

DESTINED *HEARTZ*

MANAN TRIVEDI



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And to **you, the readers**—thank you for stepping into this world with me. May you find in these pages a moment of truth, a whisper of hope, or a reminder of love’s quiet power.

With heartfelt gratitude,

Manan Trivedi

Why 'Destined Heartz'?

Love, in its truest form, does not happen by accident. It is not just about timing, or luck, or chance encounters in college corridors.

It's about two souls that were meant to cross paths—despite the barriers of tradition, the fears of the heart, and the silence of unspoken emotions.

Samip and *Sandhya* didn't fall in love instantly. Their journey was slow, uncertain, and full of quiet sacrifices. But it was real.

Even destiny seemed to be playing its quiet part. Samip had already taken admission in a pharmacy college in Nagpur, and even paid fees for a dental surgery course. Yet he didn't join either. By a strange twist of fate—or perhaps divine will—he ended up enrolling in the very same college in Ahmedabad where Sandhya was destined to begin her journey.

Sandhya, whose father didn't want her to study and was forcing her toward marriage, fought her way through every challenge. With her mother's quiet support and her own unwavering will, she scored high marks and joined the pharmacy college—unaware that destiny had already woven her story with someone else's.

It wasn't just a coincidence. It was as if the universe was gently guiding them, placing them on paths that would intertwine.

This story is titled "Destined Heartz" because no matter how different their worlds were, no matter how loud the

opposition, their hearts knew one truth—they were meant for each other.

Two souls. One path. Written in the Stars.

Destiny didn't scream. It whispered. In glances, in moments, in the spaces between words.

And somehow, despite it all... they listened.

Character Introductions

Samip Tripathi –

A studious and introverted young man with a sharp mind and quiet charm. Samip is in his third year of a Bachelor in Pharmacy program. Known for his academic brilliance and disciplined lifestyle, he prefers solitude and purpose over fleeting connections. Reserved by nature, Samip rarely engages in social events. Deep down, however, he harbours a sensitive soul and a deep yearning for love—buried under layers of silence and past pain.

During childhood, Samip was inseparable from his father. Every evening, he'd wait by the door for him to return, and they would play for hours. But one day, while playfully running through the house, Samip accidentally knocked over and shattered his father's prized glass showpiece. His father's sudden slap in a fit of rage left Samip stunned. It was the first and only time his father had raised his hand, but it scared Samip deeply. From that day, he carried a quiet fear and distance in his heart, avoiding open conversations with his father.

His mother, on the other hand, became his emotional anchor. She sensed the shift in Samip and, with gentle love, created a cocoon of comfort around him. She always knew how to read his silence and supported his ambitions unconditionally. Though his father never again tried to force closeness, he watched from a distance—proud, understanding, and always wishing Samip's dreams would come true.

Sandhya Lalwani –

A spirited, graceful young woman and a first-year pharmacy student with a fire in her soul and stars in her eyes. Balancing her academic pursuits with a budding interest in modelling, Sandhya is confident yet deeply sensitive. Her beauty turns heads, but it is her emotional intelligence and courage that define her. She is unafraid to chase what her heart desires, even if it means bending a few rules.

She was raised in a conservative Maharashtrian Sindhi family. Her father, a strict and hot-tempered man, has always believed that a girl's destiny lies in marriage, not in education or ambition. His word in the house was law, and he was never easy to convince. Sandhya had to fight even just to finish her schooling. She knew she had to push harder to be allowed to join a pharmacy college.

Her mother, ever gentle and kind, stood silently behind her daughter. She provided subtle encouragement—sneaking her books, covering for her modelling auditions, and whispering brave words when no one else would. Sandhya and her mother share a quiet yet unbreakable bond. Her mother understands her in ways even words can't express. She knows her daughter was born to fly. She has always supported Sandhya's career dreams, even when it meant going against her husband's traditional mindset.

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Chapter 1:

The Focused Scholar

Samip had always lived within the boundaries he built for himself. While the world around him laughed, flirted, and celebrated college life, Samip drowned himself in textbooks and formulas. He wasn't aloof—just afraid of emotional messes, of things that couldn't be solved with logic. The chaos of feelings scared him. He believed emotions complicated things, distracted people from their goals. And Samip had goals—big ones.

Every morning, he arrived at the college gates like a soldier on a mission—head down, bag in place, and thoughts focused on pharmacological equations and practicals. He had a routine: lectures, library, lab, and then back to his hostel. Socializing was never on the list.

One day, while walking past a group of laughing classmates in the canteen, a soft pang stirred in him. He paused—but only for a second—before quickening his pace toward the library. A strange hollowness had entered his chest, but he buried it under the weight of his books.

Inside the classroom, he was a star. Professors praised his work ethic, classmates admired his intelligence, but no one really *knew* him. Outside, he was a mystery—someone whose name echoed in academic discussions, but rarely in casual conversation.

Many girls had tried to break through his silence. Some dropped hints, some passed notes, hoping for a reaction. But

Samip always stayed polite, yet distant. His friends would tease him endlessly.

"Come on, Samip! Just once, hang out with us without a book!" they'd joke.

He'd only smile and brush it off. Love? No time for it. Emotions? Too messy.

Yet, destiny had already picked up its pen. A different story was being written. One that even Samip couldn't calculate or control. One that would test every wall he had so carefully built around his heart.

Chapter 2:

The Entrance of Sandhya

Sandhya Lalwani walked into the pharmacy college campus with a spark in her eyes and determination in her stride. Dressed in a simple Kurti, her radiant smile and graceful presence turned heads effortlessly. There was something magnetic about her—a charm that came not only from her beauty but from the confidence she carried within. She had fought long and hard to be there, and now that she had arrived, she was determined to make every moment count.

While others saw the campus as just another step in their academic journey, for Sandhya, it was freedom. It was her chance to live life on her own terms, to pursue not only her dream of becoming a pharmacist but also explore her secret passion—modelling.

Her lively energy quickly drew people toward her. Within days, she had become a familiar face in every group, laughing in the corridors, helping classmates with notes, and participating in cultural events. But amidst all the noise and friendships, one person stood out—Samip Tripathi.

She had heard whispers about him even before her first lecture.

“That’s Samip... Topper of third year.”

“He doesn’t talk much, but he’s brilliant.”

“Girls have tried—he never responds.”

The mystery intrigued her. What made someone shut the world out so completely? And more importantly, why did she care?

The first time she saw him in the library, hunched over a thick reference book, completely engrossed, she felt a strange curiosity spark within her. Unlike other boys who tried to impress her with jokes or compliments, Samip was unaware, uninterested, and distant.

That very indifference made her want to know more.

Rather than chase attention like others, Sandhya decided to approach him differently—through learning, through what he valued.

One quiet afternoon, she mustered the courage to step into his world.

Carrying a thick pharmacology textbook, she approached his table in the library. He didn't notice her until she gently placed the book beside him.

"Samip, can you help me understand this topic? I'm struggling with it."

He looked up, clearly surprised. For a moment, he hesitated, unsure if she was genuinely asking or just trying to make conversation. But her sincerity softened him.

"Which part?" he asked, shifting slightly to make space for her.

She sat down, her heart fluttering slightly—not out of romantic excitement, but from the thrill of breaking into his world.

They spent the next 30 minutes going through concepts, diagrams, and case studies. Samip explained each detail patiently, his passion for the subject coming alive in every word. Sandhya listened intently, not only to the information but to his rhythm, his quiet enthusiasm, the way his eyes lit up while teaching.

As she walked out of the library that day, she smiled to herself.

She hadn't just taken the first step toward understanding a subject—she had taken the first step toward understanding him.

And though Samip didn't know it yet, something in him had shifted too.

Chapter 3:

Between the Lines of Chemistry

Samip and Sandhya's study sessions became more frequent. What started as academic help turned into a series of quiet meetings in the college library, in corners where sunlight streamed through tall windows, and time seemed to pause.

For Samip, these moments were new territory. He found himself anticipating her questions, not because he wanted to teach, but because he wanted to see her again. He began noticing the way she tucked her hair behind her ears, the way her eyes sparkled when she understood a concept, and the subtle perfume she wore—soft, like jasmine.

Sandhya, on the other hand, was already enchanted. She had always seen boys try to impress her, to flirt with her beauty. But Samip was different. He never tried to win her—he respected her mind, listened without judgment, and spoke without pretension. That, to her, was rare.

But this growing connection didn't go unnoticed.

Sandhya was charming—undeniably beautiful. Her smile carried warmth, her walk confidence, and her presence a subtle allure. It wasn't long before the college boys began to take notice. Whispers filled the corridors. Some boys tried to approach her; others left messages through friends. Two of them, known for their shallow reputations, began following her more closely, pretending to seek notes or project help.

Samip noticed.

Though he rarely got involved in gossip or drama, he couldn't ignore the discomfort creeping into his chest. Every time someone spoke of Sandhya in flirtatious tones, a silent storm brewed inside him. Jealousy? Perhaps. But more than that—it was protectiveness.

