

The
WEIGHT
of a
GOLDEN
PROMISE

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Ms. Supriya is an Engineer by profession. This is her debut Novel. Her intention is to remain active in every endeavour while continuing to pursue excellence in her professional career. She sincerely thanks every reader for opting this book and wishing that, this novel will last so long in the minds of every reader after the final page.



Symbol of Loyalty

Dedicated to every dream that demanded sacrifice, every heart that chose patience, and every soul that believed affection is measured not by possession, but by selflessness.

PROLOGUE

Not every victory is crowned with applause. Some arrive beneath dazzling lights, with gold medals resting proudly around deserving necks. Others are buried in silence, hidden behind unspoken promises, quiet sacrifices, and tears that no one ever witnesses. This is not merely the story of a young woman who dreamt of winning a gold medal.

It is the story of girl named **Vedika**. She believed that determination could overcome every obstacle, that sincerity would never be wasted, and that some bonds were strong enough to survive distance, time, and silence. She gave herself completely to her family, to her education, and to the dreams she carried with unwavering resolve. But life has an extraordinary way of testing those who dare to hope. The medal she had pursued slipped beyond her reach. The man she trusted vanished without explanation. The future she had carefully built dissolved into a silence louder than any farewell. Yet neither failure nor heartbreak could persuade her to abandon the values that had shaped her. Even when life offered every reason to become bitter, she chose compassion. Even when hope seemed impossible, she continued to believe, years passed, the seasons changed and the world moved on. But some promises refuse to disappear. They linger in forgotten books, unfinished conversations, familiar streets, and quiet

memories that time can never erase. They wait patiently for the moment destiny decides to speak again.

Perhaps life is not measured by the medals we win, but by the strength with which we endure the battles no one else can see.

Perhaps the greatest triumph belongs not to those who reached the finish line first, but to those who lost everything and still found the courage to remain kind. Because some stories are never about success. Some are about becoming the person that success could never define.

And sometimes the greatest love is the one that asks for nothing, the greatest victory is the one no one applauds, and the greatest sacrifice is simply waiting....

CHAPTER 1

The morning sun cast a gentle glow across the sprawling campus of one of **Chennai's** most esteemed Engineering colleges. It was **Orientation Day**—a day of warm welcomes, fresh beginnings, and countless dreams waiting to unfold. The campus buzzed with excitement as anxious yet hopeful first-year students arrived with their parents, each carrying aspirations for a brighter future. Among them was **VEDIKA**. She walked through the college gates with quiet confidence, accompanied by her father and mother. Unlike many of the other students, whose ambitions were still taking shape, **VEDIKA's** dream had long been crystal clear. She had come to this institution with a singular purpose: to graduate as the **University's Gold Medallist**. Every decision she had made had been guided by that ambition, and she had no intention of allowing anything to distract her from it.

Reserved by nature, **VEDIKA** neither sought popularity nor depended on companionship. She believed that true success was earned through discipline, perseverance, and self-reliance. Friendships, though welcome, would never take precedence over the goal she had set for herself. While many of her classmates chose to live in the college hostel or nearby paying-guest accommodation, embracing the freedom and convenience of campus life, **VEDIKA** could never imagine living away from the warmth and familiarity of home. The comfort of her

family, the reassuring rhythm of her household, and the quiet strength she drew from their presence meant far more to her than the convenience of living close to the college. And so, a demanding routine became the foundation of her life.

Every morning, before dawn had fully broken, she rose promptly at five o'clock. After completing her household chores and preparing for the day ahead, she left home to catch the government bus that carried her across the city. By half past seven, she was already seated in her classroom, ready to begin another day of lectures and practical sessions. When classes ended at half past five in the evening, her day was still far from over. She boarded the government bus once again, often exhausted after hours of study, and endured the long journey home. Only after returning did she allow herself a brief rest before immersing herself in her books once more. Day after day, this became the rhythm of her life. While others found joy in college festivals, social gatherings, and late-night conversations, VEDIKA remained steadfast. Her eyes never wavered from the prize she had envisioned long before she first stepped onto the campus. Thus began her engineering journey—a journey shaped not by comfort, but by sacrifice; not by chance, but by unwavering determination.

CHAPTER 2

It was the first day of VEDIKA's second year of Engineering. As she walked past the college Administration Block, something on the notice board caught her attention. Displayed with quiet pride were the names of the final-year **Gold Medal recipients** from every department. She slowed her pace instinctively, her eyes drifting from one name to the next. Then, almost without realising it, a dream took root in the depths of her heart. I.e

"One day, my name will be there too."

It was more than a passing thought. In that quiet moment, standing before a simple notice board, the dream of graduating as a Gold Medallist became the purpose that would silently shape the years ahead. Curiosity soon led her to search for the Gold Medal recipient from her own department. The honour has been awarded to a young man whose name immediately caught her attention. It carried an old-world charm, remarkably different from the fashionable names common among students of her generation. A faint smile touched her lips. Yet it was not his name that lingered in her thoughts—it was what it represented. Somewhere, an ordinary student had distinguished himself through extraordinary perseverance, unwavering discipline, and academic excellence. His achievement stirred something

profound within her, strengthening her determination to pursue the very same honour.

From that day onwards, although she had never met him and knew nothing about him beyond his name, the unknown Gold Medallist became an unseen source of inspiration in her life. Whenever her determination wavered, the memory of that notice board quietly reminded her of the dream she had chosen for herself. Time, however, waits for no one. The third semester soon came to an end, and the long-awaited day of the examination results finally arrived.

It became one of the happiest days of VEDIKA's life. She had emerged as the topper of her semester. Even more remarkably, she had achieved a perfect score of one hundred out of one hundred in **Mathematics**—a milestone she had dreamt of since childhood. Holding her marks card in trembling hands, she stared at the numbers again and again, scarcely believing they were real. For a fleeting moment, the world around her seemed to fade into silence.

Every early morning, every sleepless night, every sacrifice, and every hour of disciplined study had quietly led her to this moment. It was far more than a mark on a sheet of paper.

It was proof that dreams, when pursued with unwavering determination and quiet perseverance, could indeed become reality. With renewed confidence and a heart filled with hope, she stepped into her fourth semester, believing she was moving steadily towards the dream that had first taken root before the college notice

board—a dream that no longer felt distant, but wonderfully within reach.

One evening, while speaking with an older family friend who had graduated from engineering and lived in the neighbouring house, the conversation unexpectedly turned to the very same Gold Medallist whose name has remained etched in VEDIKA's memory. Unable to contain her curiosity no longer, VEDIKA asked,

"Do you happen to know him?"

Her friend smiled warmly. "Yes," she replied.

"He was my junior during our Pre-University days."

VEDIKA listened intently. Her friend continued,

"He studied in a Tamil-medium school. In fact, he failed his first year of Pre-University. Most people believed that failure would define the rest of his life. But instead of surrendering to disappointment, he chose to begin again. Through relentless hard work, unwavering determination, and remarkable resilience, he transformed himself completely and completed his second year with distinction."

For a long moment, VEDIKA remained silent. She found the story almost impossible to believe. Someone who had once faced academic failure had eventually graduated as a Gold Medallist. To VEDIKA, who had always admired perseverance above natural talent, his journey was nothing short of extraordinary. It reminded her that success did not belong solely to those who had never fallen, but to those who possessed the courage to rise each time life brought them to their knees. She had never

seen him. She had never spoken to him. Yet his story alone had quietly ignited a fire within her heart—a silent determination to prove that perseverance could overcome even the greatest obstacles. As evening descended, their conversation gradually came to an end, and they returned to their respective homes. Yet although the conversation had ended, the thoughts it had awakened lingered long afterwards. The story of the young Gold Medallist continued to echo in VEDIKA's heart, becoming a quiet source of inspiration she would carry with her in the days to come. Neither of them knew it then, but destiny had already begun weaving their lives together, thread by thread, long before they would ever meet.

