

The Lost Love

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About The Novel

After a successful stint in the Bengali film Industry, Kolkata as a Producer, Writer Director, I was planning to move to make a mark in the Bollywood. Since my childhood I dream't big and I was fortunate to get an invitation from four time Oscar Winner Producer, Michael Philips whom I had sent a script which was a Hollywood venture. In 2006 instead of Mumbai I opted for Los Angeles, Hollywood, and there I formed a Company". named Sampoorna Entertainment LLC sharing my office at Columbia Studio. I was fortunate and thrilled to know that the office premises once belonged to Sir Charlie Chaplin. Soon I Signed Billy zane as a lead for my Hollywood venture "Chimera".

One fine day my friend Vikram Chaudhary the legendary Yoga Guru told me that "Tap's there is a Lady whom I know has someting regarding Kolkata." He fixed a meeting with her and I was at Lady Doctor's place in a huge Palatial Bungalow. She was a rich graceful lady, welcomed me and was delighted to know that I was a filmmaker from kolkata. She made a promise never reveal her name and she narrated me real life true story of hers in a diligent manner. I was mesmerized and my eyes welled up with tears. It was a highly emotional true intense love story.

Immediately I started formulating the story with Bala Raj from L A and after a few month's Film Script of "The Lost Love" Shaped up. I Contacted Sharon Stone's manager and handed him the script for the role of American woman. The Story touched Sharon and she was keen to play the role of Margaret. Unfortunately, the sudden death of the Producer was the prime reason for the project being shelved.

Later When I was back to Kolkata in 2010 to Shoot “Amrita” another Bengali film. My Mumbai teamhead Rajiv Ranjan Das read the Script and suggested me of transforming the script into a novel format because it was a nicely weaved intense true Love story of East and West, I liked the idea but was trying to make a movie first. Finally after a decade I took a decision and I and my Associate Rajiv Ranjan Das started working on it and the film Script got Converted in the form of a Novel.

I’m glad The Lost Love is in front of you. Hope you readers will also experience the Love, joy and pain of the story.

Tapan Saha (Tap’s).

Chapter 1

Calcutta, which is now known as Kolkata, is about to set today as usual. Dr. Bimal Mukherjee is writing an article on his study table. He pauses, looking towards the window of the corridor visible in the distance. His expression somber. He shifts back on his wheelchair and then turns the wheel towards the window. Slowly he is moving forward. When he is passing through the room, a collection of books is seen on his bookshelf, most of which are related to herbal medicine and Indian Ayurveda. An old stethoscope is hanging from the handle of the bookshelf. The golden redness of the setting sun is falling on the corridor. He stops his wheelchair near the window. His gaze falls towards the sky outside the window. The sky is absolutely clear and the red sun is on the verge of setting. He slowly takes off his glasses and cleans the glasses one by one with a handkerchief. Wearing his glasses, he again fixes his gaze towards the sky. His face is glowing with the golden light.

An airplane passing through the sky. Without blinking, he keeps watching the airplane disappear from his sight. The sun has set. The sound of someone's footsteps and bangles brings a reaction on his face. His wife Vijaya Mukherjee comes to him and puts her hand on his shoulder from behind. Noticing that it is dark outside the window she tells Bimal, "I have been seeing for years that the world may turn upside down but you do not forget to watch the sunset. People go as far as Kanyakumari to watch the sunrise."

Bimal speaks in his controlled voice without looking at Vijaya.

“If there is setting, there is rising, if there is rising, there is setting. In life, people are seen running more towards the rising but they forget that the importance of setting cannot be denied.”

He has turned his wheelchair towards Vijaya. Vijaya, who is listening to him with great attention, looks into Bimal's eyes. Breaking the silence for a moment, Vijaya says.

“I don't understand your high-level talks. I like to see the rising sun. It becomes dark after sunset and after sunrise there is light all around.”

Saying this, she went to push Bimal's wheelchair. “Now hurry up, the tea is ready.”

Bimal gestures her not to push it, he will handle the wheelchair himself. Vijaya understands and moves ahead. Crossing the corridor, she comes to the study room, collects the scattered pages on the table and presses them with a paper weight. Bimal comes from behind very cautiously and positions the wheelchair near the glass of tea on the table. The lemon colour of the tea is visible through the glass. Picking up the glass, he takes a sip of tea, Vijaya question's Bimal.

“When will this article you are writing be completed.”

Bimal does not respond. He is enjoying the tea. Vijaya says,

“That is why I was saying that if this article is completed, you can spend some time with Raja, he will miss you a lot.”

Bimal takes another sip of tea and answers in a slow but firm voice.

“If he really misses me, he will never leave us, your son has grown up Vijaya. He has started taking his own decisions. He doesn't care about anyone.”

Vijaya says in an understanding tone.

“See, your words are like a line of stone for him, if he comes to know that you have nothing to do with his decision to go out, he will cancel his plan in a minute.”

Bimal says holding the glass of tea in his hand.

“Mukherjees are not made to leave home and go out. It has not benefited anyone in the past as well. I think the American system does not suit the Mukherjee family.”

“But I think Raja going to America will fill our lives with miracles.” Hearing Vijaya, Bimal says,

“I appreciate your optimistic fortune but I don't think so. I am not with your thinking.”

Putting his hand on the handle of the wheelchair, he starts leaving. Vijaya stands there sadly after listening to him. Just then the wall clock strikes 6:30 P. M. Vijaya looks at the clock. There is a beautiful painting on the wall near the clock which shows two Indian musical instruments, sarod and sitar. Vijaya also leaves the room. The pages pressed by the paper weight are fluttering on the table.

Chapter 2

There is not much traffic today on Kolkata's landmark Second Hooghly Bridge. Raja is carefully driving his yellow Honda car. He looks 25. While driving, he looks at his watch and with one hand while he fixes his hair at the back. Sumit, who is sitting next to him is dialing a number on his mobile. Raja notices this and says,

"Why are you waking them up so early?" Sumit replies quickly,

"I am not waking them up early brother, they wake up by 5 am. You will also have to do the same, otherwise you will get stuck in the Los Angeles traffic in such a way that your whole day will be wasted." Then the phone gets connected. He says,

"Yes... Bhabhi." (Sister-in-law)

A woman's voice resonates from the other side. "Hello, hello what...?"

"Bhabhi...I was talking to Raja, Raja was saying why am I waking you up early, so I told him that you wake up by 5:00. Ok, take this, talk to Raja."

Sumit extends the phone to Raja. Raja is still combing his hair.

"This is a voice call, not a video call, your face will not be visible. Talk quickly, I will fix your hair in the meantime."

As soon as Raja takes the phone, Sumit starts combing his hair at the back with his hand. Raja gets irritated by this act of his and jerks his hand away. Sumit enjoys Raja's irritation. Raja says in a hurry on the phone,

“Hello Bhabhi, Good evening”

Sumit again puts his hand in his hair to tease him. , Raja elbows him hard.

On the phone, in the bathroom of the Los Angeles apartment, Meenu Bhabhi, with whom Raja is talking, wipes her face with a towel and laughs when Raja says Good Evening. And she teases Raja about this and says,

“Good Evening, hello I have just woken up from bed.” and she starts laughing out loud.

Raja gets embarrassed and while controlling himself says “Sorry Bhabhi good morning sorry.”

Meenu looking at her face in the mirror says

“It seems you are very nervous like small kids.. and I can't wait to see the small kid.”

Raja also immediately says “I also want to quickly say thank you to you and Bijon da face to face. You people are helping me so much.”

“You will have a lot of time here for all these formalities, although I thought that you would come here last week itself.”

Raja interrupts Meenu and says,

“Actually, I wanted to spend some more time with my father, he will miss me a lot.”

Meenu asks

“And what about me?” Raja,

“I did not understand Bhabhi.”

Meenu, taking the phone in her hand, walks from the bathroom to the bedroom and says,

“I mean I am unemployed right now and I have a lot of free time. Whenever you come here, I will be ready to wait for you. I will provide you with the service you want.”

Raja is not able to understand.

Meenu says

“Kid, please understand. I will take you for a drive wherever you want. Now tell me, is it confirmed on the seventh?”

Raja replies

“Yes Bhabhi, it is confirmed. It is a Singapore Airlines flight. The flight number is...”

“I know. I have written down all the details of your flight and stuck it on the refrigerator door. Along with your photograph, now you just come quickly and yes, listen, don’t forget to bring your sketchbook.” Raja is a little surprised.

“Sketch book, how did you know all this?”

The sound of Meenu laughing echoes in Raja's ears. Raja looks at Sumit suspiciously. Sumit also tries to hide his laughter. Raja elbows him hard again. Sumit, while dodging, turns his face towards the phone and speaks loudly.

“Bhabhi, you must have seen very few doctors who are painters and Raja is especially an expert in making pictures of women.”

Raja elbows him again. Sumit is still laughing.

“No, there is nothing like that in Bhabhi, do not believe anything he says. The truth is that I am scared that how will I reach such a big city.”

Meenu, who was doing her makeup, stops her makeup and picks up her phone and says,

“Don't be afraid, don't listen to anything Raja what Sumit says, he is an idiot from the village. You don't have to be afraid, just board the flight and land in Los Angeles. Your Bijon Da will be standing there to pick you up.”

“Thanks Bhabhi, you have removed my fear by saying this. You and Bijon da, both are very nice.”

“Okay, okay, now come quickly, we will talk, bye for now.” As soon as Meenu hangs up, Sumit asks Raja.