He had heard of those boys. They weren't just playboys—they had a reputation for toying with emotions, for treating relationships like temporary thrills. Samip, despite his usual distance from such affairs, had kept a quiet eye. And when he noticed one of them intentionally brushing shoulders with Sandhya outside the lab, his fists clenched beneath the desk.

He said nothing. But Sandhya noticed.

Later that week, one of her friends whispered to her, "You know Samip keeps an eye on you? He's always making sure you're safe. Those guys... they stay away when he's around."

Sandhya smiled, hiding the blush that crept to her cheeks. That night, she lay awake thinking—not about the boys, but about the silent protector she never asked for, yet always had beside her.

Her feelings for Samip began to deepen.

And Samip? He didn't understand what was happening. He just knew that her absence made the world quieter... and her smile made it brighter.

Chapter 4:

The College Fest Proposal

As the year progressed, excitement filled the air—the annual college fest was approaching. It was more than just a celebration; it was a spectacle of talent, charisma, and school spirit. Students eagerly prepared for competitions ranging from dance and drama to debates and fashion shows.

Among all, the most anticipated event was the ramp walk—a blend of grace and glamour, where students showcased their confidence on stage. With her natural elegance and passion for modelling, Sandhya was an obvious choice. Her name was on everyone's lips as the top contender to lead the walk.

What surprised her, however, was the faculty and students' suggestion to pair her with Samip. The quiet, studious boy who never participated in anything beyond lectures and labs. The suggestion felt like a dream—a chance to bridge the gap that still lingered between them.

When she heard the recommendation, her heart fluttered. Maybe, just maybe, fate was nudging them closer again. She waited eagerly to hear his response.

But it came like a sharp gust of wind, cold and cutting.

"No, I'm not interested in such things," Samip had said flatly, his tone devoid of any emotion.

The rejection stung more than she anticipated. She had imagined them walking together, sharing smiles, making

memories. It wasn't just about the ramp walk. It was about being seen with him, standing beside him, letting the world witness a glimpse of the bond she felt they shared.

That night, Sandhya sat alone in her dorm room, the glitz of the upcoming fest dimmed by the weight of disappointment. Tears rolled down her cheeks as questions swirled in her mind. Had she misunderstood his kindness? Was she the only one who felt the connection?

Yet, even in her sadness, she couldn't find it in herself to be angry with Samip. Instead, she hoped—hoped that maybe he was just afraid, just not ready to accept what their hearts had already begun to feel.

Chapter 5:

A Change of Heart

News of Sandhya's disappointment reached Samip through mutual friends. He hadn't meant to hurt her, but the thought of being part of something so public, of letting himself be drawn into emotions he had kept at bay, had scared him.

For years, Samip had built walls around his emotions. The idea of stepping onto a stage with Sandhya—not just any girl, but the one who had unknowingly started to stir something deep within him—was overwhelming. But maybe he had been wrong. Maybe running away from something wouldn't make it disappear.

Samip in his heart had started feeling something for Sandhya, but he didn't want to reveal it too soon. He wanted to surprise her—create a moment that would be unforgettable. To make this happen, he decided to do the first ramp walk with Juhi, another beautiful girl who had been his childhood friend. Samip confided in Juhi, telling her that he had begun to like Sandhya, but wanted to test if she felt the same. He hoped that a hint of jealousy might reveal the truth hidden in her heart.

One afternoon, Samip and Juhi sat together near the amphitheatre steps, sipping cold drinks under the mild winter sun.

"Juhi, I need a Favor," Samip said hesitantly.

She raised an eyebrow. "What kind of Favor? You sound like you're about to commit a crime."

He laughed. "Not a crime. Just... emotional mischief."

"I'm listening."

He looked away, a slight blush on his cheeks. "I think I like Sandhya. But I want to be sure if she feels something for me too. I was thinking... maybe if I do the first ramp walk with you, and she sees us, I might get a hint."

Juhi burst into laughter. "Wow. You're really testing waters with fashion and feelings. You know this could backfire, right?"

"I know," he said. "But if she doesn't care at all, then maybe it was just me."

Juhi leaned back, considering. Then she smiled. "Okay, Romeo. Let's stir some hearts."

From that day, Samip and Juhi started practicing their ramp walk together. But Samip, being a studious and slightly clumsy guy, had absolutely no idea how to carry himself on a ramp.

Their first few practice sessions were hilarious. Samip kept tripping over his own feet. Once, while trying to match Juhi's confident strides, he ended up bumping into her and spilling a bottle of water all over her clothes.

"Samip! Watch where you're going! You're not dancing garba here," Juhi said, laughing, as she wiped her dress.

"Sorry! I was focusing on the walk... I didn't see your elbow coming at me," he retorted.

Juhi smirked. "Elbow? It was standing still. You ran into it."

From mismatched steps to wrong turns and awkward poses, their practice was more comedy than fashion rehearsal. But

slowly, Samip began to get the hang of it. And with every step, he kept glancing at the corner of the amphitheatre where Sandhya usually sat with her friends.

Sandhya, who had been silently hoping to walk the ramp with Samip, watched their rehearsals from a distance. Her chest tightened every time she saw them laugh or match their steps perfectly. The sight of them practicing together—especially Juhi fixing his collar or teaching him how to turn—sent pangs of jealousy through her.

She tried to convince herself that it was just a practice, that maybe—just maybe—Samip would still ask her. But as the fest day approached and the rumours of Samip and Juhi's pairing started spreading across the campus, Sandhya's hopes began to dim. Friends whispered in corners. Social media was buzzing with posts about the perfect ramp pair. Each word stung Sandhya more deeply.

She was unable to do anything. Her smile faded; her energy drained. She wore her best smile in public, but inside, she was crushed.

So, on the night of the fest, Samip decided.

When the ramp walk began, he stepped onto the stage with Juhi for the first round. Sandhya stood backstage, pretending not to care, masking her disappointment behind a carefully composed smile.

During that first round, Samip kept looking toward the sidelines where Sandhya stood. He missed her presence beside him. The crowd was cheering, the music was perfect, but something felt incomplete. His smile didn't reach his eyes.

Backstage, Sandhya tried to focus on her friends who were prepping for their own rounds. One of her closest friends nudged her and whispered, "He's watching you. Even when he's up there." Sandhya rolled her eyes, brushing it off, but her heart raced.

Then, as the second round was announced, just as the music swelled again and the lights turned toward the stage entrance, Samip walked up to her.

"Shall we?" he asked softly, extending his hand.

Sandhya's breath hitched. For a moment, she simply stared at him. Then, slowly, she placed her hand in his.

The moment they stepped onto the ramp together, the audience erupted in cheers. The spotlight captured them in a way that felt almost magical. Samip, usually so reserved, walked confidently beside Sandhya, their chemistry undeniable.

As they walked, Samip whispered, "I should've said yes to this from the start."

Sandhya replied with a smirk, "You're lucky I said yes now."

They smiled, not for the crowd but for each other. That brief walk became more than a performance—it was a statement. A moment where fear gave way to feeling.

After they exited the ramp, their friends rushed to them with excitement, showering them with compliments. Sandhya laughed freely, and Samip, for the first time, felt at ease in her presence.

That night, something shifted between them.

Later, while sitting at the edge of the auditorium stage, feet dangling, Samip turned to Sandhya. "You looked beautiful tonight. Not just on the stage. All of it."

She smiled, looking away shyly. "You're finally learning how to talk like a human."

"Only when I'm around you," he replied.

There was a moment of silence, filled only by the distant music and chatter of the fest.

Sandhya turned to him; her voice softer now. "Why Juhi?"

He hesitated, then replied honestly. "Because I wanted to know if you'd care. I wanted to see if there was something in your eyes when you saw me with someone else."

Sandhya chuckled, shaking her head. "You're ridiculous. But yes, I did care. I cared too much."

He looked into her eyes. "So, did I. That's why I came back for you."

For the first time, they weren't just Samip and Sandhya. They were something more—two hearts beginning to move in the same direction.

Chapter 6:

Defining Their Love

After the event, Samip and Sandhya found themselves sitting on a quiet bench outside, away from the noise of the festival. The air was thick with unspoken words, filled with the electricity of a thousand silent confessions.

Finally, Samip broke the silence. "Sandhya... I need to say something."

She turned to him, her heart pounding in her chest like a drumbeat of hope.

"I like you," he admitted, his voice steady but soft. "But I'm not someone who believes in casual relationships. If we do this... it must be real. It has to mean something."

Sandhya smiled through the tears forming in her eyes, her heart swelling with emotion. "That's exactly what I want too. I've never wanted anything else."

There was a pause, and then Samip gently reached for her hand. As their fingers intertwined, it felt like puzzle pieces finally clicking into place. A calm settled between them—a serenity that comes only when two souls recognize each other.

They both knew—this was not just a college romance. It was something deeper, something sacred. Something destined.

But their joy came with challenges. They wanted to meet alone, to talk freely, to share laughter without limits. Yet, they were afraid—afraid of being caught by their

conservative families, of inviting questions they were not ready to answer.

So, they found ways. They would go with friends to temples or to the quiet outskirts of the city—places where they could steal moments of togetherness under the sky.