CHAPTER 3

A few days later, after completing her fourth-semester classes, **VEDIKA** returned home as usual. The moment she stepped inside, her father informed her that they had a guest. Curious, she walked into the sitting room and was pleasantly surprised to find that the visitor was one of her father's oldest friends—her former PUC mathematics tutor, a teacher she had always admired and respected.

The instant she saw him, her face lit up with excitement.

"Sir," she said with undisguised pride, "I stood first in the third semester, and this semester I scored a perfect hundred out of a hundred in Mathematics."

The words tumbled out almost before she had taken her seat. She had longed to share the news with the man who had laid the foundations of her fondness for mathematics. Her tutor smiled warmly, his eyes reflecting the quiet satisfaction that only a teacher can feel when a student surpasses expectations. He congratulated her wholeheartedly and praised her dedication. Then, after a brief pause, he mentioned something that captured her imagination far more than she had anticipated.

"There is something else you should know," he said.

VEDIKA listened intently.

"The engineering gold medalist from your college this year is one of my students as well."

For a fleeting moment, **VEDIKA** was speechless. The revelation stirred something deep within her. Her dream of one day seeing her own name engraved among the college's gold medalists suddenly felt even more vivid, more attainable. If he was her teacher's student, then perhaps there was a chance she could learn from him too. With his guidance in academics, she believed she could sharpen her own abilities and move one step closer to the dream that had quietly become the center of her life.

From that day onwards, the gold medal was no longer just an ambition. It became a destination she was determined to reach, whatever it demanded of her.

The days drifted by, and the fourth semester settled into its relentless rhythm. Lectures began at dawn, assignments accumulated without mercy, and laboratory sessions stretched long into the evening. Yet, beneath the weight of her daily routine, **VEDIKA's** dream remained untouched. Every sacrifice she made, every early morning and every weary journey home, was driven by a single ambition—to one day earn the Gold Medal that had first captured her imagination.

One quiet evening, as she absent-mindedly scrolled through social media, something unexpected caught her eye. On one of her friend's profile pages appeared a familiar name—the young man who had graduated as the Gold Medalist from her department.

For an instant, time seemed to stand still. The name she had once seen on the college notice board now appeared

before her again, no longer carved into a list of achievers but existing as a real person. A gentle smile found its way to her lips, and an unfamiliar excitement stirred within her heart. It was a feeling she could neither explain nor dismiss. She had never spoken to him. They had never met. To him, she was simply another face in a world full of strangers. Yet, in her mind, he had become the silent symbol of everything she wished to become. His achievement had inspired a dream that had quietly transformed her own life.

She hesitated, her finger hovering over the screen. It seemed almost foolish to send a friend request to someone who had no idea she existed. What if he ignored it? What if he wondered who she was? But then she smiled to herself.

Some journeys begin with grand declarations. Others begin with a single, trembling act of courage.

Taking a slow breath, she pressed the 'Add Friend' button

It was only a click.

To everyone else, it meant nothing.

To **VEDIKA**, however, it felt as though she had taken the very first step towards the dream that had quietly guided her heart ever since the day she had stood before that college notice board, gazing at a stranger's name and whispering a promise to herself.

She had no idea that this seemingly insignificant moment would one day become the opening chapter of a story

that would test her dreams, her courage, and her heart in ways she could never have imagined.

As they had many mutual friends, he accepted her friend request without hesitation. **VEDIKA** could scarcely contain her happiness. To her, it felt as though the path towards her dream had suddenly become a little less daunting. She believed that having the guidance of a true achiever—a Gold Medalist who had already accomplished what she aspired to—would make her own academic journey far more meaningful. With renewed hope and determination, she looked forward to learning from him and moving one step closer to achieving her goal.

As the days slipped quietly into months, **VEDIKA**'s acquaintance with the gold medalist continued to grow. She began studying exactly as he had. It reached a point where she treated every passage he had highlighted in the books he had lent her as important, believing that if he had considered it worthy of emphasis, it must hold significance. Without realising it, she had started following not only his academic guidance but also his disciplined approach to learning, trusting that the path which had led him to success would one day lead her to hers as well.

What had begun as a simple introduction gradually evolved into a meaningful friendship, one built upon mutual respect and a shared passion for learning. More often than not, she found herself seeking his guidance whenever she struggled with a particularly challenging concept, and he never hesitated to help. His patient explanations not only strengthened her understanding

but also deepened her admiration for his humility despite his remarkable academic achievements.

Before long, the fifth semester examinations came to an end, leaving only the practical laboratory examinations ahead. One evening, while **VEDIKA** was immersed in her laboratory preparations, her telephone rang. It was the gold medalist. She answered warmly, but her mind remained fixed on the practical examinations that awaited her. After exchanging a few pleasantries, she explained that she was in the midst of preparing for her laboratory exams. Seizing the opportunity, she sought clarification on several concepts that had been troubling her. As always, he answered each question with calm assurance, patiently resolving every doubt until she felt completely confident.

Relieved and grateful, **VEDIKA** thanked him sincerely for taking the time to help despite his own commitments.

“I shall ring you once my laboratory examinations are over,” she said with a gentle smile that could almost be heard through the telephone.

With those words, she politely ended the conversation and returned to her books, carrying with her not only greater confidence for the examinations ahead but also a quiet appreciation for the friendship that had steadily become an important part of her academic journey.

CHAPTER 4

The semester examinations were finally over, and the college's much-awaited technical trip was only a day away. The excitement of travelling with friends filled the campus, but for **VEDIKA**, the evening before the journey would become one of the most unforgettable moments of her life. As she was finishing her preparations, her phone rang. The name flashing across the screen made her smile instinctively – it was the Gold Medal Boy.

The conversation began as it always did, with casual exchanges about the trip, college, and future plans. Then, after a brief pause, his voice became unusually gentle.

"**VEDIKA**... may I ask you something?"

"Of course," she replied.

"What kind of person would you want as your life partner?"

The question took her completely by surprise.

For a few moments, she could not find the right words. Her heart knew the answer instantly, yet her mind urged her to remain silent. She wondered whether speaking the truth would change everything between them. Finally, she took a deep breath.

"I can tell you," she said softly, "but you must promise me one thing."

"What is it?"

"You mustn't misunderstand me."

Before he could reassure her, nervousness overwhelmed her. She smiled awkwardly, changed the subject, and began speaking about the technical trip instead.

He listened quietly.

Yet deep within, he sensed that the answer she had been afraid to speak was the very answer he had been longing to hear. He had admired her determination, sincerity, and kindness for a long time. He could not let this moment pass unanswered.

"VEDIKA," he said gently, "please don't hide your feelings. Whatever is in your heart, tell me. I promise I won't misunderstand." His words gave her the courage she had been searching for.

A long silence followed. The only sound between them was the rhythm of their breathing.

Then, almost in a whisper, she finally spoke.

"If I ever choose someone to spend my life with... I would want him to be just like you."

Time seemed to stand still.

Neither of them spoke for several seconds. The silence carried more meaning than words ever could. A smile slowly appeared on his face. His heart, which had silently hoped for this moment, was overflowing with joy.

"So..." he said softly, "I wasn't the only one."

VEDIKA remained silent, her cheeks glowing with embarrassment.

"I've wanted to tell you this for a long time," he continued. "I like you too, **VEDIKA**. Perhaps I have for much longer than I ever admitted to myself."

Her eyes filled with overwhelming happiness. The emotions she had guarded for so long had finally found a voice. That evening, they found the courage to speak the truth they had both been carrying in silence. Their fondness was not born from grand gestures or dramatic confessions. It grew from admiration, trust, shared ambitions, and countless conversations that had quietly brought two souls together. It was the beginning of a fondness story built not merely on romance, but on friendship, sacrifice, respect, and a promise to stand beside one another while chasing the dreams that mattered most.

Although they both confessed their feelings for one another at the same time, they were left with mixed emotions. On one side, **VEDIKA** was determined to win the Gold Medal and fulfil her father's dream by securing a government job. On the other, the Gold Medal boy was unwavering in his ambition to become a **Civil Servant**. They honestly shared their aspirations with each other and came to a mutual understanding.