“What was Bhabhi saying about me?” “She was calling you a village idiot.” Well, how does she say that?

Sumit becomes a little sad. While driving, Raja says

“What happened, all the laughter has disappeared. Now you look like a village idiot. Leave Bhabhi, how would she know what Sumit is to Raja, sitting seven seas away. To tell you the truth, Sumit, I was nervous at the very mention of going to America, but when you got Bhabhi and Bijon Da's support ready for me, the confidence inside me arose. I can never forget you, Sumit, you have supported me since childhood, more than a brother. You are my true friend.”

Hearing these words of Raja, Sumit's face brightens up, he forgets about Bhabhi and says cheerfully.

“In the name of friendship, let's chill. Speed up the car and drop me at your old favorite place.”

Raja looks at Sumit and says smilingly “Now you really look like Sumit” and increases the speed of the car.

Chapter 3

He stops the car at the edge of a green field. Sumit quickly comes out and takes out two bottles of beer from the ice case kept in the car's dickey and closes the dickey with his shoulder and comes forward. He is holding one bottle in each hand. Raja is sitting on the bonnet of the car and looking at the Hooghly Bridge visible nearby. A steamer is seen going in the Hooghly River. Sumit opens the cap of a beer bottle with his teeth and offers it to Raja. Raja finds the bottle cold and says,

"How come it is so chilled brother?"

"It has come out of the ice box brother... If beer is not chilled, there is no fun."

He quickly opens the cap of the second bottle and offers it to Raja "It is a new beginning."

Raja also offers his bottle forward and hits it with his bottle. A sweet sound comes out from the collision of the glass bottle. Raja says, "Thank you Sumit."

Both of them silently sip beer for some time. Sumit picks up the bottle again and says,

"This is in the name of the success of your mission."

Raja reluctantly clinks the bottle. This time the sound of glass bottle clinks is not so sweet and tinkling. Sumit stares at Raja and says "What happened, is the beer not strong?"

"No no, that is not the case."

Raja replies

“Then why has your face turned pale?”

“You know Sumit that till date I have not done anything against my father. I have not disobeyed even a single word of his. I am scared. After all, I have to go through that land unknowingly but what can I do because my mission is to fulfill my father's dream.”

Sumit says while getting down from the bonnet and sitting on the fort below.

“There is no need to spend a single penny on this. Why do you worry? Meenu Bhabhi and others will take care of you.”

Raja also gets down and sits on the ground. Both of them just sips the beer silently.

Lost in his old memories Sumit says “Do you know when Bijon da got married and Meenu Bhabhi came to my village as a bride, I became Meenu Bhabhi's favourite. I would do all her small and big tasks. That is why she respects me a lot. Bijon da had left Bhabhi in the village. After Six months, I dropped her off at the airport in Kolkata. She went alone. If a woman can go, why can't you and see, I will come to drop you off at the airport too.”

While listening to Sumit, Raja lies down on the grass on his elbow. He is holding a beer bottle in one hand. He carefully stands the bottle in which the beer is still left and says, “It is very good that my fear has come down due to your words. You are my true Friend, who helps selflessly.”

Raja lies down saying this. Sumit also takes big sips and stands the bottle and lies down on the grass near Raja. Looking at the stars in the sky says.

“Actually, I am afraid how will I spend my time here alone without you. I will not feel like doing any work, festivals, movies,

going out. Look, this time Durga Puja (Goddess Worship) will be spent with you but Diwali (Festival of Lights) will be with your Meenu Bhabhi,

promise me that you will come to Kali Puja (Goddess Worship) next year.”

Raja said, “How can I promise like this? What will be my college schedule till next Diwali (Festival of Lights). How do I know, still I will try.”

Raja lies on his elbow and finishes the whole bottle of beer in two sips. Sumit has also emptied his bottle. Both are lying down. Enjoying the intoxication of beer. Suddenly Raja lightly hits Sumit with his elbow.

Sumit asks.

“Why did you hit now brother, are you drunk?”

“I hit because why did you send my photo to Meenu Bhabhi and this one” and again hits with a little force.

“This is because why did you tell her about my sketchbook.”

Sumit laughs and says that “I WhatsApp’d the photo because Meenu Bhabhi is a fan of Bollywood Heroes. I told her that Raja Mukherjee is more handsome than Bollywood Stars. She could not believe it. I sent your photo to prove it to her.”

Both laugh and the night gets darker.

Chapter 4

Raja is very happy on the arrival of Durga Puja on one hand and on the other hand he is wondering whether he will be able to come to Kolkata next year for Durga Puja or not, but ignoring this he wants to enjoy this year's Puja to the fullest. Actually, before his father became disabled, Durga Idol Puja was organized at his home. He has heard this but since childhood he spends time in the public pandal in front of his house. This time he has requested his friends Rajat, Kishore, Baban and Sumit to stay with him from Soshiti Puja till the tenth immersion. He wants to collect all the memories and go to America. Who knows, due to being busy in his studies, he may not get a chance to come to the Puja for two- four years.

Durga Puja is the religious and cultural identity of Kolkata city. Every year people from all over the world come to see Kolkata Durga Puja.

The Durga Puja held in Kolkata city is a sight to behold. Bengali society worships Goddess Durga with big pandals and attractive idols. The practice of organizing Durga Puja spread from Bengal to other parts of the country.

During Durga Puja, Bengal, especially Kolkata, is immersed in a sea of joy in which there is not only religion but also a Bengali culture in which art, literature and theatre are all intertwined. Even today, Durga Puja like that of West Bengal is not celebrated anywhere.

If we turn the pages of Bengal's history, we find the first mention of Durga idol worship in 1576 AD. At that time Bengal was undivided which is Bangladesh at present. In Tahirpur of present day Bangladesh, Raja Kans Narayan started Devi worship in his village. Durga Puja in Kolkata was first started in 1610 AD by Rai Choudhary family of Badisha, Behala, Sakher Bazar area. At that time Kolkata was a village which was called Kolikata.

Belur Math in Kolkata is situated on the western bank of the Hooghly River. This Math organizes a very popular Durga Puja. Here for the first time in 1901, Swami Vivekananda himself laid the foundation of Durga Puja. Raja's father Bimal comes out only once a year during Durga Puja after becoming disabled. He along with his family attends the Kunwari Puja on Belur Math Mahanavami. In Kunwari Puja, unmarried girls are worshipped as goddesses. The young Kumari, who looks like a living goddess, is offered flowers, sweets and dakshina as prasad and Bimal Mukherjee does this with his own hands. Raja stays with him like a shadow to take care of him. He is very careful till Bimal Mukherjee is brought back home safely because he always feels that his physically challenged father should not suffer any pain. Raja is dancing with his friends in the pandal with Dhunuchi (incense burner) in the evening. His feet and hands are accompanying on the special beats of Dhaak Baja

(traditional drum). The smoke of the dhunuchi goes on his face. He dances in emotion. His eyes have turned red. His friends in the pandal are watching him. Rajat says "When will we see him dancing like this again?" All the friends get emotional.

Our culture is of mother worship. The worship of Goddess Durga is also a symbol of our culture of mother worship. India has a history of worshipping Maa Durga as Bharat Mata in the freedom struggle and sacrificing everything in this worship. Sri Aurobindo wrote about the nation, what is the nation? What is our mother land? It is not a piece of land. Neither is it an

ornament nor a figment of the mind. It is a powerful force created by the powers of all the millions of units that make up the nation. Just like Bhavani Mahisha Mardini is born out of the powers of all the millions of gods who gathered and threaded into a mass of power that we call India. Bhavani Bharati is the living unity of 300 million people, but it is passively imprisoned in the magical circle of self-indulgent inertia and ignorance of its sons. To get rid of Tamas we have no option but to awaken the Brahma within us.

The tenth day is the day of Maa Durga's departure. After the Visarjan Puja, women put Sindoor in the betel leaf and apply it to the goddess's forehead and also offer sweets. All the women present in the pandal apply sindoor (vermillion) to each other's forehead. Raja sees his mother Vijaya enjoying sindoor khela. He thinks, blessed is his mother who prays to Durga Devi for her husband's long life. She has the same respect for her husband in her heart. Like other women have for their healthy husbands. With the collective owl sound of the women, Maa Durga leaves for the Visarjan (Immersion) with her sisters and sons.

Raja goes to the Visarjan with his friends. He bows to Durga Devi with folded hands and closed eyes as she is immersed in the Hoogly River. Then people shout in unison. Bolo Durga Maa Ki... in response everyone shouts Jai.

Chapter 5

There are two days left for Raja to go to America. Raja has invited his friends. Everyone is sitting on sofas and chairs in the hall. Vijaya has fried hot pakoras. The maid brings them in a plate and places them on the table. Rajat, Kishore and Baban pounce on the plates as soon as they are placed. Roopa, who is sitting with Suman, sees that Suman is continuously looking at Raja. Roopa asks Suman

“Won't you eat pakoras?” Suman says,

“No, my throat will get sore due to the oil.”

Okay, don't eat Lata Mangeshkar, (Legendary Singer) I will eat, Roopa gets up and goes to the table. Vijaya hears their conversation. She tells the maid standing nearby “Bring sweets for everyone.” Vijaya asks Suman,

“Will you eat sweets?” Suman slowly nods her head in yes.

Vijaya touches her cheek and says,

“After eating sweets, you must sing a sweet song.” Sumit says, “Aunty, you are right. Raja will not be able to hear Suman's song live soon, so Suman's song must be sung.”

