We have to take him there. That is our only option, "

He kept looking at her for an answer.

Mercury was flying around him. Probably he was sad too.

She had no idea what to do. But Surya was right. They needed an expert, and within her range, the shrine was the best option.

"Okay, fine. Let's take him there. But I must tell you don't think that you can hold me there, "

"We can talk about it later. First, we have to take him out."

They carried the body of Aryan outside.

Abdul was waiting for them.

"I came as I got your message. Put him there, " he said.

They moved inside the cart. She put his head on her lap.

"Please, move fast, " Her eyes were red.

The cart started to move.

"He is not going to make it. Can't this thing move faster?" She shouted.

Dimisha was trying to hide her crying behind her anger.

"Abdul is driving as fast as he can. He knows all the short-cuts. Trust me this is the best we have," Surya replied.

"He is burning like hell," she said touching his forehead.

Aryan's eyes were being closed since that moment, the heart was beating slightly, giving them a hope of his life. His whole skin got pale.

"I should not drag him into this. It's my fault," Dimisha moved her fingers through his hair.

"You have to hold yourself. It's not your fault. I should have known what that witch can do,"

"She was trying to kill me with that dart. But he saved me. If something happens to him, I would not be able to forgive myself...never," she said.

She wiped the tears from her cheek.

"Dimisha, relax. We are not going to lose him. He will be saved in our shrine, trust me,"

"He is lucky to have this little friend. He would not survive without his help," Surya said, looking towards Mercury.

Mercury was blowing cold air over his body to keep his body temperature low. Mercury was behaving like he could feel his pain.

"Yeah, his heart is pure. He cares for others."

"You will see him like before, I promise,"

The cart was moving at its maximum speed. There was not a single screw left in the cart, which was not unshattered. Screw and joins were making continuous noises of scratching.

Dimisha was holding Aryan tightly by his head, not letting him from falling.

"How far is your shrine?" Dimisha asked.

"One more mile, not more than that," he said, looking outside.

"Are you sure they can save him?"

"If there is anyone on the earth who can break this spell, it's Gurudev,"

"Hope he is as good as you say," she released a sigh.

"Do you have any idea how many fights he has fought against those evil powers and the lives he saved?"

"No, and I am not looking forward to it,"

The cart stopped.

"We have reached. Let's take him out, "

Dimisha and Surya carried Aryan out carefully.

"Mandakini is out on the run. If you hear something, inform me without any delay. You get that?" Surya said to Abdul.

His lips were open, breathing through his mouth. Abdul was exhausted due to the tension and pressure. He had just nodded his head and left.

"Is this the place! Where is your shrine?" She said impatiently.

That place looked like the fragments of some ancient temple. Some rock-cut pillars were standing here and there, nothing above those. There was a statue of a big white-colored bull in the middle. But not a single person was there.

"Put him here," Surya said, showing a risen rock platform.

Dimisha did as said. Surya moved towards the statue of the bull and said something in its ear.

She was looking at him, biting her lower lip and tapping her fingers on her fist. With the passing time, she was becoming more and more restless.

"Come on...come on, " she was mumbling.

Suddenly, she felt something moving under the floor she was standing. It's towards her left.

A large mirror protruded from the ground in between two pillars, far away from them.

"We can go now. The gate is opened, " saying so, he lifted Aryan from his leg.

Dimisha held his shoulders and moved towards the mirror.

A tall, spotless mirror.

Slowly slowly the mirror came up from the floor, and after reaching its maximum level, it stopped.

Dimisha could see herself clearly in it.

She had to bend her neck back to see the top level of it. The pillars holding the mirror from sides are reddish in color. Surya was moving closer and closer to it, pulling two of them with him. He was going to bump his head in the mirror. Dimisha was looking at him, not understanding the purpose of his doing. She closed her eyes, holding Aryan tightly, but Surya did not.

Dimisha held his breath and wanted to shout out to stop him, but he was gone. He moved through the mirror with Aryan and her.

"It's a door," She thought in her mind, opening her eyes.

It's completely different here from the other side. A fresh breezy wind was blowing. No one could have guessed that.

A middle-aged man was standing on there, holding his hands back. His lips were making a slight expression of a smile.

A welcoming face

Four men were standing behind him. They took Aryan from them.

"Dimisha, he is our Gurudev, I was telling you about,"

"Please, do something. His condition is critical," Dimisha said to Gurudev without waiting for anyone to speak.

"Take him to Ahuta kaksha. Hurry," Gurudev ordered to the men standing behind him.

Those men carried him immediately and took away from her.

Mercury flew with him. Dimisha was looking at the direction Aryan had been taken.

She was still high-strung.

"You can relax now. He will be fine within a short period," Gurudev assured her.

"What is happening to him?" Dimisha looked at him, releasing the pressure from her cheek muscle.

"You can go now, let me speak with the heir of Bharata," Gurudev said to Surya.

He bowed to him. Then he smiled at Dimisha and left.

"Walk with me. I am sure you have questions to ask."

"It will be better if I stay with him," Dimisha was standing there, crossing her hands.

"I can understand what you are going through. But you can trust us. Your friend will be alright. We are on the same side,"

They shared a moment looking at each other's eyes, and then she nodded her head to go with him.

They started to walk side by side on stairs going up.

"Those books have failed to mention that this place looks like a secret fort or a royal palace." Dimisha was looking at the large brickish colored walls on both sides of her.

"We like to stay off the book. It helps us to do what we do,"

"Yeah, about that, what do you do exactly?"

"You have not found that in your book, huh?"

"PROTECT LIVES FROM EVIL. THINGS...that's all."

"A warm compliment, " He chuckled to hear that.

He said again, "Well, you have been through some experiences recently. Experiences that if you tell someone out there, they will take you as delusional or maybe insane, isn't it?"

"Sometimes, I think of myself as insane," she said.

"The things you are facing is just a tiny fraction of the big picture. This blue planet is hiding enormous secrets inside it. Our mind is even not able to understand all the secrets. But, whatever we have found out, one thing I can tell you with absolute certainty that knowing secrets can only increase the burden on your shoulder. We, the people in this place, take that burden and try to keep it that way. It's good for all of mankind."

They reached the top end of the stairs, and a long balcony started. On one side of the balcony, there was a series of rooms, and the other side was completely open, not even a railing. Rock cut Pillars with the designed shape were standing in a line.

"What kind of secrets are we talking about here?" Dimisha stepped on the balcony.

"Our objective is not limited to just one dimension. It's deeper than you can imagine. I can not give you just a one-line answer. It will take time for you to understand. Stay here and try to figure out by yourself." Gurudev stopped walking.

Dimisha looked down from the balcony. They were almost ten feet high from the ground. Her hands subconsciously moved towards the pillar near her. She could feel it on her fingertips, the harsh surface of the rock.

"It's beautiful," she said, looking towards the lake.

Some lotuses were in blossoming there.

"I have never seen such a big swan,"

Some swans were also there, bigger than a usual one.

"Oh, those are very helpful to us."

"Gurudev," someone called from behind.

"The patient is stable now," he said.

"Are you talking about Aryan?" Dimisha asked in elation.

"I do not know his name. I am talking about the one you have brought here,"

"Where is he? I should go and see him," Dimisha said, looking at Gurudev

"I don't think so. He is out of any danger, but, still unconscious,"

"You can go now. Take care of him. Do whatever is needed, and we will be there soon," Gurudev said to that man.

"Told you, he will be fine. Soon, he will awake. But for now, let him rest, "

"Thank you very much. I don't know how will I repay, "

He smiled, and said, "You don't have to pay for anything. He saved the life of the blood of Bharata. So, it's our responsibility to take care of him."

"That dart was aimed at me. Unfortunately, he came in front of me,"

"He must be brave. Sacrificing your own life to protect others, that's not easy, not everyone has such a heart to bite the bullet. A true sign of a free-born,"

"Are you sure about that, is he really a free-born?"

"I have no doubt about that."

Dimisha was looking at him with doubts in her eyes.

"Do you know what was the poison she used to hit him, "

She said nothing.

"He was hit with a strong dosage of Ayahuasca. We won't be able to bring him back if he is not a free-born."

Dimisha was bemused.

"What a coincidence it was. The blood of Bharata met a free-born. What's next!"

Chapter 24

Everyone was putting their best effort to secure their survival on earth. Those tribal people were not left behind. They were also trying to avert the problem in their own way.

After Pradhan left, they were counting the number of sunrises passed.

"How long is it going to take!" One of them said.

They were discussing the situation. It's depressing for them, though they had to think about it.

"What if Pradhan won't return, "

In the night, sitting around the fire, some of the elders of them were discussing it.

"It's not impossible. He is going there when he is not supposed to. What if he got..."

"Shut your mouth. Don't bring misfortune upon them, "

"I think it's time to think about it, "

"I am sure he will return with a solution, "

"Shouldn't we think about it. I mean it's on us to take care of our families after Pradhan, "

By the time, Manu and Dhanu ran to them. They started to panting, reaching there.

Something was wrong, for sure.

They were looking at two of them to speak.

Manu and Dhanu were appointed by them to keep an eye to those creatures who started to live near the river recently. Those creatures just look like them, except for the fact that they had a different color...a green, leaves like color, and they have some dangerous weapon too.

Those tribal people thought that the magical stone was their doing. They wanted to take their place.

"What is it Dhanu?" One of them asked.

"I have seen something very strange, very weird, "

"Is it about those green-colored monsters?"

"Yes, it happened in the evening, today, " Manu said.

"What did you see? Tell us, quickly, "

"Are they coming for us?"

"No, that's the strange part, "

Dhanu sat down near the fire.

"We all thought they were here to kill us, right?"

"What else it could be, "

"I thought it too. But what I saw today changed my mind, "

"What do you mean? What did you see? Stop moving round and round,"

"I was watching them. One of them came apart. He seemed ill. First, he started to roar like an animal, and then another one came, and then..."

Manu and Dhanu looked at each other.

"Well, speak now, quickly, "

"He killed the other one, that one who came later, "

"What?" They were shocked to hear that.

"Are you sure they killed one of their own, "

"I saw it happened with my own eyes. Manu was there too. You can ask him, "

Dhanu looked at Manu.

"Yes, he is right. I saw it too, "

They looked at each other.

"Why would they kill one of their own, "

"Maybe that creature was in some kind of pain. To the relief, it from the pain, "

"It did not look like it, " Manu said.

"I don't think so. They were absolutely fine. Even, it struggled to survive, "

"Are they look like those green-colored monster, "

"Yeah, I mean there is a slight difference. Their colors were not green."

"Then they are not a green-colored monster."

"But when they died, some green monsters came and carried them. They put some white-colored thing on one of them too, "

"Maybe it's some kind of ritual...a sacrifice, "

"Maybe, "

"What should we do now? Should we tell everyone about it?"

"No, we can not tell them. They are going to panic. I don't want to scare anyone. If they are fighting with one another, it's not a bad thing for us. Soon, they are going to decrease in numbers, "

"What do you want us to do?" Manu asked.

"You keep watching them, and inform us if anything new happens, "

Manu and Dhanu left.

Those people again started to talk about what just happened. ----------

"My lord, " Vinasha bowed in front of his master.

"I hope you bring good news,"

"Yes, my lord. I am here to tell you that he took the bait, and everything is going as we have planned," Vinasha said joyfully.

"Excellent Vinasha, Excellent. You have done a great job," Asthiyuj replied.

Vinasha gave a smile, filled with pride.

"They don't have any doubt upon you, do they?" He asked again.

"No, my lord. There is no chance of that. Everything is moving fluently. But..."

"But, what?"

"There was a slight problem. But I had it under control, "

"What do you mean by a slight problem?"

The happy face turned serious immediately.

"There was a girl who tried to uncover me. But she is erased. That is not a problem anymore, "

"Are you absolutely certain about that? Those humans are very suspicious creatures,"

"Don't worry my lord. I tackled them with great care. You can trust your servant,"

Asthiyuj looked away for some time.

"My lord, after staying with them, I understand that they are the creatures who want an easy target to strike, and I gave them one. So, they are not going to doubt me, "

"Though keep your eyes open, "

"Always my Lord, always "

"You are the most trusted one. So, I presume you can get me what I want, "

Asthiyuj sounded worried.

Vinasha did not say anything. He was just standing, looking towards the ground.

"You have to stay with them until they have built that thing. You understand that?"

"I know, and I am ready for it,"

"You have made your master very proud, Vinasha.....or should I call you Biplab Bharadwaj?"

Saying that he made a loud cruel laugh.

"It's just a disguise. I will always be the same Vinasha you know, no matter what,"

Asthiyuj smiled while blinking his eyes and stood up from his chair.

"Now we have to wait. We have done our part of the plan. It's their time,"

"It won't take so long. Their hearts are filled with fear....fear of losing lives. "

"It's not about the depth of their fear on which we can count. We should think about their smartness level. Because that's what will take us to our destiny,"

"You mean smartness of Dr. Hemanta Biswas?"

"I don't think, I have to remind you that he is central to our plan,"

"No, my lord. I do remember that, and that's why I am providing all the knowledge to him that is needed,"

"How far is he from building that device?"

"If my calculation is right, it won't take more then just a couple of days. He has already made the strategy of it. He is smart,"

"You have spent just a few days, and now you are starting to praise him," Asthiyuj said, raising his eyebrows.

"Forgive me, my lord. praising any human was not my intention. What I meant was that he is better than the average creatures. He will do it,"

"Make your moves with absolute care. So many people will be there who is fixing eyes on him. If he is as like as what you have explained, then we would not be the only one who needs him,"

"What is my next order, my lord?"

"Keep doing what you are doing. Give him what he wants. Help Dr. Biswas so that he can help us in return,"

Vinasha nodded his head.

"But don't let him doubt you. If he somehow realizes that you know more than you required, then it will be big trouble for us. We won't get a second chance. Is that understood?" Asthiyuj said, showing his index finger.

"Yes, master, "

"Now go, "

Vinasha left after bowing to his master.

He reached the jungle, pretending to be someone else, a human.

Biplab Bharadwaj.

Everyone on the surface knows him with this name. But no one doubted the mask he was wearing.

"Sir, the professor was looking for you, "

A soldier said while he reached the camp.

Biplab felt uncomfortable to hear that. Dr. Biswas, the man who got irritated by any visitors, now he wanted to see him.

That's out of the circle of his normal behavior.

"Did he find out the truth!" He thought.

The soldier was still there, waiting for anything to say.

"Thanks, " he said.

The soldier left, and he moved towards the tent of Dr. Biswas.

"Sir, you wanted to see me?" He asked, peeking his head through the tent door.

"Yes, come in,"

Biplab was surprised to see the serene behavior of e professor towards him. He was standing next to him, holding his hands behind. Dr. Biswas shooked his head, showing the chair near him.

"Thank you, sir," Biplab pulled the chair and sat.

"Is everything alright?" he asked again.

"How are your injuries?"

"I am fine. " he tried to make a smile to act normal.

"I need to ask you something, "

"Of course, sir. It would be an honor for me if I came to any use to you, "

Dr. Biswas chuckled looking away.

"I would have to break your neck if you were not that important, you nasty human, " Biplab said, in his mind.

"What is it you want to ask sir, " a sweet voice from him.

"The idea, you have come up earlier about energy, and all, where did you get that?" Dr. Biswas asked, resting his one leg over another.

"What happened, sir? Did I say anything wrong?" Biplab was making a punch so tightly, hiding from Dr. Biswas, that the nails have scratched his palm.

"Just answer what I have asked?"

"This is not the first time when I have heard about Gravitime or about you," Biplab released a deep sigh, looking toward his shoes.

"What do you mean?" he questioned, squeezing his eyebrows.

"Actually, sir, I have been studying all your research for a long period of time. I follow all your updates on your projects, like all...whether it is about the cure of everything, the dark matter, or the gravitime. I am a fan of your work, "

His heart was thudding his rib cage in fear of getting exposed his real face.

"I knew there is something untold about you. Because the theory you have proposed is not possible to make in just one observation,"

Biplab could sense something fishy.