They agreed that their dreams should take precedence over everything else. Once they had both achieved their respective goals, they would seek their families' approval before making any decision about their future together. Until then, they resolved to keep their commitment entirely private and not reveal it to anyone.

Not long after they had quietly committed themselves to one another, the Gold Medalist introduced one of his closest classmates to **VEDIKA**. “She is a trusted friend of mine,” he said with a reassuring smile. “If you ever need any help in college, you can always turn to her.” **VEDIKA** thanked him, and over time, she and the young woman developed a sincere friendship. What had begun as a simple introduction gradually grew into a bond built on trust, kindness, and mutual respect. They stood by each other through academic challenges and shared many ordinary moments that made college life memorable. Yet there was one truth that **VEDIKA** carefully kept hidden.

Despite their growing friendship, she never breathed a single word about the silent promise she shared with the Gold Medalist. It was not born out of fear or distrust, but out of respect for the commitment they had made to protect their dreams until the day they had earned the right to speak of them openly. Nor did she confide in any of her own classmates. While friendships often thrive on shared secrets, **VEDIKA** believed that some promises became stronger when they were guarded in silence. To everyone around them, she and the Gold Medalist were simply two determined students whose paths had crossed through academics. No one could see the invisible thread that quietly bound their hearts together—a promise patiently waiting for the day it could step out of the shadows and into the light.

CHAPTER 5

Time moved on, and before she realized it, **VEDIKA** had reached the final year of her engineering degree. It was a year filled with hope, anticipation, and dreams waiting to be fulfilled.

During that time, the Gold Medal Boy called her with news that brought a smile to both their hearts—he had secured a government job. **VEDIKA**'s happiness knew no bounds. She congratulated him with genuine pride, for she had witnessed, from a distance, the dedication and sacrifices that had brought him to that moment.

Yet, the government job was never his final destination. Hidden behind that achievement was a dream he rarely spoke about—his ambition to become a **Bureaucrat**. Refusing to settle for anything less than his ultimate goal, he continued his studies alongside his new responsibilities, proving that true ambition never rests.

The irony of their story was almost unbelievable. They had shared countless conversations, encouraged one another through every triumph and disappointment, and stood beside each other through words alone. Yet, until then, they had never once met in person. Their friendship, trust, and silent commitment had been built entirely over telephone calls, where distance had never weakened the bond between them.

It was only during **VEDIKA**'s final semester that fate finally allowed their paths to cross. For the first time, they stood face to face – not as strangers, but as two souls who had already known each other's hearts. The meeting was simple, almost ordinary, yet it carried the weight of years of unspoken understanding. There were no grand declarations, no dramatic promises, because none were needed. Their dreams remained exactly as they had always been, and neither of them had taken a single step away from the path they had chosen.

Soon afterwards, **VEDIKA** completed her engineering degree. Another chapter of her life quietly came to an end. But one dream remained painfully out of reach. Ever since the day she had stood before the college notice board in her second year and seen the names of the Gold Medal winners, she had imagined her own name shining there one day. That dream had driven her through countless sleepless nights, early mornings, examinations, sacrifices, and unwavering determination. She had performed brilliantly, earning exceptional marks throughout her course. Yet destiny can be both kind and cruel. Despite all her hard work, the Gold Medal slipped away by the narrowest of margins and was awarded to one of her classmates.

For a brief moment, the little girl who had once dreamt so fearlessly felt her heart sink. Years of hope dissolved into silent disappointment. Yet she chose not to envy her friend, nor did she allow defeat to define her. Instead, she smiled, offered her heartfelt congratulations, and quietly accepted that not every sincere dream is destined to become reality.

As she walked out of the college gates for the last time, she carried no Gold Medal around her neck. Instead, she carried something far more precious—a heart that had learned to endure disappointment with grace, a spirit that refused to surrender, and the courage to keep walking towards the dreams that still awaited her beyond those gates.

Some victories are celebrated with medals. Others are written quietly into the character of a person.

VEDIKA's was the latter.

Graduation marked the end of one journey, but for **VEDIKA**, it also became the beginning of another. A few days after the convocation ceremony, she introduced the Gold Medal Boy to her parents. They welcomed him warmly, knowing only that he had guided and encouraged their daughter throughout her engineering years. **VEDIKA** spoke of his kindness, his dedication, and the inspiration he had been to her, but she carefully concealed the one truth closest to her heart—the silent commitment they had made to each other.

Neither of them wished to burden their families with promises before they had fulfilled their own dreams. Until then, their relationship would remain a secret known only to the two of them.

One evening, during one of their usual conversations, he spoke about the future.

"I think you should continue your studies," he said thoughtfully. **VEDIKA** remained silent, waiting for him to explain. "My dream has never been limited to securing

a government job," he continued. "One day, I want to establish a training academy for students preparing for competitive examinations. I want it to become a place where talent is guided, regardless of a person's background. When that day comes, I hope you'll be a part of it."

His words were not a request; they were a glimpse into the future he had quietly been building in his heart. "You have the ability to inspire people, **VEDIKA**," he added gently. "Higher studies will prepare you for that responsibility." She listened carefully. She had always admired the way his dreams extended beyond himself. They were never driven by personal success alone but by the desire to help others achieve theirs.

Without hesitation, she agreed.

"If you believe it will help us build that dream one day," she replied softly, "I'll continue my studies."

Knowing how deeply attached she was to her parents and how often she became homesick, he offered another suggestion that "Why don't you pursue your postgraduate degree at the same engineering college? You'll be close to your family, and you won't have to struggle with being away from home."

His advice was practical, thoughtful, and filled with quiet concern. But **VEDIKA** had a different idea that "I've decided to join one of the top colleges in Mysore," she said with quiet determination. "I want to experience a new academic environment and challenge myself."

Although he was surprised, he respected her decision.

"If that's what your heart says," he smiled, "then go with confidence. I know you'll do well wherever you are. Soon afterwards, **VEDIKA** left Chennai and began her new life in "Trichi".

Yet reality proved very different from what she had imagined. For years, she had lived surrounded by the unconditional fondness of her parents. Every morning had begun with familiar voices, every evening had ended in the comfort of home. In Trichi, despite the impressive campus and excellent facilities, the silence of an unfamiliar room felt unbearably heavy. Each passing day deepened the ache in her heart. She missed her mother's gentle care. She missed her father's reassuring presence. She even missed the ordinary routines she had once taken for granted. Within a week, the loneliness became impossible to ignore.

Finally, she made a decision. She withdrew from the college in Trichi, returned to Chennai, and enrolled for her postgraduate studies at the very engineering college where she had completed her undergraduate degree.

When the Gold Medal Boy heard the news, he burst into laughter. "So," he teased, unable to hide his amusement, **"Miss Independent was planning to conquer Trichi... and surrendered after only one week?"**

VEDIKA sighed dramatically.

"I underestimated how much I would miss home," she admitted.

"I told you so," he replied with a grin. "Some people carry their homes in their luggage. You carry your entire family in your heart."

She laughed despite herself.

Perhaps he was right. Home had never been just a place.

For **VEDIKA**, it had always been the people who had fondness for her unconditionally and perhaps that was why he understood her so completely because long before she spoke her feelings aloud, he had already learnt to read the language of her heart.

As time passed, **VEDIKA** immersed herself in the pursuit of her higher education, whilst, in another town, the Gold Medalist balanced the demands of his government service with his unwavering preparation for the Civil Services Examination, determined to fulfil his dream of becoming a Bureaucrat.

Though separated by distance, neither of them ever forgot where their first priority lay. No matter how demanding their schedules became, they always found time for each other. However hectic his day was, the first 'Good morning' at dawn and the last 'Good night' before sleep were always reserved for **VEDIKA**. Those seemingly ordinary messages became the quiet assurance that, despite the miles between them, they remained an inseparable part of each other's lives.

Their relationship became a silent example to those around them. They met in person only once a year, yet the warmth, understanding, and affection they shared never diminished. Time and distance failed to weaken

the bond they had carefully nurtured. Instead, every sacrifice only strengthened their commitment.