The maid brings a plate of sweets. Suman picks up a sweet from the plate and eats it slowly. The maid takes the plate in front of everyone.

Everyone picks up the sweets and eats them. Roopa carefully picks up the Tanpura (Indian Musical Instrument) kept

in the hall and gives it to Suman. Suman looks at Raja from the corner of her eyes while taking the tanpura. Raja also looks at her and takes out a drawing sheet and pencil from the almirah kept in the hall. He sits comfortably on an empty chair in the corner of the room. Suman plays the tanpura. Everyone's attention is focused on Suman. Suman starts singing.

“You who are leaving, you will not be able to settle there,

I am sure that our memories will bring you back. You are a guest in a foreign land, home is home,

you will not be able to forget it,

you who are leaving, you will not be able to settle there. I am sure “

Everyone is enjoying this relevant song of Suman and Sumit is even repeating the lines of the song. The atmosphere was getting settled when Bimal Mukherjee comes in the room sliding his wheel chair. As soon as Suman's eyes fall on him, she stops singing.

Bimal says

“Why did you stop singing, sing, you are singing well.” Suman gets nervous and she starts again. “You will not find mother's love there, you will yearn for father's love, you will laugh a lot there, where will you find friends' shoulders to cry,

I am sure that you who are leaving, you will not be able to settle there. Everyone applauds. Rajat says, “What have you done to be sentimental Suman?”

Suman puts the Tanpura on the chair and gets up and comes to Bimal, bows down and touches his feet. Bimal puts his hand on her head and blesses her. He says,

“You need good accompaniment, there was emptiness in your song.” Rajat quickly says,

“Let's do one more ghazal and this time uncle will accompany you by playing sarod.”

Everyone becomes quiet because Bimal did not like this. Everyone understands from the expression on his face. Vijaya gets up and comes to Bimal, looking at him, smilingly says,

“This is a good opportunity, you play the sarod well but you have stopped playing it. We all will also enjoy your sarod playing.”

Bimal's eyes go to the sarod lying in the corner, he says “No that sarod is just a decorative thing.”

Vijaya says

“You do not want to play it because the string of the sarod is broken.”

Then Raja quickly says “Mother, I have seen a new string kept in the drawer of the puja room, we can put a new string.”

Bimal says in a serious tone “But the new string will not give me that feel and touch.”

Saying this, Bimal turns his wheelchair and starts going back. Everyone watches him go. While leaving, he says that,

“This is a complicated matter, beyond your understanding.”

Raja is standing and watching him go. There is silence in the room for a while. Suddenly, all the friends notice the drawing sheet in Raja's hand. Everyone goes to him and tries to snatch the drawing sheet from him.

Raja tries to hide it, but Sumit succeeds in snatching the sheet. He looks at the drawing and all his friends look at it. It is a beautiful drawing of Suman singing. He lifts the sheet up and says,

“I had told someone that Raja is an expert in drawing girls.”

Suman gets embarrassed after seeing her picture, she feels uncomfortable. She leaves from there with Roopa. All the friends say goodbye to Raja, some hug him, some pat his back, everyone bids goodbye. Raja comes to see them off at the door. Vijaya also goes towards Bimal's study room. Raja comes near the table while walking and picks up the greeting cards lying there. On one card it is written 'Bon voyage' and on another card it is written 'Doctor, do not forget us'. Raja's eyes become moist.

Chapter 6

Today is the day of Raja's much awaited trip. Sumit and Rajat have arrived. They pick up the bag, the bag that Rajat picked up was not closed properly and the stuff falls out of it on the floor. Everyone sees that some Laddoos (Sweet) are rolling on the floor as if they were tennis balls. Rajat picks up a laddoo and puts it in his mouth, everyone starts laughing. Raja looks at his mother in a questioning manner. Vijaya picks up all the laddoos and packs them in the box again. Raja goes ahead and takes the box from mother's hands and puts it on the dining table. Mother again picks up the box of laddoos and puts it in the bag, this happens twice. Finally Raja's friend forcibly puts the box of laddoos in the bag and closes the bag. Raja feels helpless at first and then he bursts out laughing. Rajat and Sumit are putting the stuff in the trunk of the car outside. Raja touches the feet of his mother and father. He has stopped his tears from falling. Before his eyes get wet he quickly comes out of the hall and sits in the front seat of the car. Rajat is in the driving seat and Sumit is sitting in the back. Vijaya and Bimal watch the car go. Vijaya is waving goodbye to Raja. Vijaya looks at Bimal. Bimal turns his wheelchair inwards and goes straight to the window from where he watches the sun set in the sky every evening. Vijay stands at the main door for some time and turns towards the room, looks at a picture of Raja on the wall and goes near it, cleans the light dust on the picture with the pallu (Corner) of her sari. Raja's picture is smiling but Vijaya's eyes get wet. She does not say

anything but feels that now Raja is not here so she will have to be satisfied by looking at his picture.

Chapter 7

Outside the Kolkata airport, Raja hugs Rajat and Sumit tightly. He hangs his bag on his shoulder and drags a trolley bag along and walks inside the airport without looking back. His eyes are moist. Sumit and Rajat wave at him. Sumit realizes that Raja did not even look back and tells Rajat that “He is going out for the first time and has become too sentimental.”

Chapter 8

Bimal is a little disturbed while watching the setting sun. He is waiting for the plane on which his son is travelling today. Finally, he sees the plane tearing through the sky. Bimal keeps staring at it. As soon as the plane starts disappearing from his sight, he suddenly raises his hand and waves goodbye to the departing plane.

Chapter 9

Raja's flight lands at Los Angeles airport. Raja comes out with his luggage. His eyes are searching for someone. Then he notices the voice of Bijon standing far away

“Raja, I am here, Bijon”

Raja suddenly smiles. He moves towards Bijon. When he comes near he says to Bijon

“How are you, Sir”

Bijon starts moving towards the door. Raja is also walking along with him “I am fine and in this country no one calls me, Sir, by the way you are welcome, did you have any problem in the flight?”

Both of them come out of the door while walking. Bijon is walking fast and both of them reach the parking lot. As soon as Bijon reaches his car, he opens the trunk of the car. Raja puts his luggage in the trunk. Raja takes a deep breath. Bijon is seen doing this and while closing the dicky door he says “There is some different smell from the house.”

Raja replies

“Yes, there is something different but I cannot tell.”

Bijon says

"I will tell you, it is called Smog. It is special for Los Angeles. The fog mixed with the smoke and the humidity is deadly for people like me, come on, sit quickly."

Raja is looking at Bijon while entering the car. Bijon says,

"Hey brother, I am chronic asthmatic If I stay out for long, I will die."

When the car comes out of the parking lot, Raja breaks the silence and says,

"Bijon, I wish to first visit my medical college." "Your wish will be fulfilled."

says Bijon while driving the car. The car is passing through downtown LA. Raja's eyes are fixed outside. The car passes near the beautiful Disney Concert Hall. Raja says while looking at it.

"It seems as if I am in a dream city, everything is so grand."

"People say this in the first impression, but soon a second impression is also formed."

Says Bijon

Raja turns his neck and listens to Bijon. Raja asks.

"What is that second impression?"

"Home sickness. When the dream breaks, the memories of home start haunting."

Raja forcibly smiles and starts looking ahead. Then Bijon suddenly stops the car. Raja looks at Bijon and asks, "Where are we?"

"In reality... I am joking."

Bijon replies. Raja looks outside and sees a maroon AUCM sign on the wall. He immediately understands that he is in the campus of his medical school. Bijon points ahead with his finger and Raja looks curiously and there is a big sign written American

University of Complementary Medicine. His eyes sparkle and without any delay he unbuckles his seat belt, opens the car door and jumps out. Bijon says while sitting.

“Hey wait, what is the hurry, you have to come here from tomorrow.”

Raja ignores Bijon's words and looks around. He feels that this is a theme park. He moves ahead and combs his hair with his hand as per his habit. He is looking towards the campus and forgets that he is on the road. Bijon is sitting in the car and looking at him smilingly. Suddenly a shining silver car narrowly escapes hitting Raja. Seeing this, Bijon closes his eyes. A fifty-year-old woman screams while taking a break from the driving seat.

“What are you doing, you would have died right now.”

Raja becomes aware of this unexpected incident and he says “Sorry, Sorry.”

Woman gives a strange look to Raja while adjusting her glasses. She starts the car slowly and moves ahead while staring at Raja. Raja comes running towards his car. Bijon laughs seeing him. Both of them are looking at the license plate behind the car while leaving. On which is written UNICEF Supporter. Woman parks her car a little distance away, gets out and looks at Raja, Raja feels uncomfortable. He quickly gets inside the car. As soon as he gets in, Bijon says,

"Be careful, in New York the driver will show you the finger and in LA the driver will shoot you with a bullet."

Raja's attention is on Woman standing far away who is still standing and looking at him, Raja tells Bijon to go home. Bijon reverses the car and drives fast, Raja sits with his back resting on the seat.

Chapter 10

Bijon suddenly stops his car inside a house. Raja who is sitting in a relaxed pose reacts to the sudden stopping of the car and looks at Bijon.

Bijan says smilingly "Welcome to my house."

Raja gets out of the car. He looks at Bijon's huge house. He had not imagined that Bijon's house would be so big and beautiful. Raja's eyes go to the beautifully decorated garden. Raja says to Bijon who has come out of the car.