"Anyway, thank you for telling me that. You have done an excellent job. I am thankful to you for that," Dr. Biswas tapped on his back of the shoulder.

He released his punch.

"I am trying as much as I can to protect mankind from this terror event. It's my duty. But why are you thanking me? Does this theory of mine is able to help you with anything?"

"Yeah, of course. it's your idea...your theory which has shown me a new direction to think. Using the sound of higher frequency to destroy the stone is actually triggered by you in my head,"

"That's like a privileged moment for me. My idea can help Dr. Biswas; I have never imagined that,"

"You have a gifted brain, use it well, use it to help others,"

Biplab smiled, wiping his sweats from the forehead with a handkerchief.

"Sir, if you don't mind, can I ask you something?"

"Why did you stop your work on gravitime in the middle. I am sure funding is not the only reason,"

Suddenly, Dr. Biswas' face color turned pale white. He bought his fist to cover his face and started to blow air.

"I made a mistake in those days, a big mistake, and because of that, someone else has lost her life."

"Friend of yours?"

"She was more than a friend. She was everything to me,"

"I am sorry, sir. I did not know that,"

Dr. Biswas smiled faintly, nodding his head.

"Certainly, media and other people are eager to know what you have achieved. But they never try to know what is the cost one has to pay to achieve that," he spoke again.

"Humans are always busy with numbers. They use numbers everywhere. How much one can earn, how much one collected medals and all. Humans and their nature to collect everything," Biplab said, looking below.

Dr. Biswas gave him a strange look to see the sudden change of his temperament.

"Sorry, sir, I am saying this from my personal experiences. I have been through some difficulties in my life too, not as painful as you, though it gives me nightmare sometimes,"

"It's okay. I understand. Anyway, enough chitchat for a day. You may go now,"

He released a sigh of relief coming out from his tent. His truth remained uncovered.

Chapter 25

Aryan opened his eyes. The only visible thing to him, from his position, was the roof.

A red brackish colored roof.

He was not even moving his head to find where he was. Just laying like a person in a coma.

Blinking his eyes.

"Oh, you are awake, " a voice penetrated his ears.

He looked to that unfamiliar voice.

A lady was there. He could not recognize her. But, one thing he could tell that, she was happy to see him awake.

He did not show any response to her. Aryan was feeling different. Good or bad....not sure.

"How are you feeling now?" She asked, coming closer to him.

He just nodded his head.

The lady touched her forehead with her cold palm.

"You will live, " she said.

"Where am I?"

The voice came out from his mouth sounded upscaled than his normal voice. It was unintentional. Aryan was surprised too.

Something was changed. He could feel that.

"You are in the shrine. Your friends brought you here, "

Then his mind started to recall his previous events one by one.

A face came to his mind.

"Dimisha, " word came out from him.

"Sorry, what?" The lady asked.

"Where is Dimisha?"

She did not reply to anything.

"My friend, who brought me here, where is she?"

"She is here. Don't worry, "

"Is she okay?"

"Don't take the stress. You have been through a lot. You should rest."

"Just answer my question, "He said, trying to sit.

The lady helped him to sit on the bad, putting a pillow on his back to lean.

"Stay here. I am going to tell Gurudev about you, "

"Gurudev?"

"Just sit here until I get back, "

She left the room in a hurry.

Aryan sat there for some time. But there was no show. So, he decided to go out and see what's going on by himself.

As his leg touch the floor, he felt something on his sole, a sensation.

Aryan smoothly moved his leg again over the floor to check if there is something on it.

No...there is nothing wrong about that as far he could see. It's his leg, his body.

It felt light. He did not need any force to move his legs. Like it's moving, more like floating in the air.

Aryan kept sitting there. He did not think he could walk.

"Hey, you are awake, " Dimisha was at the door.

A smile flashed to his face automatically.

"How are you feeling now?" She asked.

She came inside and sat on the chair next to his bed.

"I am fine. Actually, I am feeling better. My head feels so light. It's like someone has removed a heavy weight from my head." Aryan replied, energetically.

"I am glad to see that you are fine. This time you are able to appall me a little,"

"Really? Are you trying to say that you were worried about me? " he asked with a smile.

"Oh! Your brain started to work like before. Nothing is changed,"

"What happened to me. What did she put in me, the woman,"

"She injected something inside you called Ayahuasca,"

"Ayahuasca, What is that?"

"It's a herb, used by some ancient tribes."

"When that thing was injected, I can't explain it to you what it's felt like. It's like I was flying. I can go anywhere. I was in a dream, but not a dream." he rubbed his forehead with two of his fingers, " are you getting what I am trying to say?"

"Don't think of it too much. What you have felt is just a near-death experience,"

" Near What?" his mouth is wide opened," I was going to die?"

"Not exactly, you can call it a journey of your soul out of the body,"

"In that case, thanks for putting my soul back to my body," he released a sigh, "it explains me flying,"

"Actually, it's you who has saved me from the attack. If you were not there, I would be the one who is laying on the bed right now. So, thank you,"

"Oh, it just a result of reflexes. I used to a lot of cardio. Besides, anyone in my place would react like that. I saw her, that witch and automatically my body moved," he smiled, looking away.

"It's a brave act, and foolish too. She injected you with a very strong dose of it. Gurudev thinks you are alive because you are a free-born. But if you ask me, I will say you have just got lucky. Don't try to do that again," She said, raising her eyebrows

"Free born, what is that supposed to mean? That woman said to me that too,"

"You will know. But, for now, just keep one thing in your mind, don't do anything stupid, you got that?"

"I got it. Relax. I have no intention to move out of the body either,"

She did not reply to anything to him. She stood up and took a step towards the door.

"What has happened to the thing you were searching for? You have got any lead?" he asked from behind.

"The treasure of hell?" Dimisha asked, turning back to him.

"Yeah, you have found something about it?"

"No, not yet. Gurudev has sent his men all over. Soon, we will get some news. Right now, you just think about getting better,"

"Who is this Gurudev guy?"

"If this was a school, I would say he is the principal of it," Dimisha tilted her head a little to her left.

"But, we are not in a school, right?"

"Nope, we are not, "

"Where are we then?"

"Do you remember Surya?"

"That rude arrogant guy. Yes, I do remember him. What about him?"

"Remember, he was telling me to bring somewhere safe."

He nodded his head.

"This is the place, the shrine, "

"So he finally succeeded in bringing you here, "

"It's not like that. At that time, your condition was critical, and I had no other option, "

"So are you going to stay here now?"

"Don't know. But they promised me to help to find it, the treasure of hell. So, maybe, temporarily, let's see," she said with a shrug.

"Hey, have you seen Mercury?"

"Mercury is fine. I saw the way he was behaving when you were unconscious. I must say he does care about you,"

She smiled, holding her arm crossed.

"I still don't understand what is going on. How can you be so normal after seeing all this?"

"It's hard to explain. Did I tell you that I was brought up in an orphanage?"

"No, we have not got a chance to know each other, "

"Fine, I am telling you now. In my room, in that orphanage, there was a photo hanging on my wall. A photo of a man with messy hair, showing his tongue, "

Aryan was listening to her like a story.

"At the corner of the photo, there was a quote. THERE ARE ONLY TWO WAYS OF LIVING A LIFE. ONE IS THOUGH AS NOTHING IS A MIRACLE. THE OTHER IS THOUGH AS EVERYTHING IS MIRACLE, "

"So, you are saying you are living presuming everything is a miracle, "

"Oh no, Now I am more confident that nothing is a miracle, "

" I am not sure I understand what you are trying to say, "

"I finally find answers to some unanswered questions. So, if you can think outside the box, all these things seem pretty normal to you. So, for me, nothing is a miracle,"

"Wow, what a philosophy!"

"You will get used to it. Don't worry,"

The footsteps of someone walking hindered their discussion. They looked towards it.

It's Gurudev. He was standing there with Mercury next to him. He flew towards Aryan immediately as he saw him.

"Oh my little friend, I missed you too," Aryan held him with both of his hands.

"Gurudev," Dimisha greeted him.

"Aryan, he is Gurudev, I was telling you about, " she introduced him.

"Oh! You are the principal, "

"Principal, " Gurudev giggled," this is the first time someone is calling me that,"

Dimisha looked at him, widening his eyes, standing behind Gurudev.

"I am sorry, sir. My mind is not functioning properly, "

"It's okay." he walked closer to his bed, " you can call me Gurudev. Everyone here calls me that, "

"Sure, sir...I mean Gurudev, " he stammered.

"How are you doing, now?"

"I am good, thank you for saving my life. Dimisha told me about you, and what you have done. Thank you so much,"

"You do not need to thank me for that. You are the one who saved her life," Gurudev said, shaking his hand in the air.

"She is my friend. It's my duty to that, "

Dimisha was standing behind Gurudev. A smile glowed upon her face to hear the word friend from him. It's felt good to her, the way he said.

"You have shown enormous courage. She has told me all about you," Gurudev moved his hand through Aryan's back of the head.

"I am happy that we all are safe,"

"There is something I need to speak with you, "

He sat down on the chair.

Aryan looked towards her. She was looking at him too.

"Dimisha, can you give us a minute with your friend," he said.

"Yes, of course," saying so, she left the room.

"Aryan, I m going to say something remarkably important. Maybe you have heard about it. But, I don't think you understand the significance of it. So, listen to me carefully," he rested his arms on his thighs.

Aryan shook his head.

"You are a free-born. You know that,"

"I have heard this before. The lady, Mandakini, back there, she told me that too. But, honestly, I don't know what it supposed to mean,"

Gurudev moved his lips to smile and said," Do you want to know what a free-born is?"

Chapter 26

The sweet sound of birds chirping woke them up. It's almost dawn. Romeng took a long yawn, sitting there for a minute. The ashes were still making a thin line of smoke. Gaurang woke up too. He was stretching his neck, holding the back of it.

"Where is Pradhan?" Romeng said, looking to his left and right.

All of them were there except for their leader. They could not find him.

They were looking at each other's face for answers.

"Did he entered inside without us?" Mrigang said.

He sounded nervous.

Romeng immediately checked all the goods inside the bags, they brought.

"I don't think so. Everything is in the bag. He would have taken with him if he had moved inside."

"Where is he then?"

Some dark thoughts started to play with their imagination.

"We have to find him. You go this way, and I will check on that side of the jungle,"

Everyone moved in different directions.

"PRADHAN," loud shoutings of them was echoed everywhere in the jungle.

Gaurang and Mrigang moved far away from the cave, shouting his name. But there was no sign of him.

There was a waterfall, not very far from the cave. Romeng went that side, expecting to find Pradhan there.

After walking some distance at a faster pace than usual, he reached near to it. The sound of falling water could be heard from there. He stopped shouting his name. It's not going to help anymore. If Pradhan was somewhere near it, then it would be impossible for him to hear any other sound. The sound flowing water of the waterfall suppressed them all.

That part, an estimated middle part, of the water was calm and more extended than the source. Both sides were filled with tall grasses and medium-sized stones.

Romeng was right.

Pradhan was there, sitting on a rock, looking towards the top of the waterfall. Though he could not see him clearly from this distance, he was confident that it was him.

He released a sigh of relief to see him fine.

"Are you alright? We were looking all over for you," Romeng asked, reaching near to him. He sounds worried, "what are you doing here anyway?"

Pradhan was not saying anything to him. He was just looking at the waterfall.

"This is my favorite place since when I was a kid. So peaceful, isn't it?" Pradhan said, without looking at him.

He was not in a mood to enjoy the environment. Though he said, putting his hands on his hip, "yeah, it is,"

"I always wonder from where all those water are coming,"

"It's the blessings of our ancestors, our god,"

"Do you think there is someone out there who really care for us? Is there anyone who is observing us, helping us?" Pradhan removed his eyes from the waterfall and turned towards Romeng.

"It has to be someone who has created all these...river, trees, foods, animals,"

"If that is true, then those people who are trying to hurt us, destroy our families are also his creation,"

"What are you trying to say?"

"I am saying that what if he, who is doing all this, don't want us anymore. Maybe it's god's idea to send a magic stone to destroy us,"

"Why on earth would he does that?"

Pradhan was about to say something. But he stopped. Gaurang and Mrigang were running towards them.

"We were looking you all over the jungle." They were panting.

"I was just...nevermind. Let's go and do what we are here to do,"

Pradhan moved towards the cave.

Gaurang shook his head to Romeng. He could feel something off about Pradhan. But he did not say anything. He shook his head back, blinking his eyes. Three of them started to walk behind Pradhan.

"Take those sticks out," he ordered, standing in front of the cave.

They took out some long thick sticks, attached with animal fats to one of the ends, from the bags, and handed one to each and then lighted them up with fire.

"Let's go,"

The inside of the cave had no sign of a single beam of light. The fire sticks, they brought were the only source of light which made it possible to see the inside of it.

"Watch your head, they are very sharp," Pradhan said.

Conical shaped rocks with sharp pointy ends were hanging from the roof of the cave. They were moving forward, bending their heads and sometimes their hips too.

"One....two...three," Pradhan was moving forward, counting his footsteps in his mind.

"We have to turn left," he said, while he completed thirty-two steps.

Everyone was doing exactly the same what Pradhan directed them to, without an inquest. After some difficult jig jag pathways, they finally reached a wider space. Though the darkness was all over in this place too, their bodies felt some kind of relief. At least, they could stand properly there.

"This is it," Pradhan said, looking at the walls of the cave.

He was moving his fingers over the walls, closing his eyes.

"I found it. It's here," his finger stopped moving at some point.

Saying so, he pushed that part, and a hole appeared there. Everyone rushed towards him to see what just happened. A white beam of light came from the outside through that whole. He made two more identical wholes in two other places at a distance from each other.

All three beams of lights were falling in the same place.

"Give me the crystal," he said.

"Show me the light," Romeng said, putting the bag down.

Mrigang moved his fire stick closer to Romeng.

He searched inside the bag, and took out a small white crystal and handed it to Pradhan.

Pradhan took it and touched his forehead with it and then the mid-portion of his chest. All three of them sat down on their knees and started to chant while he was fixing the crystal where all three beams of lights were falling. Their chanting was getting louder and louder gradually. Pradhan was moving the crystal sometimes clockwise and then anti-clockwise. When the crystal was fixed

properly, the lights coming from three different directions entered inside it and came out from the opposite sides of it with just one single beam. He stopped touching the crystal and move backward, holding his palms joined. He also started to chant with them.

There was a half-built statue of a woman in front of the crystal. The head of the statue was missing. When the light, coming from the crystal fall on the statue, a brown-colored smoke started to eject from it. Seeing the smoke, they started to dance, throwing their hands and legs here and there in the air, and making noises with their mouths.

Chapter 27

After a long period of waiting, finally, that day came when Major Singh was able to hear something he wanted to hear. One of his men informed him while he was working, that Dr. Biswas wanted to see him.

Dr. Bisawas proved himself as a hero, a modern-day savior, one more time.

"Professor said he found the key to the solution to all their problems. "

He did not wait for a moment to run to the office of Dr. Biswas as he got the message.

"Professor, I am dying to hear something good, " he said briskly to Dr. Biswas.

"I know. I am being through the same state of mind, " his calm reply with no sense of excitement or any kind of happiness, in his face.

This was not expected by him.

Major felt a blow on his head to see such a dim reaction of the professor. While he was leaving his office, he was imagining the professor shouting with happiness. But that was quite the opposite.

"Did you find anything?" Major asked to confirm the news.

"Yeah, I did, "

"Well, what is it you found?"

"You seem very excited, " Dr. Biswas chuckled mildly.

"You have no idea, "

"Wait, then, "

Dr. Biswas took out a small box and gave it to him.

Major opened it quickly.

A small, round-shaped, gadget, probably fitted in his palm was looking at him.

"This is it? This tiny device is the solution to our problem?" Major Singh bent down to see the thing in the box.

"What were you expecting? A bazooka?"

"No, but..."

"Don't get confused with its size. This device is much more powerful than you can imagine," he replied, holding his specs in his hand.