One day, Sandhya invited Samip to a temple she often visited with her mother. It was a special place, one that carried childhood memories and spiritual comfort. That day, they planned to meet as if by chance.

As she walked through the temple grounds with her mother, she spotted Samip arriving. Her heart fluttered with excitement, though she kept her face composed.

"Hey! What a coincidence! You here too?" she said loudly, the corners of her lips twitching in amusement.

Samip played along perfectly, bowing slightly in greeting. Her mother, both surprised and intrigued, asked who he was.

"He's from my college. A very sincere student... also believes in God a lot," Sandhya replied, her voice sweet and genuine.

That day, Sandhya subtly painted a picture of Samip as a respectful and spiritual boy in her mother's eyes. It was a small step in building acceptance, a strategic move made with affection, courage, and hope for a shared future.

In that quiet temple courtyard, amid the scent of incense and the soft chants in the air, two young hearts carved a space for their love to grow—with faith as their witness and destiny as their guide.

Chapter 7:

A Trip to Remember

College had arranged a week-long educational trip to Darjeeling for the students of the pharmacy program. The itinerary included a mix of sightseeing, industry visits, and some adventure activities. The cost was set at ₹10,000 per student.

Samip was excited when he first heard about the trip. He had always wanted to visit the beautiful hills of Darjeeling. Without wasting much time, he approached his parents for permission. To his relief, they immediately agreed, impressed by the educational nature of the trip and the well-organized plan shared by the college.

On the other hand, Sandhya was equally thrilled about the idea of traveling with friends and experiencing something beyond books and lectures. However, when she brought up the topic at home, the mood quickly shifted. Her father's face fell as he looked at the expenses. Their financial condition had been unstable lately due to a few setbacks in his business, and ₹10,000 was not a small amount. He gently denied her request, saying, "Maybe next time, beta."

Heartbroken, Sandhya shared the news with Samip. Her voice trembled over the phone as she said, "I tried, Samip... really, I did. But Papa is not agreeing. He just cannot afford it right now."

Samip went quiet for a moment. But then, with the certainty of someone who would not take no for an answer, he replied,

“Sandhya, you *are* coming to Darjeeling. I will take care of it.”

Sandhya gasped. “But Samip... how can you?”

“I have been saving money. Birthday gifts, my part-time tutoring, and small savings from years—this is worth spending on. It is not just a trip, it is a memory we will cherish for life,” he said with a reassuring tone.

Reluctantly at first, but later touched by his gesture, Sandhya agreed. She came up with a plan and told her father a little white lie—that this time, the college had received funding from an external educational body and was sponsoring students based on merit. She told him she was among the few selected, and there would be no cost involved.

Her father, though hesitant, trusted her and finally agreed. “If it is free and a part of college curriculum, you should go, beta. Just take care of yourself,” he said softly.

With the plan in place and the excitement building, Sandhya, and Samip both prepared for the journey. Neither of them knew that Darjeeling would become more than just a scenic trip—it would be a turning point in their story.

The journey to Darjeeling began with laughter, music, and shared snacks on the bus. The long winding roads, the scent of pine, and the cold breeze added a thrill to their adventure. Upon reaching, the group checked into a modest but cozy hotel nestled amidst the misty hills.

The next few days were filled with wonder. The students visited tea estates, took photos at Tiger Hill during sunrise, and strolled along the mall Road. One day, the professors arranged a group trek to a nearby monastery. During the

trek, Samip and Sandhya found themselves walking side by side, occasionally teasing each other and exchanging quiet smiles.

One evening, while others gathered around a bonfire in the hotel courtyard, Samip pulled Sandhya aside. He pointed to the stars above. "Do you think our names are written somewhere up there?"

Sandhya laughed, "Only if they twinkle in mischief like your eyes."

Their bond grew stronger each day—not just with words, but with moments. When Sandhya got a little dizzy during a high-altitude excursion, Samip held her hand, making sure she felt safe. When Samip misplaced his wallet at the tea garden, it was Sandhya who found it tucked in his backpack. Every small act of care drew them closer.

On the final day of the trip, the college hosted a fun cultural evening. Some students performed skits; others danced. As the night ended, Samip stood on stage and called Sandhya up.

"Before this trip ends," he said nervously, holding a handcrafted paper crown, "I want to crown the queen of my heart."

The crowd cheered, Sandhya blushed, and Samip placed the crown gently on her head. "You made this trip unforgettable," he whispered.

She smiled with tears in her eyes. "You made it magical."

That night, under a sky full of stars and surrounded by friends, their story quietly bloomed. And as they made their way back home from the hills of Darjeeling, both knew something had changed—something beautiful had begun.

The following morning on the train back, as everyone else dozed off, Samip and Sandhya sat quietly near the window. The early morning light hit her face gently. Samip leaned in, “Do you know, I think this was one of the happiest weeks of my life?”

Sandhya turned to him, “Mine too. You made it possible, Samip. I cannot thank you enough.”

He reached out and gently touched her hand. “No need to. Just promise me something.”

She looked at him curiously. “What?”

“Promise me this won’t be our last trip together.”

Sandhya chuckled, “Are you proposing a lifetime of adventures?”

He grinned, “One trip at a time.”

And just like that, with a view of the fields speeding past and a warm silence between them, their journey together had truly begun.

Chapter 8:

The Fracture of Fate

Being a Gujarati Brahmin boy, Samip was always enthusiastic about Navratri. The festive beats of garba, the colourful traditional attire, and the joyous celebrations had always been his favourite time of the year. This year, he had planned to play dandiya with a group of his friends and had even invited Sandhya and some of her college friends to join.

They agreed to meet directly at the garba venue since Samip had some pending work. However, fate had other plans.

Running late, Samip began walking briskly along the footpath toward the venue. In a flash of misfortune, a speeding car lost control and struck him. His friends, who were close by, were stunned. Panic set in quickly, but they managed to call an ambulance and rushed him to the hospital.

Meanwhile, Sandhya reached the garba venue. Dressed in a vibrant Chania choli, excitement lit her eyes—but it slowly turned into confusion and worry. She had been waiting for Samip for quite some time and tried calling him repeatedly, only to be met with silence.

Back at the hospital, after the initial chaos, one of Samip's friends noticed Samip's phone buzzing. It was Sandhya. He hesitated but eventually picked up the call and broke the shocking news to her.

Sandhya's heart sank. Her hands trembled, and tears welled in her eyes. She wanted to rush to the hospital immediately,

but Samip's friend gently urged her to wait until the operation was complete.

That night was agonizing for her. She could not sleep, her mind replaying worst-case scenarios.

The next morning, Samip's parents arrived at the hospital. By then, the surgery had been completed. Samip lay on the hospital bed, his leg wrapped in bandages, his body tired, but his spirit still strong.

When Sandhya finally arrived with two of her friends, her eyes found Samip instantly—and she froze. Seeing him in pain crushed her. Though she tried hard to control her emotions, silent tears slipped down her cheeks. Samip's mother noticed the sorrow in Sandhya's eyes and the depth of her worry.

Later, when Sandhya and her friends prepared to leave, Samip gently urged them to go home and rest.

Once they left, his mother turned to him. "Who was she?" she asked quietly.

Samip hesitated, trying to find the right words. "They're my college friends," he replied.

"I'm asking about the girl who looked like her world had fallen apart. She was crying for you," his mother said, her voice calm but curious.

Taking a deep breath, Samip realized he had to share the truth. His mother was someone he had always trusted. Maybe she would understand.

"Mom," he said, looking her in the eye. "That was Sandhya. She is from my college—first year. I... I love her. I want to spend my life with her."

His mother's expression changed. "What is her background? Her family? What caste does she belong to?"

"Her father is a well-known businessman," Samip answered. "They're Maharashtrian Sindhi."

There was a long silence before his mother responded.

"What have you done, beta? She's Sindhi, and we are Brahmins. Do you realize what this means? Your father will never accept this. He doesn't like the Sindhi community."

Samip's heart sank. The very support he had hoped for suddenly felt uncertain. His mother's words echoed in his mind. Until that moment, he believed love would be enough—but now, he saw clearly that more hurdles lay ahead.

And yet, deep in his heart, he knew he would fight for Sandhya.

Because love, no matter how tested, was still worth every struggle.

Chapter 9:

The Gathering Storm

Just as their love was taking delicate roots, Sandhya's world was shaken by a familiar storm—her father.

One evening, as she returned from college, her father sat waiting in the living room. His stern gaze met hers as he announced, "We have received a marriage proposal. They are coming to see you this Sunday."

Sandhya's heart dropped.

She had fought tooth and nail to get to this stage in her education, and now the very foundation of her freedom was at risk. She tried to reason with her father, "Baba, I have just started college. Let me complete my degree at least."

But he slammed his hand on the table. "Education will not find you a good husband. A girl's place is in a family—not in some pharmacy lab!"

Her mother looked away, helpless.

That night, Sandhya cried herself to sleep, her pillow soaked with tears of fear and frustration. Dreams she had worked so hard to build now felt like sand slipping through her fingers. She clutched her books to her chest, whispering to herself, "This isn't fair. I've come so far."