They were, in every sense, fellow travelers in the same boat—each rowing towards a different dream, yet guided by a single destination: a future they hoped to build together.

CHAPTER 6

During the first semester of her postgraduate studies, a notification for a Government recruitment examination was released. **VEDIKA** immediately shared the news with her father and then telephoned the Gold Medal Boy to inform him about it. With the encouragement and approval of both her father and him, she submitted her application for the post. Thereafter, she began preparing simultaneously for both her university examinations and the Government recruitment examination.

At that stage, **VEDIKA** found herself in a dilemma. She had failed to achieve the Gold Medal she had dreamed of during her engineering degree. She had therefore enrolled in postgraduate studies hoping that, at the very least, she would earn the Gold Medal there. However, another thought troubled her that if she secured a Government job before completing her studies, she might be forced to discontinue her education. She shared her concerns with the Gold Medal Boy. Reassuring her, he said, "By the time you receive your appointment order, you will have completed your studies and the Gold Medal will already be yours. Don't be afraid."

Comforted by his words, **VEDIKA** continued her studies with renewed confidence. Just as she had hoped, she emerged as the college topper by the end of her third semester.

However, when she reached her final semester, her Government appointment order arrived at her home.

The news filled her with mixed emotions. On one hand, she was delighted to have secured a Government job, fulfilling her father's long-cherished dream. On the other, she feared that accepting the appointment would mean abandoning her postgraduate studies and losing her chance to win the Gold Medal. She informed her family about the appointment and also shared the news with the Gold Medal Boy. Everyone congratulated her. That evening, she sought his advice regarding the decision she should make. Following the guidance of both her father and the Gold Medal Boy, she decided to put her postgraduate studies on hold and prepare to join her new Government post.

Yet another challenge awaited her. Her place of posting was nearly 300 kilometers away from her hometown. **VEDIKA** had always been deeply attached to her family and suffered from homesickness. Living so far away and travelling daily was simply impossible for her. Unable to decide what to do, she hesitated to join the post and remained at home. Seeing her distress, the Gold Medal Boy once again stood beside her. Through the help of people he knew, he made every effort to arrange a transfer to a location much closer to her home. Eventually, his efforts were successful, and **VEDIKA** was reassigned to an office near her hometown. At last, she felt relieved. Free from anxiety, she settled comfortably into her new role, while the Gold Medal Boy continued working in his Government job and steadily pursuing his dream of becoming an IAS officer. One evening, during a

telephone conversation, he told **VEDIKA** that he intended to establish a coaching institute in the future and wished to entrust its complete administration to her. He explained that managing both a Government job and the institute simultaneously would be difficult. Therefore, he suggested that she should continue in her Government service until their marriage, and afterwards resign from her job to take charge of the coaching institute as well as their household. He also encouraged her to complete the postgraduate course she had left unfinished. Without the slightest hesitation, **VEDIKA** replied, "I have fulfilled my father's dream by securing a Government job. After our marriage, my life and responsibilities will be yours. Therefore, I shall gladly resign from Government service, according to your wishes, and devote myself to managing your coaching institute and our family. Before that, I will complete the postgraduate degree that I left midway."

Time passed, and a few months later, **VEDIKA** was offered another Government post, one that was more prestigious than the one she currently held. However, she remembered the promise she had made to the Gold Medal Boy that after their marriage she would leave Government service and dedicate herself to the coaching institute. Honoring that commitment, she declined the new appointment, choosing to remain true to her word rather than pursue a more distinguished career.

At present, **VEDIKA** has fulfilled all her aspirations and has reached the distinguished position her father had always dreamed she would achieve. In addition, honoring the wish of the Gold Medal Boy, she took six

months' leave from her government job, completed the higher studies she had left unfinished, and became a double graduate. Her present aspirations are for the Gold Medal Boy to realize his dream of becoming a Civil Servant and for the two of them to be married. Throughout this time, she has continued to keep their commitment to one another a closely guarded secret.

By now, **VEDIKA** has reached the age at which her family feels it is time for her to marry. Like any loving parents, her father decides that the time has come to arrange her marriage.

One day, he says to her, "My dear, now that you are of marriageable age, inform the Gold Medal Boy about this and ask whether he is ready for the marriage at this stage."

However, knowing that the Gold Medal Boy is fully immersed in preparing for the Civil Service examination, **VEDIKA** replies that she does not want anything to distract him from his studies. She assures her father that she will discuss marriage only after his examination is over and requests that the subject be set aside for a little while longer.

Since they already believe that the groom has been chosen, her father feels there is no harm in waiting and decides not to pursue the matter any further for the time being.

On the other hand, **VEDIKA** informs the Gold Medal Boy that her father had asked her to speak to him about their marriage. He, too, agrees that they should wait until his

Civil Service examination is over before discussing the matter further.

Consequently, **VEDIKA** decided that until the Gold Medalist completed his Civil Service examination, she would devote her time to meaningful pursuits rather than remain anxious. Determined to support his dream in every possible way, she began preparing study materials that could be useful to him. At the same time, she enrolled in additional courses to enhance her own knowledge and skills. Above all, she wished to keep herself occupied until the day he returned with good news.

Meanwhile, she constantly prayed for his success, making countless vows and offering heartfelt prayers in the hope that he would clear the Civil Service examination. Thus, life moved forward, and the days gradually turned into months. During this period, **VEDIKA** witnessed the marriages of many of her close friends and classmates. Yet, despite the passage of time, no joyful news arrived from the man she had fondness.

CHAPTER 7

VEDIKA had reached the age of twenty-six. On one hand, her family had begun to pressure her to consider marriage. On the other hand, she was deeply concerned that any discussion or emotional burden from her side might distract the Gold Medalist from his Civil Service preparation. Caught between her family's expectations and her unwavering commitment to his dream, **VEDIKA** silently carried the weight of both responsibilities, choosing patience over haste and hope over despair.

Nevertheless, gathering her courage, **VEDIKA** resolved to raise the subject of their marriage with the gold medalist. Summoning all her confidence, she telephoned him. However, as soon as he answered, she received the very same response once again:

"Let the examinations be over first."

As the days slipped by, the distance between them began to grow in ways **VEDIKA** had never imagined. Fearing that every conversation would inevitably turn towards the subject of marriage, and believing that such discussions would distract him from his preparations for the civil service examinations, he gradually withdrew. What had once been regular conversations became occasional exchanges, and even those grew increasingly rare. With each passing day, he answered fewer of her calls, choosing instead to devote every moment of his

time and energy to his studies, while **VEDIKA** was left wondering whether silence had become another sacrifice in the pursuit of his dream. Having made it a habit to share the events of each day with her love liken her routine, her joys, her disappointments, and even the smallest moments that mattered. **VEDIKA** found his growing distance deeply painful. The realization that he was gradually withdrawing from her left her heart heavy with sorrow.

As the days passed, her longing to speak with him only grew stronger. Unable to suppress her desire to hear his voice, she began calling him more frequently, hoping that this time he would answer. Yet, each call met the same response. He declined to answer, sending only a brief message that he would call her later. Unfortunately, that promised call seldom came, leaving **VEDIKA** waiting with a heart full of hope and quiet disappointment.

Determined to understand what had gone wrong, **VEDIKA** decided that speaking over the telephone was no longer enough. She longed to meet him in person and tell him everything that had been weighing heavily on her heart. Taking leave from her government office, she set out from her place of work and travelled to the town where her gold medalist awaited, hoping that a face-to-face conversation would clear the misunderstandings that had gradually come between them.

However, upon learning that **VEDIKA** had travelled all the way to see him without informing him beforehand, he became upset. Refusing to meet her, he asked her to return home immediately and assured her that he would come to see her himself in the coming days.

VEDIKA returned to her hometown with a heart heavier than it had ever been. The journey back felt far longer than the distance she had travelled, for every mile reminded her that she had left without the answers she had desperately sought. The silence between her and the Gold Medalist echoed louder than any words ever could. In fact she tried to meet him for three times more. But the response is still the same.