"Hope you are right, doc,"

"I have done all the calculations more than ten times. Don't worry. It will work perfectly,"

"And one more thing. This gadget has a name. Call it NEELAM."

"NEELAM!" Major was surprised to hear that name.

The name did not fit with the gadget.

"Why Neelam?" He asked again.

"Long story. I hope you don't have a problem with that name"

"Why would I? Call it whatever you want. All I want is to get that stone go away."

"It will. We are just one step behind from that, "

He put on his specs and said, standing next to him.

"It is an energy emitter. It can release energy in the form of sound waves."

"A sound wave?"

"Not just an ordinary wave. The frequency emitted by this device is much higher than any earthly being can produce. I have examined the energy, the vibration, the stone uses to impact other objects, and set my device accordingly. Most importantly, I have designed it in a way that we can target a specific area with it," he said in one breath.

"So, when can we try this on that thing?"

Major Singh had no interest in the scientific details. All he wanted was to use that thing on the stone.

"It's ready to use. The moment you give the green signal, it will show it's magic," he shrugged while replying.

"I have told you doc. You have complete freedom in this case. Do whatever you want. There is no need to wait for me. I have lost one of my men already. I don't want it to happen again,"

"In that case, there is no reason to wait anymore. What do you say, should we try it now?"

"Why not, Anything I can do to help?"

"Just ask someone to carry all those things to our stone," he said, showing some pieces of equipment scattered in the tent.

"And my precious Neelam will go with me," saying so, he took the device softly with his hand and walked outside.

Coming out of the tent, Dr. Biswas waited for a moment moving his eyes around. He took a deep breath with a smile and closing his eyes like he was trying to smell the air around him.

"Sir, are you okay?"

It's Biplab. He was standing next to him staring at the device in his hand.

"Oh, I am fine. How are you feeling?"

"I am good. It's healing quickly. Probably, the effect of a clean, pollution-free environment,"

" Good, "

"What about Neelam? You talked to Major about it?"

"Yeah, I just did. He let us use it,"

"Really? That's awesome. When are we going to do it then?" he said enthusiastically.

"Right now,"

"Really!"

"It appears he is desperate too, "

"Are we going there?"

"Yes. The team is already there,"

"Excuse me, sir, we are here to take all the equipment, "two army person was standing there.

" It's inside, take it carefully."

They were waiting to allow them to pass to go inside the tent. Dr. Biswas and Biplab walked aside, and they have moved in.

"We should go. I left heavy lifting part to them,"

Both of them took steps towards the gravitime stone. Major Singh's men were walking behind them, carrying all the setup.

Though Dr. Biswas was behaving calmly from outside, blood was rushing inside his vain like never before. He could hear the sound of the beating of his heart.

After some walking, which was felt like the longest distance he covered, Dr.Biswas reached the spot where everyone was waiting for him. Everyone was eager to see his new invention and the result of using it.

"Today, I am going to end you. You can not destroy anything anymore," he said in his mind, looking towards the stone.

He gave a long stare to it. Dr. Biswas felt like it can hear what he just said.

"Sir, where do you want these?" the men with his equipment asked.

"Put it there," he said.

They did what they were said. All the team members gathered around him.

"Sir, the calculation was completed. We found out the spot, from where we have to fire it,"

"Good, have you re-checked all the numbers?"

"Several times, Would you like to take a look?" Himangshu handed him a clipboard with some paper attached to it.

Dr. Biswas took it from him and gave it a rough look over the maths.

"Go and arrange all the stands," he ordered them, returning the clipboard.

They moved towards their pieces of equipment and started to arrange it on the calculated location. Professor was looking at them from a distance.

He was missing someone, who was with them earlier, Pratiksha Barman. A young beautiful girl who had her whole future ahead. But, she had to lose her life, the unfortunate incident.

He was taping his thigh with his fingertips in anxiety.

"Fix it tightly. I don't want any mistake," he said.

They were arranging the stand to build as they were thought before, and at the top of it, he will keep his device, Neelam. All of his team was tightening the screws, and joining the wires. He was giving the finishing touch to it. Making it sure that there was not any negligence.

"Are we ready to go, professor," Major Singh asked, walking towards him.

"Just a final touch, and then we will use it," he gave a close look to each part, leaning towards it.

"Let's find out, what Neelam can do! I am waiting to pop the bear, " he said with his farm voice.

Dr. Biswas did not reply to anything.

The feeling he was having right now was not new to him. Every time he was into something new, he had been through this.

A fear, a sensation through his body.

Initially, it was hard to deal with, but now he enjoyed it.

Closing his eyes, he released a deep breath and then put the device on top of the stand.

"You may want to ask everyone to move back," he stated to Major Singh.

He nodded to him and then took out his walkie talkie.

"Officer, clear the area. I want nobody in front of my eyes, quick," saying so, he cut off the connection.

Within a minute, they removed everyone working there. All of them moved near to Dr. Biswas. Everyone was excited to see if it works or not.

"He is using some kind of sound wave to destroy it,"

"Hope it's going to work. I am sick of staying in the jungle. I can't do it anymore,"

"Where are all those weird things come from?"

They started to chat, standing behind Dr. Biswas.

"Can you guys keep quiet for some time? You will get a lot of time to chat," he spoke emphatically, turning back.

Everyone looked at each other. There was pin-drop silence in the surroundings.

"Thank you," he said again.

Saying so, he again gave a final look to his device and moved back. He took out a tiny remote from his upper pocket.

"Here we come," he turned on the device.

A strong invisible wave was released.

His heart stopped for a moment. Everyone was looking at it like their eyes were going to come out.

Tik....tik...tik

A few seconds passed. Everything around him was paused.

Dr. Biswas could feel it, something was happening in the surroundings.

Chapter 28

Letting Gurudev spoke with Aryan, Dimisha left the room and walked towards the stairs leading to the ground.

The ground was covered with green grasses, and till that early period of the day, the fog from the night was keeping them wet. She enjoyed the feeling when all the grasses tickle on her soles while walking on them. She believed walking like this helped her to think.

With a lot of questions in her mind, she reached the lower floor attached to the raw ground and about to put her first step on the grass.

Suddenly, the talking of someone indistinctively drew her attention, which made Dimisha, pulled her leg back. It's coming from the room she was standing near, and from the way, they were exchanging words, it was certain that it's not a friendly conversation.

Apparently, Someone was angry, scolding at someone.

She got closer with a sensuous slink to the door of that room to hear what they were talking, more likely quarreling.

"Where were you when this was happening?" Someone was furiously verbalizing.

Anyone who spent just a few minutes with Surya could recognize the voice. Standing outside, Dimisha was picturing the way he was uttering those words, like putting hands on hips, moving his index finger in the air, pumping his chest muscle under his shirt in each breath.

"What do you want me to do now?" someone else spoke.

This one was polite, a little scared too.

"Nothing, you have done enough already by doing nothing. I will deal with it by myself,"

"I am sorry, please forgive me, "

"This is not going to help you, "

"You know this is not the time. They came off season. I was not expecting this, "

"That is why I am worried more. There must be something wrong, something serious, for sure. Otherwise, they would not have come at this time,"

"Give me another chance. I will fix everything, "

"I will not do that mistake again."

The arguments kept going for some time and then, there was a moment of silence.

The door opened with a sound. Surya was there. He froze for a bit to see Dimisha, standing in front of him.

"Hey, is everything alright?" she started the talking.

"Yeah, everything is totally fine....umm...you can go now," he said to the man coming out the room, scratching his forehead.

The face of the man was pale. He nodded his head while gulping and left.

"You are not hiding something from me, are you?"

"No, why would I do that?" he was not looking at her eyes.

He started to walk away from her.

"I thought we are friends," Dimisha said, crossing her arms.

"I am honored by the offer of your friendship, thank you very much," Surya spoke while touching his chest while slightly bending forward.

"Friends do not keep secrets from each other,"

He released a deep breath through his mouth while rolling his looking away.

"Look, I know what you are trying to say. But my first priority is to keep you safe."

"So, I was correct. Something is going on out there. "

"What makes you think that?"

"I asked what you are hiding, and you told me that you want me to keep safe. Isn't it obvious that something is going on and it must be not in the shrine otherwise you wouldn't worried about my safety, right?"

He was staring at her with his eyebrows squeezed.

"I find my ways. You can not hide from me," she shrugged.

"Okay, come inside," he took her inside a room.

"Look, it's a secret what I am going to tell you, "

"I am sure,"

"Growth of the human mind does not seem equivalent to everyone. People from some regions have mastered their skills while and some others are left behind."

"Stop beating around the bush. Tell me, what is the problem," Dimisha said.

"What I am saying is that from a bird's eye view, it looks like that the civilized world has secured a higher position than the people who live in jungles, without having any knowledge outside their place. They have failed to adapt to the modern-day skills of life. Some may think of them as useless. But that's not true. They are an asset to us. Those people are doing some important task without realizing it. "

"What important task?"

"Take the example of this tribe, Brunai. It's a tribe that is leaving in the eastern part of the forest. That part of the forest is habitat to some very rare and useful herbs and orchids. They are protecting all those herbs and orchids without knowing it."

"What went wrong?"

"Sidharth, the boy I was talking to, he had a duty to keep an eye on that tribe. If something happens, any problem to them, he should inform us. But, he has failed to do so." he said, clenching his teeth.

"If I have not noticed the green smoke in the cave, this matter would have remained in the dark by now," he spoke again.

"What is going on with that tribe?"

"Not sure, but the way he was explaining it appears to me as a "Kaal-Grahi" stone. You heard about it?"

"Yeah, I have read about it, It can destroy someone's time,"

"Right, it seems like a stone has appeared there," he sounded worried.

"But, that's not possible. That stone can not appears anywhere like this,"

"I know. But, I have to check it, and if not Kaal-Grahi stone, then what it is?"

He had not waited for her to say anything and left the room, walking fast.

"Where are you going?" Dimisha hastened towards him.

"I am going to the cave. Someone is praying for help. I have to speak to them,"

"I am coming with you, "

She fastens her walking.

"That's not going to happen. I can not take the risk of taking you outside, "

There was an absolute denial of her offer.

"It's not up to you. It's my decision," she was rigid too.

They reached near the lack, continuing their disagreement with each other.

"Look, the stealing of the map, and now the Kaal Grahi stone. Do you think it's a coincidence?" Dimisha said.

"I don't know, maybe or maybe not. But I have my order to keep you safe here,"

"Cut the crab..." She got irritated by hearing the same thing again and again," It's not going to work, and you know that. If you want me to be here, then let me be a part of this,"

They stared at each other for some time.

"You are not going to give up, will you?"

"You know me," she smiled with a shrug.

"Gurudev will going to kill me for this, you know that," he said again.

"We can talk about it later, "

" Okay, you can come," he replied, raising his eyebrows.

"Thank you,"

"But you have to choose a ride to go there," he said, pointing towards the lack.

Dimisha did not get what he was trying to say, but, then...

"Are you serious?" She was amazed.

Her eyes were glowing with a smile on her face.

Surya smiled back and whistled. A swan, swimming in the lack, flew near to him.

"You can take one," he said and climbed on the swan near him.

As he sat on it's back, it spread its wings and took Surya to the sky.

"See you up there," he said while going up.

Chapter 29

Suddenly, they stopped doing the worship dance.

Pradhan looked at everyone. They were breathing heavily and covered with sweat. But, out of breath was not the reason for their pause.

"Can you hear that?" Pradhan asked, looking towards the roof.

"I did not hear anything,"

"I think I heard something," Mrigang nodded his head.

"Is it.." he was about to say something, but

"sssshhh..."Pradhan raised his hand to stop them from talking.

The sound was getting louder and more distinct now. They can hear it clearly. It's like two big stones were rubbing each other.

"They are here," Pradhan shouted.

"They are here...they are here. I told you, "

Everyone was jumping in happiness.

"Our prayers have reached them," Romeng said, coming closer to Pradhan.

The greenish gas, burning inside was vanished, and two humans appeared behind the statue of the headless woman, walking towards them. As they saw them, everyone kneeled, touching their foreheads to the ground.

Dimisha looked at Surya.

"What are they doing?"

"They think of us as their guardians," he whispered.

"What? Are you serious?"

"It's a long story,"

"It must feel good to be treated like a hero, a savior angel," she said in a sarcastic gesture.

"It's not what I want. But, it's the only effective way to keep an eye on them. If we go near to them like an ordinary person, they will serve our lungs, kidneys, livers on dinners,"

"So, what's now, Mr. Angel?"

"Wait here, let me do the talking,"

Surya walked near to the tribal people. They were still kneeling. He asked them to stand up, and the conversation began.

They were speaking in their native language which Dimisha, had never heard before. But, Surya seemed quite fluent in this.

Dimisha could see only one guy, with a weird hat, was doing all the talking. The other three of them were just standing behind him. He was using his hands to express his thoughts, or more likely his fear. He was opening his eyes as wide as he can while talking. From his hand movements, Dimisha could have an idea that he was explaining about something big and scary, coming out from the ground. After some time, they stopped talking. He bowed to Surya and walked back-foot away from him.

"I was right. It's a "Kaal Grahi" stone," Surya come near to her after they left.

"Are you sure about that?"

"He said that when he shot an arrow, it became invisible. What does it mean?" Surya was asking, raising his eyebrows.

"What are we going to do now?"

"I don't know. It's my responsibility to protect them, to keep them out of danger. But how can we fight against time? It's impossible, isn't it?"

"Don't worry, we will figure something out. There has to be some way," Dimisha put her hand on his shoulder.

"We have to go there. Let's see that thing by myself. "

"That's right. We should take a look at it. Who knows a brilliant idea may pop into your head when you see it,"

Surya made a faint smile, looking away. They came out of the cave, through the secret passage which they used to get in.

Two beautiful swans were waiting outside for them.

"You know, I have never traveled through the sky route before," Dimisha sat down on her swan.

"I know,"

"No, I mean, I have never even into an airplane before. This cute swan is my first ride,"

She was moving her hands over it's back.

"Trust me. It's much better than that machine. You can feel the cool, fresh air touching your face here," he said, sitting on his swan.

The swans opened their wings and within an instant they are in the sky, flying towards the place of Brunai tribe.

After a few minutes of a straight journey,

"There, they are. Can you see them?" Surya was pointing towards the ground.

Dimisha turned her head down, towards the side he was pointing. From that height, she could only see a huge area full of greeneries, and in the middle, there was a white line, which was presumed to be the river.

But, Dimisha was not able to see what Surya was trying to show her. She kept moving her eyes until she had found what she was looking for.

It's a space near the river, where the forest was less dense than the rest of the parts.

There was a glimpse of humans too.

"Something is wrong," Surya sounded suspicious.

"of course, that's why we are here,"

"No, look at them. They don't belong here. They are outsiders,"

Dimisha looked below, narrowing her eyes. People, wearing military uniforms, were roaming here and there.

"Yes, he is right. They are outsiders for sure, and it means the problem is deeper than I expected, " she spoke in her mind.

"They are the Army people," Dimisha looked at him.

"Army? What are they doing here?" he was angry.

"Apparently, our stone has able got their eyes,"

"No..no..no, That's not good. They will make it worse,"

"I feared that too, " she said, observing what they were doing.

"We should get back to the land. I don't want any outsider to see a swan flying with a human on its back,"

They flew to a distant place from where they could not be seen by the army and dropped to the ground.

"This way," Surya said, getting off his Swan.

Saying so, he nearly ran towards the site. He was impatient.

"Be careful, don't do something stupid. The army is not something that you can elbow out easily,"

He did not say anything. Just kept walking, clenching his teeth.

"Don't forget we are just here to know about the Kaal Grahi stone. Not to fight with someone,"

"And how are we going to do that?" he was speaking like a disgruntled person.

"It is clear that they are here for the same reason as ours."

"What are you suggesting?"

"Do as I say, and there will be no harm, okay?"

Surya nodded his head reluctantly.

"In which way, the base is?"