"Your house is very nice Bijon and especially this garden."

Bijon tells Raja that

"All the credit goes to your Bhabhi (Sister-in-Laws). She is involved in all this, I am not able to contribute to it even if I want to due to my personal business."

Raja cannot stop himself from touching a tempting red rose and caresses it lovingly with his hand. Just then Meenu opens the door of the house, she is wearing a sleeveless blouse with a saree. She looks beautiful.

Meenu's eyes fall on Raja who is caressing the rose petals. Seeing the young and handsome Raja, a smile comes on her face. Seeing Raja caressing the rose, she says,

"Remove your hand from the flower and come here."

Raja removes his hand from the flower. He feels nervous seeing Meenu and her style. Meenu says, "Will you stand there? Now come inside."

Raja, in a nervous mood, follows Meenu's order and starts moving towards the door. stares at him from top to bottom. When Raja reaches the door, he sees Meenu laughing. Looking into Raja's eyes, she says,

"Don't worry, I was just Kidding Raja, I am your Meenu Bhabhi."

Bijon standing nearby understands that he has not even done each other's introduction, he introduces each other in a hurry, Raja she is Meenu, and Meenu He is Raja.

"Meenu who is still staring at Raja says "You can call me Meenu."

Bijon moves inside the door dragging the trolley bag, but as soon as Raja comes near to the door hanging his bag on the shoulder Meenu stands in the middle of the door and says come in, Raja tries to get out from one side and in this attempt, Raja's shoulder rubs the chest of Meenu. Raja says "Sorry"

Meenu smiles and says "It's OK"

Raja goes inside the hall and takes off his bag, his vision is admiring the beautiful decorations of the most recent western style. Meenu also comes inside near Raja and asks.

Will you have coffee?

Raja says that

"If It is coffee time here, then I will drink, there is no need to make specially for me."

Meenu says "Come on, Raja. This is your home. And there is nothing wrong in making specially for you, Isn't it?"

Bijon listens carefully to this thing while stuck in the sofa. Meenu looks at Bijon with a questioning eye. Bijon stands up and tells Raja.

“I have a conference call, I have to go, consider it as your own home, enjoy the coffee, I see you later,”

Bijon goes towards the upstairs and Meenu moves towards kitchen. Raja sits on the couch and closes his eyes for a while. He takes a long breath and opens his eyes, his eyes go to the picture of a beautiful young girl on the wall in front of him. When he carefully looks at the picture, he comes to know that it is Meenu's teenage photo, he takes out the sketch book and pencil from the bag and starts sketching rapidly while looking at the picture. After some time Meenu is seen coming with a tray of coffee.

Raja hides the sketch book after seeing Meenu. Meenu comes to Raja and puts a cup of coffee on the table and asks Raja

“How much sugar?”

Raja says

“I will take it.”

Raja gets up and puts two spoons of sugar and stirs it with a spoon.

As soon as Meenu turns after picking up her cup, she sees the sketch book lying on the couch.

“What's the matter, what were you drawing, can I see it?” Raja replies to Meenu

“It is not yet complete, it is incomplete, I will show it to you myself when it is complete.”

Meenu says

“Okay, I like surprises, I will wait.”

There is a different thrill in waiting for good things in life. Meenu suddenly gets sad and after a pause says

"But there is no word of thrill left in my life now."

Raja feels that Meenu wants to share something but Meenu changes the topic. She says,

"You know Raja, I get bored lying at home. Come, finish your coffee quickly, I will show you your room."

Raja drinks the hot coffee finishes it soon. Meenu keeps staring at him. After keeping the coffee cup on the table, Raja gets up and hangs his bag on his shoulder and picks up the sketchbook and pencil kept on the couch in one hand. Meenu gets up and walks towards the upstairs and is talking to Raja. Meenu says,

"The life of an Indian housewife is like this here Raja. Monotonous." Raja climbs the stairs with her and says,

"Why don't you find a job? At least you will be busy." Meenu replies in a whispering voice "Bijon doesn't like me working."

Raja asks "Why?"

"It's a long story, I can't explain." Meenu says

Bijon's room comes after the remaining stairs. The door is open. Bijon is sitting on the floor and doing something. Before Raja can see anything else, Meenu shouts to Bijon and closes the door.

"You forgot to close the door again."

Bijon is saying "Sorry"

from inside. Raja hears a low voice. Raja starts wondering what Bijon was doing. Just then Meenu opens the door of another room and says to Raja

"Come inside."

Raja enters the room behind Meenu. Meenu says

“This is your room, it's all for you, how is it? Look at that window, you will get the best view, just like mine because we are neighbours, whenever you get bored, you can knock on the wall and call me for company.”

Raja says

“It's a very nice room. By the way, I saw an outhouse in the compound, it's only for guests, right?”

Meenu replies

“Yes, it is for guests only but you are not a guest,”

“I understand.”

Raja nods his head in yes.

“What would you like to have for dinner, Indian, Chinese or Italian? And you can use the phone to call India and we will not even charge the bill for that.”

Raja says,

“How do I thank you Bhabhi?” Meenu says,

“You will call me Meenu, this Bhabhi, Woovi will not work.”

Raja whispers “Meenu ji”

“Oh, just Meenu, by the way no ji business okay Okay. I am leaving. I will meet you later.”

When Raja looks at the room after seeing Meenu walking away in a strutting manner, he feels that he is in a neatly decorated paradise. There is a reading table right in front of the window, a queen size bed, a walking closet and the walls are filled with beautiful European paintings. Some are erotic too. Seeing all this, a smile comes on Raja's face and he goes and lies down on the bed. He thinks that today he has encountered two women, the first one whose name he does not even know, under whose car he was about to come, her staring from a distance has become

a mystery and the second one is Meenu who is so open-minded that he is scared to face her. Raja has sensed Meenu's attraction towards him because he is also young and not a kid.

Chapter 11

Meenu reaches the college campus in her car to drop Raja. As soon as Raja gets out of the car, Meenu says from inside the car, "If you need anything, call me. Are you sure you will come back home by bus? By the way, I can come to pick you up."

Raja says,

"I don't know when the classes will end. I will catch the bus, thanks Bhabhi, I mean Meenu."

Raja waves. Meenu has a smile on her face and goes to back the car. When Raja moves towards the campus, he sees that the campus is very busy. Welcome Freshmen signs are visible everywhere. There are many types of booths. At some places, Sign Up for Jupiter dorm is written.

International Student Corner is written on one booth and Free T-Shirt with Credit Card is written on another. Raja sees many types of food stalls. Raja moves towards the booth of International Student Corner. He picks up some brochures and campus map kept there. He is crossing the lawn but his attention is still on the campus map which is in his hand.

On the other side, a red sports car stops inside the campus in which three beautiful girls are riding. One's name is Lisa. She looks like a doll with golden hair. Her friends Brittany and Gina

also get out of the car and follow Lisa. Michael and Tom, who are standing at a distance, are staring at the girls coming to the college. Seeing the beautiful Lisa, they start following her. Michael walks fast and comes in front of Lisa and says, "I think you are a freshman because I have never noticed you in the campus before."

Tom says, "Come with us. We know every corner of the campus and will show you everything for free."

Lisa and her friend look at both of them oddly and giggles. Lisa says with attitude "Yes, I am a freshman and I think I can find my own place on campus."

Saying this Lisa and her friends move ahead. Tom and Michael are watching them go. Tom says,

"This girl is very hot, see she will come running to us again in a while."

Michael says "You are right."

Chapter 12

Raja is still roaming in the campus. He is trying to find his class on the location map. Raja sees Lisa and her two friends coming from the front. Lisa looks at Raja and smiles. Raja's eyes are fixed on the beautiful Lisa and he is moving forward and, in this process, Raja accidentally stumbles and falls on Tom and Michael, who are sitting there in a corner and taking drugs. Both of them have seen Raja and Lisa sharing a smile.

They get angry and snatch Raja's school bag. Michael abuses Raja. "Fuck you asshole."

Raja says

"I did not see it, sorry".

Both look at Raja suspiciously, Tom makes a sly face you

"Asshole It seems have studied in a blind school, Mother fucker terrorist."

Raja tries to take his bag back from Michael, Michael does not give it and seeing the opportunity, he throws the bag towards Tom. Raja is trying to take his bag back but Tom and Michael tease Raja by passing the bag to each other. Some other boys also join the bag throwing game. Raja is quietly watching the boys throwing the bag to each other. Slowly the crowd of

onlookers increases. Suddenly Lisa comes running and enters the circle making space. Lisa says

“What are you guys doing, grow up this is not high school.”

Michael stares at Lisa and says “We know don't try to teach us. Be happy that you survived and we didn't ask you to strip.”

Some people laugh loudly and Lisa feels embarrassed. Tom moves forward and has the bag in his hand. Showing the bag to Lisa, he says “Listen if you want the bag back then do a strip show for us.”

Hearing this some boys shout. Raja also gets embarrassed and feels helpless. Lisa says

“What are you guys talking.. for your information, assholes, harassment is illegal.”

Tom says, “There is no need to get upset, take it easy, we are kidding.”

Lisa says

“This is called kidding, you people stop being childish, at least think that you have come here to become doctors.”

Lisa goes ahead and snatches the bag from Tom's hand, hands it over to Raja, breaks the circle and goes out towards the hallways. Raja also follows her. Tom and Michael get jealous seeing this, Tom asks Michael

“Why is she supporting him,”

Michael says, “Stop being kind, she has not tasted a real man yet.”

