

**"AARVI."**

She was sitting on the bench in the corridor looking unconsciously; thousands of memories were running in her head. Her marriage, a typical arranged-marriage by her father and she agreed to that because, she had actually no objection with her family. The day of her life, marriage-day was full of memories with all her friends, relatives, families and she was happy to the extreme. She cried while leaving her heaven for another home like a child and accepted, a girl had to go. Her eyes were full of hope and excitement for her new life, maybe she was dreaming of it. Things were exactly the same she had thought before that night. But, that day after her marriage in her in-laws house changed her life completely.

"That night, just after three days of her marriage, she faced the most inhumane act ever. She experienced that barbarous happening whole night drowned with blood all over. She did not defend herself because he had taken the rights on her body by marrying her in the presence of crowd. He was her legally wedded husband to force himself on her anywhere, anytime and by any means. She screamed, nobody listened. She bleed, no one cared. She suffered, no one asked. " A drop of tear fell from her eyes and she still felt Goosebumps of those thoughts.

The peon called her. " Ma'am, Please go inside. Sir is here."

" Yeah. Thank you."

" May I come in sir?" she questioned.

"Yes, please come in Mrs. Nikita."

" I'll be Miss Nikita from tomorrow Mr. Mishra." She smiled and took a seat in front of him.

Mr.Mishra- "Is everything going well in the court room? Any tension? "

"Hmmm. Everything is going fine. Case is on our side. Let's see tomorrow." She replied.

"Well. I hope so. Sorry. I was out of city for last four days. You waited for me. I had started the legal procedure for adoption. It may take one month. You have to wait."

"I can wait for years. Thank you so much for helping me in fulfilling my dream. I will be indebted. " She stated politely.

" No Nikita. You deserve it. I am not doing anything out of the flow to help you. But, you are going against everything for your dream and alone. It's commendable and it needs courage indeed. You are a great human in true sense. It's my privilege to know you." He said.

She showed her gratefulness and asked for his permission to meet her dream.

"Yes. Sure. You can meet her anytime. Wait a while, please."

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He called his office girl to bring her.

Nikita was staring at the door without a blink. Maybe it was magical for her life, that little girl. The first day with her got flashed back before Nikita's eyes. Just before one month, she visited the child care centre for a work and met her accidentally. That day was the happiest day for her life and she got the reason to smile again. She was, as usual, waiting for Mr. Arnav Mishra, the director of the Child Care Centre, and was turning some papers and a little girl ran randomly and hugged her legs suddenly and started giggling. As a result, the bunch of papers fell down from her hand and she looked at her in worries. She thought that the baby got hurt.

"Hey baby, You Okay? Got hurt?"

She picked her up on her lap. Her eyes locked in her tiny face. "Arre. She is too small to talk." She murmured.

A girl of her early twenty came and told, " Sorry ma'am. We were playing "hide and seek" and she tried to hide behind you. But, "

"It's Okay. No problem. What's her name? How old is she?"

" No official name given yet. But, we call her Pari. Probably, she is one and half years old. Both of her parents died before three months in the flood and she was luckily escaped by one of her villagers. He dropped her here. From that day, she is with me." The girl told in one breathes.

Her heart dropped after listening her. Nikita stood up and took Pari in her arms, planted a kiss on her forehead while she was playing with her pendent hanging on the neck.

"You need it Baby? I'll get you one next time." She smiled.

" Come Pari. Come to me. Aunty has work to do." The girl took Pari from her. But, Nikita's world stopped there in her face. "Listen Girl. May I Know Your Name?" Nikita called the girl form back.

" Priya. I'm working as a care taker here." She answered. Nikita smiled thanking her. She left with Pari and Nikita was there at still looking at them.

That day, she decided her future with that little angel. That day, she smiled after years for a genuine reason. That day, she felt alive. She set to bring that angle in her life forever. She met Mr. Mishra and opened her wish before. He nodded "yes " to her and promised to help her in any means.

" Sir, Pari." Priya entered the room carrying Pari. Nikita sensed the moment and looked at Pari with a broad smile in her eyes. She reciprocated her with open arms to hug. Priya made her stand on the ground and she ran towards Nikita with some not cleared words and smiles. Nikita hugged her tight on her knees and her heart cried in happiness. She felt like holding her entire universe in her arms. Mr. Mishra was standing at a distance smiling and thinking, " How can someone be so close to soul in little time? Only a baby can. No wonder we call them angels on earth."

Nikita got Pari sat on her lap hugging and told, " Sir, Please hurry up. I can't wait to take her home."

Mr.Mishra dragged the chair and sat beside her. " Sure. Legal procedure will be finished in time. The thing is that, she is born for you for sure. Nothing will stop you Nikita. Pari is the luckiest on earth. She will be called yours."