He showed the way to the army base through his hand, and they have started to walk silently towards it.

While reaching there, they started to observe the camp, hiding behind a tree.

The camp consisted of many small tents with armies, guarding the place.

"We have to get inside that tent," Dimisha was directing towards a tent approximately in the middle of all.

"Why? What's inside it?" he spoke, lowering his voice.

"Are you coming with me or not?"

He did not reply to her.

They started to walk towards that tent with stealth steps. Bluffing the guards, hiding behind the goods placed all over, they had finally reached near to a tent, and when they were about to enter the tent, the sound of someone shouting held their legs.

"Stop right there,"

They have turned back. Two guards were pointing guns at them.

"Probably my plan was better," he muttered to Dimisha.

Dimisha looked at him, tightening her lips.

"Silent, don't move," the guard shouted again.

The other guard reported about it on the walkie talkie.

"Move," he came closer to them, pointing his gun.

Dimisha and Surya were taken inside a tent and tied their hands behind. This tent was empty. They were made to sit on the ground.

"Great, now we are stuck with those people," Surya spoke indistinctively.

After some time, there was another army person came inside the tent. He was not in a delightful mood, that's for sure. His eyes were red in anger.

The guards who were pointing guns at them, they saluted him.

"Are those two?" he asked with his firm voice.

"Yes, sir,"

"You have fifteen seconds before I shoot you in the head to tell me who you are and what you are doing here," He rushed towards Surya and grabbed his hair behind.

"You have no idea what you are dealing with, you fool," Surya's eyes have become furious.

His answer was like fuel to the fire.

He punched in his face making him fall on the ground. Surya sat back, staring at the army man's eyes. He spitted out some blood.

Then he moved towards Dimisha with fire in his eyes. He opened his mouth to say something, but at the same time, Dimisha cried out loudly.

"Please don't hurt me. I will tell everything,"

"Don't you dare to touch her, you bastard," Surya roared like a wounded lion.

He kicked Surya on his chest. That strike with the army boot made Surya fell apart from him.

"Start talking, if you don't want to die," he said to Dimisha.

She was crying continuously.

"This place has many expensive gems and stones, about which no one knows except him. He used to steal them secreted in different places and sell on the black market. I am an ordinary girl who works for him. He has my family. Please, don't hurt me," she said, whining.

"What are you searching here now?"

"A gem. He said it worths millions. It inside my pocket. We were here to take it," her face was drawn in tears.

"Search her," he ordered to one of his men.

The guard standing behind him, come forward, and searched her pocket.

"Sir, I found this," he took out a small blue-colored gem from her pocket.

He handed it to his boss.

The gem looked expensive to the officer. He looked at it, bringing it closer to his eyes.

Suddenly, his face color became pale. The big army chief roaring in anger became serene. His breath was getting normal, and pupils were completely dilated.

"Wait outside and let no one get in," he ordered to his junior officers.

They saluted and left the tent.

"Are you okay?" Dimisha asked Surya.

Her voice got back to normal. She stopped crying.

"Yeah, I am fine," he was trying to seat.

"Wait, getting caught is the part of your plan?" he said, widening his eyes.

"Yup, I wanted to chat with the big guy here,"

"Why haven't you told me before?"

"I wanted to have some fun. Besides, you are terrible at acting," she shrugged.

"Well, it's hurting. Though, I am impressed," Surya said with a smile.

"You have underestimated me,"

"Major Ajay Singh, right?" Dimisha was reading the name written on his dress.

Major Singh nodded his head. She took back the gem and put it back into her pocket.

"Ask what happened to the stone," he spoke in her ears.

"What's going on here?" her voice became more commanding in nature.

"We are reported that some sort of stone is located here which can destroy everything that comes closer to it. We were ordered to deal with it asap," he was saying like an emotionless thing.

Major Singh was standing like a statue.

"What have you done with it?"

"We have destroyed it as we have planned,"

"What? That's no possible," Surya said, squeezing his forehead muscle.

"Can you keep your mouth shut for some time?" she shouted at him, crossing her arms.

"Fine, ask him to tell all about it," he moved a few steps backward.

She took a breath and asked again," How did you destroy it?"

"I have got the help of Dr. Hemanta Biswas, an expert, a scientist,"

"Is he here, now?"

"No, he is dead." an emotionless, stone-cold reply of him.

"What? How did that happen?" her heart starts thudding

"He has built the device that has destroyed the stone. We are about to take Dr. Biswas back to his place. But we found him killed... murdered by breaking his neck."

Dimisha looked back to Surya. He was confused too.

"Who was Dr. Biswas?" He asked, whispering to her.

"He was a genius, a scientist. I heard about him before,"

"What happened to the device?" she got back to the officer.

"It was stolen."

"Do you have any doubts, who can kill him?"

"One of our employees named Biplab Bharadwaj is also missing after that. We think he has to do something about it,"

"Give me all the details related to the matter,"

Major Singh walked out with his robot-like steps, and after some time, he returned with a file.

"This is all here," he gave her the file.

"Now, walk us to the river without any trouble," she ordered him once more.

Major Singh took them outside.

"They are with me," he said to the guards waiting outside.

Dimisha and Surya walked through the camp. Some of them gave a suspicious look, but she was holding the thread of a puppet, they feared most.

With the help of Major Singh, they came out of the base.

"Return to your base and sprinkle some water to your face. When you will do that, you won't remember any of our faces. Now, go,"

Major Singh left.

"Someone has built a device to destroy the "Kaal-Grahi" stone, and another one has stolen it. What's next?" Dimisha said, releasing a heavy breath.

"This is not good. Someone is planning a war," Surya said.

Chapter 30

Gurudev took Aryan into a room filled with antiques.

"Wow, look at this place, " Aryan's jaw was about to touch the floor to see all those things kept there.

"I knew you will like it here, "

"Are you kidding me! I love this place. It's like I am back to my job, "

Gurudev was smiling to see Aryan behaving like this.

He was feeling like he was a kid and someone showed him a big chocolate house.

"What is that thing?"

Aryan asked pointing towards a white-colored thing pointy in one end.

"It's the teeth of the last dragon, "

"Awesome. Look at those books. Can I read them?"

"Of course. But first, you have to get ready for this, "

"I have to get ready!"

He asked with a quizzical expression on his face.

"Come on, sit. We have a lot to talk, "

Gurudev sat down and asked Aryan to sit in front of him.

"What do you want to talk about?"

"First, I have to ask you a simple question, " he looked into his eyes, " the things you have been through lately, how do explain all?"

He scratched his head, and said, "Trust me, Gurudev, I am asking the same question to myself, "

"Do you have any idea from where all those things come...a Kuwalif, some magical trees and all, "

"I am starting to believe that the world I know is hiding many secrets than one can imagine, "

"True, people who claim that they know our earth, they are just scratching the surface. There are endless mysteries, "

"Like the mystery of treasure of hell, "

"So, Dimisha told you about it, "

"Yes, that's how we have met, "

Gurudev stood up and took a few steps. Moving his face away, he asked, "What do you think? How does life start on earth?"

Aryan was flustered by this unexpected question. Last time he faced this question when he was in school, sitting in the exam hall.

He looked at him, trying to figure out what he actually meant by that.

"That is a simple question. I am sure you can answer that," he said again.

"umm..." he looked up, and said, " first it was a single-cell living organism, primitive. Then with the thousands of years of evolution today's life is formed, "

"So, you believe that initial life on Earth was a single cell organism, "

"That's what we are told. It's a ubiquitous theory, isn't it?"

"A theory, that is partially true, suitable for the outside world. But not for us, "

"How do you theorize it then?"

Gurudev sat back in the chair.

"The theory you have just told explains about life after the earth cools down. But what if I told you that there were living things even when this planet was in the fire, "

He kept looking at Gurudev for some moment.

"That is impossible, "

"Really? I thought you have changed the diameter of possible and impossible after seeing all these, "

"I did, but though living things on earth when it was burning like hell, "

Gurudev chuckled and said again, " it is true. There were some lives on earth when it's on fire. The way we found this environment, suitable or more appropriately we adjusted to this condition, the same way they did too. "

"But no one knows about it, how is that believable, "

"On earth, millions of species exist, and humans know only a tiny fraction of it. It's said by the science that you are studying till now, "

"Yeah, but..."

"But, everyone heard about it, "

"Where?"

"Why you said burning like HELL?"

"Sorry?"

"When we were talking about ancient times, you said the earth was burning like hell. Why do use the word hell?"

"I don't know. Perhaps, it's like an idiom, "

"What do you know about hell?"

"Not so much. I am not the kind of person who was interested in all those things. Just the fact that we are punished after death in hell for our sins, "

"Now, I want you to close your eyes and tell me what do you see when the word hell comes to your mind, "

Aryan spoke, closing his eyes, " There is fire everywhere. Some creatures, with red skin and big horns, are roaming around, "

"Good, now open your eyes, "

He slowly opened his eyes. He was starting to understand what he was trying to show him.

"Is that what you see? Fire and scary creatures?"

Aryan nodded his head.

"It means you know about them, the creatures living in the fire. Then why do you find it hard to believe that there were creatures while the earth is on fire, and in your way it is burning like hell?"

"I don't know. Those are just my imagination,"

Aryan was confused. He didn't know what to say.

"Let me tell you the real story." Gurudev understood what he was going through, " when this little planet scattered apart from the star, it was holding some lives beneath it. With time they evolved and started to live on it. But one day, something happened which changed everything. The ice age, you may have heard of it, "

Aryan nodded his head to say yes.

"While the planet was layered by ice everywhere, they had no option left to move to that part where there was still heat, "

"You mean at the center, "

"Yes, that was the place where they exist till now, "

" I never thought this way. What about the punishment and all the sayings about hell?"

"Hell was told to exist below the earth. That was a metaphorical way of talking about the center. But when it comes to punishment, that is not true, "

"But, what about all the stories we hear?"

"You tell me one thing if you believe in those stories, it means we will go to hell and get punishment for our sins, right?"

"Right,"

"It's also true that when we die our body will remain on earth, and our soul will go to hell, right?"

"Yes, that's a general idea, "

"In that case, you should ask yourself, does soul has these feelings? Do souls feel pains or these are just bodily experiences?"

He said again, "It's impossible to hurt a soul. You can not cut it with a sword or burn it with fire. So, this punishment theory of yours is useless. It's just a step to keep you in fear so that you don't do anything stupid. The soul is energy, pure and harmless,"

"What about God then?"

"What about him?"

"We all are told that God has created heaven and hell, "

"Do you believe that he will create something where he can see his sons and daughters get tortured? He is almighty, not some kind of cruel ruler,"

"What is the truth then?"

"God is not an absolute concept. It varies from person to person. For me, the meaning God may not be similar to yours, "

"I don't understand, "

"Think of someone, who does not know a single thing about a helicopter. He lives under a rock, far away from the modern world. What will he do when he saw a helicopter?"

"He will run, get scared, " Aryan replied quickly.

"Yes. He may think of it as an evil thing or God."

"But, will you think of a helicopter in this way, "

"So, God is what we don't know, "

"Exactly. In school, when you have to solve a math problem, what did you do? You consider a variable 'X' as the answer and try to find the solution. The same goes here. God is a variable to the answer to the questions that we have not found yet. For example who created the universe? Instead of saying we do not know, we say God created. It's like hope to us that there was someone out there, "

"You are saying, God didn't create the Universe?"

"If God created the universe then who created God?"

"Creation of God? May be by itself."

Aryan's voice was not confident with his answer.

"So, you believe that there was just a coincidence in the ultimate creation."

"What if someone created God?"

"In that case, he is not the supreme one as we think of him. There is someone above him too, and the question still the same, who created that one, "

"I don't know what to say. I am confused. " he drank some water from the glass.

"Relax, you will be alright, "

"What you people do? I mean what is your duty?"

"Our duty, " Gurudev smiled a little, "Our duty is to keep the earth to ourselves, "

"What does it supposed to mean?"

"It means, we stop them who think this belongs to them because they have been living here before us. I do not know they are right or wrong. But, for us, they are monsters, evil things and we can not give up our birthplace to them. So, we are the one who fights against them."

"That's a hell of a job," he said, releasing a sigh.

"Hell, " Gurudev giggled and said, "More likely, a job to stop our home to become hell, "

"How do you, people know so much about these things?"

"Years of study. The great Bharata was the one who started the war and your friend Dimisha, she is the heir of him, "

"Dimisha, I knew she is special, "

"One more thing, you were saying something about free-born. What is it?"

"For that, I have to tell you something before. You see..."

"Gurudev, " a man was standing at the door.

They looked towards him.

"It's urgent," that man said.

"I am coming, " Gurudev replied.

He looked back to Aryan and said, "I have to go. We will talk later, "

Saying so, he left the room. Aryan was sitting there, thinking about all of it, he just heard.

"Species living at the center and they think earth belongs to them. I won't be able to sleep for several days,"

He went near to the rack filled with ancient books.

Chapter 31

Dimisha and Surya were still standing at the bank of the river, flipping the pages of the file, given by Major Singh.

"Neelam, they gave that stupid thing a stupid name," Surya said with an audacity smile.

"It does not matter what they want to call it, "

"I am just saying first they made an evil thing and then they lost it."

"Yeah, they were scared to see that stone. It happens with everyone when they see something that they don't understand,"

"We have to find it before it falls into the wrong hands, "

"It already with some bad people, "

"How can you tell that?" Surya asked.

"Do you remember what that army person told us?"

"Which part? Can you be a little more specific?"

"He said it got stolen after the device was tested on Kaal Grahi stone,"

"Yeah, I heard that, and I can see that too. That stone was destroyed. There is no Kaal Grahi stone here,"

"Exactly, it means someone is waiting just to be sure that that device can work, and at the moment he felt that it can destroy Kaal Grahi stone, he stole it, "

"It means he is not just a guy who stole it just because of its price, though human love their money, "

Dimisha looked towards the river, rolling her eyes.

"That guy, Biplab, he was missing too. No one is able to find him. Here the report says he may be killed by the tribe native to this place. But, I talked to their head. He told me that he warned others not to come near to the river. The report is definitely wrong,"

"He is going to destroy another Kaal Grahi stone. That's why he needs that thing. But the question is where he is going to use that. Where else one more stone can possibly be?" Dimisha said, rubbing her palms.

"We have to go to the Shrine," he moved closer to her.

"Can you please, for some time this protecting me thing keep aside and focus in this situation, " she said making a puckered face.

Dimisha felt irritated to hear the same thing again and again.

"No, no, no, you are taking me wrong. I have not said that to take you back. I have said because if we want to find something about that stone, where is another one like it, then that is the only place which can give us our answers,"

She kept staring at him for some moment, and then said, "Maybe you are right. A possible way to get that guy is to be knowing his next target. We have to find details about the Kaal Grahi stone,"

"Then there is no reason to waste time. We should move,"

"Let's go," Dimisha nodded her head.

They started to walk through the forest back to their rides.

"Search the jungle, quick, "

The voice of someone shouting stopped them from going further.

They bent down immediately and hid. Hiding in the woods, they were trying to figure out what is going on.

"How could they have escaped? What were you doing at that time?" he shouted again.

Surya and Dimisha looked at each other. It did not take much time to realize the scenario. It's just a reaction to what they did just a few minutes before.

"It's the Army man," Surya was saying undertone.

"Major Singh, he is trying to find us,"

"We should go. He may be back to his senses. I don't want to stuck with that man right now,"

"Agreed, he is not going like to see my face either after that trick," she replied.

Bending forward and hiding behind the dense green trees, they reached to their the place, where the swans were waiting for them.

"At least, you don't need to worry about those tribal people. They are safe now," she said, moving her hands over the neck her swan.

The swan also touched her with its beak.

"I am not sure, it's over or not, and anyway there is something terrible going on. I can tell you that if we don't do something soon, there will be chaos all around,"

"Don't worry. We will find out whatever it is,"

They sat down on their swans and flown towards the sky.

"Is this the thing?" Asthiyuj took a closer look at the device in his big palm.