The crowd slowly disperses. Raja is following Lisa, Raja sees Lisa walking and thinks that some fashion model is walking. He quickly comes to Lisa and says, "Oh God, I thought that ragging happens only in India."

Lisa asks in a questioning way "What is ragging."

"What those people did to me just now is called ragging." Sometimes students even commit suicide due to this."

"I understood, listen, if these people harass you again, then call the campus police. I was about to call them. It seemed as if they were under drugs. I can't believe they are crazy people."

Lisa moves ahead and Raja stops. Lisa turns around and comes back to Raja and asks

"What happened."

Raja says

"Sorry, I have lost my way. I have to go to anatomy class. It's very late. My number is 199B. Can you tell me where it is?"

Lisa says,

"Hello, like you, I am also new here. Come, a blind man will show the way to another blind man. Both are walking together."

Suddenly Lisa says,

"It seems we have gone ahead."

Lisa comes behind quickly to check. Raja also comes to her and introduces himself.

"By the way my name is Aditya Mukherjee but for friends I am Raja ..."

After saying this he extends his hand. Lisa smiles and shakes hands.

Both move ahead. Lisa also tells her name “Lisa, Lisa Duvall.”

Raja quickly says

“Duggal, this is an Indian surname.”

Lisa says,

“Duvall not Duggal.”

Raja says,

“Ok it is a very beautiful name Lisa.”

“No not at all, I know this name does not sound like any Hollywood celebrity.”

Lisa says this with great confidence. Raja replies that her name is much better than any celebrity. Lisa says

“Don't lie, I hate lies.”

“You didn't understand, your name defines the beauty of western civilization.”

Lisa says lightly

“I got impressed after hearing this, I can understand how.”

Raja says very lovingly,

“Monalisa”

Lisa blushes after hearing Raja's argument. She sees weight in Raja's words. She says,

“You are very smart, you are definitely an artist, right?”

Raja says, “Small One”

While walking, both of them cross a classroom. Lisa feels that she might have missed the room. She tells Raja,

"Oh, the classroom might have been left behind, maybe it is there."

She walks behind like a Swan and enters the classroom. Raja is staring at her while she is doing this. Raja also follows her and enters the classroom. Looking at Lisa, he moves straight towards the podium and narrowly escapes slipping. The students in the classroom notice and laugh. Raja feels embarrassed. As soon as he regains composure, he sees Margaret Strauss standing within arm's reach. He trembles, his eyes remain wide open. Because she is looking at Raja. Raja remembers that this is the same lady whose silver car he had narrowly escaped being run over by. Raja gets scared. Margaret looks at him and says, "Welcome, I am Professor Margaret Strauss. Go and sit at the back, Mr. Mukherjee.

The seats in front are already full." Raja nervously says,

"Thanks mam"

and then he realizes that the professor addressed him as Mr. Mukherjee. He asks in a frightened voice,

"How did you know my name?"

Both look at each other for a few moments. Margaret opens her class list and says,

"You have come late to class on the first day." Raja says,

"Sorry."

Raja understands that the professor must have seen his name in the class list. He quickly turns to sit on the empty seat at the back. After sitting, he glances at the students in the classroom. He

sees some girls of Indian origin. Raja is still scared of Margaret. Whenever Margaret sees him, he feels nervous. He secretly takes out a sketchbook from his bag and starts drawing something on it. Margaret is addressing the classroom from the podium.

“So, what were we saying, yes, why have you all come to the medical school and that too in the osteopathic division? Is D.O bigger than M.D or M.D is bigger than D.O.?”

All the students are listening to Margaret attentively. Margaret is speaking.

“Well, when we go out from here to the field, it won't make much difference.”

Margaret stops speaking and says to the girl named Danish sitting in front.

“You can take the conversation forward.”

Danish stands up from her seat after hearing this and thinks for a few moments and then says

“We live in the best country in the world and the best research is going on here, I just want to be a part of it and spread modern medical science all over the world so that fake hospitals do not get a chance to play with people's lives. I would like to make my medical system available to the

indigenous people and at the same time educate them and prepare them to despise nonsense medicines like natural and holistic.”

Margaret while listening to Danish attentively lowers the rim of her glasses and stares at her. Taking her eyes off from Danish, she looks at Raja sitting behind and says, “Aditya, now

it's your turn. Briefly tell me why you have come here and what do you want to learn.”

Raja was unexpected that his turn would come so soon. He slowly stands up from his seat and takes a deep breath. He glances at the students sitting in the classroom and feels that everyone is waiting for him to speak. He starts speaking.

“I am from India which is the mother of all kinds of sciences and arts. These include the great tradition of Ayurveda. Westerners have termed this great science as an alternative medical system. Some experts have even termed it quackery. Once upon a time, a great man from the east came to this country. His life's mission was to bring the western civilization out of this delusion, but his dream remained incomplete like an incomplete painting due to some evil force.”

Margaret holds her breath after hearing this. Lisa is impressed after hearing this from Raja. Raja speaks further.

“The man is heartbroken. He has no hope left to fulfill his dream but my mission is to complete his painting and give it a meaning. I will devote my entire life to this because that great man is none other than my father Dr. Bimal Mukherjee.”

The student is spellbound. Tears shine in Margaret's eyes. Silence prevails in the class for a few moments. Margaret says in a choked voice

“You have said something very deep.”

Lisa is looking at Aditya. Suddenly someone starts clapping and the classroom resounds with the sound of clapping. Raja sits down on his seat shyly. Two boys Aaron and Frank sit next to Raja who is sitting alone in the back. Margaret continues her lecture.

Chapter 13

Raja did not even realize how a week passed by. Every day Meenu Bhabhi or Bijon Da would drop him to college in a car. After attending classes in college, he would directly catch a bus from the bus stop and go home and to avoid Meenu Bhabhi's molestation, he would lock himself in his room.

In college, Lisa would interrupt him and talk to him at every opportunity. He also liked Lisa's company. Even today he was displaying his scholarship in his class. He was answering the questions asked by Professor Dr. Zarelli with a very accurate analysis. Along with the professor, all the students were listening to him. Lisa was getting very impressed with Raja's knowledge.

Chapter 14

Today, after the last class is over, Raja joins the crowd of college students who are leaving the college campus. Raja is about to reach the bus stop when bus number 23, which is already full of students, starts moving. Raja runs a little behind the bus but the bus goes ahead at double the speed. Raja is panting, thinking that he will be late for going home today because the next bus will come after two hours. He was standing on the road and thinking this when Lisa passes by in her car.

Seeing Raja standing in front of the bus stop, she suddenly stops the car. She rolls down the window of her car and looks at Raja, who is standing a little behind, and says,

“Do you want a ride?”

Raja notices, it is Lisa. He moves towards her, he says “No it's okay.”

She says,

“Come on, come inside.”

Raja hesitates. She says orderly “Come on, come on.”

Raja enters the car. The car starts moving. After a little silence Raja asks her,

“Why she is alone today, where have her friends gone?”

Lisa replies that,

“She had some work so she did not come along but you tell me where would you like to go for dinner. Mr. Da Vinci.”

Raja responds,

“My sister-in-law must have already cooked food. I will go for dinner with you some other time. Thanks for the invitation.”

Lisa looks in her rear-view mirror and sees Margaret's car parked behind her. She asks Raja

“Who is it, who is following us?”

Raja recognizes Margaret's silver car. He looks back and says that “She is Professor Margaret. She does not like me so she is following me.”

Lisa laughs at Raja's statement. She confirms that it is Margaret after looking in the rear-view mirror. She says that “She is not what you are thinking. I have heard that she has dedicated her life 24/7 to the lab and donates half of her salary to charity.”

Raja says,

“I have made two mistakes. I am afraid that she might fail me in the exam.”

Lisa asks,

“What kind of mistake?”

“Once I almost collided with her car and the other time I reached her class late.”

Lisa replies to Raja,

"Don't worry, she is a very good person and very disciplined too. She dominates over her senior colleagues. She is also the president of the SH n D committee."

Raja wants to know about the committee and asks, "What is this committee again?"

"Is there no Sexual Harassment and Discrimination Committee in your campus in India?"

Lisa asks Raja looking at him. Raja says,

"No, I have never heard of such a committee till now."

Lisa says,

"This is such a body which prevents professors from sexually exploiting students and students from sexually exploiting professors."

Raja is surprised listening this. He reacts,

"Oh God, do professors also do such things?"

Lisa said

"Why not, these are all professional schools, the future of students' career is in the hands of professors."

Raja says

"I thought..... I had formed an opinion that there is no corruption in the education system of America."

Lisa laughs at Raja's statement and says "It is not like that, there were some cases years ago, the university had to pay a heavy price for it, then Professor Margaret Strauss took over the committee. Understand that she is fire. No one wants to confront her.

She has made a new rule that the faculty cannot meet any student alone or in private.”

Raja listens carefully and says

“This is not a good thing, if we have to ask them any question, then how will we ask?”

“You can take appointments during office hours and these office meetings are videotaped”

On Lisa's saying this Raja relaxes a bit and says in reaction “I can't believe how serious this is.”

Lisa says

“Before this rule it used to happen that some boys used to video tape sex with their professors and blackmail them. Do you know why?”

Raja moves a little forward on his seat and asks “Why?”

Lisa says

“For higher grades.”

A question arises in Raja's mind and he asks Lisa that “If a professor refuses to give grades then.”