" No No Sir. I will be blessed if she will choose me. I'll be the luckiest instead."

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She asked her, " mama, what is marriage?"

she looked at her. "Oh! I was in my past. I was recalling my life 6 years back." She realised the reality from her mind. " Hey you returned? Don't want to play more?"

"No Mama. I'm done. Tired. You say na."

This little baby of her grew so fast. Now she is 8. She kept her hand on her head with love and smiled.

"Beta, a social bond which ties two families and two persons for lifetime quoted with happiness and a promise of sharing the life together."

She questioned her with stressed eyes," Mama, are you happy?"

She went in silent zone for next couple of minutes dragged by memories buried inside her heart. She came closer to her from the other side of the bench to hug her tight. Perhaps, those tiny hands did not guess the reason of her silence and decided to hug. Little baby was unable to know the game of her mama's mind. She held her hands and kissed them.

"Beta, Let's go home. It's evening now. You have forgotten your coat too. It's cold na?"

They left the park holding each other's hands. On the way back, she was continuously thinking what to answer her girl. How could she make her daughter understand the happiness she got was inexpressible? Would a girl of 8 understand life ? Maybe her daughter would do.

At home, she hugged her on reaching and told," your mama is happy because you are her happiness." she smiled listened her mom so innocently, so radiantly and so heavenly as if she understood everything that was unsaid yet. She could not take her eyes of from her angel's face. How could she? She was the reason, she smiled from always. She was the ocean in her life's desert.

"Baby, take this glass. You are a good girl. You will finish it in no time, won't you? "

"Mama, You are so clever. You always fool me to drink milk. But, Miss. Aarvi is a good daughter and she drinks milk regularly." She smiled. She left for her study room after having the glass of milk while she left for making dinner.

"Yes. Miss.Aarvi is the best daughter in the world. Her Pari is the best daughter in the world." Nikita knew it.

In the kitchen, she lost again the time of past when her divorce granted 6 years back.

Judge repeatedly asked," Are you sure, you don't want to compromise? You don't want to give your marriage a chance? "

" I am 100% sure sir. I don't want to kill my self-respect every day. I don't want to be a criminal killing anybody. I want peace and happiness and I think, I deserve it always. Everyone deserves it. Marriage is not everything. I won't compromise my life for the sake of a social bond. I can't stay with a person who thinks, girls are born to tolerate. I can't tolerate someone who are a PhD holder in lying and who shows his manly power by raping his wife every night stating his legal rights as a husband. Please, don't ask me to compromise in this marriage." Nikita stated in the witnessed.

"Divorce is granted." Judge declared. She felt relieved.

Her struggle for life ended. After three failed attempts of suicide two years back when she decided to stepped ahead from this marriage, she was well aware that no one would understand her pain. Nobody would listen her pain she was going through physically, emotionally and mentally. But, she had lost faith on marriage, relationship and love after that night. He was no longer a husband to her but a damn bloody rapist <sup>quoting</sup> with so-called gentleness who had the false notion of owning a girl in exchange of financial security from his highly handsome salary. She decided to step out and never returned. The whole damn society was against her. Marital rape was not a crime and a husband had all the rights to enjoy the body of his wife without her consent even, nothing wrong in that. A girl was bound to give her husband physical pleasure whenever and wherever he demanded. Nikita was against this shameless tradition of marriage. She stood for herself and her parents hugged her to fix the broken pieces of soul and body.

Today, she was free completely from that cage of marriage and she was happy with no regrets. She was independent with a secure job in bank. She determined to live her life in her terms and conditions and she won. She wished to adopt a girl in future and to give her a better life. It was not easy but she was sure of doing it. Her parents were worried by this decision but they understood. Then, the day came in her life when Nikita met Pari in the child care centre for the first time and she fell in love with her in the very first sight. Pari entered her soul and never refused to be back.

" Nikita, all the legal procedures were finished. Congratulations new Mom." Mr. Mishra on call.

" Thank you. You perhaps gave me my world." words got choked on her throat. She could not answer properly and drove straight to the child care centre.

After signing the remaining documents, Nikita thanked Mr.Mishra and handed him a cheque for the development of the children's' park.

" Nikita, don't thank me. Thank the almighty. He is great. And, yes please don't call me sir. We are friends and you can call me by my name Mrs.Nikita. Opsss.. Sorry. Miss.Nikita. Congratulations once again for your victory against evil Miss.Champ. I'll meet you this weekend at your place. Take your Pari. She is waiting for you." Nikita hugged Mr.Arnab Mishra with teary eyes. Not to be dishonest, this friend of her always stood for her whenever she needed a friend. He gave her the whole universe in the form of Pari by clearing all the legal process smoothly. Without him, it would not be possible. Arnab wiped her tears out and told," I'm with you Nikita. Don't worry. Go home. Happy days are coming."