"Yes, it is. They call it Neelam, "

"Neelam, " he laughed, " humans and their emotions." Unfortunately, this won't last long. Soon we will take back what is ours, they won't be alive to feel their emotions,"

"Should we move to our next part of the plan? " Vinasha asked.

"Yes, we should. There is no reason for delay. Let's hope that you brought the right piece of metal,"

"Yes, my lord. This is what we were looking for. I have seen the power consist of this tiny thing. It has destroyed that huge stone within a fraction of a second. Surely it can open the gate for us. I have no doubt in that,"

"These tiny primitive creatures, they always create the thing that is poison to themselves," he chuckled.

"They always use their knowledge to make their life comfortable. They are blind-folded by their greed,"

"In that case, we can proceed to our next and final step," Asthiyuj stood up from his chair.

"I was waiting for this moment. We will walk free on the surface again like the old-time," his face was glowing while saying this.

"Don't be so happy. Our job is not finished yet. We have a lot to do,"

"Forgive me, my lord. I am just...the thought of getting free and walking on fire drives me crazy,"

"You need to hold your horses. Our enemies, out there, are trying to put us back to that cage, and if we lose focus, they may accomplish. This is the final part and the hardest one,"

"I realize that, and I will keep this in mind,"

Asthiyuj groaned.

"What is your order for me now? Should I follow the rest of the part of our plan?"

"Yes, you know that I can't trust anyone else but you. So, you have to go there and brake all the stone with it and take that out of the cage. Have you learned to use that thing?"

"Perfectly, my lord. The man, Dr. Biswas, I was able to gain his trust completely. He taught me how to use it. This is not a hard task," he replied, shaking his head.

"Then, we can move towards our destination without any delay," he replied with a glorified voice.

"But, to do so, first, I have to need the locations. I mean..., it's time,"

Asthiyuj nodded his head and moved towards a wall on his right. He removed a brick from the wall. There was a scroll inside the space. Asthiyuj took out the scroll.

"Study it carefully. This will take you to the gates. But remember, this is not like a normal map. It has many puzzles. If you can not find the hidden, subtle meanings of the map, you will be lost there forever," He said, while handed him the scroll.

"You can relax, my lord. I will not let you down by any chance. No one can stop me from bringing out the fire to the surface," he replied with confidence.

"You have to do it by yourself. I can not afford to go out. The condition out there is not suitable for me, and still, I have to gain my strength back,"

"You don't need to. You wait here and I will bring the fire to you. Then we will celebrate on their dead bodies,"

Bowing to his master, Vinasha got out.

He got himself involved in his task without any second.

Sitting on the ground, he opened the scroll and started to study the scroll.

It's not a simple one. The pictures were not fixed. They were always changing. Vinasha was looking at it, from all the angles moving upside down, and turning left to right.

"Find you, " he said after a long study, "The ending of human and rising of our lives is not far."

Chapter 32

Aryan was reading the books one by one, kept in the rack. He could not remember how long he was sitting in that chair, holding those books in front of his eyes.

One book led to another.

Starting from the history of the shrine, how their secret organization was set up, how did the temple of pillars was created, and everything was in those books. It's hard for him to leave it in the middle.

Dimisha and Surya also returned to the shrine.

"Where is Gurudev? " he asked the man waiting outside his room.

"He is busy discussing something. "

"Tell him, it's Surya and there is an emergency, "

"But, he said...." he was hesitating to do so as he got strict order not to disturb him.

"Just tell him, " Surya said harshly.

With a huffy face, he went to call him.

"I would not be surprised if he threw me out, " he said to Dimisha after the man left.

"Nothing like this is going to happen, "

"You don't know him. You may think of him as a calm person. But when it comes to breaking his rules, he becomes furious, "

"You did not break any rule. What are you talking about?"

"It's me who took you out of the shrine, "

"Oh! Come on. I am not a kid who needs help to go out for a walk. I am thoroughly responsible for my decision. You don't need to worry about it, "

"Look, he is here, " Surya said.

They could see Gurudev walking towards them.

"His face says he is not in a happy mood, what do you say?" She whispered to him.

"What do you expect? I was strictly ordered not to let you out of the shrine."

He reached near them.

"Pranam, Gurudev, " they said together.

He slightly bowed his head. He was disgruntled. Anyone could see it in his face.

"First of all, you tell me why did you let her out? You know that there is a bloodthirsty monster out there who is trying to get her," Gurudev was scolding with his red eyes while reaching near to them.

Dimisha looked at Surya. He was just standing there with his head holding low with all the burden of guilt upon his shoulders.

"I am sorry. I should not have done that. It will not happen again," he replied gently.

His face became pale.

"Forgive me, Gurudev. It's not his fault. I am the one who forced him to take me out," Dimisha confronted boldly.

Gurudev looked both of them. His chest was still moving up and down.

"Why would you do that? I have told you already how dangerous it is out there,"

"Next time I will keep that in mind," Dimisha shook her head.

"Look, I do not want you to feel like you are trapped inside. But you know the temple of pillars, right? Only the heir of Bharta can enter inside. Can you imagine what will happen if he somehow they able to possess your body!" His voice softened a little bit this time.

He said, putting his hands on her shoulders.

He was back to normal. The angry face was gone.

"Gurudev, we have a serious situation," Surya said, sounding worried.

"What do you mean?"

"We went for an inquiry to Brunai tribe. There was something going on there, "

"Tell me in brief, "

"There was a Kaal Grahi stone found there. They were scared, and that's why they came for praying, "

"Kaal Grahi stone!" Gurudev was finding it hard to believe that, "How can it possible? A Kaal Grahi stone can not appear like this, "

"That's what I thought. So we went to check what is going on in real, "

"And that's the worse part, " Dimisha said.

"So, there is a stone?" Gurudev asked.

"No, the stone was destroyed by the outsiders, "

"Are you even listening to yourself? An outsider destroyed a Kaal Grahi stone, "

"It's true. They were army people and brought an expert, a man of science with them. He built a machine which can do this,"

"A machine that can destroy a Kaal Grahi stone!" Gurudev was startled.

"Yes, and they have already succeeded in destroying one stone," Surya was saying like he was complaining about them.

"When are they going to realize not to play with things they don't understand. It's a ravage," Gurudev looked away from them, putting his hands on hip.

"Gurudev, the problem is not that they have made some menacing instruments, but the actual problem is that the device is missing. Nobody knows where it is," She said.

"What? Are you serious?" Gurudev turned towards Dimisha, with his eyes wide open.

"Certainly, whoever stole this, he is going to brake another stone like this one, and I am sure he is not going to do it with an intention of the greater good of mankind,"

"We have to find the device as soon as possible," he said

"The easiest possible way to find out the device is by finding where it is going to be next. In order to do that we must locate other Kaal Grahi stones," Dimisha looked at Gurudev for some guidance

Gurudev was lost in some thought, looking away. His eyes were brooding.

"Gurudev," Dimisha called.

He did not respond to her. He was standing there like a statue. Dimisha and Surya looked at each other, and then again she called him, and this time with a more attaining voice.

"Yes," he replied, shaking his head.

"Are you alright," Surya asked

"I am fine. I am just thinking about finding another stone," he exhaled a breath.

"Can you tell us the location of the stone?"

"There must be something written about it," he muttered.

Suddenly, as he came up with something, he started to move away, almost by running. Dimisha and Surya looked at each other and then they went behind him.

Aryan was sitting inside the library, reading about the history of that place.

"Hey, guys! Where have you been?" he said, seeing all of them.

Without paying any attention, Gurudev rushed towards another side of the library, along with Surya. He pulled a ladder to one bookshelf and started to search for something among the pile of books. Surya was standing there, carrying the books taken out from the shelf by him.

"What are they doing?" Aryan asked to Dimisha.

"Probably, looking for some information," she replied.

"Gurudev has told me a lot of things earlier. This world is a lot more complex then we think,"

Dimisha did not say anything. She just smiled faintly and sat down on the chair next to him.

"What's wrong? You seemed tensed, "

"There is a new problem. I just don't know what to do."

"What about the treasure of hell? You were after it for a long time, "

"My brain is not working. One problem is not averted, and a new one is raised."

She rubbed her eyes with her palms, feeling exhausted.

"What is a new problem?"

"What?" She asked, taking her hands off from her eyes.

"You are saying something new has come up, what is it?"

"Oh! It's a long story. In a nutshell, some bad guy is out there with a nuclear bomb, "

"Nuclear bomb? What do you mean?" He was shocked.

"A weapon, very dangerous. A scientist has made it, and someone stole it, "

She kept looking low with a brooding face.

"Dimisha, " Aryan put his hand on her, and said, " whatever you do, I am always with you. I am new to all those, though I want you to know that you are not alone. Always remember that,"

He looked into her eyes. She looked back.

A moment was passed like that.

She could feel a hit raising on her cheeks. It turned red.

"Hey Dimisha, a little help here," Surya shouted.

"Okay, I have to help them. In the meantime, you check on this. This file is about the device he made. Try to find what it can do." she said, tucking her hair in the back of her ear.

Dimisha gave him files, she brought and walked towards Surya.

"Hey, Dimisha," he called her from behind.

She has turned back.

"Thank you," he said with a smile.

She smiled back to him, maybe blushing.

Gurudev and Surya were trying to find all about the stone, where it can possibly be. He was behaving very restless.

"You guys, found something?" she pulled a chair and sat.

There was a pile of books on the table. Gurudev was not raising his head. His eyes were locked in the letters of the books.

"Not yet, all these books are just explaining what it is, what it can do, and all other kinds of stuff that we already know. But nothing about its location," Surya closed one book and started with another book.

Dimisha also took one book from the pile with an ancient binding and started to search for any clue. It's written on an animal skin.

"The monsters will walk on the earth again,

If you remove the boondie curtain," She spoked indistinctively.

"What? Are you saying something?" Gurudev asked.

Those lines spoke by her, trigger something inside his brain.

"Oh! It's nothing. I am just reading the lines,"

She lifted the book and showed him the page.

"Can you read the rest of the part,"

"Sure," nodding her head, she has started to read,

"Pushing the time away is its duty,

Without it, there will be flames on earth for eternity,"

"If the treasure is released to the surface

Everything will turn into evil ashes,"

"That's all," she said.

"What does it mean?" Surya asked.

"There is a mentioning of the word treasure. You noticed that?"

"It struck my mind too. Do you think it's talking about that treasure?"

"What else would it be?"

"Can you two please let me think ?" Gurudev said.

"Dimisha, pass me the book," he said again.

She slid the book towards him through the surface of the table.

"Monster...curtain...pushing the time, it's definitely talking about the Kaal Grahi stone," he was mumbling, scratching his eyebrow.

"It pushes the time away. It is obviously talking about Kaal Grahi stone. I think so too." She said.

"And according to the riddle, it's a curtain. Which means there is something behind the stone. Like it's blocking us to see,"

"Correct, But what is it that the stone is blocking," Dimisha said, closing her eyes.

"The treasure of hell," Surya spoke loudly.

Dimisha and Gurudev gave him a strange look.

"If the TREASURE is released, that's what it is saying, right? It means it is no coincident that you are warned already about it and now this puzzle talking about some treasure,"

"Maybe you are right," Gurudev nodded his head.

"But what the treasure actually is? Monsters don't collect gold, money or jewelry,"

"No, Treasure does not just mean gold or jewelry. It has to be something super important for them and it must be in bulk,"

"Maybe it's some kind of explosive," Aryan spoke in the middle of their discussion.

"What makes you say that?"

"Sorry, I was listening to you. But Gurudev was telling me about all those creatures, and according to that theory, they can not survive without heat. So.."

"Oh, come on, you are saying they are trying to build a bomb," Surya sounded annoyed.

"I don't mean a bomb...bomb. But something like that which can give them heat,"

"You know, he is right. Look what that the riddle says, "everything will turn into evil ashes'. It has to be something to do with fire," Gurudev agreed with him.

"Someone is playing a big game with us," Dimisha was tapping on the table with her fist.

"Using that stone to attack those tribal people is part of their plan. So that Dr. Biswas built the device and then they took it to brake the shield," she narrated.

They looked at each other. Their throats became dry and faces have become pale. A cold sensation of fear touched them from inside.

Chapter 33

(somewhere else on the news)

"We have a report on forest fire in Assam, which appeared to be a state of India. The forest, on which this tragic incident is happening is known as Jatinga.

Yes, my friend. This should ring the bell. Most of our viewers may have heard about the place. For those who don't know about Jatinga, let me give a small description of that place.

Jatinga is the only forest that is known for the suicide of birds. Yes, my friends, you hear me correctly. Birds commit suicides, not just one time. But again and again and again each year. Many scholars have put their theory on the table about that phenomenon. Some like to relate it with spirits and dark magics, and some others are explaining it through their scientific hypothesis. The first one who brought the incident to the world was E P Gee, a naturalist through his book 'The Wildlife of India'. Strangely, this seems to happen during the dark night between seven to ten.

Now, let's get back to our news.

We have Mr. Sekhar, who is reporting live from Jatinga.

Mr. Sekhar: Thank you, Abhisekh. I am standing here at the Jatinga forest where a continuous fire has been going on for almost five days. I am not allowed to go near to it, but we can see those huge flames from here. Surprisingly, the flames are not yellow all the time. It keeps changing its color. It's more shocking that some people, local to this area have claimed of seeing someone walking out from the fire. They are not sure it's a human, but it had two big horns.

Sekhar has moved his mouthpiece to one of the local people standing there.

"Sir, can you tell me anything about the fire? Have you seen something like it before,"

"This is the curse of God." That man was just waiting for a camera to speak in front of. As he got the chance, he started to shout with a mix up the feeling of anger and fear, " We have made him angry with our sins. The end is near. Everything will be burned." the man has shouted as much as he can. While saying, a sprinkle of spits came out from his mouth.

Mr. Sekhar: That's it for now, Abhisekh, Thank you.

Abhisekh: Thank you, Sekhar. We will get back to you soon. We have experts in these fields, which can tell us more about the situation.

Gaurav Chauhan is a retired officer from the fire department and Dr. Jahnvi Mehta, who is working for many years as ornithology.

Welcome to our show

Abhisekh: So, Mr. Chauhan, what do you have to tell about this unusual fire going on?

Mr. Chauhan: I would not call it an unusual fire. See, Assam is a place where you will find a huge amount of fossil fuels beneath it, and there is a strong possibility that some gases may be licking, which is causing that fire.

Abhisekh: What about the creatures, people are claiming to be seen?

Mr. Chauhan: Well, you should ask this question to a biologist or geologist or whoever expert in this field. I can tell you one thing about those people, they are in shock. When someone is shocked, they try to turn their fear into a metaphor. This is not completely new. Sometimes, you see, when you save someone's life, they will call you an angel. "

Abhisekh: Thank you, Mr. Chauhan, for throwing light on that matter.

Now, I would like to ask you Dr. Jahnvi, about the suicide of birds. What do you think? Is it related to some kind of paranormal activity?

Dr. Jahnvi: It would be a mistake if I try to pinpoint the exact cause of the suicide of birds. This is happening for a long time years after year, and still, all we have got is just a hypothesis. They are relating this to some supernatural powers, and I can't tell them that they are wrong, though I wanted to. Because, if I say they are wrong, then I have to tell what the actual reason is.

Abhisekh: Thank you, Dr. Jahnvi.

So, viewers, you have heard both of our experts. Stay with us, and we will keep updating all the details about the fire at Jatinga. That's all for now. Thank you. Good Night.

"Ha..ha..ha," Asthiyuj was laughing with his mouth wide open.

The sound of his laughing was echoing from all the corners.

"They think it's an ordinary fire, which they can blow off easily," Vinasha informed.

"They are just a bunch of fools. They have no idea what is they are going to face in upcoming days. I will neither let them die nor live. The earth is ours now,"

"What about the girl, the heir of Bharta, I heard she is as powerful as him," Vinasha said, squeezing his eyebrows.

Asthiyuj punched the stone kept near him, groaning in anger. The stone got broken into pieces.