Lisa looks at Raja and says

“The videos were posted on the internet.” Raja says while sinking back in his seat Lisa, engrossed in the conversation, realises that she has taken a wrong turn. She tells Raja

“Oh shit I made the same mistake again, sorry I took a wrong turn. Look, I can't talk and drive at the same time.”

Raja says

"Never mind, take a U-turn." Lisa says

"That's the problem, the U-turn is after the next five blocks and after that we will come to the freeway ramp. I am sorry, I am very hungry. Aren't you hungry? Would you like to have a coffee?"

Lisa ignores Raja's reply and stops the car directly near the coffee shop. Both of them get down, take a deep breath and reach the counter. Raja takes out a bunch of dollars from his pocket and Lisa also takes out her debit card. Raja looks at Lisa and says,

"No, I will pay the bill."

Lisa looks into Raja's eyes and asks, "Why, Mr. Da Vinci, will you tell me?"

Raja also says laughingly

"Nothing, I am just paying for my Mona Lisa."

The fat waitress is standing at the counter and making faces after listening to their conversation. She is waiting for the money, wondering who will pay? Finally, Raja extends the dollars. Lisa says,

"You shouldn't give it." Raja says,

"You are giving me a free lift too."

Both take coffee and settle down at a table. Lisa also replies,

"Wait, why are you in such a hurry? Say thanks when I actually drop you home. We will reach by tomorrow."

Raja gets worried on hearing this. He takes the pepper shaker kept on the table in front of him and starts sprinkling pepper in his coffee. Lisa finds this strange and in reaction she says, "What are you doing, this is pepper. Will you burn your tongue?"

Raja says

"I like adding pepper to coffee, will you try it?"

Lisa says "Oh no"

Raja insists

"Take a sip and see."

He fills a spoon with coffee and offers it to Lisa. Lisa tastes it reluctantly. After tasting it, she says

"Yes, tasting something different."

Hearing this, Raja offers the pepper shaker to her. Lisa also smiles and offers the pepper shaker back to Raja and shakes her head to indicate no. Both are relaxing and drinking coffee.

Suddenly, Lisa asks Raja

"Tell me something about India. The land of temples. I wish to see it for real one day. There are temples at every turn of every street, right? And Taj Mahal is a beautiful place."

Raja interrupts Lisa "Taj Mahal is not a temple."

Lisa asks

"So is it a mosque?" "No, it is a tomb."

Lisa listens to Raja while furrowing her brows "A heartbroken emperor built it in memory of his dead wife. It is a symbol of love and sacrifice, a witness."

Lisa is happy to hear this and after thinking for a while says

“Pure love never gets lost. I think some people here look for dates at their life partner's funeral. What a difference there is between the east and the west.”

Raja seeing the seriousness in Lisa's words says “But India is changing now.”

Lisa says

“I hope not...”

Then suddenly Raja dramatically ducks and puts his face under the table. Lisa does not understand why Raja is doing this, she gets confused. She looks around and sees Margaret sitting in a far corner drinking coffee.

Lisa suddenly laughs. Raja peeks from under the table. Lisa says “What happened to you, get up, the coffee is finished.”

Both of them get up and start walking towards the exit. Lisa says “Wait, let me ask if she is really following us.”

Raja gets nervous. While leaving, Lisa says bye to Margaret. Margaret also responds slowly and starts drinking coffee. Raja quickly gets out and sits inside the car. When Lisa comes out, she finds him sitting in her car seat. Lisa also moves towards the car. Raja is worried and Margaret sitting in the corner of the coffee shop is clearly visible to him through the glass. She is drinking coffee. Suddenly Raja gets goosebumps. He gets shocked to see that Margaret is also sprinkling pepper in the coffee as he did. The car starts moving but Raja turns his neck and keeps looking at Margaret until she disappears from his sight.

Chapter 15

Lisa's car stops outside Raja's house. In the darkness of the night, Meenu's image is seen on the window of the house. Raja gets out of the car. He thanks Lisa and starts walking towards the house. Lisa calls him from behind, Raja turns back and looks at her. Lisa says,

"Do you want a ride tomorrow too?"

Raja says "OK"

and waves "Goodbye". Lisa also waves at him and starts the car and leaves. Raja moves towards the house. He thinks of ringing the doorbell but finds the door open. He is surprised how the door is open so late in the night. He enters the house and walks slowly. He puts his bag on the couch and goes towards the kitchen. He does not see anyone in the kitchen. He comes out of the kitchen and calls out to Bijon da and Meenu and says,

"I have returned."

But he does not get any response from anywhere. He climbs the stairs hesitantly. He peeks into Bijon's room which is open. He sees used hypodermic syringes lying under the bed. He moves towards his bedroom. On the way, he glances towards Meenu's room and sees Meenu sleeping on the bed. Meenu has just wrapped a bath towel around her body. Her breast is sticking

out of the towel. Both her thighs are visible. They are wrapped around each other in such a way as if it is an erotic painting. Raja's eyes are fixed on Meenu. He looks here and there to see if anyone is watching him. He slowly moves towards Meenu's

door and as soon as he holds the door handle to close it, Meenu suddenly scratches her big bust with her hand. Raja's hands start trembling. He carefully closes the door and moves towards his room. He hears Meenu's voice asking who is it. Raja says, "It's me, it's me, it's me. Meenu ...Raja...., I have just returned. I called out but no one answered."

Meenu opens the door and covers herself with a towel. Raja avoids looking at her. Meenu yawns and says,

"I was going to take a bath. I felt tired. I lay down and fell asleep. Was the door open?"

"Raja gets nervous. He thinks Meenu is asking about his door." He says in a nervous tone,

"No, no, it was closed."

Meenu asks in surprise

"If it was closed, how did you come upstairs?"

Raja is relieved that his theft was not caught. He says You are talking about the main door.

"Yes, it was open." Raja quickly replies.

"Why do you look so nervous, is everything alright?" Meenu asks staring at Raja.

Raja says

“I am absolutely fine, who said I am nervous, I am tired after attending classes in college all day.”

Just then Bijon stands at his door and sees both of them talking. He asks in an irritated tone.

“What is happening?”

He says seeing her in the towel.

“Meenu, what are you doing in the towel? Go and wear some decent clothes.”

Meenu says

“I did not know that Raja is at home.” Bijon says

Ya right

Raja looks at Bijon and says “Sorry”

Bijon says to Raja.

“Not your fault, it's ok.”

Meenu says to both of them

“I will come down now we will have dinner, change quickly and freshen up.”

Saying this she closes the door.

Bijon also goes inside his room. Raja runs into his room and closes the door as soon as he enters, he is nervous and panting. He goes to the bathroom and stares at Meenu's picture, he is confused and full of guilt. He takes off his shirt. Then he responds to the continuous knock on the door.

“Ya Meenu.”

Bijon da's voice comes

“No Meenu it's me Bijon, get ready quickly, we will go out for dinner.” “I will be back in a few minutes.”

Saying this Raja starts taking a quick bath. Raja gets ready and comes down the stairs. His hair looks wet. It seems he has shampooed. Bijon is nowhere to be seen, he looks here and there. He goes to all the rooms and calls out to Meenu and Bijon, but again like before there is no response. Raja goes towards the kitchen. He is shocked to see the scene there. Food is scattered on the floor. Meenu is sitting in a corner covering her face with her hands. He tip toes and reaches Meenu. After a lot of effort, he says.

“Bhabhi...Meenu...what happened? Are you okay? Where is Bijon?” Meenu slowly removes her hand from her face and looking at Raja says,

“Sorry Raja, it was a cat, maybe it got jealous of our dinner plan. Today I made your favourite Macher Jhol (Fish curry) and Baigan Bhaja (Fried brinjals). Everything has been ruined, Raja says slowly.

“But Bijon said that we are going out for dinner.” Meenu says,

“Ask him, I don't know what he wants to do.”

Raja comes out of the kitchen and searches for Bijon, but he is nowhere to be seen downstairs. Raja climbs the stairs and goes to Bijon's room. There is a sound coming from Bijon's room, but the door is closed. Raja goes near the door and says.

“Bijon, I am ready, shall we go?” There is no response from Bijon.

Raja calls Bijon once or twice again. Bijon is awake inside, because the sound is still coming, but he does not respond. Raja waits for some time, goes to his room and lies down on the bed. His eyes are open and he guesses from the behaviour of Meenu and Bijon that while he was taking bath, there must have been some argument between Bijon and Meenu downstairs and in anger Bijon dropped the food and came upstairs and said Raja we are going out for dinner. Raja also calculates that the reason for the fight is Meenu talking to him while wrapped in a towel.

Raja gets a little scared also feels hungry. He open his bag and fetches the home-made sweets eat two of them, drinks some water. Lies on the bed, he closes his eyes and falls asleep.

Chapter 16

Raja is ready to go to college. He takes his college bag and leaves the room. He hears faint sounds of conversation and laughter on the stairs. Slowly he descends the stairs. He is surprised to see Bijon and Meenu laughing and joking and there is a lot of breakfast on the table. It seems as if nothing happened last night. There is no sign of a fight. Raja looks towards the kitchen and finds no trace of the food scattered last night.

The kitchen floor is shining clean. He moves towards the table and says in a broken voice "Good morning, good morning."

On seeing Raja, Bijon and Meenu welcome him with great energy. They give him tight hugs one by one. Raja feels strange and uncomfortable.