" Baby, Let's go our home. " Nikita took Pari and walked towards the door.

" Why Aarvi? " Arnab asked from the back.

" Aarvi was the only dream I had ever dreamt of from always." She replied.

Arnab was surprisingly standing while Nikita left carrying her pride, Miss. Aarvi Mishra. Pari converted to Aarvi.

She still remembered her tiny fingers holding her hands when she entered her home for the first time. Nikita's mother welcomed her granddaughter with Tika and she collapsed in her lap blissful as if she knew her from her birth. From that day, she became the soul of the family and kept spreading peace and happiness with her unconditional love and countless giggles. When she accepted Nikita, she was a baby of one and half year. Maybe, she was the littlest to sense the emotions of family. But, she never cried unlike little babies. Aarvi stepped her little feet in Nikita's life to give her life. She remembered when she took Aarvi in her arms for the first time and she clutched her fingers tightly. She remembered when she slept in her lap for the first time embracing her and listening to stories and she spent the whole night staring at her face. She remembered the day when she started talking and called her Mama for the very first time. She was in cloud nine and her happiness was no bound. She called Arnab to share this news and he equally got thrilled in happiness and ran to see Aarvi. That day was no less than a rebirth day for Nikita. She recalled her first day in Kidzz and she was crying for not going to school and she was waiting two hours outside the school gate. That day, she was crying as the apple of her eyes was started her new life. She reminded the day when her pride ran towards her to show her the certificates of her excellence. She remembered every little things of her and of them. She had treasured those priceless moments in the locker of her heart and soul because she was the only one she lived for.

She took a deep breath and smiled at herself.

" Mama, Arnab Uncle is here. " Aarvi shouted in happiness. She is his lifeline literally. She thinks, maybe Arnab is addicted to Aarvi. There is no weekend till date form last six years when Arnab does not come to meet Aarvi. "Yes Baby. Coming. " She replied.

" Hey Nikita. What is there today for dinner? "

" Not yet decided. You say. What do you want to have?"

"Hmmm. Something beautiful like your heart."

"What! Are you mad? Always flirt-mode activated. Mad man."

" Not always. Just the thing is, you take it wrongly." He smiled.

Nikita left for the kitchen without saying a word. She knows very well what he says. But, she does not want this story to be continued. He respects her wish too.

"Nothing is absolutely incomplete without marriage. Marriage is just a part of life which is over hyped by our society. And, everyone has the full rights to choose their happiness, not necessarily in marriage only. If we will sit and listen what people will say when a girl remained unmarried for 25 years or when a marriage fail, definitely we will lose our lives in those baseless and useless stuffs. A bad phase of life or a broken marriage can't decide our future and our happiness. Life is beautiful beyond everything. You have sole rights on your happiness and peace. So I did choose my life on my own ways. A broken marriage could not decide my happiness. I fell in love again after that also with my life and world. That fall made me raised in every steps of life. I gathered all my courage to fulfil my dreams. And, Aarvi is the biggest dream I have and she is the reality now. She is my own child not born from my womb but born from my heart. She may not have my blood and flesh but she is enriched with my values. She makes me proud in every steps of life. She colours my sky with rainbow in every season we pass through. She is the reality in my life that has come as the greatest blessing from the God. She functions as the beats of my heart. She is the answer to all my prayers. She completes me in true sense. I am blessed to have her in my life." Nikita's inner voice explained this to herself when she was preparing for dinner.

Aarvi knows it that Nikita is not her biological mother.

When she was five, she did not know how, she came to her and sat on her lap and told her in her not so cleared voice, " Mama, I was not born from you? You had brought me from somewhere. Right?"

She was shockingly surprised and tried to say something to her. But, her little bundle of joys cut her before that and told, " I Know Mama, I'm everything to you and God has sent me to you."

She hugged her tight in tears and looked up to thank The Almighty. She smiled and told herself, 'it's not necessary to give birth to become a mother. Beta, you are my own child. It's the ultimate truth. "

"My Aarvi is all grown up to do her works by herself. She thinks so." Nikita murmured.

Aarvi came inside the kitchen calling. "Mama, We are hungry. Arnav uncle is on phone. Serve the plates."

She made a puppy face." Sorry baby. I forgot. Just give me few more minutes. Come, sit down here."

"Wait. I will help you." She added.

"Accha! My girl is too big to make food by her own?" She smiled.

"Yes, I'm a very big girl now Mama. You never realise." Her innocent face explained.

Arnav was standing there at the kitchen-door smiling when Nikita noticed it and smiled back.

"May I join to help you little princess?" Arnav questioned.

"Yes uncle. Come soon. Mama is weak in cooking. We have to handle the kitchen today." Aarvi's voice reciprocated. Nikita handed Arnav the chef gown over to wear with a smile garnished in her eyes.