"Give me a chance to deal with her, My lord. I will give her the most painful death anyone have ever seen,"

"No, Vinasha, no. Death won't be enough punishment for what she deserves. I need her body, her blood, fresh and alive. I am going to possess her by myself,"

"I understand what you are having in your mind. The temple of pillars?"

"Yes, I have to get inside it and destroy it,"

"I have just released the first treasure, and you are gaining back your strength. After releasing all of it, you will be indestructible."

"How long it will take to release all of it?"

"I have found out the next location of the treasure. I am just waiting for your order. Should I proceed, My lord?"

"Go ahead. Open all of it as soon as possible. I want to see fire all around. I want to feel the heat like before," Asthiyuj said, raising his hands in the air.

"Then, I should move towards our next location. I will return with good news, I promise," Vinasha bent on his one knee and bowed.

"Keep that device safely. That device is a powerful one, one of it's kind. We will be needing it in the future too. "

"It's safe with me," he has nodded his head.

"Now go, and burn them all,"

Chapter 34

Pradhan and all three of them, who went with him, were returned to their people. They were ecstatic to see them returned.

"Pradhan, you were right, mother goddess listened to us, " one of them run to him and said.

"I know, she sent a guardian to protect us. I saw him with my own eyes, "

"Pradhan, you know, after you left, there are some other green-colored creatures came and tried to capture our river, "

"Really? what happened to them?"

"They were gone too, "

"Mother goddess blessed us, " he closed his eyes to remember their Goddess.

"The black stone is gone. We can live here like before, " Pradhan shout out loudly.

With him, everyone shouted. It was there day of celebration.

They were dancing and singing and drinking.

They were innocent people, unaware of the real plight going on. In the shrine, the world of everyone was shaken by the attack of those who live beneath them.

"This is a disaster, the biggest attack on us. People are dying, turning into monsters, "

Gurudev was angry. He felt responsible for what just happened. He was walking here and there while others were discussing if there was any way to prevent that.

"This is it or there are more to come?" Dimisha asked crossing her hands.

Gurudev stopped walking and looked at her.

"I don't think they will stop at it. It just the beginning, " she said again.

"I know there are more to come. But without the map, it is impossible to reach them," he replied.

"We have to find her, "

"Who?"

"That witch, who stole the map. This is the only way, "

"But, it won't be easy. She is smart. She knows how to hide, " Surya said,

"There must be someplace where she can go. You know her for a long time. Think...where she could possibly go, " she entreated him.

Putting his elbows on the table, he started to think.

By then, a man came and said, " Surya, a woman is waiting at the entrance, asking to speak with you, "

Dimisha gave Surya a look of surprise.

"What woman?" He asked annoyingly.

"It's Mandakini, "

No one was expecting to hear that. They looked at each other.

"Speak of the devil, " Dimisha shrugged.

"Wait, wait, she is not that easy to get. She is up to something, "

"Let's go and find it out, " Dimisha moved towards the door.

Surya looked at Gurudev.

"Go and listen to her, what she has to say. She may become handy at this moment, " he said.

Nodding to him, both of them went to meet her.

Dimisha and Surya walked through the mirror passage of their shrine. Mandakini was waiting there, near the big statue of the bull.

"What do you want?" Surya shouted, rushing towards her.

"I know you are angry with me, but.."

"Angry? You stole a map, because of which people are dying, you poisoned my friend. Tell me why I should not just kill you," Dimisha scolded, pointing a finger to her.

"You and I both know that I was not trying to kill your friend. I am just giving a glimpse of what he is capable of. I thought by now you have realized his power,"

"You are not here to explain that, are you? So stop beating around the bush and tell us why you are here,"

"Actually, I am here to talk about the map."

"What about it?" Surya said.

"You know I stole it for Asthiyuj. Asthiyuj promised me that he would bring my eyes back if I steal that map for him. But, he lied to me. I gave him the map, and in return, I just got treachery." Mandakini started to weep.

"You selfish woman, do you have any idea what you have done?" Dimisha's face turned red.

"I am sorry, I had no idea that something like this would happen. Please forgive me,"

"Your apology is meaningless to us. Get out of here before I kill you," Surya said, clenching his teeth.

"I want to help you. Just give me a chance to fix this,"

"Why on earth you think I am going to trust you,"

"Because I know where the next treasure is,"

"What? Do you know that? Dimisha came closer to her.

"Yes, I know the spot of the next treasure. I looked at the map before I gave it to him,"

"Come on, Dimisha. You have seen her. Don't fall for her lies,"

"I am not lying. I swear. This is my place too. I have done a lot of bad things, but I love my place," her voice was shaking.

"Go away, These crocodile's tears won't work upon me this time," Surya walked away from her.

"At least, you listen to me. I am here to help," she begged to Dimisha.

Dimisha did not reply anything to her. She was looking away steadily. Her eyebrows were squeezed, and her arms are crossed.

"Wait here," saying so she moved near Surya.

"I think she is telling the truth," she said to Surya.

"Are you serious?" he was frowning with all the muscle of his face he can bend.

"I know she is not trustworthy. But, it feels like she is telling the truth. Not completely, but whatever it appears to be handy for the situation,"

"What are you suggesting?"

"We should not let go of this chance," She pointed her, with her chin.

Both of them turned their heads towards Mandakini. She was looking at them. She was weeping continuously, wiping her tears with her hand from her cheek.

After some debate and discussion, Dimisha was able to convince him. He was agreed to listen to her for once. Mandakini could see them, coming towards her. He looked unhappy.

"Okay, we will listen to you," Dimisha said,

"Thank you so much. I will never forget this," she said, holding the hands of Dimisha.

"But, the moment I find out you are trying to do something ugly, you are finished, do you understand that?" Surya was scolding at her, pointing his finger.

Dimisha gave him a long stare.

"This is a mistake," he mumbled.

"For some time, put your claws back. We have a bigger problem here."

"Are we good now?" she asked both of them loudly.

Aryan nodded his head, looking away. Mandakini smiled while Dimisha had looked at her.

"It's settled then. You two find out the location of the next treasure, and I am going to Aryan, see what's he has found out," she left them to talk and walked inside the shrine.

Aryan was surrounded by a pile of books. He threw a book from the shaft to the table, flipped some pages with a ruf read, and brought another one. He was repeating it again and again.

"It looks like you are having fun, huh?" Dimisha asked, standing behind.

His head turned towards her by itself.

"Oh! Not as much as I want to, but these things are quite amusing," he smiled while sitting.

"What about the matter I told you to look in to, have you found anything?" Dimisha sat next to him.

"Kind of, I was thinking about the story of the creation of hell, Gurudev told me. He said there is fire everywhere on earth once, and the monsters were walking upon it. So, I was researching what made them move to the center of the earth. Of course, they did not go by themselves, and I found this," he showed a page from a book.

"Sodaka," she read indistinctively.

"People think, meteorites are the reason for the cooldown of earth. Inside the meteorites, there are water molecules that spread all over the surface and created an ice layer. But, that's partially true. Only some water molecules can not do this. It's impossible. So, I have done some digging and found about Sodaka. This is what inside the meteorites, and these are the actual cause of wiping all

to the center with freezing," he waited for a moment, and then said looking at her, "If you ask me that's the best solution we have got. We have to bring some of it,"

She was reading the page, biting her lower lip.

"What's wrong? You don't think so?" he asked again.

"No, it's not that. Nobody has ever returned from that place. So, we can not say it with absolute certainty,"

"Come on, I don't need to tell you to take the leap of faith. You have been doing it by yourself for a very long time,"

Dimisha looked at him, narrowing her eyes.

"What?" he shrugged.

"You are adopting my nature fast," she smirked.

"What can I say, just trying to fit in new shoes. But, still, I have found heard to know the obsession of those people with poetry and riddles, "

"What poetry? What are you talking about?"

"Read this, 'follow the stars of the earth in the daylight, and the sun will open the doors for you.' Why could not just say, go there and take it out,"

Her lips moved slightly to smile.

Surya cleared his throat, standing next to them.

"Did she tell you something?" Dimisha asked with excitement.

"Yeah, she did. She gave me a location, and if my calculation is correct, they will try to open, soon."

"We have to hurry then," she stood up.

"You were talking about some ancient weapon," he asked Aryan.

"He was talking about Sodaka, and I think he is right. This thing is strong enough," she shook her head.

"But, you know well what is said about the sodaka," his face turned tensed.

"I know that. No one has ever returned from that place before,"

"I don't think this is a good idea,"

"Don't worry. You go and stop them from opening another treasure, and I will return with that thing which will send those treasures back to their places."

"I? There is a slight mistake in your words, I guess. It's supposed to be we," Aryan said, raising his hand.

Dimisha looked back at him.

"I am not going to let you have all the fun by yourself,"

"This is not fun. This place is not like others. Even we don't know what is inside." She uttered.

"You take him with you. You may need an extra hand. He is not that much fool like others,"

"What makes you so long to understand that?" Aryan taunted him.

"Just make sure he does not open his stupid mouth," Surya said to her, without replying to him.

She nodded her head lightly.

Surya left the room.

"This guy has some issues,"

"Pack some warm clothes, we have a flight to catch," she said.

Chapter 35

"Next time, try to be a bit more specific when you say about packing warm clothes," Aryan's voice was quavering.

"I did not want to ruin the surprise," she shrugged.

"Surprise?... you call this a surprise?"

"What happened to the man who wanted to have FUN?"

"I can not breathe. I think I am going to puke,"

"If you are not going to stop crying like a baby, I will throw you from my swan. You can keep complaining about the temperature down there in the middle of the ice,"

"Yeah, that's helping. I am feeling better now, a lot better," he replied with a scowl on his face.

"How long will it take to be there?" he asked again.

"I don't know. We have to find the stars on earth, remember?"

He was grinding his teeth.

"Can I hug you if you don't mind?"

"Of course, if you want to live the rest of your life without your hands,"

"Oh my god! That's a complete platonic offer. It's a technique to give body heat to others in cold weather,"

"You can not keep your mouth shut, can you?"

"Not when I am freaked out,"

"Try to breathe and relax. You will be fine,"

"I should have brought Mercury with me,"

"I told you he would not be able to survive at this height. Besides, he is happy at the shrine,"

"I am missing him," he said, making his face.

"There it is," Dimisha cheered, looking below toward the ground covered with thick layers of ice.

"Where? I can not see anything,"

"To see something, you have to open your eyes,"

Aryan was closing his eyes forcefully. The height was making him nervous.

Slowly, slowly he opened his eyes.

"Look, down there, at those conical tower-shaped snow," she was pointing with her finger.

There were seven tall snow pillars with a pointy head. When sunlight fell on the top, they twinkled. It looked like stars.

"Beautiful," he was amazed to see that.

The swan decreased its speed, moving towards the pillars. After some time, it touched the ground just near to those pillars. Both of them got off from it.

"Thanks, my baby," she said, brushing the neck of the swan with her hand.

Aryan bent down, holding his knee. He was panting.

"Here, drink it, you will feel better," she offered him a bottle.

He took the bottle and opened the cap.

"What is it?" the smell of it made him squeeze his nose.

"Just take a sip,"

He took a sip, holding his breath. As the drink touched his throat, he started to cough.

"Feeling better?" Dimisha asked, rubbing his back.

"It's strong," his voice was strangling.

"It will keep you warm, I was expecting it will be needed," she smiled.

"Now, what?"

"Now, we will wait for the sunlight to open the door for us,"

He gave her a surprised look.

"You will see,"

After passing some time, impatiently, in the snow desert, the moment came for which they were waiting. The sunlight was focused on a specific spot between the pillars. As the sunlight was getting more and more intense, the ice on that particular location started to melt, and a narrow hole was created.

"The sunlight has opened the door for us, just like the riddle says," she waved her palms in the air.

"Are you sure you want to go inside?"

"We don't have time for this. We are already running out of time, "

she entered inside the passage, without any hesitation.

Aryan looked here and there, taking a gulp.

"Are you coming? This hole will be closed soon."

He rolled his eyes and entered.

By crawling like a baby, they were moving forward through the rabbit hole, and finally, reached its end. They stood up.

"Wow! I never expected this!" Aryan's eyebrows were moving up with amusement to see the inside.

"Keep your eyes open, " she said.

"What are those things?" he said, looking towards some big statues.

"They are yetis, a creature found around here,"

"They seem very real. Look at those nails. They are bigger than my leg,"

"Yes, they are very real," she said in her mouth.

She got closer to one of the statues and observed it closely.

"ARYAN," she shouted with her full strength.

One of the yetis opened his eyes and slapped her with his claws. Within a blink of eyes, she had been thrown far away at a distance, striking at the wall. Aryan tried to run towards her. But the yeti stood, blocking his path. He failed to maintain his balance and slipped on the ground. He was wriggling backward as fast as he could to move away from that yet.

That yeti put it's one claw just next to his left and brought his mouth, protruding long teeth, to him. It's enough to make Aryan froze. He was laying there like a lifeless person.

Then it started to smell him. He could feel long hairs of that yeti touching him. He closed his eyes, giving everything up.

Suddenly, it stopped moving. The roaring yeti turned into a statue.

There was a sound of something hitting on the floor that came from nowhere, and the yeti got back to his original position, became the statue again.

Aryan did not understand what just happened. He opened his eyes and looked around. He was fine. No mark of injury, or bleeding. Dimisha was laying on the floor at a distance from him. He immediately runs towards her.

"Dimisha," he called, shaking her with his hand.

He called her multiple times.

With a whimper, she sat down.

"Are you okay?" she asked.

"I am fine. But your head, it's bleeding."

"It's nothing,"

"Why are you here?" someone spoke from a distance.

Judging by the sound, anyone can tell that it's not the voice of a young man. They moved towards that direction.

"Answer my question?", this time he spoke louder.

"We are here for Sodaka,"

"Go away before I tear you apart," he came closer.

It's an old man with a long beard and long hair. The color of his beard and hair were similar to the color of the snow out there.

"Good morning, sir," Aryan nodded his head while smiling uncomfortably.

"Why do you want Sodaka. It's a holy object. Sinful souls like you can not have it,"

"You must be the guardian of Sodaka. I don't know our souls are sinful or not, but we need it to protect the lives on earth," she said politely.

"Your words can not penetrate my heart. I know people like you filled with greed, can not think anything but themselves."

"We are not lying, sir. The world is really in danger," Aryan said, breathing heavily.

His legs were still shaking. Though he was trying to cover up his fear, the heart-stopping shock, he had faced, from the yeti. He was making his voice natural as much as he could.

Dimisha could see through him. She could feel the blood rushing through his vain.

"You look familiar to someone from my past," the guardian came closer to her.

"Have you met him before, maybe at a party or something like that?" he asked Dimisha.

She stared at him with a hooded look, squeezing the lips.

"I am just saying," he shrugged.

She looked back towards the guardian and said," I am the heir of Bharata, maybe you know him,"

"Heir of Bharata?" he was perplexed," So, it has become true,"

He moved away, turning his back to them.

"True what?" Dimisha took a step towards him.

"His prediction. He was here for the same reason as you. Bharata forecasted that he would return one day."

"How could he tell that?"

"I asked the same question," the guardian chuckled, and said," he believed that everything in this universe moves in a circular motion. We may think like we are moving forward, but that's not true. No matter what we do, each and every move is just to take us to our initial point."

"It means we can take Sodaka," Aryan's asked.

"No, to do that you have to prove yourself worthy of it,"

"Are you serious? You have just said yourself about the prophecy."

"It's not up to me. I am just a guardian. It's him who is going to decide you can take it or not," he was directing towards a corridor towards his left.

They turned to see what he was directing. It's a narrow corridor. The floor was covered with water.

"What you are looking for is on the other side of the water. If you can pass through this, you can have Sodaka."

"It's not easy as it looks, is it?" she asked.

"It's never easy. But an heir Bharata never fears a challenge,"

"Are you sure you want to do this," Aryan asked.