Life, however, refused to pause for heartbreak. Each morning she reported to her government office, where the mounting pressure of work demanded her complete attention. Yet, no matter how hard she tried to immerse herself in her duties, her mind remained elsewhere. The work that had once filled her with pride now felt burdensome, and the office that had once represented the fulfilment of her father's dream no longer offered her the peace it once did.

For the first time in her life, **VEDIKA** found herself questioning her own destiny. She had always believed that determination could overcome every obstacle. She had achieved academic excellence, fulfilled her father's aspirations by securing a government position, and sacrificed countless comforts in pursuit of her goals. Yet despite all those achievements, she now felt powerless before a problem that neither intelligence nor perseverance could solve.

VEDIKA had never been someone who craved companionship. She had consciously kept her world small, believing that too many relationships would distract her from her ambitions. Throughout the years, her happiness, disappointments, victories, and fears has

been shared with only two people they are her loveable father and the Gold Medalist. They alone knew the person behind her composed exterior.

Her naturally reserved personality had only deepened that solitude. She rarely initiated conversations beyond necessity, and although many admired her sincerity and discipline, few had the opportunity to know her closely. She had built invisible walls around herself, never imagining that one day those very walls would leave her imprisoned in loneliness.

Now, those walls had become unbearably silent.

Each passing day intensified the emptiness within her. The person who had once been her greatest source of strength had gradually become distant, and the absence of his reassuring words created a void that nothing else could fill. For the first time, **VEDIKA** truly understood what it meant to feel alone not because people were absent, but because the one person who mattered most was no longer beside her.

She fought her emotions with remarkable courage, convincing herself that everything would eventually return to normal. But the burden she carried grew heavier with every passing day. Sleepless nights, unanswered questions, and unspoken fears slowly exhausted both her mind and spirit. At last, she realized that silence was no longer protecting her; it was slowly destroying her. If she wished to preserve herself, she needed someone who would simply listen without judgement. More importantly, she could no longer keep hidden the promise she and the Gold Medalist had

guarded so carefully for years. The secret that had once symbolized hope had now become too heavy for one heart to bear.

Summoning every ounce of courage she possessed, **VEDIKA** decided to confide in the only person she believed might truly understand her that the close friend whom the Gold Medalist himself had introduced to her during their college days. With trembling words and tear-filled eyes, she narrated the entire story: how their friendship had blossomed into an unspoken commitment, the dreams they had vowed to achieve before marriage, and the painful distance that had unexpectedly grown between them.

For the first time since her world had begun to crumble, **VEDIKA** allowed another soul to witness the pain she had hidden behind her quiet smile.

On hearing this, her friend looked at **VEDIKA** in utter astonishment and asked, "Are you certain about what you are saying?"

No matter how much **VEDIKA** tried to explain the situation, her friend found it difficult to believe. After listening patiently, she gently replied, "Perhaps you have misunderstood his concern and care for something else. If there had truly been a problem between the two of you, he would surely have spoken to me about it by now. I simply cannot believe that he would behave in such a manner."

Those words, though spoken with good intentions, offered **VEDIKA** no comfort. Instead, they deepened the emptiness within her. For the first time, she realized that

even the one person she had hoped would understand her could not see the pain she was carrying. With no one willing to believe her, **VEDIKA** felt profoundly alone, as though she were fighting a silent battle that no one else could see.

Unable to bear the uncertainty any longer, **VEDIKA** finally realized that no amount of advice from others could quieten the storm within her heart. There was only one person who held the answers she desperately sought. If she was to find peace, she had to hear the truth from him no matter how painful it might be. With that resolve, she once again embarked on the journey to the place where the young man she love was staying. She had travelled the same road before, carrying hope in her heart. This time, however, she carried only fear.

What awaited her was not a conversation she had imagined countless times, nor the reassurance she had prayed for. It was a moment that would quietly divide her life into two chapters before that phone call and after it. Standing outside, her trembling fingers searched for his name in her contacts. She closed her eyes, took a deep breath, and pressed the call button. For nearly two years, every call she had made had disappeared into silence. She had almost forgotten what it felt like to hope.

Then, unexpectedly...

He answered.

The sound of his voice after such an unbearably long silence shattered every wall she had built around her heart. The emotions she had suppressed for two years

rushed to the surface all at once. Tears blurred her vision before she could utter a single sentence.

She was no longer speaking with composure. Between sobs and broken breaths, every question she had carried in her heart poured out uncontrollably. "Why did you distance yourself from me? What mistake did I make? Why did you stop talking to me? Was everything we promised each other meaningless? Have I become a burden to you?"

She had rehearsed those questions a thousand times in her mind, yet when the moment finally arrived, they escaped her lips as cries of a heart that had been breaking in silence for far too long.

There was a brief pause.

Then came the words that shattered what remained of her world.

"You deserve someone better than me. As you already know, my examinations are my priority, and I cannot make any decisions right now. When the time is right, I will explain everything. Too much time has already passed. Please don't waste any more of your life waiting for me. Move on... and marry as soon as you can."

Before she could respond...

The line went dead.

No goodbye.

No explanation.

No promise.

Only silence.

VEDIKA stood motionless, staring at the dark screen of her phone as though it might suddenly come back to life and tell her it had all been a terrible mistake.

But it remained silent.

Around her, the world carried on as though nothing had happened. Vehicles rushed past. People continued their conversations. Life moved forward without hesitation. Yet for **VEDIKA**, time had stopped. It felt as though someone had quietly reached into her heart and extinguished the light that had guided her for years. In that moment, she felt like a frightened child trapped alone in the middle of a busy road, surrounded by relentless traffic rushing in every direction. There was no familiar hand reaching out to lead her to safety, no comforting voice telling her which way to go. Every path before her seemed uncertain, every step impossibly heavy.

She wanted to move.

She wanted to cry.

She wanted to ask God why a promise built on honesty, sacrifice and unwavering faith had led her to such unbearable loneliness.

But no words came.

Only tears.

They fell silently, carrying with them two years of hope, countless unanswered prayers, and a fondness that had never asked for anything except the chance to remain.

Sometimes the deepest heartbreak does not arrive with anger or betrayal. Sometimes it arrives quietly in a familiar voice that gently asks you to let go of the very person you had never imagined living without.

By that time, **VEDIKA** was twenty-eight years old.

She returned home without uttering a single word. There was no greeting, no explanation, no attempt to disguise the storm raging within her. She walked straight to her room, closed the door behind her, and disappeared into a silence that spoke louder than any cry ever could.

That evening, her father noticed the change immediately. His daughter, who had always filled the house with quiet warmth and resilience, now seemed like a shadow of herself. Concern replaced his usual calm as he gently knocked on her door and stepped inside. She sat motionless, her eyes fixed on nothing, as though the world she had once believed in had crumbled before her.

He sat beside her, placing a comforting hand on her shoulder.

“My dear,” he asked softly, “what has happened? I’ve never seen you like this.”

His gentle voice broke the fragile wall she had been desperately trying to hold together. For a long moment, **VEDIKA** remained silent. Her thoughts wrestled with one another. Should she reveal the truth? Or should she bury this unbearable pain within herself, just as she had done for so many years?

The silence stretched between them until it became impossible to bear.

Finally, with a trembling voice, she spoke.

“He told me... that I shouldn’t allow my life to be ruined because of his Civil Services examinations. He said I shouldn’t wait for him anymore and that I should marry someone else.”

The words left her lips slowly, each one carrying the weight of years of hope, sacrifice, and unwavering fondness. Before she could say another word, tears streamed down her face, washing away the strength she had fought so hard to preserve.

Her father’s expression hardened instantly.

It was not merely anger that crossed his face, but the heartbreaking realization that his daughter had carried this burden alone for far too long. “At the same time, a troubling thought crossed his mind that,

Perhaps my daughter had mistaken his care for something more by herself??

In that dilemma, he asked her daughter Vedika straight away that whether he has assured to wait so long or you only assumed or what else??

“He continued gently to Vedika that,

‘If only you had clarified this from the very beginning from him, you would not have had to go through all this suffering and moreover we could have found you a good match long ago’.