Her world, once full of possibilities, now seemed to close in around her like a prison.

When Samip found out through her friend, he was devastated. Though he never expressed his feelings in

words, the thought of losing her—forever—tightened a knot in his chest. It was a kind of helplessness he was not used to feeling.

He began questioning himself. Could he protect her? Would he ever be able to speak up? What if he lost her before he ever had her?

At college, he avoided her gaze. He could not bring himself to meet her eyes—those eyes that always carried so much light. Now, he feared seeing pain in them. Sandhya noticed. And her heart broke a little more with each passing day. The silence between them grew, heavy with uncertainty.

She sat alone during lunch breaks, waiting for him to show up, just once. She checked her phone, hoping for a message, even a simple "Are you okay?" But it never came. Her world felt lonelier than ever.

Something had to change. Soon. Or they both risked losing the one thing they had started to believe in—each other.

Chapter 10: *The Silent Struggle*

The warm rays of the afternoon sun filtered through the window, casting soft, dappled patterns on the floor. Yet, despite the calmness of the day, Samip sat in his room, his eyes staring blankly at the wall, lost in thought. The peaceful surroundings did little to ease the storm brewing within him. His mind was a swirl of emotions, a battle between his heart and the reality he was forced to face.

For days now, he has remained distant, withdrawn into a shell of silence that even his closest friends and family could not break through. He had become a ghost in his own life, moving through the motions without truly participating in anything. His once lively conversations and laughter had been replaced by a quiet solitude that made everyone wonder what was going on.

Samip's cousin, Arvind, had been the first to notice. While others in the family merely assumed he was having a bad week or just tired from work, Arvind knew something deeper was at play. He had grown up with Samip, had seen him through all his highs and lows, and this silence was unlike anything he had ever witnessed.

One afternoon, when the house was quieter than usual, Arvind found Samip sitting alone in the living room, staring at his phone screen without reading anything. It was as though he was waiting for something to happen – something to snap him out of the fog he had been in for so long.

Arvind sat down beside him, an unspoken understanding passing between them. He did not waste any time with pleasantries.

“Samip,” he said softly, his voice laced with concern. “What is going on? You have been distant for days now. Are you okay?”

Samip did not immediately respond. He continued to stare at the phone in his hands, his fingers tracing absent patterns over the screen. There was a long, uncomfortable silence before Arvind spoke again, his voice slightly more insistent this time.

“Is there something going on? Are you...are you in love or something?” Arvind’s tone was light, but the weight of his words hung heavily in the air. “If there is an issue, you know you can talk to me. I can help, I promise.”

The words stung Samip’s heart. The truth of them echoed through his mind, louder than anything he had ever said aloud. In love, yes. It was true. But how could he explain the situation to Arvind? How could he tell him that his heart was torn between Sandhya – someone he cared for deeply – and the overwhelming pressure from her father, who had made it clear that he wanted Sandhya to marry someone else? Someone far more traditional, far more suitable, far more...acceptable.

No one knew about his feelings for Sandhya – not his family, not his friends. It had always been a secret, something Samip carried quietly in his chest, hoping that someday, somehow, things would change. But now, the weight of his love for her felt like an unbearable burden. She was being forced into a marriage, and Samip had no idea how to help

her – how to save her from the life that was being thrust upon her.

He could not bring himself to speak the truth. Instead, he simply shook his head, his eyes remaining focused on the phone that no longer held any meaning.

“I’m fine,” he muttered, through the words felt hollow even as they left his lips.

Arvind was not convinced. He knew Samip too well to believe the lie, but he also knew that pressing him for answers was not going to help. Not yet. He placed a hand on Samip’s shoulder, offering a comforting squeeze.

“Look,” Arvind said gently, “You do not have to tell me everything if you are not ready. But do not shut yourself out, Samip. If something is bothering you, you do not have to carry it alone. I am here. Always.”

The sincerity in Arvind’s voice caused a brief flicker of emotion in Samip’s chest. For a moment, he wanted to break down, to spill everything to Arvind—about Sandhya, the pressure from her father, and the constant ache in his heart. But the fear of judgement, the fear of making everything worse, held him back.

Instead, Samip just nodded, his lips tight. He was not ready yet. Maybe he never would be. He could not imagine a world where he would have to explain all of this to anyone, especially not Arvind, who had always been the more straightforward one. What if Arvind did not understand? What if he saw it as something foolish? A simple crush on a girl that could never be.

But in that moment, Samip realized that he could not keep hiding forever. The weight of his emotions, the guilt, the

frustration, and the helplessness – it was all too much to carry alone.

“I just...I don’t know what to do,” Samip finally whispered, his voice barely audible.

Arvind gave him a knowing look, the corners of his lips turning upward in a gently, reassuring smile.

“Don’t worry,” he said softly. “You will figure it out. And no matter what, I have got your back.”

For the first time in days, Samip felt a small flicker of hope. May be, just maybe, he was not as alone in this as he had thought.

The silence between them was not as heavy anymore. It was simply the quiet understanding between two people who cared about each other – waiting for the right moment, when Samip would finally be ready to share his truth.

Chapter 11:

The Proposal of Two worlds

It all began in the unspoken corners of their lives. For months, Samip and Sandhya had shared fleeting glances, quiet conversations, and secret meetings that blossomed into something deeper. Their connection was undeniable, yet wrapped in silence—protected from a world that might not understand. They never dared to voice it aloud, especially with their families rooted in different cultural traditions. The fear of rejection, of hurting those they loved, kept their feelings locked away.

But love has a way of demanding attention.

One evening, after yet another hushed meeting beneath the preteens of coincidence, Samip walked home under the fading sky, his mind clouded. The joy of their togetherness was no longer enough. The pressure was mounting. And then, Sandhya's voice echoed in his heart—the words that struck him like a storm.

"I won't be able to resist much longer, Samip," she had whispered, eyes brimming with helplessness. "My father has fixed a meeting with a potential groom. I have tried, I really have... but now, I may have to surrender to his will. Unless you do something."

Her plea was not desperate—it was honest, vulnerable. And it shattered the last thread of Samip's hesitation.

The weight of their love, once silently carried, now demanded action.

That night, with emotions surging and a decision firm in his heart, Samip went to meet Arvind, his cousin and confidant. Sitting across from him, he finally let it all out—the story of a love that had grown quietly but deeply, the pressure of their families, and the impossible choice they were being pushed toward.

It was time to chart a path forward. Together.

Arvind listened patiently as Samip poured out his heart. “I understand, Samip. But you know how important family is in these matters. The best thing to do is talk to your father about it. Let him know what you feel. You never know, he might surprise you.”

With a nervous energy, bubbling in his chest, Samip went to his father, who was sitting in his study reading the newspaper. After a long pause, Samip called his father that he wants to show college pictures to him. He shows pictures with sandhya also. Samip’s father asked him that who is the girl who is having many pictures with Samip. After a long pause, Samip finally spoke up. “Dad, there is a something important I need to talk to you about. It is about Sandhya, the girl who is with me in these pictures.”

His father looked at him intently “Go on,” he said, his voice calm yet expectant.

Samip took a deep breath, trying to gather his thoughts. “I love her, Dad. I want to marry her. But...there is a problem Her family is Sindhi, and we are Gujarati Brahmin. I do not know how they will react to this.”

His father’s eyes softened. He leaned back in his chair, considering his son’s words. “Samip, do not worry. Love is a beautiful thing, but marriage is more than just love. It is about families coming together, traditions merging, and

respecting each other's values. I will take care of it. We will find a way."

Relief washed over Samip, though he still felt a sense of uncertainty. His father smiled at him. "I will talk to Sandhya's father. I know someone who can help."

The next day, Samip's father reached out to Mr. Sanjay, a longtime friend and business associate. Mr. Sanjay was a Sindhi man, a well-respected businessman who ran a truck service company, providing transportation solutions for industries across the region. His friendship with Samip's father went back decades, and they had always supported each other in both business and life.

"I will talk to Sandhya's father," Mr. Sanjay said without hesitation after hearing the situation. "I know him well. Let me see how I can help."

Later that evening, Mr. Sanjay made the call to Sandhya's father. Speaking in fluent Marathi with a mix of Sindhi, the shared language of their community, he began by discussing business matters, weaving in personal inquiries about family and of course Sandhya. "I hear you are looking for a suitable match for your daughter," Mr. Sanjay began casually. "I know a fine young man, Samip. He is a Gujarati Brahmin, well educated, and from a respectable family."

There was a brief silence on the line before Sandhya's father spoke. "Tell me more," he said, his voice cautious yet interested.

Mr. Sanjay, ever the diplomat, spoke with warmth. "I have known Samip since he was a boy. He is a hardworking and responsible man. If you are open to it, I would like to introduce him to you as a potential match for Sandhya. But,

of course, I understand if you have reservations. After all, marriage is a significant step.”

Sandhya’s father, while thoughtful, could not hide his curiosity. “A Gujarati Boy, you say?” he mused. “Well, we will see. Let us meet him and his family. I believe it is only fair.”

With that, the decision was made. A meeting would be arranged.