"I have to. Lives are depending upon me,"

"Should I go with you,"

"No, it's my destiny. I have to walk through it by myself,"

"Just be careful. Best of luck," Aryan said and hugged her.

Dimisha could feel it, the heart, beating inside him. While hugging, she could feel the rhythm of it.

"I am waiting right here," he whispered in her ears.

She looked at him with a smile and walked towards the water corridor.

The water was not so deep. It was barely touching her knees. She was moving forward with baby steps through the ice-cold water, though her palms are sweating. It looked normal, though it's not. She could tell that. Her heart was thudding more and more as she is going forward.

Suddenly, she started to feel some tinglings on her legs, like something was moving. A sensation of fear had passed through her body. Taking a gulp, she moved forward. But, the tingling did not stop. On the contrary, it grabbed her legs even tightly this time, making it hard for her to move. She bent down and tried to remove it with her hands. It's something long that had a very rocky surface.

Within an instant, that thing had became extremely aggressive. It had pierced her calf muscle with its teeth. A loud shout of pain came out from her mouth.

She fell into the water. The water was turning red with the blood coming out from her leg.

It's a giant crocodile. It was grabbing her with its teeth. She was moving her hands all over the water, trying to hold on to something. But there was nothing there. The crocodile was pulling her down and down. She was feeling like her leg was going to tear apart from her body.

"Dimisha, come back," she could hear the shouting of Aryan.

"Dimisha, come back. We will find Sodaka later. There are many ways to kill the monsters," he was crying from the outside.

Her vision started to blur. The pain was spreading all over her body. Her body became heavy for herself. She was finding it difficult to move anymore. She closed her eyes.

Suddenly, the picture of crying in the agony of humans came to her mind. The fire all over the earth was burning all of them. They were running here and there for help. But no one was there to help. Monsters were laughing over her dead body.

"No, I can not fail. I can not let them down. They are counting on me. Come on, Dimisha, you can do this," she said to herself.

She took a deep breath, and with her full strength, she pushed herself to come out of the water.

There was no pain on her leg anymore. The crocodile was gone, and so all the wounds.

It was just an illusion to taste her.

Panting heavily, she got back to her feet and started to walk towards her destination.

The water path ended, and she reached to an ample cave. There was a tiny pond in the middle of it and lots of gold Kalash all over, stuck to the wall.

"Finally," She said.

She knows what to do now.

"How long have you been here?" Aryan asked the guardian.

He did not reply to anything and moved away.

"He doesn't like to talk, I guess," he said, silently.

"Hey, guys," Dimisha was standing there with a Kalash in her hand.

As they heard her voice, they run towards her.

"Are you alright?" he asked in a stuttering voice.

"Just tired," She nodded with a smile.

"So, you have passed the test," the Guardian has said.

"Easily,"

"Whatever the water showed you, it's not just a test. It's a lesson for your future. Always remember it. He tastes everyone not in a similar way. There is always a reason behind the way he tastes anyone. He is trying to tell you something. If you can figure out what it is he is telling you, you will succeed,"

Chapter 36

Surya, with a few men and Mandakini, went to the place where Mandakini claimed to have the next treasure.

They knew it won't be easy. That's why they were making their steps carefully and trying not to make any sound. Mandakini and Surya were walking side by side ahead of them. He was keeping a sharp eye on her, still finding it hard to believe her.

"Just like the old-time, huh? You and me on a mission," she whispered.

"There is nothing like the old-time, "

He was biting his teeth in anger. Mandakini could not see his face, though he could sense it.

"Oh, come on, I know you miss those days or maybe missing me too, a bit,"

"Whenever I remember those days of my past, I feel mortified by the regret of not putting a knife through your heart. But, don't worry, making the same mistake twice is no my style,"

"Surya, you always try to hide your soft corner with this angry face. But, you know what! You are a very bad liar,"

He stared at her with his brows furrowed.

"There is no need for eyes to see the soft corner of your heart. I know the feelings you have for me. We both feel the same way,"

"First, If I feel something about you, it is nothing but anger, and secondly, I am not here to talk with our past life experiences. So, be careful with your words. You may not survive to say another one. You know me well,"

She scoffed, and said, " you have not changed at all,"

He looked the other side, shaking his head.

"Don't you feel disgusted to yourself after what you have done? I mean, you are the actual root cause of what's going on here. Seeing people burned alive, and then turned into a monster makes you happy, right?"

"He lied to me too. In the beginning, when I gave him the map, I had no idea that he is going to do this. I wish I could change what I have done," she replied with a pitiful voice.

Her nose became runny. She was taking short and noisy breaths through her nose.

"Don't waste your tears now. It's not going to help you anyway. Keep your mind in staying alive,"

"I am not crying," she said, holding her breath.

He moved his head away, rolling his eyes.

"Are you sure we are in the right direction?" he asked again.

"Yeah, I am positive about that. There are some honey bee hives on my left. We have to go with those hives till the end,"

"In that case, we have a long distance to cover. We should walk fast," he increased his walking pace.

There were big hives hanging from the trees in lines. They could see this whole place was filled with those hives. After a long walk, below these hives, they reached near the last one.

"Now, which direction?" he asked.

Mandakini bent down and plucked some grass from the ground. She was taking the smell of it.

"It's not the one," she mumbled.

She picked some other grasses from the other side and smelled it like before.

"Okay, this way. Over these grasses," she said, turning back to Surya.

They started to walk over a specific type of grass as led by her.

She took off her shoes.

"It feels good when those grasses touch your feet. You should try it too, helps to relax,"

"I will relax when I put them back to the cage. We are not here to enjoy or relax. Keep moving,"

"Come on, Surya. Remove your shoes. We will pretend that we have not seen anything, like the way we are pretending of not listening to any of your discussions about past life," One of the men teased from behind.

They have laughed, clapping with each other.

"Oh! This is getting worse," he grumbled.

"How far I have to bare you?" he shouted again.

"Not any longer. We are here in the place." she was tapping the land with her legs.

"You see, this place is hollow. The treasure must be under this land," she spoke again.

"It means we are not late. They have not reached the treasure yet,"

"See, you are welcome," Mandakini smiled.

"Okay, everyone, listen to me carefully. We know they will be here soon to burn this place with the hellfire. So we have to protect this area,"

All of them started to move in different directions. They were throwing some white powders on the ground, making some patterns.

A stake flew out of the blue and pierced the chest of one of his men. Within an instant, the man had turned into ashes. Before anyone could understand what just happened, there were stakes that had started to mizzle all over them.

"Cover yourself, they are here, "Surya shouted.

He pushed Mandakini under a tree.

"Are you okay?" he asked.

"I am fine. What are we going to do now?" she asked, crying.

"We will do exactly we are here to do. Stay here,"

Saying so, he took out his knife and thrown it to one of the monsters. A blue-colored smoke came out from him, and the body fell on the ground. Then he took out his sword from his back and moved to the open. They were throwing stakes at him. He was moving his sword as fast as he can, to block those stakes. His friends were dead.

"Surya, behind you," Mandakini shouted.

A big red monster was moving towards him with a groaning. Surya jumped and separated his head from his body with his sword. Two more were approaching him from another side. He threw a green-colored bead towards them. Lethal smokes ejected from the bead, which penetrated the skins of those monsters.

Monsters were coming again and again. Surya was somehow able to keep them away from the place. But, they were a lot in numbers. Surya got multiple wounds on his body. Though he was not losing his strength. He was fighting with them like a brave warrior.

"Surya," it's her, she was shouting in pain.

Though he could not see her, he could tell that she was in trouble. He somehow managed to run towards her while saving himself from their attack. She was unconscious, laying on the ground. He quickly bent down and checked her breath. She was breathing.

"Mandakini," he was panicked.

She was not responding.

For a moment, he lost his focus and that was his biggest mistake. His enemies were waiting for that moment.

Surya felt a strong blow in the back of his head.

Chapter 37

Dimisha and Aryan returned to the shrine with the element, the only weapon that could have stopped Asthiyuj and show it to Gurudev.

It was not an expected reaction, they got in return from him. He was not happy. Something was troubling him.

"What is it, Gurudev? Where is Surya?" She asked.

"He has not returned yet, "

"What?" She sounded concerned, "There must be something wrong. He is supposed to return by now, "

Dimisha could sense it, what Gurudev was worried about.

"Do you have any idea where he headed to," Aryan asked.

"He said he found the next location of the treasure. I sent some of my men with him, " he said with his brooding eyes.

"What about Mandakini?"

"What about her?"

His fear got heightened to hear that name. It's not a good indication. Apparently, not during that period of hardship.

Dimisha and Aryan looked at each other, and then she said with a feeling of guilt and fear,

"She is with him. It's her, who is taking them to the treasure,"

"What?" Gurdev jumped from the chair.

His face was terrorized.

"He didn't tell you?"

"Of course not, he hid it from me. Because he knew, I would not let him go with her at any cost, "

Gurudev punched on the wall in anger.

They never saw him this impatient.

"Actually, it was me who forced him to go with her,"

"Why would you do that?" Gurudev looked at her with grimace expression.

"She was crying and completely broked. She said she wanted to help. "

"And you fall for that,"

"At that moment, she seemed genuine,"

"Damm, that psycho woman put something inside me to give some kind of soul without body experience," Aryan said.

Dimisha gave him a look filled with rage.

"Just saying," he said, shaking his shoulders.

"She is one of the gifted people who can convince anyone with her tricks. I am very disappointed, Dimisha," Gurudev was wriggling his head, holding his arms crossed.

"I am sorry. But I think she was telling the truth,"

"There is a lot more to learn. you are not ready to face the outside world. Perhaps, I overestimated you,"

"I think, right now, we should think about Sodaka. Using it on them is the best way to help Surya too. What do you say?" Aryan was looking at them to say something.

Gurudev released a heavy sigh, closing his eyes.

"I will alert everyone. It's time to send them back to their place. We should not wait any longer. Also, send a team to search for him," he said.

"Pranam, Gurudev," a man said, standing at the entrance door of the room.

"What is it?" Gurdev turned towards the man.

"A girl is waiting outside at the 'Darpan Dwar'. She is asking to speak with Dimisha,"

Gurudev moved towards the man and started to talk.

"What is Darpan Dwar?" Aryan whispered to her ears.

"It the door, we use to come inside the shrine,"

"Oh! the mirror passage," he shook his head.

"Right,"

" But who wants to speak with you?"

"How am I supposed to know? Though I have a hunch about who that might be"

"Dimisha, I hope you can predict who is waiting outside to speak with you," Gurudev said, coming closer to her.

"Mandakini, I presume,"

"Yes, Go and talk to her. She may have some information about Surya,"

Nodding her head, She was about to leave to meet her.

"Wait, don't go soft on her. She is a very good liar. Keep that in mind," he said, waving his finger, " don't let her play with your mind,"

"It won't happen again," she replied gently.

Dimisha and Aryan walked towards the Darpan Dwar.

Mandakini was sitting outside on the floor, leaning her back on the statue of the bull.

"It does not look good," Dimisha said, observing her from a distance.

She was bleeding from multiple places.

"You have returned alone?" Dimisha asked, crossing her arms.

"They got him," she was huffing.

"And you have nothing to do it, right?" Aryan spoke.

"Of course not, but if we do not hurry, they will kill him, or worse." she stood up somehow, holding the statue.

"You were with him. How come they let you go?"

"Somehow, I managed to escape. If you are done with the interrogation, please focus on Surya. His life is in danger. You can waste your time by inquiring me, and by the time he will become one of them," she uttered, narrowing her lips.

Dimisha looked away, holding her hands on her hip.

"What are you thinking? We are running out of time. I swear I am not lying,"

"Do you know where they are keeping him?"

"I can take you there,"

"I don't know why I am doing this, " she spoke twisting her lips, "Fine, I will go with you,"

"Thank you, Thank you very much," she nodded her head.

"Dimisha, but Gurudev said..." Aryan was trying to say something.

"I know what Gurudev said. I will come to that later. For now, it's our only lead,"

"Wait here. We will be back soon,"

Ordering her to wait, they moved back to the shrine.

"What is going on in your mind, Dimisha?" he asked on the way to the shrine.

"I can not explain it to you. I have just a feeling that she knows where Surya is. I am not saying she is not lying. But, ... You remember when I went through the water corridor to bring Sodaka?"

"Yes, I was there too. What about it?"

"The guardian told me it's trying to show me something."

"What did it show you?"

"I don't know. It's like...never mind. I may be overthinking,"

They reached inside the shrine where Gurudev was already waiting for them.

"What did she tell you?" he asked.

"A lot of meaningless things. But I don't trust her. "Dimisha said, crossing her arms.

"Anyway, I have managed to find out the truth about Surya. By mistake, she mentioned about the place where he is kept,"

"That's a relief," Gurudev released a sigh and said," You go with some of our men, and bring him back,"

"Gurudev, I do not need any of your men to go with me. I prefer to go alone,"

"I certainly can not allow you to do that. Not when it's certain that what is waiting for you there. It will be foolish to go there alone,"

"I am not going alone. A free-born will come with me," she looked at Aryan and smiled," and it's better not to go in a group. You know that more people means more heat. It's just going to alert them that we are coming,"

Gurudev and she stared at each other's eyes without saying another word for a long time.

"Surya told me how stubborn you are. Will you be needing anything?" he took off his eyes from her.

"Nothing, just some regular stuff and a few drops of Sodaka, that's it,"

"You go and save him. By the time, I will pour the Sodaka drops to the hellfire."

Gurudev left the room.

"Dimisha, why haven't you told him the truth?" Aryan was snarling.

"I have not lied anything. I have twisted the fact suiting my way,"

"But why?"

"I have no time and patience to listen to long speeches about how bad she is. I already knew it. So, I bluffed," she shrugged, tilting her head.

Surya was on his knees, tied by his hands with chains. He was bleeding from the back of his head and chest. It's painful for him to keep breathing. The desire to see the end of this fight was keeping him alive.

"What do you call yourself, Order of the Ghost. Ha ha ha," Asthiyuj said, sitting on the chair in front of him.

"Remove those chains, and you won't be needed to tell what I can do," he was groaning.

"I like the courage. But, don't worry. I will remove those soon, and you will become one of us," he said sternly.

"It will be nice to live inside an angry, strong body," Asthiyuj scratched his nails over his chest.

"You can not turn me into a monster. I would rather die,"

"Monster," he chuckled and stood up from the chair.

"What is the definition of a monster, Surya?" he asked, turning his back to him.

Surya did not reply to him. He was just panting. A few drops of blood came out from his mouth.

"In your world, a long time ago, there was a widow who was living with her three years old daughter. She was trying hard and soul, so that her daughter does not have to sleep empty stomach. One day, she earned some extra money. She was very happy. She was planning to buy a sweater for her daughter. But, she did not reach home that night. Someone put a knife throw her for the money she earned that day. You know, what she was praying on her last breath? She was bagging to survive for a few minutes so that she can see her daughter wearing that sweater. I gave her that

chance. So, go and ask that poor widow or that hungry little child who was crying for her mother, who really a monster is, me or one of your kind who took away the love of a mother from a child."

"Some of us may make some mistakes due to a lack of knowledge. But, it does not mean that you can do whatever you want with them," he spat some blood.

"You people are lost. Some humans may pretend as pure-hearted or clean. They are not hurting others, not because they choose to live like that. But they are afraid that they will go to hell if they do that. Their instincts are telling them from inside to go and destroy anyone who earns more than them, destroy him who is happier than them. The only thing that is stopping them is fear. Fear of burning in hellfire."

"People have faith. They believe in God. They love God, and this is what keeps them pure. It's not the fear,"

"Speaking of God, are we talking about those people who kill each other in the name of their religion and then say we are protecting our God. Go out and see for yourself how savage they have become."

Surya looked away, clenching his teeth.

Asthiyuj sat back on the chair and said, "If you still believe them, just do one thing. Go out and tell them that there will be no punishment for any actions of them. What do you think, which path they will choose? We both know the answer, don't we?"

"You can justify yourself any way you want. But I won't let you succeed in your purpose," he said with his eyes making red in anger and pain.