His words were neither cruel nor heartless. They were the helpless words of a father who could no longer bear to watch his daughter sacrifice her own happiness for a promise that had quietly slipped away. Unable to say anything more, he turned and walked out of the room.

As the sound of his footsteps faded down the corridor, the silence returned.

This time, however, it was accompanied by the quiet sobs of a woman whose dreams had not been shattered in a single day, but had slowly unraveled over the years.

That night, **VEDIKA** did not simply mourn the end of a relationship. She mourned the future she had spent years believing would one day become her reality.

By then, **VEDIKA** had long crossed the age that society deemed ideal for marriage. Almost overnight, the gentle hope with which her family had once spoken of her future was replaced by an unspoken urgency. Determined not to lose any more time, they began searching tirelessly for a suitable groom, believing that somewhere fate still held a place for her.

But fate, it seemed, had fallen painfully silent.

The proposals that had once arrived with effortless regularity became fewer and farther between. Families who had once shown genuine interest now politely declined, while others simply disappeared without a word. With every passing month, the silence grew heavier, carrying with it the cruel judgement of a society that measured a woman's worth by the number of

birthdays she had celebrated rather than by the strength of her character or the beauty of her heart.

The atmosphere at home changed in ways that words could scarcely describe. Laughter became rare, conversations grew shorter, and every unexpected knock at the door stirred a fragile hope that was too often followed by quiet disappointment. Anxiety settled into the house like an unwelcome guest that refused to leave.

No one suffered more than her father.

Each rejection carved another wound into a heart that had spent a lifetime dreaming of his daughter's happiness. Though he tried to hide his pain behind reassuring smiles and gentle words, the weight of his helplessness was visible in his tired eyes. Every night, he lay awake wondering whether he had failed in the one responsibility he treasured above all other to see his daughter settled in a home filled with love before his own strength deserted him.

VEDIKA watched him in silence, and that silence became her greatest sorrow. She could endure the whispers of society, the unanswered proposals, and even the uncertainty of her own future. But watching the man who had devoted his entire life to her happiness slowly crumble beneath the burden of worry broke something within her that no tears could ever mend.

Meanwhile, life showed **VEDIKA** no mercy.

At the office, she had earned the admiration of her superiors for being diligent, disciplined, and remarkably dependable. Yet, the very qualities that made her

exceptional gradually became the reason for her suffering. Colleagues began entrusting their own responsibilities to her, confident that she would never refuse. **VEDIKA** accepted every task with a quiet smile, never wishing to disappoint anyone, even as the burden upon her shoulders grew heavier with each passing day. But no one knew that behind that composed smile was a woman whose heart had already been shattered.

The separation from the young gold medalist she had fondness so deeply had left an emptiness within her that words could never describe. Every morning, she forced herself to rise, put on a brave face, and walk into the office as though nothing had changed. Yet every evening, she returned home carrying not only the weight of unfinished work but also the unbearable silence left behind by the man who had once filled every corner of her life with hope.

Her body continued to obey her. Her heart no longer did.

The emotional wounds she refused to reveal slowly began consuming her from within. Sleepless nights became routine. Meals were skipped without notice. Anxiety stole her peace, and exhaustion settled into her bones like an unwelcome companion. She convinced herself that if she kept working, she would not have to feel the pain.

She was wrong.

One afternoon, while working alone in her office, the walls around her suddenly seemed to close in. The words on the files before her became impossible to read. Her heartbeat raced uncontrollably before slowing into an

eerie stillness. A wave of dizziness swept over her, and she instinctively reached for the edge of the desk.

There was nothing to hold on to.

Within seconds, her world dissolved into darkness.

She collapsed onto the cold office floor.

Minutes passed.

Then an hour.

Outside, life continued as though nothing had happened. Phones rang. Conversations echoed through the corridors. Footsteps hurried past her closed office door. Yet not a single person realized that **VEDIKA** lay unconscious inside, fighting the silent consequences of months of heartbreak, loneliness, and relentless pressure.

It was only when an elderly Group D employee noticed the unusual silence from her room that a feeling of unease crept over him. He knocked gently.

No response.

He knocked again.

Still nothing.

Fear tightening his chest, he hurried to inform the senior officer.

The office door was unlocked at once.

The sight inside froze everyone where they stood. **VEDIKA** lay motionless on the floor, her body trembling faintly, her face pale as ivory, her breathing shallow and fragile. The woman who had quietly carried everyone

else's burdens had finally collapsed beneath the weight of her own.

For a brief moment, guilt filled the room. No one had noticed. No one had asked whether she was all right. They had simply assumed that the strongest person among them would never break. She was rushed to the nearest hospital with the help of a colleague without delay. By the grace of God, the doctors managed to stabilize her condition. After conducting several examinations, they explained that her blood pressure had fallen dangerously low, brought on by prolonged emotional distress, physical exhaustion, inadequate nutrition, and overwhelming stress. They prescribed medication, insisted that she take complete rest, and warned that continuing to ignore her health could have far more serious consequences.

Later that evening, **VEDIKA** quietly stepped out of the hospital, clutching a small packet of tablets.

The sky above was beginning to darken.

People hurried home to the warmth of families waiting for them.

VEDIKA walked alone.

She realized then that medicines could restore a weakened body, but there was no prescription capable of healing a heart that had been broken by fondness, abandoned by hope, and left to suffer in silence.

Some wounds were simply invisible.

And those were often the ones that hurt the most.

From that day onwards, **VEDIKA** gradually withdrew from everyone around her. Conversations became a burden she no longer wished to carry, and silence became the only refuge she trusted. No matter how overwhelming the workload became, she refused to seek help or share her struggles with anyone. She silently shouldered every responsibility, believing that enduring the pain alone was easier than explaining it to people who would never truly understand.

As the days passed, her quiet demeanour and emotional withdrawal began to attract attention in the office. Rather than recognizing the silent anguish she was enduring, a few of her colleagues chose ridicule over compassion. They began dismissively referring to her as a “**psycho**”, laughing amongst themselves, oblivious to the fact that behind her silence was a heart slowly breaking under the weight of grief, disappointment, and unbearable loneliness.

Even those closest to her began speaking with quiet negativity. What hurt her most was not the criticism itself, but the fact that the very people who stood beside her failed to understand what she was going through. Their words, spoken without knowing the weight she carried, wounded her deeply. Rather than defending herself or explaining her pain, she chose silence. Sometimes, silence was the only refuge left for a heart too weary to be understood.

The days drifted by with merciless indifference, yet the anguish within **VEDIKA**'s home only intensified. What had once been a house filled with warmth and quiet laughter had become overshadowed by worry. Every

passing proposal, every whispered conversation about her age, and every anxious sigh from her parents tightened the invisible chains around her heart.

As the years slipped by, whispers began to follow her. People started wondering why she was still unmarried. Before long, idle gossip took on a life of its own. Those who knew nothing of her journey were quick to invent stories, drawing conclusions from silence they could never understand. Yet **VEDIKA** paid little attention to the rumours. She had long learnt that not every question deserved an answer, and not every opinion deserved a place in her heart. Some truths were too sacred to be explained to those who measured lives by appearances rather than by the quiet strength of sacrifice.

Their distress wounded her far more deeply than her own. She had spent her entire life trying to bring happiness to others, placing their dreams before her own, never knowingly causing pain to a single soul. Yet it seemed as though destiny had chosen her alone to bear an endless procession of disappointments. Each night, she lay awake in the darkness, staring at the ceiling as tears slipped silently across her cheeks. Her heart searched desperately for an answer that never came.

"Why?" she whispered into the silence. "If I have never wished ill upon anyone, why must my life become a punishment? Why does every dream I cherished crumble the moment I reach for it?" The questions lingered unanswered, and the silence that followed was crueler than any spoken word.

Gradually, the weight of loneliness, guilt and helplessness became almost impossible to carry. The future that had once shone with promise now appeared shrouded in darkness. There were moments when the pain became so overwhelming that she found herself wondering whether life would ever hold peace again, or whether she was destined to endure sorrow without end. For the first time, hope itself began to slip through her fingers, leaving her standing alone in the ruins of the dreams she had once believed would define her life.