Sandhya had a mixture of emotions when she heard about the upcoming meeting. Relief, nervousness, a flutter of anticipation—it all churned inside her like waves during a restless tide. She had always known this day would come, but knowing and facing were two different things.

The idea of seeing Samip in such a formal context—under the sharp scrutiny of their parents—made her heart race. Would he be nervous too? Would he meet her father’s gaze confidently? Would they be able to hide the spark between them well enough to keep everything appropriately polite?

The night before the meeting, Sandhya turned to her mother. “Please, do not mention Samip. Pretend you do not know him. Let us make this meeting about the proposal—nothing personal, just about the marriage.”

Her mother, ever the wise women, nodded understandingly. “Of course, Sandhya. I will follow your lead.”

And so, the stage was set. The following afternoon, both families gathered at a quiet, neutral location – a restaurant where the formalities of the meeting could unfold. Samip arrived with his parents, his heart pounding in his chest. He had been in love with Sandhya for months, but now, in front of both their families, it felt different. It was as if they were

strangers to one another, forced into a new world where tradition and formality governed their every move.

Samip's father greeted Sandhya's father warmly, and Mr. Sanjay, as the mediator, led the conversation, guiding both families through process of getting to know one another. There was an air of politeness, even if the underlying tension was palpable.

Sandhya, seated beside her mother, tried to keep her focus. She glanced at Samip across the table, but he kept his distance, respectful of the formality of the situation. His parents spoke about their family's traditions, the importance of respect, and their business values, while Sandhya's father talked about their Sindhi roots and the responsibility of marriage in their culture. Though their backgrounds were different, the conversation revealed shared values and an unexpected harmony between two families.

For Sandhya, it felt surreal. She could not help but notice how well her father and Samip's father were getting along, discussing business and family with ease. She found herself warming to the idea of this union, though it still felt strange to her to see Samip in this formal context, especially knowing how deeply they had already connected in secret.

Finally, after several hours of polite discussion, Sandhya's father turned to Samip's family. "I think we understand each other's values," he said slowly, "Let's meet again soon to discuss the next steps."

Samip's father smiled, his face lighting up with gratitude. "Thank you for your time. We will respect your decision and are happy to continue this conversation."

As the meeting concluded, both families exchanged formal goodbyes, their hearts light with the hope that this was the beginning of something beautiful. Samip and Sandhya, though they had barely spoken throughout the meeting, exchanged a quiet, knowing glance.

For now, their love remained a secret, hidden beneath the formality of the evening. But as they walked away from the restaurant, both felt the weight of their family's approval and the sense that their futures—once uncertain—were now intertwined in a way they could never have imagined.

Chapter 12:

Seeds of Suspicion

Somewhere deep down, Sandhya's father was not fully convinced that Sandhya and Samip were strangers. He had not said a word about it, but his silence had a weight that lingered in the air. Samip, too, had a growing sense of unease. He could feel the tension building like a storm cloud, and he knew—sooner or later—it would burst.

The next evening, as twilight painted the sky in amber hues, Sandhya sat in the living room pretending to read. The soft rustle of pages was the only sound, but her thoughts were elsewhere. Her father's quiet stares, the way he lingered before answering, the small pauses in conversation—each moment whispered suspicion.

Her phone buzzed, cutting through the silence.

Samip: "Hey, any updates? How is your dad doing?"

She typed quickly:

Sandhya: "He's been quiet, but I think he's getting suspicious. Be careful, Samip. He might approach you or make inquiries at college."

Samip: "I'm always careful, Sandhya. Besides, he'll find the same thing everyone sees—just a guy buried in his books."

She smiled at the message. Samip's calmness grounded her, even when everything around them felt like walking a tightrope. He was focused, disciplined, yet warm in the most unspoken ways. Still, beneath his composed exterior, she knew he was just as worried.

Her phone buzzed again.

Samip: "I have a feeling your dad might make inquiries. I think it's time we speak to our teachers, friends... even the principal."

Sandhya: "I'm scared, Samip. What if they do not support us?"

Samip: "They will. We are not distracted. We are not irresponsible. Everyone knows we're serious—about our studies and each other."

Sandhya: "I trust you, Samip. I am ready. Let's do this."

Later that evening, the tension finally cracked. During dinner, Sandhya's father set down his fork and asked, seemingly out of nowhere:

"So, Sandhya... a friend mentioned you study with Samip in the same college. How come you two do not know each other?"

Her heartbeat spiked, but she kept her voice calm.

"Yes, Papa. We are both in the pharmacy program. As Samip mentioned when we met at the restaurant."

He studied her face, searching for clues. "Do you know him well?"

She took a breath. "Papa, I'm in first year, he's in third. Our paths barely cross. My focus is on my studies, as always."

His eyes narrowed slightly. "So, no friendship. No connection at all. That is what you are saying?"

Sandhya nodded. "I would never lie to you, Papa."

Her father leaned back in his chair; arms crossed. "Do you think he's a good choice for marriage, if the time came?"

The question struck like lightning, unexpected and heavy. She was not sure how to explain that what she felt for Samip was not a childish crush—it was deep, quiet, and real. But her father was not ready for that truth yet.

"I trust you, Papa," she said gently. "Whatever you decide will be for my future. Right now, I'm focused on my education."

He nodded slowly. "Hmm. I'll keep that in mind."

Later that night, her phone lit up again.

Sandhya: "He's asking questions, Samip. I think he knows there's more."

Samip: "Then it's time. Let's take control of the story."

Sandhya: "What do you mean?"

Samip: "Let's go public at college. Tell our teachers, friends—everyone. We are serious about our future, and about each other. No more secrets."

Sandhya read the message three times before replying.

Sandhya: "It won't be easy. But maybe... it's the only way."

She knew the road ahead would not be smooth. But if their love was to stand strong, it needed light, not shadows. And together, they were ready to face the truth—whatever it brought.

Chapter 13:

Mission to Convince

The next day, Sandhya and Samip took their plan into action. They spoke with their classmates, their friends, and most importantly their teachers. Everyone in the pharmacy college knew the two were brilliant students, always immersed in their textbooks, always preparing for exams, always chasing their future careers.

It was not long before the whispers started. Some of their friends knew about their feelings for each other, while others were surprised, but no one doubted their dedication to their education. The teachers, too, were supportive. They had seen Sandhya and Samip grow, not just as students but as individuals who were committed to their future. No one thought their relationship as a distraction from their goals. If anything, it seemed like a natural extension of their shared ambitions.

A week later, Sandhya's father paid an unexpected visit to the college. It was a holiday, and the campus was nearly empty. Still, he went straight to the faculty to inquire about his daughter and Samip. He wanted to have answers to his doubt.

The teachers greeted him politely but were quick to assure him of what they knew.

"We've had no indication that Sandhya and Samip are anything more than focused, dedicated students," one teacher explained. "They both spend most of their time in the studies. They are both very studious."

Her father listened intently, but the answer did not seem to satisfy him. He had expected to hear something more. After a long silence, he nodded stiffly.

"Thank you," he said, before leaving the college without further inquiry.

Back to the exit of college gate, he seen some students playing in the college garden. He went to them and asked about their classes. They said that they are in the 3rd year of pharmacy program. Sandhya's father asked them about Samip.

The students looked up. One laughed lightly, "Yes, sir. He is the most boring guy in our class. All he does is study!"

Sandhya' father asked: Is he in love or in relationship with someone?

Another chimed in, "No way that guys into love or relationships. He is always buried in books. Too serious for that kind of stuff."

That response made something stir in Sandhya's father. Their candid honesty felt more reassuring than any formal testimony.

Back home, Sandhya sat anxiously, waiting for her father's return. When he walked in, he did not say a word at first. He simply sat down in his chair; his face unreadable.

"I spoke to your teachers," he finally said. "They say you and Samip are just focused on your studies." Also, Samip's classmate said, "He is only serious about the career, nothing else"

Sandhya nodded, relieved that the teachers and classmates had backed them up.

Her father looked at her for a long moment, his expressions softening just slightly. “I care for you Sandhya. I think Samip is the right choice for you. Should we move forward?”

For the first time in a long while, Sandhya felt a sense of peace. Her father is finally convinced.

“I respect your decision, Papa.” She said quietly.

And as the days passed, Sandhya knew that no matter what her father thought, she and Samip has already carved their own path forward—together.

Chapter 14:

Winning Their Blessings

The week that followed the parents' first meeting was a quiet storm of emotions. There had been no shouting, no dramatic rejections—just a polite, hesitant pause. And somehow, that silence weighed heavier than an outright no. This pause lasts for 6 months.

Samip and Sandhya met at their usual spot beneath the Gulmohar tree on campus, their backs resting against the thick bark, hearts beating with shared unease.

"They didn't say no," Sandhya whispered, looking at the yellowing leaves overhead. "But they didn't say yes either."

"They will," Samip replied, brushing his fingers against hers. "But we have to show them—not just tell them—why we're right for each other."

She looked at him, hope flickering in her eyes. "What do you have in mind?"

He grinned, the corners of his eyes crinkling. "Operation 'Winning Their Blessings' begins today."