"Have you been out lately. Can't you see the fire burning all over? Soon, all the flame will connect to this place, and I will be on the surface. THE ELEMENTS WILL BE DESTROYED WITH INTENSE HEAT, AND THE EARTH AND ITS WORKS WILL BE BURNED UP. It's the destiny of earth. It's time for you to be on the right side,"

"I will rather die instead of living like one of you,"

"Who says anything about dying? You will be my guide, my mask to get inside of your 'shrine', "

Surya's became furious to hear that. He was giving pressure as much as he could to free himself from those chains and seeing him like this Asthiyuj was laughing in amusement. His purpose was to fulfill.

Chapter 38

Dimisha was packing things, which she thought would be needed to fulfill her task.

"It would not be easy if he is that much powerful," Aryan said, standing near to him.

"Don't worry, I will take care of it, "

"How exactly are you going to do that? Not that I have doubts on you, but though..."

"All we need is a trojan horse, "

"Trojan horse? Are you talking about Mandakini?"

"You will know, " she said with a smile, "let's go now, "

"Dimisha, I have something to tell you, "

She turned her face towards him. He was looking at her too. But there was something different, something strange in his look this time.

"Can't you wait?" She said, moving back to her work.

She was pretending not to give him much attention.

"I think this is the right time, "

He came closer to her and moved her towards him, holding her shoulder, " I am in love with you since the moment I saw you. I have no doubt about that. "

She was not looking at him, trying to avoid eye contact. Tears were fighting to come out from her eyes. But, it's not sadness she was feeling at that time. Something she could not explain. Something she never felt before.

"I know, you have responsibilities, and probably you think of me as stupid to say this at this time. But, I don't know I will be alive or ..."

Aryan could not finish his line. She did not let him.

She pushed her lips around his.

Dimisha could not hold her emotions any longer.

Her hands automatically moved to hug him tightly around his neck, and her lips wrapped around his.

Aryan was astounded. His hands started to move softly around her hip.

Time stopped moving for them.

Aryan looked into her eyes. Her pupils were dilated. He wanted to say something, but could not utter a single word, except for a smile with blushing.

"Don't enjoy it too much. We have a monster out there," she said, releasing a heavy breath.

"Yeah, right, " Aryan replied, adjusting his shirt, "Let's send these things back to their place,"

Dimisha tied her hair and walked outside the shrine to Mandakini. She was waiting for them. Dimisha could see she had some bandages on her injuries.

"We are ready to go," she said.

Nodding her head, Mandakini started to walk with them.

"Aren't we going by air?" Aryan asked.

"Nope, this time we are going by road. Our ride is waiting for us," she pointed a cart, waiting for them at a distance.

It's Abdul with his huge oxen cart.

"Good idea. I like that cart more than the swan," he said.

"Yeah, I figured. Any person who is afraid of flying will say that,"

"Those swans, they don't even have a seatbelt, and you know what people say, if God wants us to fly, he would have given us wings,"

"What is she doing here?" Abdul becomes furious to see Mandakini.

"We are in a critical condition, that's why we need her help, and Surya was the one who made that call," she said.

He rolled his eyes with a sigh, saying something indistinctively.

"So, I am not only one who doesn't like to see you," Aryan said, sitting inside.

"Situation made me do a lot of bad things which I regret now,"

"Where are we going?" Abdul asked.

"To the Agnikund," Dimisha replied instantly.

"You already knew, " Mandakini said with a tone of surprise.

The cart started to move. Bit by bit, the speed was increasing.

"What is Agnikund?" Aryan questioned.

"It's the place where Surya is imprisoned,"

"How did you find that out. I don't think I told you that,"

"Oh! It's simple. I was examining the treasures and the path of the fire spreading. All the fire out there are moving to one specific location which is..'

"Agnikund," Aryan snapped his finger.

"Correct,"

"You are smart," Mandakini said, stretching her forehead.

The cart reached the peak of its speed. Those big, wooden wheels were like moving in the air, they were barely touching the road. There was a rhythmic sound while the soles of those oxen stroke the ground each time.

"Ah! It's going to be a long journey," Aryan said, putting his hand on his hip.

"Don't worry, we are almost there,"

"Actually, we have reached. You can tell him to stop," Mandakini was smelling the air.

"Abdul, You can stop now," she shouted.

He pulled the rope, tied on the necks of those oxen and the cart slowed down its speed. After covering a distance it stopped.

"Thanks for the ride," Dimisha said to Abdul.

"No problem. Surya's friend is my friend too," he smiled in return.

After everyone got off from the cart, he drove away.

"Keep your eyes open. We are now at their place," Mandakini alerted them.

"I can not see any monster here, "

He moved a gaze all around the place.

"But they can see you,"

"What do you mean they can see us, from where?" He again looked all over with fearful eyes.

"It means, keeps your mouth shut," Dimisha said, squeezing her lips.

That place was covered with black ashes. Not a single life was there, except three of them. Standing in the middle of the place was felt like there was no air to breathe. It's suffocating. In the middle, there was a high ground taking a conical shape. It's top was open.

"That's the door. We have to go through it," She said.

They started to walk to that open mouth instantly.

They were about to reach there, but suddenly, Dimisha stopped.

"What happened?" they moved back to see her.

"Nothing, My leg...just stuck in the sand," she was trying to pull her leg out of it.

She was making the full effort, but her leg was going deeper and deeper.

"Aryan, move back," Mandakini shout out.

Aryan took a few steps back. She was walking towards her, tapping on the floor. But, before she could go near to her, a black shadow came up from the sand and grabbed Dimisha. That thing took her before she could do anything.

"Dimisha," Aryan screamed, running to that place she was before.

But, there was no sign of her. The place became like it was before, sandy. He started to remove the sand with his hand.

"Where did she go?" he was snarling.

"Come on, we have to move inside," Mandakini put a hand on his shoulder and said.

"I am not going anywhere until I find her,"

"She is inside. That creature is taking her to his master. If you want to save her, we have to go inside,"

_____, ____--_-----_--------------------------------_---------

Before Dimisha could react to anything, everything was changed, in an instant. That shadow pulled her down and threw it into a completely dark place. Her head hit something very hard. It's started to bleed.

She sat there for some time, pressing the wound like a statue. Closing her eyes, she felt the environment, trying to find out about the place.

She said, "You can come out now. Don't be so shy, "

She made a whistle too.

"You dare to talk to me like that," a roaring voice came out.

"There you are, I know you missed me," Dimisha chuckled.

"You stupid little creature, you dare to laugh in front of me,"

"I can not help myself. You have one of those clown faces,"

Asthiyuj jumped towards her, and yelled furiously, "If I want I can brake this face of yours and you won't even able to cry."

"Did it hurt when I poked you last time?"

He took a step back, and said with an insulting smile, " enjoy the last few minutes you have,"

"Bring her to me," he ordered two shadow-like creatures standing next to him.

Saying that he went to another room. Those shadow monsters wrapped her by her arms and dragged to him.

She did not seem frightened to see him in front of her face. She was just observing the place minutely.

They threw her on his legs.

"Dimisha," Surya shouted.

He was tied by both of his hands, covered in blood. His condition was critical.

She made a step to move towards him. But a shadow had put a knife on his neck, and she stopped.

"Do not make any move," Ashtiyuj roared, "this is my place, "

Dimisha stood there, staring at him, with angry hooded eyes.

"Now, take out the Sodaka Kalash and put it on the floor, if you want to see him alive,"

"I prefer it to throw on your face," she said, clenching her teeth.

"You think you can capture me with that thing?"

"Why don't you put some sprinkles of it on your face and find out by yourself?"

"Your magic water does not work on human,"

"Luckily, you are not human. Not even close,"

He laughed with his mouth wide open and then clapped.

It's Mandakini. She came out with Aryan. His hands were tied behind. She was grabbing her by the neck.

"Sorry, folks. I don't play well with humans,"

"Yeah, I have noticed that," Aryan said, making a face.

"One more word, and you will be missing your tongue forever. I promise,"

"You stupid liar. What did he offer you, huh?" Dimisha asked, with fire on her eyes.

"Revenge, my dear friend, revenge. Those humans took everything from me and left me to die. This time, I will show them what fire, burning inside me. Every single person will suffer. They will get what they deserve,"

"Now, put the Sodaka Kalash down," Ashthiyuj ordered.

"Dimisha, don't do that. I am not afraid of dying,"

"Shut your mouth, " Mandakini slapped him.

"Do it now," he was shouting.

She looked at Aryan and then Surya. Both of them were in agony. She removed the bag from her back.

"Don't try to make any smart move," Asthiyuj said pointing his finger.

"I am sorry, Dimisha," Aryan said sadly.

"It's okay, you could not do anything,"

She took out the Kalash and put it on the ground.

"Now, walk away from it,"

She slowly moved away.

"One way or the another I will send you where you belong, mark my word,"

"I appreciate the courage you have. But it won't last any longer," Asthiyuj laughed loudly at her, and said again, "How are you going to do that when your own body won't be in your control?"

Her eyes slightly widen.

"Oh, you realize what is going to happen with you next?"

"Don't you dare to touch her, you filthy insect," Surya shouted.

"I am keeping you alive so that you can see your best hope, the blood of Bharata turning into, what do you call, a MONSTER,"

Dimisha made a tight fist and took a step back. She was trying to breathe normally, but her heart was not under control. The beating was getting faster. Her forehead and under the nose portion was sweating.

"I can feel it. Your body is heating up right on time. It's like your body is starting to bail upon you," he came closer and took a smell of her.

"It's time, " he stared at her eyes, " I will go inside the temple with the help of your body,"

He took out a sharp knife and gave a cut to his palm and then to her palm too. He let those cuts touch each other. The blood from the body of Asthiyuj started to flow to her body. Slowly slowly she started to blackout.

Aryan was weeping to see her like this. After some time, she dropped to the ground like a life person, and so the body of Asthiyuj.

She opened her eyes. It's completely red. She stood up and looked at her hands, touched her body, and face. She was behaving she was seeing herself for the first time. The cut marks on her palm were gone.

"Dimisha," Aryan was calling.

"Dimisha is gone. It's Asthiyuj. I think he likes the body," Mandakini said.

Surya was kneeling there, dropping his head. He even could not look at her.

"It's all over. We have failed the humankind," he was telling himself.

"No, no, it can not end like this. It's not possible," Aryan was crying.

She laughed to see them like this. But it's not her.

"You, filthy, primitive fools, your time is over on earth, "

She kept laughing and laughing.

Aryan and Surya were drowned in tears. Everything was lost. Each effort they had made by then to stop Asthiyuj became dust.

"What do you want me to do with him?" Mandakini asked to the monster inside Dimisha's body.

She came closer to them.

Suddenly, her body started to wriggle abnormally, like she was having a hysteric attack. She was not able to stand on her legs. The shaking was not stopping, rather, it's increasing.

"What is happening?" he asked.

"I don't know, "

She was looking at her, squeezing her eyes.

Surya was looking at her with his mouth open. Gradually her body becomes stiff. The color of her skin turned into snow white. Her red eyes turned into blue.

Aryan gave Mandakini a hard blow in her stomach with his elbow and escaped from her grip. He immediately ran near Dimisha.

He touched her, calling her name. She was laying like a lifeless body with her eyes wide open. Her body was freezing.

"Aryan, help me," Surya screamed.

The shadows standing next to him was gone.

He rushed to him and opened the locks of the chain.

"Surya, what is happening with her?"

Surya looked at her eyes, touched her palms. But her body became like a big piece of ice.

"No, Dimisha, you can't do that, " Surya seemed scared.

He immediately opened the sodaka kalash. It's empty. Not a single drop was inside the pot.

"She...She.." He was stammering. Words are not coming out of his mouth.

"What?" Aryan was impatient too.

"She is gone,"

"What do you mean she is gone!" he pushed him and uttered, "This is not true. Bring her back, you have to bring her back, we can not give up on her like this, " Aryan cried out.

"She trapped Asthiyuj inside her. I can not do anything, "

His mind stopped working. He did not know what to do. The injuries and the pain of his body seemed nothing in front of that.

"No, no, no, why did you do that? Why did you leave like this? Please, come back. Talk to me for once, just one more time. Dimisha. Speak,"

Aryan was crying and crying, holding her body in his arms.

Chapter 39

Aryan was sitting on a bench near the lake, inside the shrine. They didn't allow benches near it, but somehow he able to get one. He enjoyed sitting there, watching the swans. It helps him to commemorate the moment when Dimisha was with him.

It's been several weeks since she was gone. Though, the pictures of that moment were still in his mind, fresh and alive. He could hear her voices like she was calling his name for help. Mercury was playing around him.

"Hey," Someone pulled him out from his thoughts.

He raised his head to look at him and again moved back towards the lack.

It's Surya, standing there.

Surya could see what is going on inside him. He was a changed person. The person, who always smiles, who used to tease him all the time, was lost somewhere in that place. This one, sitting in front of Surya, was not the Aryan he met earlier. His eyes were swollen.

"You are here to tell me something?" Aryan asked without looking at him.

"Yeah, Gurudev is looking for you. He has something to discuss with you, and...."

"And?"

"I wanted to see you too. I wanted to make sure that you are fine, "

He turned towards Surya asked without any expression on his face, " What did you find out? Am I fine?"

"No, but you will be. I can tell that, "

"I hear her voices wherever I go, "

He started to weep.

"Listen, we could not change what happened. But we will remember the reason for which she sacrificed herself,"

"She is in pain, a never-ending pain, which neither let her die, nor to live,"

"That's a sacrifice no one can make except her, She was....sorry, she is a brave girl,"

"I should have known that. She was telling me about the test she faced while walking through the water corridor. It's telling her to sacrifice herself for others,"

"Don't blame yourself. It's not your fault."

"I wish I walked on that corridor that day. You know what, she was telling me that she just needed a trojan horse. But her plan to become that did not cross my mind,"

"She could see what's coming. That's why she drank the Sodaka and trapped him inside forever. She made a smart decision,"

"She never told me anything, about it, "

"Dimisha knows that you would not let her do it if she told you,"

"Would not you do the same?"

"She loves you, I can tell,"

"You think so?"

I saw it in her eyes. The way she looked at you, the way she stuck around, she definitely loves you,"

"I made her fail,"

"It's not your fault. She made that decision, "

"Did you find anything about Mandakini?"

"She knows how to hide. But, don't worry. We will find her. She will get what she deserves, "

Aryan, again moved his brooding eyes back to the lack.

"Anyway, Gurudev is waiting for you. Go and meet him," he tapped on his shoulder and left.

Aryan smiled, nodding his head.

He waited for some time and then went to meet Gurudev.

Gurudev was sitting in dhyana mudra when Aryan arrived. He preferred not to disturbed him. So, he just waited there without any noise.

"Come, sit here," Gurudev said, relaxing his legs.

"Sorry, I don't want to wake you up,"

"No, it's fine. I was waiting for you,"

Aryan sat on the floor in front of him.

"I have something to tell about Dimisha,"

His face became pale to hard her name.

"Her body was shifted to the cold chamber today,"

"Do you think there is any chance of curing her? I mean is it possible to get her back to life?"

Gurudev released a sigh and said," She had drunk Sodaka, and then she summoned him inside. This compound gets activated if it comes into contact with those creatures. When Asthiyuj entered her body, that got activated and it trapped him inside. Her body becomes a cage. She is neither dead nor alive. So, I don't want to give you any false hope."

Aryan did not say anything. He knew what it meant.

"I called you because I wanted to know about your upcoming days, what have you decided?"

"Dimisha left a responsibility upon my shoulder. I will stay here, learn about all those things and protect the world just like she did,"

"You have made your mind? Because once you are inside, there is no going back,"

"I have already entered this circle. Anyway, there is nothing out there for me,"

"In that case, your training starts now. Are you ready to be a warrior of The Ghost?"

"Yes, I am ready," he stood up and said.

The sunlight coming through the window felt on his face as he stood up. But, this time it felt different, like an indication of a path to a journey.

It's the beginning …..