One of VEDIKA's colleagues, deeply unsettled by the strange change in her behaviour, gently asked if she would speak with him in private. Away from the curious eyes of the office, he patiently encouraged her to tell him what had happened. But by then, VEDIKA was no longer the woman everyone had once known.

She had begun speaking to herself without realizing it, as though she were caught in an endless conversation with someone who existed only in her heart. Almost every sentence carried the name of the gold medalist she had fondness so faithfully. She would whisper, **"He will come... once his examinations are over... he promised... he will clear interview.. he will took me to go for Bharath darshan...please don't be angry with me..."** Then, with frightened, tear-filled eyes, she would look at those around her and plead softly, **"I'm not mad... am I? I'm not a psycho... am I?"** Why does nobody believe me?"

The words broke everyone's heart. What they were witnessing was not madness, but a young woman slowly collapsing beneath the unbearable weight of fondness,

abandonment, loneliness, and hope that refused to die. Every passing day seemed to pull her further away from the world around her, while her heart remained imprisoned in memories of a promise she still believed would one day be kept.

VEDIKA's increasingly unusual behaviour stirred different reactions within the office. A few colleagues looked at her with genuine sorrow, silently wishing they knew how to help. Ironically others, however, chose mockery over compassion, whispering behind her back by making group discussion and increasing her suffering to cruel jokes. Not one of them paused long enough to ask what pain had driven such a remarkable young woman to this state. No one truly listened to the silent cries hidden behind her vacant smile.

Watching the scenes unfold around her in the office, she quietly consigned her existence to a forgotten corner, choosing silence over drawing attention to herself.

Unable to bear watching her suffer alone, one compassionate colleague named **Karthikeya** finally stepped forward. Believing that she needed professional and Moral support rather than judgement, the colleague gently persuaded **VEDIKA** to visit a psychiatrist. During the consultation, the colleague carefully recounted everything that had unfolded over the previous months—her sudden withdrawal from others, her sleepless nights, her constant murmuring of the gold medalist's name, her overwhelming despair, and the heartbreaking belief that he would return once his examinations were over.

As the psychiatrist listened quietly, the room fell into a heavy silence. What unfolded before them was not merely the story of a failed fondness, but the painful account of a young woman whose hopes, identity, and emotional strength had gradually been worn away by grief, loneliness, and promises she still clung to with all her heart.

That day, the dam she had built around her heart for nearly two long years finally gave way. The tears that had refused to fall through countless sleepless nights now poured down her cheeks without mercy. Every silent cry, every swallowed word, every shattered dream escaped at once. **VEDIKA** wept as though her soul itself had grown too weary to carry the burden any longer.

She had once been the girl everyone admired the brilliant young woman who excelled in every endeavour, whose determination inspired those around her, and whose smile concealed nothing but hope for the future. Yet now, she found herself sitting in the waiting room of a psychiatrist's clinic, surrounded by people who like her, were fighting battles that the world could neither see nor understand.

For the first time in her life, fear consumed her.

Her trembling eyes wandered from one patient to another. The reality of where she was struck her with devastating force. A suffocating question echoed relentlessly in her mind.

"How... how did my life come to this?"

Moments later, the question escaped her lips between uncontrollable sobs.

“Why has this happened to me? I never wished harm upon anyone. Why am I the one suffering like this?”

Her cries filled the room with a pain so profound that even those who had spent years witnessing human suffering were left speechless.

The psychiatrist quietly watched the young woman before him. He did not see a weak mind or a hopeless patient. He saw a gentle soul who had endured years of silent heartbreak, overwhelming loneliness, impossible expectations, and emotional wounds that had never been allowed to heal. Behind her diagnosis was a story no medical report could ever fully tell.

Deeply moved by her anguish, he approached her not merely as a doctor treating an illness, but as one human being trying to rescue another from the darkness that had slowly engulfed her life. Her treatment began that very day.

Recovery, however, was never going to be measured in days or weeks. It became a journey of fragile victories, painful setbacks, and countless moments when simply choosing to face another sunrise demanded extraordinary courage.

For nearly six months, **VEDIKA** remained under continuous psychiatric care. Slowly almost imperceptibly the storms within her mind began to quieten. Though the scars remained, the first faint rays of hope started to pierce the darkness that had once seemed endless.

It was the beginning of a new battle not to become the girl she once was, but to discover the strength to become someone who could live beyond her pain.

Before long, **VEDIKA** began to show the first fragile signs of recovery. Though the road ahead remained uncertain, the darkness that had once consumed her no longer seemed quite so impenetrable. At home, her family quietly transformed their lives around her. They cared for her with the tenderness one reserves for a little child watching over every meal she ate, every medicine she took, every restless night she endured, and every faint smile that cautiously returned to her face. They spoke to her gently, celebrated even the smallest signs of progress, and wrapped her in a fondness that asked for nothing in return. For the first time in many months, **VEDIKA** was no longer carrying the weight of her suffering alone. Her family's unwavering affection became the silent strength that slowly, almost imperceptibly, began to piece her broken spirit back together.

The time had come for **VEDIKA** to return to the life she had once known.

On her first morning back at the office, she quietly made her way to the colleague "**Karthikeya**" who had reached out to her when the world had seemed to abandon her. In the darkest chapter of her life, when her voice had fallen silent and her mind had become a prison of its own, this **one person** had chosen compassion over judgement. Standing before them with folded hands, **VEDIKA** expressed a gratitude too profound for words. Tears lingered in her eyes, not merely from remembrance, but

from the overwhelming realization that a single act of kindness had helped save a life that had almost surrendered to despair.

There was only one thing she asked in return.

With quiet humility, she requested that the painful truth of everything she had endured the illness, the silent suffering, the emotional collapse, and the long road through recovery remain known only to them. She did not wish to become the object of whispered conversations, sympathetic glances, or pity disguised as concern. She had already carried enough burdens. She wanted nothing more than the opportunity to reclaim her life with dignity, allowing her work not her past to define who she was. The colleague nodded gently, understanding the weight of her request without the need for another word.

VEDIKA then returned to her desk.

Everything around her appeared unchanged. The same corridors echoed with familiar footsteps, the same desks stood in their places, and the same faces moved through the office as though time had never paused. Yet for **VEDIKA**, everything had changed. She was no longer the ambitious young woman who had once walked into that building filled with dreams and certainty. She had journeyed through a darkness so deep that, at one point, she had almost forgotten what hope looked like.

Yet somehow, against every expectation, she had found her way back.

The scars remained, invisible to every eye but painfully familiar to her own heart. They would always remind her of the battles she had fought in silence, the tears she had shed in solitude, and the countless nights when surviving until morning had felt like an impossible achievement.

As she opened her first file and resumed her work, she realized that this was no ordinary return. It was a quiet resurrection. Every page she turned, every document she completed, and every breath she drew within those familiar walls became a silent promise to herself – that no matter how cruel life had been, she would no longer allow her past to dictate her future.

For the first time in years, **VEDIKA** was not merely returning to work.

She was returning to herself.

Following the gentle counsel of her psychiatrist, **VEDIKA** began to rediscover life through the quiet embrace of nature. She wandered beneath canopies of ancient trees, listened to the songs of birds at dawn, watched rain wash the dust from forgotten roads, and found comfort in sunsets that painted the sky with colors no sorrow could ever steal. Nature asked no questions, demanded no explanations, and passed no judgement. It simply welcomed her, allowing her wounded soul to heal one silent day at a time.

Gradually, she distanced herself from the people who had disappeared when her world had fallen apart those who had watched her suffer from afar, yet never reached out a hand. Instead, she devoted herself to the friends who had stood beside her through every storm.

Whenever they stumbled beneath the weight of their own burdens, **VEDIKA** became the shoulder they could lean upon, quietly repaying the kindness that had once saved her.

Today, **VEDIKA** is **thirty-two**.