Step 1: Academic Excellence

Samip threw himself into his studies with a renewed fire. He was already known as one of the most disciplined students on campus, but now, he went further—volunteering in research labs, mentoring juniors, participating in intercollegiate seminars. His professors took notice.

Sandhya, too, channelled her nervous energy into productivity. Her design for a community health awareness project got selected for a state-level competition, and her presentations became the talk of her batch.

One afternoon, while visiting the college to pick up some documents, Sandhya's father ran into her professor, Dr. Mehta, in the corridor.

"Ah, Mr. Lalwani," Dr. Mehta said with a warm smile. "You must be very proud of your daughter. She is exceptional—bright, mature, and very dedicated. And Samip... you must have heard of him?"

"Yes," Sandhya's father said cautiously. "They're... in the same college."

"Indeed," the professor nodded. "Two of our best students. I have seen them work together during several college activities. They challenge each other—in the best ways. That kind of partnership is rare."

As Sandhya's father walked out of the college gate, her professor's words echoed in his mind.

Step 2: Family Involvement

Back at home, Sandhya made subtle but powerful changes. She began helping her mother in the kitchen more often, assisted her younger cousin with homework, and even took over some of her father's small business errands. Slowly, without trying too hard, she was reminding them she was already the mature woman they hoped she would grow into.

Meanwhile, Samip took a more strategic approach. He invited his parents to the college's Annual Day, where he and Sandhya were performing in a skit on gender equality.

Dressed modestly in a kurta, Sandhya portrayed a young woman pursuing education against the odds, while Samip played her supportive partner. The crowd applauded, but more importantly, so did Samip's mother.

"That girl," she said to her husband as they left the auditorium, "has the strength of her beliefs. I like her."

Step 3: The Heart-to-Heart

It was a Sunday evening when Samip finally sat down with his parents. The living room smelled of cardamom chai, and the ticking of the wall clock seemed louder than usual.

"Maa, Papa," he began, "I know you worry. But I have watched Sandhya stand by me, challenge me, respect me... grow with me. She is the one I want to build my life with."

His mother looked at him, eyes wet but smiling. His father said nothing for a long time, then quietly nodded.

That same evening, in another part of the city, Sandhya sat on the swing in their balcony, her parents by her side.

"Papa," she said softly, "Samip is not just a boy I like. He is someone who believes in me. You once told me to choose someone who values me—not just loves me. That is him."

Her father did not respond immediately. But later, he left a glass of warm milk by her bedside—a silent gesture of understanding.

Chapter 15:

Bridging the Gap

Weeks passed, and both families continued to carry the weight of contemplation. The silence between meetings was not cold—but contemplative. It carried with it a sense of unfinished business, of threads waiting to be tied.

Then, one crisp January morning, a new chapter quietly began.

Sandhya’s father, still mulling over the first meeting and unsure yet increasingly curious about Samip’s world, made a decisive call. He rang Mr. Sanjay, an old family friend and mutual contact between the two families.

“I want to talk about moving forward with the marriage,” he said simply.

Mr. Sanjay, thrilled by the unexpected turn, wasted no time. He contacted Samip’s father with the news, his voice bright with anticipation. A meeting was quickly arranged—not at a restaurant this time, but at Samip’s home. Sandhya’s father had insisted.

“I want to see where my daughter might live one day,” he had said.

When the day arrived, the air buzzed with quiet anticipation. Sandhya’s father stepped out of the car, his eyes scanning the modest, warm home. He was not one for extravagance—he looked for values, for the things that mattered beyond walls and windows.

Inside, the conversation began with courtesy and tea. Then, with the honesty that had always defined him, Sandhya's father came to the point.

"I believe the children are sincere. I would like the wedding to be held in March or April," he said.

Samip's father, calm and composed, responded thoughtfully, "We understand the desire. But why rush? Let them have time to grow into their future. October or November gives everyone time—to prepare, to settle."

The room grew quiet, the disagreement not harsh, but weighty. The two men were not adversaries, just fathers with different clocks ticking in their hearts.

They spoke of traditions next—Gujarati or Marathi?

Samip's father smiled. "Rituals do not define love. We believe in unity. We are open to all traditions, if they are meaningful to the children."

That line, spoken with such warmth, softened the edge. As Sandhya's father got up to leave, he only said, "I'll think and call you."

Back at her house, Sandhya and her mother waited anxiously. When he returned, his brows were furrowed, his mind visibly agitated.

"I don't understand," he muttered, pacing the floor. "Why delay the marriage if it is fixed? March or April is best. They want October or November? That is too far."

Sandhya approached slowly; her tone careful. "Papa, what is the hurry? Let me focus on my studies. We can marry later."

“No,” he said firmly. “If it is fixed, it should happen soon. You can study from your in-laws’ place. I do not like this delay. If they don’t agree... we will find another boy.”

The words struck like lightning—sharp, cold, unexpected. That night, with trembling fingers, Sandhya didn’t text Samip. She called him.

“Samip... I’m scared,” she whispered. “Papa’s upset. He wants to cancel everything if the date isn’t agreed upon. I can’t lose you.”

Samip’s heart clenched at the sound of her voice.

“I’ll talk to Papa,” he assured her. “Don’t cry. We’ll fix this.”

That same night, Samip sat down with his father. He laid everything out—Sandhya’s father’s worry, the threat to their relationship, his own fear of losing her.

Samip’s father listened silently, then gave a small nod. “May,” he said. “It’s a fair middle ground. We’ll call them now.”

He picked up the phone and dialed.

“Let’s meet in the middle,” he told Sandhya’s father. “May. It gives us time, and it respects your urgency.”

There was a pause, then a response. “Only one condition—the marriage will be conducted with full Gujarati Brahmin rituals.”

“Of course,” Samip’s father said, smiling. “With happiness.”

Chapter 16:

The Final Agreement

This time, the two families met at a quieter restaurant—soft lighting, simple décor, the smell of cardamom and clove in the air. The seating was informal, the conversations warm.

Sandhya wore a soft blue saree. Samip, in a cream kurta, couldn't help but steal glances at her. They sat beside their parents, but for the first time, it felt like they were sitting as one family.

Samip's mother reached across the table, gently touching Sandhya's mother's hand. "Your daughter is graceful, kind, and wise. We couldn't ask for more."

The words hung in the air like a blessing.

Sandhya's father, who had been quiet throughout, finally looked at Samip. "When I first met you, I wasn't sure," he said with honesty. "But I've watched how you two respect each other. I still have my fears... but I trust my daughter's choice."

Samip's father added with quiet pride, "You both have worked hard to show us what this relationship means to you. For that, you have our blessings."

Tears welled up in Sandhya's eyes. Samip gently squeezed her hand under the table, offering silent comfort, silent promise.

They had fought—not through rebellion or shouting, but through honesty, patience, and quiet courage.

The engagement and wedding date were decided to set after meeting the priest in nearby temple. The rituals agreed. The families united.

Their love had withstood every test. Now, it had become something even more beautiful—blessed not just by passion, but by respect, trust, and family.

Their journey was just beginning—but from here on, it would be walked together, with the wind at their backs and blessings in their hearts.

Chapter 17:

The Engagement Preparations Begin

The moment blessings were given, a wave of excitement swept through both families. Discussions about dates, venues, guest lists, and rituals became the new normal.

The First Step: Choosing the Engagement Date

Both families decided to visit a priest to find an auspicious date. After careful consultation, a date a month later was chosen. It gave just enough time for preparations without feeling rushed.

The Ring Shopping Adventure

Samip and Sandhya, along with their parents, visited a renowned jewellery store.

Sandhya, blushing, tried different rings while Samip looked on, teasing her occasionally.

"Don't take too long," he whispered once, "or I might pick one myself."

She giggled, finally choosing a delicate diamond ring—simple yet elegant, just like her.

Samip's ring was a classic platinum band, picked after much debate and mock arguments between the families over what suited him best.

Pre-Engagement Rituals

As the date approached, their homes buzzed with activities:

- **Family gatherings** where relatives poured in with blessings and laughter.
- **Shopping sprees** for outfits—Sandhya’s engagement lehenga was a pastel pink adorned with intricate embroidery, while Samip chose a classic navy blue sherwani.
- **Haldi and puja ceremonies** to seek blessings for a new beginning.

In between all this, Samip and Sandhya stole moments to talk, laugh, and dream about their future.

One evening, Samip texted:

"I still can't believe this is happening. You're going to be mine—officially!"

Sandhya replied:

"And you'll finally stop teasing me by calling me your 'unofficial fiancée' 😊"

The Emotional Touch

On the night before the engagement, Sandhya’s mother sat beside her, running her fingers lovingly through her hair.

"You're not just marrying Samip," she said, eyes moist, "you're gaining a second family."

Sandhya hugged her tight, feeling the bittersweet emotions of stepping into a new life.

Chapter 18:

A Twist Before the Celebration

The news of parental approval felt like a dream for Samip and Sandhya. The engagement preparations started with excitement, buzzing calls, and endless lists. Both families decided to host the ceremony in a beautiful banquet hall filled with flowers, fairy lights, and a touch of old-world elegance.