He is wondering where the mess of last night has gone. Suddenly Bijon chirps and says,

"I will drop you to college today." Meenu says,

"No, I will drop you." Bijon says,

"I can drop you; I am not in a hurry today." Hearing this, Meenu looks at Raja and says,

"Raja, you choose whose car you would like to sit in."

Raja stands like a statue and remembers the incident of the night. Meenu says to Raja,

"Okay, let's eat something first." Raja says,

"I am not hungry right now." Meenu says lovingly,

"You did not eat even last night, anyway, thank Bijon for this."

Hearing this, Bijon glares at Meenu. Raja realizes the danger. Fortunately, he hears the car horn coming from outside the house. Raja looks through the window and sees Lisa turning her car around. His eyes light up with relief. Raja looks at both of them and says, "She is my friend. I have to go; we will meet in the evening."

Saying this, he goes out very fast. When he stands near Lisa's car, he hears loud noises of Meenu and Bijon fighting again. Raja quickly sits in the car and the car starts moving.

Chapter 17

Raja, sitting in the hallway, is drawing a picture of the campus vastly.

Some boys are gathered and watching. Raja draws sometimes with his left hand and sometimes with his right hand. The boys are surprised. The boys clap. Aaron and Frank want to take that picture. Frank manages to take the sketch book and runs away with it. Aaron is behind him. Frank turns back while running and as soon as he looks ahead, he bumps into Professor Margaret. Everyone becomes quiet. Frank extends the drawing book towards Margaret. She looks at that picture carefully for a while.

The boys are looking at Margaret with surprise. After observing that picture, Margaret says in response,

"It is not bad, at least one of you is an accomplished artist."

She takes the book from Frank's hand and turns the pages at the back. After two-three pictures, she sees an incomplete picture which is hers. Seeing her face in the book, she suddenly gets annoyed and asks "What is all this, what kind of joke is this? Who has drawn this?"

The group of boys gets tensed. Everyone is looking at each other. Margaret is very upset. She stares at Frank suspiciously. Frank gets scared and says,

Professor Strauss, I did not make it. Margaret says

“I don't believe you.”

Aaron, standing nearby, takes Frank's side and says that “Professor Strauss, I swear, he is telling the truth. He does not draw.”

Margaret says in a slightly louder voice

“Then who did it, tell the name, come forward.” No one comes forward nor does anyone admit it.

Margaret gets serious and says,

“Everyone should know about the campus policies that drawing photos of Professors without their permission is prohibited.”

The sound of the Margaret is coming loudly in the hallways. Other people also pay attention to this. The students are hesitant to take the name of Raja. Margaret looks at the drawing carefully. It is signed R.

“Who is this R?”

Just then Dr. Zarrilli and Dr. Bedard pass by there and stop near Margaret. Margaret extends her sketchbook and shows her incomplete picture to both of them. Dr. Zarrilli asks Margaret

“Is this drawn with your permission?”

Margaret Says “No.”

Dr. Zarrilli also asks the students gathered in front

Who has drawn this?

Doctor Zarilli's eyes fall on Frank. Doctor Zarilli asks him.
"You... you have done this."

Frank says "No sir."

Doctor Zarilli announces in a commanding voice

"Whoever has drawn this should immediately report to my office and you too Frank."

Margaret, Doctor Zarilli and Doctor Bedard leave from there. Frank is in tears. He looks at Raja with questioning eyes. Raja looks broken. Raja softly says

"Thank you, Frank, and all of you friends for not letting my name come out."

Frank says

"I am nervous. I have heard bad things about Professor Zarilli."

Raja says

"It is my fault. I will face them."

Everyone looks at Raja with admiration and is also very concerned. Everyone turns towards the classroom. The place becomes empty. Only Raja and Lisa are seen standing there. Raja looks a bit disturbed. Lisa says, "Come on Raja, if we are late this time too, then this will be your third mistake."

Raja leaves with Lisa, who is worried.

Chapter 18

Margaret has completed half the lecture. Raja is still worried about the sketch book issue. He is not able to concentrate on the lecture at all. Lisa is sitting in a corner and keeping an eye on Raja. Margaret is speaking.

“In mammals, the adrenal glands also known as suprarenal glands are triangle shaped endocrine glands that sit atop the kidneys; the Ad meaning near or at plus Rene's. Anyone? Renes ...Renal Danish stands up and answers “Kidneys.”

Margaret says

“There you go...these are the glands that are chiefly responsible for regulating the stress response through the synthesis of corticosteroid and catacholamines, including cortisol and adrenaline.”

The sound of Margaret's lecture fades in Raja's ears and Raja is lost in a dream. He remembers the incident of that day when he had to apply for American Medical College. “There is silence. Raja is sitting on the sofa. Suman and Sumit are also sitting nearby. Bimal is seen far away, drinking juice on the dining table in the other room. Sumit says

“Bijon and Meenu Bhabhi have helped a lot of people in the family. They will not have any problem in keeping Raja. Vijaya says

“Sumit... Raja has been encouraged by his father for everything till now. Maybe he is worried that he might miss Raja somewhere.”

Raja says

“What missing... what missing mother, Baba and I have never even talked face to face.”

Vijaya, looking at Raja, says

“Raja how can you talk like this... did he not help you in your homework? Appreciate your Baba, give him time to adjust.”

Raja says impatiently

“But by then the deadlines will pass and I will have to wait till next year.”

“Why don't you apply to the medical college here in Kolkata?” Vijaya says.

Raja says,

“Mother, you don't know, I want to go to a western country so that my voice gets validity. I want to complete what Baba started, if I fulfill his dream, he will be happy.”

Just then the sound of the wheelchair attracts everyone's attention. Bimal stops the wheelchair at the door and says from there,

“Mukherjees are not meant to go out, Raja.”

Raja asks, “Why?”

Bimal says

"It is complicated, beyond your understanding."

Raja's attention returns to the present when he hears Margaret's voice in his ears,

Mr. Mukherjee.

His face is blank. Margaret asks Raja,

"Do you know the answer or not? Are you paying attention?"

Raja looks lost and says,

"Yes, I am listening, Professor. By the way, what was the question?"

Loud laughter echoes in the classroom. Raja feels highly embarrassed. Margaret stares at Raja's eyes. Lisa feels concerned. Margaret asks Raja,

"At what level is the adrenal gland found in the thoracic vertebra? Ten.. six... or twelve.. which one?"

Raja replies, "Twelve" Margaret says,

"Thank you, your answer is correct, Mr. Mukherjee." Margaret looks at the watch and suddenly walks out of the class. While leaving she says bye to the students. Aaron and Frank sitting nearby pat Raja on the back in a friendly manner. Raja fills his bag with books. Lisa comes to Raja and says

"Will you try Sushi for lunch, Raja?"

Raja gives a flat reply

"I am not hungry...you guys please have it." Lisa says

Get up, you didn't even have breakfast. Raja says

Oh, I had forgotten that I didn't have breakfast today, but how did you know?

Lisa says

What are friends for?

Raja cheered up. Seeing this, Lisa smiles. She understands that the friendship is going to become even deeper.

Chapter 19

Raja, Lisa, Aaron, Frank, Brittany, Zena and other friends are sitting in the college canteen eating Sushi. Raja had not eaten anything after drinking coffee with Lisa yesterday except the home-made sweets. Raja eats a lot of Sushi.

After lunch, Lisa and Raja are studying in the lawn. While studying, Raja suddenly starts staring at Lisa, she finds him very beautiful. Lisa realizes that Raja is staring at her, so without speaking she asks Raja, what is it? Raja nods his head to indicate, nothing. And gets immersed in the book.

After a few moments, Lisa also stares at Raja and Raja does not realize. Raja is reading aloud like children's read. Lisa finds Raja's activity very cute, she smiles. Raja is not looking at her, she gets up from there smiling and walks away. Here Raja lies down on the grass and looks at the airplanes flying in the sky. He closes his eyes for a while. Tom and Michael see Raja lying down from a distance. They are sitting on a bench and sniffing drugs. Tom says to Michael, "Look there, the terrorist is lying in the lawn." Michael looks at him carefully and says, "And he is alone right now, let's see him."

Raja is lying down and smiling, oblivious to the world. He used to do this at night near the Second Howrah Bridge, which is his favorite place, and he used to see stars there at night. His

eyes are closed. He slowly opens his eyes and sees some people standing in a circle. Raja looks carefully while lying down and understands that these are Tom and his gang. Tom says,

"Congratulations shit head, I have heard that you have become hot with Professor Strauss."

Michael says,

"Yes, in the far east, there is a tradition of graduates, they make pictures of Professors and masturbate on them."

The whole gang laughs. Raja gets up and sits and starts stuffing his stuff in his bag. He does not see Lisa around. He calls

"Lisa."

The whole gang cracks up again. Michael jokingly says, "Why are you calling Lisa, she is superwoman, she will come flying to save you on hearing your voice, wimp, be a man, talk to us."

Raja says seriously,

"Look, I don't want any fight with you people, we can become friends." Tom says,

"We can become friends, but how about a deal. You do this, you make a picture of Lisa and give it to us and we will leave you alone."

Raja says,

"I will make it; I have no problem." Tom says,

“Cool, but I forgot to tell you the details, her picture should be completely nude, the anatomical details of her body parts should be equal, then the deal is done.”

Raja understands their intentions on hearing this. He says, sorry, I can't do this.

Michael says,

“Really, you can't. Okay. We are friends.”