For years, her parents had watched their daughter fight battles she never spoke about aloud. They had seen the tears she hid behind forced smiles, the sleepless nights, the unbearable silence, and the courage with which she rose each morning despite carrying a heart that had been broken more times than anyone knew.

Eventually, they abandoned the dreams society had written for their daughter.

Marriage was no longer their greatest wish.

If destiny never led her to a husband, so be it.

All they prayed for now was that she would wake each morning with peace in her heart, laughter upon her lips, and hope enough to carry her into another day. To them, her smile had become worth infinitely more than any wedding celebration the world could offer. Nine years have now passed since the Gold Medalist quietly disappeared from **VEDIKA's** life.

Nine years!

Enough time for seasons to change countless times.

Enough time for children to grow into adults.

Enough time for strangers to become family.

Yet somehow, not enough time for one heart to forget another.

Life had taught **VEDIKA** how to endure disappointment. It had taught her to survive loneliness, betrayal, and the unbearable weight of unanswered questions. She became stronger than she had ever imagined possible. But strength never succeeded in teaching her how to hate.

She never hated the Gold Medal she had once dreamt of winning, even though it had remained forever beyond her reach nor did she ever hate the Gold Medalist who had once become the centre of her universe.

Deep within her heart, she continued to believe that he had never wished her harm. Every memory she carried reminded her of a man who had always wanted the very best for her. Without offering an explanation, he had chosen to disappear from her life. Perhaps he believed that leaving was the greatest act of fondness he could offer that by removing himself from her future, he would never become the reason her marriage was delayed or her life stood still.

Whether that belief was true or mistaken no longer mattered.

VEDIKA simply could not curse someone whose absence had always felt less like abandonment and more like a silent sacrifice.

Some affection do not end with a farewell.

They simply learn to exist without expectations.

Even now, after all these years, whenever fate unexpectedly placed his name before her eyes, her heart paused for the briefest of moments.

There were no tears.

No anger.

No resentment. Only a quiet smile that no one else could understand.

For somewhere, hidden beneath the scars that time had failed to erase, a small corner of her heart still whispered the words she had never spoken aloud

“Wherever you are... I pray that life has been kinder to you than it was to us. Thank you for teaching me how deeply a heart can love, and how quietly it can continue cherishing, even when it receives nothing in return.”

Nine years passed.

Time had quietly rewritten almost everything around them. The streets had changed, seasons had come and gone, faces had aged, and life had carried them in different directions. Yet there are some stories that time can never erase.

One ordinary afternoon, at a busy traffic signal, fate chose to pause their lives for a fleeting moment.

Their eyes met over a fleeting moment of 30sec

No words were spoken.

VEDIKA stood frozen, carrying the silent questions that had haunted her heart for nearly a decade:

Why did you leave me?

“Why did you keep lowering me in front of people who wish to insult?”

What made you to took the decision??

Across from her stood the man she had once believed would walk beside her for the rest of her life. His eyes held a different burden the quiet remorse of someone who believed he had made the greatest mistake of his life.

The traffic lights changed.

The world moved on.

So did they without a single word.

Without an explanation. Without a goodbye.

Neither of them knew that, even after all these years, the other had remained unmarried. Each believed the other had found happiness elsewhere, never realizing that both had chosen solitude for reasons rooted in the same bond they could never forget.

Their bond had not faded.

It had merely learnt to exist in silence.

Ironically **VEDIKA** had never spoken his name to any another soul. She carried it within her like a sacred prayer. Yet whenever she happened to see his name on a roadside sign, a passing vehicle, or a stranger's nameplate, her soul would pause for a moment, as though destiny had briefly allowed her to see him again. She refused to another man to take his place not even in the smallest corners of her life.

She guarded the books which were received from him with such a care that, whenever someone with a genuine love for reading asked to borrow a book, she would readily lend one from her own collection but never the books she had received from him. Every single book he had given her had been carefully wrapped and preserved. They now occupied a separate place on the bookshelf of her little home library, untouched by anyone else. To her, they were far more than books; they were sacred keepsakes, treasured with the same quiet reverence one reserves for something deeply cherished.

Even the front passenger seat of her car remained untouched since buy, which is reserved lifetime only for him. Year after year, no one sat there. It was a silent promise she had made to a love the world believed no longer existed. Even today, every morning begins only after she whispers, within the silence of her heart, "Good morning" and every night ends only after she softly says, "Good night." Not to the world but to the man she has never stopped cherishing.

For now, she had quietly withdrawn from everyone around her. Yet time had failed to take away her smile. Every responsibility she fulfilled at the office and every gentle smile that graced her face carried a quiet reminder of him. His words, his values, and the unwavering faith he had once placed in her had become an inseparable part of the woman she had grown into.

Unaffected by society's expectations or its endless whispers, she chose peace over explanation. Surrounded by the unconditional love of her parents and few circle of friends she lived with quiet contentment, knowing that

although he was no longer beside her, he had never truly left her heart. Some people depart from our lives, yet remain woven into every success we achieve and every smile we share. He was one of them.

Although they had both secured stable and respectable positions in life, destiny had written an entirely different path for them.

Though miles now separated them, she never truly felt his absence. Every piece of advice he had offered, every study strategy he had shared, the discipline with which he approached his work, his quiet humility, and the compassion he showed towards others had gradually become woven into the fabric of her everyday life. They were no longer merely his qualities; they had become her way of thinking, her way of living. In embracing the values he had left with her, distance lost its meaning, for a part of him continued to walk beside her every single day.

Somewhere deep within her soul, she still waits hoping that one day, the Gold Medal Boy might change his mind and stand before her once again.

Perhaps love is not measured by the number of years spent together.

Perhaps it is measured by the number of years one continues to wait.

Whether these two souls will ever find their way back to one another is no longer a decision they can make. That choice now rests gently in the hands of invisible entity.

May His grace guide them towards the ending they were always meant to have.

And may every reader who has walked beside **VEDIKA** through her journey offer a silent prayer that these two hearts, separated by fate but united by affection, may one day become one.

“Their journey ended apart, yet their sacrifices remained forever intertwined

EPILOGUE

Nine years.

That was how long it took for destiny to bring them face to face once more.

The traffic signal turned red. Amidst hundreds of strangers waiting to cross the road, two pairs of eyes found one another as though time itself had paused.

Neither smiled. Neither spoke. Yet, in that fleeting moment, years of silence said everything words never could. **VEDIKA** looked at the man who had once inspired every dream she dared to chase. He looked at the woman who had quietly transformed his guidance into the very foundation of her life. They were no longer the young students who had spoken of gold medals, government service and impossible dreams. **Life has honoured them both.**

She had earned the career she had worked tirelessly for, while he had fulfilled the ambition he had carried since his youth. The promises they had once whispered to themselves had become realities though not in the way either had imagined.

For a brief moment, memories returned like the gentle turning of old pages.

The library books he had lent her .

The passages he had highlighted.

The countless conversations filled with encouragement.

The sacrifices neither had spoken aloud.

The dreams they had protected more carefully than their own hearts.

Neither regretted the past. Some relationships are never meant to become possessions.

They are meant to become purpose. As the signal turned green, the crowd began to move. They walked in opposite directions. Not because love has faded but because it had completed its journey. Some people enter our lives to stay. Others enter simply to transform us forever.

He had been the reason she learnt perseverance. She had been the proof that his faith in another person had never been misplaced. Neither belonged to the other. Yet a part of each would always remain with the other. Back at home, in the quiet corner of her little library, the books he had once given her still rested separately, carefully wrapped, untouched by time. Whenever anyone asked to borrow a book, she would gladly lend every volume she owned except those.

Not because she was unable to let go but because they no longer belonged to the world of reading.

They had become silent witnesses to a chapter of life that had shaped the woman she had become.

She gently closed the glass door of the bookshelf and smiled. Not every story ends with two people walking

into the sunset together. Some end by teaching them how to walk towards their own destinies.

And sometimes the greatest love is not measured by how long two people stay together,

but by how beautifully they change each other's lives before letting go.

The End