But just as everything seemed to be falling into place, a twist shook their plans.

A Mysterious Phone Call

One evening, as Sandhya's father was finalizing the guest list, he received a call from a distant relative—someone known to stir trouble.

"I heard Samip is very career-focused," the relative said with a sly tone. "Will he even have time for family after marriage? Are you sure about this?"

Doubt, once again, crept into Sandhya's father's heart.

That night at dinner, he was quiet, distant.

Sensing the tension, Sandhya asked gently, "Papa, is everything okay?"

He hesitated, then said, "I'm just thinking, beta. Marriage is not a decision to be taken lightly."

Sandhya's heart pounded. She immediately texted Samip.

Sandhya: *Papa seems worried again. Some relative filled his mind with doubts.*

Samip: *Let's not panic. We'll handle this together.*

Operation Reassurance

The very next day, Samip decided to act. He and his father visited Sandhya's home without prior notice—carrying a box of sweets and something more important: a heartfelt letter.

Samip sat across from Sandhya's parents, his voice steady, his eyes honest.

"I understand you are worried," he began. "Career is important to me, but family is my foundation. My success is meaningless without the people I love."

Then he handed them the letter. It was written in Samip's neat handwriting, filled with promises—not of riches, but of respect, partnership, patience, and unwavering support for Sandhya and her family.

Sandhya's father read the letter slowly. His hands trembled slightly, but when he looked up, his eyes were moist.

"I was wrong to doubt you, son," he said quietly. "Thank you for reminding me what really matters."

The Engagement Day

The ceremony went ahead as planned—but now with deeper joy, having survived the tremor of doubt.

Sandhya looked breathtaking in her pastel lehenga, while Samip, in his navy blue sherwani, couldn't take his eyes off her.

As they exchanged rings, the hall burst into applause. Their friends whistled and cheered, and their parents watched with proud, teary smiles.

Later, under the fairy lights, Sandhya whispered to Samip, "For a moment, I thought we'd lost it all."

He smiled and gently touched her forehead with his, "Real love survives storms, Sandhya. We're just getting started."

Their journey had truly begun — with honesty, patience, and a bond that had already proven it could weather any storm.

Chapter 19:

Wedding Bells and a Hidden Surprise

With both families finally on board, the preparations for Samip and Sandhya's engagement—and eventual wedding—were in full swing.

There were endless visits to jewellery stores, colourful saree shopping, and cake tastings that often ended with Sandhya smearing frosting on Samip's nose, much to everyone's amusement.

One sunny afternoon, as the two families gathered to finalize the invitation cards, a tiny commotion erupted.

Samip's little cousin, Aarav—an energetic 8-year-old with a mischievous grin—came running into the living room, holding a glittery pink envelope.

"Look what I found!" Aarav shouted, waving it like a trophy.

Everyone turned.

Confused, Sandhya's mother took the envelope from him and opened it carefully. Inside was a handwritten love letter—from Samip to Sandhya!

Samip's face turned crimson.

Sandhya gasped and tried to grab the letter, but it was too late—Sandhya's father had already started reading aloud, struggling to suppress a smile:

"Dear Sandhya,"

"You are my calm in chaos, my joy in sorrow, my courage in fear..."

The room exploded with laughter. Sandhya buried her face in her palms while Samip muttered, "It was supposed to be a private surprise after the engagement!"

Sandhya's father, between chuckles, teased, "Looks like someone has already written his wedding vows!"

Sandhya's mother smiled warmly and said, "If words could be weighed, these would be priceless."

Amidst the laughter and teasing, something beautiful happened—both families realized the depth of love Samip and Sandhya shared. It wasn't just a formal alliance. It was real. It was heartfelt.

The Cute Drama: A Missing Ring

Just when they thought the excitement was over, during a ring selection trip, Samip realized he had misplaced the engagement ring!

Panic ensued. The jeweller, the staff, everyone started searching frantically.

Sandhya, trying not to laugh, finally tugged at his sleeve and whispered, "Is this what you're looking for?"

There, on a delicate chain around her neck, hung the ring Samip had been searching for. She had sneaked it during the selection, planning to surprise him later.

Samip shook his head, half in shock, half in awe.

"You're already making me crazy," he said, laughing.

"And you'll love every minute of it," she teased, winking.

Their laughter mingled with the golden afternoon light—echoes of a love that would only grow stronger with every small surprise, every shared secret, and every playful twist of fate.

Chapter 20: *The Engagement Ceremony – A Night to Remember*

The engagement day arrived with the sky painted in soft hues of orange and pink. There was an excitement in the air—an unsaid magic that everyone felt the moment they stepped into the beautifully decorated banquet hall.

Strings of fairy lights hung from every corner, casting a warm, golden glow. Fresh jasmine and roses filled the hall with their sweet fragrance. Samip stood by the entrance, looking dashing in a royal blue sherwani, stealing glances at the door every few seconds.

Then, she arrived.

Sandhya walked in, adorned in a delicate pastel pink lehenga, looking no less than a dream. Her eyes immediately found Samip's across the crowd, and in that shared glance, the nervousness melted away, replaced by a familiar, comforting happiness.

The ceremony began with laughter and endless photos. Families mingled, guests congratulated, and friends sneaked samosas from the snack table.

But just as the ring exchange was about to happen—a small cute drama unfolded.

Aarav, the same mischievous little cousin who had once revealed Samip's love letter, ran up to the stage shouting, "Wait! Wait!"

Everyone turned to look, stunned.

"I have an important question!" Aarav announced, holding a mic someone foolishly handed him.

The hall fell silent, amused.

He looked seriously at Samip and said, "Promise me you'll never make Sandhya cry, or I won't let you marry her!"

The guests burst into laughter. Sandhya blushed. Samip smiled and bent down to Aarav's level.

"I promise," Samip said, loud enough for everyone to hear, "that I'll always keep her smiling—even if she gets angry at me for stealing the blanket."

The crowd roared in laughter again. Sandhya giggled, covering her mouth shyly.

The Surprise Twist

Just when everyone thought the surprises were over, Samip pulled out a small velvet box different from the engagement rings.

He opened it in front of Sandhya. Inside was a tiny, delicate bracelet engraved with the words:

"For the girl who made me believe in forever."

Tears welled up in Sandhya's eyes—not out of sadness, but overwhelming joy. She couldn't stop smiling as he gently clasped it around her wrist.

Their families clapped, cheered, and even wiped a few happy tears as Samip and Sandhya finally exchanged rings.

As they stood together on the stage, bathed in golden light, they realized:

This wasn't just a ceremony.

It was the beginning of *their forever*.

And with so many hearts behind them, their journey was already blessed.

Chapter 21:

First Days After Engagement

The engagement ceremony was a whirlwind of colours, laughter, and countless moments that Sandhya and Samip would remember forever.

Dressed in elegant traditional outfits, with wide smiles that refused to fade, they stood together as rings were exchanged amidst cheers and happy tears. Their parents, who once needed time to think, now beamed with pride, hosting the guests like it was the happiest day of their lives.

The formalities were done. Now began something even more special—their life together.

The First Days

Post-engagement, life for Samip and Sandhya became a little more chaotic but a lot more beautiful.

Suddenly, there were a hundred decisions to make—wedding venue, guest list, outfits, food, decorations! Every phone call was filled with “*Which colour theme do you like?*” or “*How many guests from your side?*” followed by giggles, mock arguments, and sneaky late-night calls.

One afternoon, while trying to finalize the wedding card design, Sandhya dramatically sighed, “Samip, if we survive this planning phase, we can survive anything.”

Samip laughed, “Exactly why this is the real test before the wedding!”

A Cute Drama

One evening, they decided to meet at a coffee shop to take a break from all the wedding madness. Sandhya, exhausted, rested her head on the table.

"You know," she said, half-sleepy, "maybe we should just run away and get married quietly."

Samip leaned closer with a mischievous grin. "Tempting. But then who would eat the 500 kilos of Gulab jamun your dad ordered?"

Sandhya burst out laughing, drawing amused glances from nearby tables.

They sat there, laughing and talking about everything and nothing, forgetting the rest of the world existed. It was a small reminder amidst the wedding storm—*this* was what truly mattered: the friendship, the laughter, the ease between them.

A Small Surprise

As they were about to leave, Samip handed her a small envelope.

"What's this?" she asked.

"Open it," he said, looking suspiciously proud of himself.

Inside was a simple hand-drawn sketch—two stick figures holding hands under a big wedding arch, with messy captions: "*Samip + Sandhya: Best Team Forever.*"

Sandhya laughed till her sides hurt. It wasn't fancy, it wasn't expensive—but it was *perfect*.

She looked up at him, eyes shining. "I'm keeping this forever."

"Good," Samip said, teasing. "Because I have no talent for drawing, and this is my life's masterpiece."

Chapter 22:

Wedding Preparations and Unexpected Challenges

With the blessings of their families secured, wedding preparations swung into full motion. Excitement buzzed through both households like electricity.

The Planning Storm Begins

Lists were made, re-made, and misplaced. Shopping trips became family outings, ending with ice creams and sore feet. Every weekend was packed with visits to decorators, caterers, and endless discussions about themes, outfits, and menus.

Sandhya's mother insisted on a traditional wedding, while Samip's mother, secretly a fan of Bollywood glamour, pushed for a dash of modern style. After hours of heated but hilarious debates, they finally settled on a fusion wedding—traditional ceremonies in the morning and a modern-style reception in the evening.

The First Small Mishap

One week into preparations, a major confusion erupted. Samip's sherwani (which he had proudly selected after three painful shopping trips) got exchanged with another groom at the boutique!

The shopkeeper called in a panic, "Sir, there's been a mix-up. Another groom named Sameer took your sherwani by mistake."

Samip's reaction was classic—first silent horror, then a groan.

"How can someone take the wrong outfit?!" he complained, half-laughing, half-panicking.

Sandhya teased him mercilessly. "Don't worry, Samip. If nothing else, you can just come to the mandap in jeans and a kurta. I'll still marry you!"

He rolled his eyes dramatically. "Thanks for the undying support," he said, earning a playful smack on the arm.

Luckily, the boutique resolved the confusion within a day, and the sherwani was safely retrieved.

A Cute Secret Surprise

Meanwhile, Sandhya was planning something special. With the help of Samip's best friend, she had secretly arranged a surprise for the wedding day—a personalized wedding entrance song, written and sung by Samip's favourite local band.

"I want him to feel what I felt when he gifted me that bracelet," she told her friend, smiling shyly.

The song, titled *"Found You in a Crowd,"* would be performed just as Samip would step into the mandap, completely unaware of the surprise waiting for him.

The Emotional Heartbeat

Amid all the laughter and chaos, there were quieter moments too—like when Sandhya's father spent a long evening looking at her childhood photos, sighing deeply, realizing his little girl was growing up.

Or when Samip's mother stitched a small, hand-embroidered message into the inside of his wedding jacket:
"May you always be surrounded by love as pure as your heart."

The wedding countdown had officially begun.

The chaos was real, but so was the love.

And somewhere between fitting appointments and cake tastings, Samip and Sandhya knew:

They weren't just preparing for a wedding—they were preparing for forever.

Chapter 23:

The Wedding Day – A Dream Unfolds

The morning sun rose with a golden hue, as if the skies themselves were blessing the day. The day Samip and Sandhya had dreamed of for so long was finally here.

The house bustled with activity. Relatives arrived with bags, laughter, and endless suggestions. Florists ran in and out, filling the venue with the scent of fresh jasmine and roses. Somewhere in the chaos, Samip's little cousin lost a shoe, causing a mini-search party while the band rehearsed noisily at the gate.

Samip, getting ready in his room, looked at himself in the mirror—dressed in his regal sherwani, the one he almost lost a few weeks ago. His mother came in, fixing his turban with trembling hands.

"You look just like your father on our wedding day," she whispered emotionally.

Meanwhile, in her room, Sandhya was a vision in her deep maroon lehenga, adorned with intricate gold embroidery. Her friends fussed over her jewellery and makeup, while her mother held back tears, seeing her daughter ready to step into a new life.

The Cute Surprise

As the wedding rituals began, Sandhya was nervous but excited. Just as Samip made his grand entrance with the *baraat*, the *special surprise* Sandhya had planned unfolded.

The music stopped. The hall dimmed slightly. Then, a soft spotlight shone on the stage where a local band began to perform "*Found You in a Crowd*"—the custom song Sandhya had secretly commissioned for him.

The lyrics told their story:

Of two studious hearts crossing paths,
Of unspoken glances in college corridors,
Of late-night conversations and dreams shared.

Samip stood frozen for a moment, his heart thudding. When he realized what was happening, he looked towards Sandhya—hidden behind a curtain but peeking out with a shy smile.

His friends teased him, "Bro, you're gone! Look at your face!"

Samip just shook his head, smiling the widest smile he ever had.

An Unexpected Drama

Just as the rituals were about to start, another small twist came—the priest announced they had forgotten an essential item: the *Mangal sutra*!

A ripple of panic went through the families. The priest insisted, "Without it, we cannot proceed!"

Samip's younger brother sprinted to the car, where it was thankfully found under a pile of gifts and sweets. The entire gathering laughed with relief, breaking the nervous formality into genuine warmth.

Sandhya joked when Samip reached the mandap, "Already losing important things, Mr. Groom?"

Samip winked and whispered, "Only to make our story more memorable, Mrs. Almost-Groom."

The Wedding Rituals

The vows were spoken, the pheras completed. Each step was not just a ritual—it felt like the sealing of a promise made long ago, when two young hearts had first begun to find each other.

When Samip tied the Mangal sutra around Sandhya's neck and filled her parting with sindoor, there was a soft collective sigh from the crowd.

They were now husband and wife—not just by ceremony, but by soul.

The day ended with stars overhead and hearts full of love. Their journey had truly begun—with music, laughter, and a few memorable mishaps along the way. But more than anything, it had begun with trust, friendship, and a love that was beautifully, uniquely theirs.

Chapter 24:

The Morning After

Their wedding had been nothing short of a miracle—one crafted from the fabric of patience, persistence, and love. After all the ups and downs, all the negotiations and emotions, they were finally together.

The morning sun filtered through the soft curtains of their new bedroom. A golden warmth bathed the room as Sandhya walked in quietly, holding two cups of tea. Her hair was loosely tied, her face fresh with the soft glow of a new bride. There was a nervous joy in her steps, and a mischievous smile tugged at the corners of her lips.

She placed one cup on the bedside table and nudged Samip gently.

"Mr. Tripathi, rise and shine. Your wife made tea."

Samip turned over with a lazy grin, eyes half-open. "I married a chef?" he teased, his voice still husky with sleep.

Sandhya rolled her eyes and sat beside him. "Just for today. Tomorrow, you're on tea duty."

He sat up slowly, stretching. Their fingers brushed as he took the cup from her hands, and the contact sent a quiet thrill between them. Sandhya blushed, looking away.

"So," she said, sipping her tea, "shall we pretend to be the perfect couple today?"

Samip leaned in, a wicked glint in his eyes. "Why pretend? We'll be the perfect couple in public. In private, we'll just be two crazy lovers trying to act mature."

She laughed, pushing his shoulder. "You don't need to act. You *are* immature."

"Only for you," he said dramatically, pretending to place his hand on his heart.

She couldn't stop smiling. There was something new in this air—a soft excitement that danced between them. It wasn't just about being newlyweds; it was about finally being able to love openly. To tease, to laugh, to be silly without fear.

"You know," Samip murmured, brushing a stray hair from her face, "I still can't believe you're my wife."

Sandhya tilted her head. "Why? Expecting a Bollywood heroine?"

He grinned. "No. I got better. I got the woman who made me believe in love."

She looked at him, eyes filled with affection. "And I got the boy who never stopped chasing dreams—even when I became one of them."

They sipped tea in silence for a while, the comfort of their presence louder than any words. Outside, the world moved on. But inside that room, time slowed down for them.

And as the first full day of their married life began, it carried promises of whispered secrets, warm cups of tea, and a lifetime of gentle teasing.

Epilogue: *A Love That Lasts*

Years later, they sat side by side, wrapped in a shawl on the balcony of their home. The sun dipped below the horizon, painting the sky in hues of orange and lavender. Their fingers remained intertwined—just as they had on that very first morning after their wedding.

The walls of their home were filled with memories—framed photographs of festivals, trips, and a beautiful daughter who carried the best parts of them both. With her mother's wit and her father's calm charm, she was the centre of their universe. Her laughter echoed through the house, adding a new dimension to their love story.

Their love had never needed to be grand. It had been steady. Quiet. Unshakable.

Samip looked at Sandhya, his hair flecked with grey but his smile just the same.

"I'd walk that ramp with you again," he whispered. "Every single time."

Sandhya leaned her head against his shoulder, her eyes closed, her heart full.

"And I'd still choose you. In every life."

Love, after all, wasn't just about the grand gestures. It was about mornings with tea. About shared silence. About laughter in the kitchen and teasing in the living room. It

was about bedtime stories to their daughter and sleepy giggles in the hallway. It was about fighting the world—and winning. Together.

Author's Note

Some stories aren't just written—they are lived, felt, and remembered.

Samip and Sandhya's journey is a tribute to the quiet strength of love, the resilience of young hearts, and the beauty of finding home in another soul. It is a story of cultural harmony, family bonds, and the subtle rebellion it takes to stand up for your heart's choice.

As their love blossomed into a partnership and eventually into a family, it became a testament to everything love can be—patient, enduring, playful, and strong. Their daughter, a living symbol of unity, carries their story forward in every smile, every moment.

I wrote this story not just to entertain, but to remind us all that real love isn't loud or flashy—it's found in gentle mornings, unspoken promises, and unwavering belief in each other.

To everyone who has ever had to fight for love, who has faced doubts and still chosen hope—this story is for you.

Thank you for joining Samip and Sandhya on their journey. May you find a piece of your own heart in theirs.

**With all my heart,
Manan Trivedi**