Hearing this Raja extends his hand to shake hands. Michael holds his hand and twists his wrist forcefully. Raja groans in pain. Tom says “Don't even try to scream terrorist.”

Michael who is still holding his hand twists his hand with full force and says,

“Because you are our friend we will give you a homely feeling, if you dare to call the police then we will pour acid on your girlfriend Lisa's face like it happens in your India, am I right? Would you like to date Frankenstein?”

Saying this Michael winks at Tom. Just then Lisa is seen coming.

Michael straightens Raja's hands and pretends to shake hands. Seeing the coffee cups in Lisa's hands he says.

“Hey Lisa WhatsApp ...wow you both are working hard in studies right? See you later... friends.

Everyone leaves. Lisa serves coffee to Raja. Raja stretches his injured hand, hides it and takes the coffee with the other hand. Lisa also offers Raja a pepper packet. A sweet smile appears on Raja's face. He is sipping coffee while thinking about something. Lisa asks Raja while sipping coffee.

“What were those punks saying to you?” “They ..They were talking about India.”

Lisa does not believe Raja. After a while she notices that Raja is mixing pepper in coffee with his left hand. He is not using his right hand. Lisa carefully looks at Raja's right hand. Raja hides it. She looks at Raja suspiciously. Today Bijon has come to pick Raja up. Raja bids goodbye to Lisa and leaves.

Chapter 21

Bijon is driving the car. Raja is sitting quietly in the car, there is no conversation between the two. Raja looks at his right hand, his wrist is swollen, blue marks have appeared below, he is also feeling pain. After going some distance, Raja tells Bijon that “I have applied for the dorm, I don't remember but probably I am number 43 in the waiting list.”

Bijon says

“Why did you do this, you can stay with us, there is no problem.”

Raja says,

“No, the dorms are right opposite to the library, it will be easy for me to do my homework.”

Silence prevails inside the car again. Bijon says,

“You can talk to me openly about what the matter is.”

Raja says,

“There is nothing like that.”

Bijon suddenly looks at Raja after a while and says, “I am sorry Raja.”

Raja asks, “Sorry, why?”

Bijon says

“You came to us from such a far-off India and I didn't even give you time. Come, I will show you LA today. Tonight is in your name.”

Raja says

“Bhabhi will also come along, won't she?”

Bijon says does

“Oh no, what a woman have to do with men's fun? You understand what I am saying, right?”

Raja says

“But Bhabhi said that she will cook Italian dinner tonight.”

Bijon says “Fuck her.”

Raja is surprised to hear Bijon's comment. Bijon laughs loudly and says

“I am sorry, I just had a bad day at the office. Don't worry, she won't refuse.”

Raja is still thinking how Bijon can say such a thing about Bhabhi.

Chapter 22

Bijon enters a strip bar. Raja is following him. The lights are dim inside and there is a huge crowd and everyone is cheering. A DJ is announcing the names of beautiful dancers in a classic tone. All around, dancers are seen in bright, flashy clothes. Raja notices some bouncers who are standing in alert mode. They say “hi..” to Bijon as soon as they see him. It seems as if they are old acquaintances. Bijon is giving money to all the bouncers as tips. Everyone is treating him like a special guest. There is a stage in the middle of the bar which is lit up with flashy tech lights. A beautiful dancer is dancing very seriously. People are staring at her with hungry eyes and making noises. Raja gets shocked when the dancer takes off her bra and shakes her bosom while making eye contact with Raja. She beckons Raja with her finger and calls him near her. Raja turns red with embarrassment. He shakes his head and says “no.. and goes and sits on a nearby chair. Bijon comes to him and says “Hey she has liked you, go to her, don't be shy at all.” Bijon pulls Raja towards the dancer, Raja resists. Raja says “Its ok we can sit here.”

Bijon says, “I don't want to miss it, if you want to sit here then sit. Bijon quickly goes to the front of the stage and sits with the people. Raja is watching Bijon's every move with curiosity and doubt. Bijon takes out a bunch of dollars and keeps giving them to the dancer. In response the dancer shows her assets

especially to Bijon. Suddenly a warm hand caresses Raja's thighs. Raja jumps like a spring. He sees a half-naked, extremely beautiful dancer sitting next to him. She comes close to Raja and rubs her whole body against Raja's body. The experience is new for Raja. He feels confused excitement, at the same time he is also feeling fear, thrill and guilt simultaneously. The twenty-year-old dancer introduces herself to Raja.

“Hey, I am Ruby,” Raja also says.

“I am Raja.”

Ruby says

“So you are Indian?” “How did you know,” Raja asks.

Ruby replies

“I had an Indian friend in college, her accent is the same as yours.”

Raja gets another shock when he looks at the stage. The dancer is dancing in rhythm with Bijon's head stuck between her thighs. The crowd is laughing while cheering. Bijon holds the dancer's bust with his hands. The dancer immediately removes his hand. Ruby fondles Raja's thighs lovingly. Raja shudders. Ruby says “Do you want to dance?”

Raja says,

“Is it your turn next on the stage, that's good, go dance, I will watch from here.”

Ruby gives a squeaky laughter and says,

“How cute you look, it's your first time, isn't it?”

Raja doesn't say anything. Ruby says "I didn't say anything about the stage."

and fondles his thighs again. Raja gets scared. Ruby points to one side, on the other side of the stage,

"In the booth, there's only me and you... you can see everything of mine, because I like innocent first timers."

She whispers in Raja's ear.

"I will let you play with my body, this is our little secret. Although the club doesn't allow touching, I will break the rules for you."

Ruby focuses her gaze on her big, round, tight bust. Raja does not understand where to look. Bijon walks up to Raja in a jovial manner and puts his jacket on the table. He is with a nude dancer. He winks at Raja. Raja laughs mechanically. Bijon shows Ruby the dollars and says,

"Hey, do you want to join me?" Ruby says,

"Why not?"

He takes her along with and goes into a small dark room, which is half open. Raja can see a little bit of the inside. He can't resist and keeps looking there from time to time. Both the dancers are completely naked. They are dancing while clinging to Bijon's body. The noise is so much that Raja can't hear the phone ringing. After a while, he notices that the phone lying in Bijon's jacket is ringing. He takes out the phone. Meenu's name appears on the screen. Raja is in a dilemma whether to pick up the phone or not, Till then the phone ringing stops. Raja picks up the jacket and hangs it on his shoulder and goes towards the rest room. When he is washing his hands after urinating, the

phone kept in his jacket pocket rings again. This time he takes out the phone and receives the call.

Meenu's voice comes from the other side.

“Raja has not returned home yet. I am worried. You said that you will pick him up. It is very late. I hope he is fine. You have not taken him with you to some shady joint. See, he is a very innocent boy.”

Raja is listening, Meenu disconnects the phone.

Chapter 23

Raja and all his friends are wearing aprons like doctors. Everyone is following Professor Richmond who is bald as well as fat. He is crossing the lawn and heading towards another building whose entrance has "ER" written on it. An ambulance has just stopped there and two people are taken out of it and taken inside on a stretcher. Professor Richmond is walking like a big ball. The boys are stunned to see his agility. The hallways seem very quiet. Only a few people are seen. Professor Richmond enters a room on whose door a sign of "Gross Anatomy" is hanging. When the boys enter inside, they start whispering about the lab, the hall is very big. Professor Richmond brings them to the place where many cadavers are kept on movable stretchers. The cadavers are covered with cloth from top to bottom, the group of students looks very quiet.

Some people are looking nervous and some are eagerly ready to learn. To show their courage, some students go close to the cadavers and start reading the description written on the chart. Professor Richmond is instructing the boys that "If anyone feels nauseous due to chemical odour, he can comfortably go out and take fresh breath. Does anyone want to leave?"

He looks around but no one responds. Yes, some girls are seen covering their nose with napkins. The girls come forward and say,

“We will do it sir.”

Professor Richmond says “Ladies you embarrass me. “

Two girls remove napkins from their noses. The professor takes both of them in the middle and goes to the cadaver. Professor Richmond says “Ok we will start, this is our guy, guy or girl we don't know yet. Who will remove the clothes of this beauty first, who is the one with Guts.”

The students look at each other, Frank boldly comes forward. Professor Richmond becomes happy.

“What a thing, come on, one man is born to become a surgeon and the rest of you go and clean the toilet.” Everyone laughs.

“Okay, I will bring the instruments soon but please you guys don't tease the cadaver. Let them be as they are.”

Saying this Professor Richmond leaves the room and moves towards the lab room. Michael is in a mood of fun. He says,

“Friends if you want to cut the chord, the countdown begins five, four, three, two, one,”

The boys shout and say “Don't do this.”

Danish says

“We are not even allowed to touch the cadaver and you are talking about opening it.”

But Michael does not listen to anyone and uncovers the cadaver. Everyone keeps staring, suddenly the lying cadaver sits up from its place and opens its eyes. Seeing this the students scream. Seeing the students shouting, the cadaver also shouts imitating them. Professor Richmond enters the hall, accompanied by a lab assistant who has tools in his hands. Michael and the cadaver both sneak out slowly. Professor Richmond hears the noise and asks “What is going on.”

The students come to their respective positions. The professor moves towards the cadaver and uncovers it.

“It is the cadaver of a 20-year-old girl.”

The students look at the cadaver with great interest because her body is very perfect. Raja also gives a blank look to the cadaver. Many things start coming to his mind. Like a beautiful stripper is dancing naked.

Meenu is lying half naked on the bed. Glimpses of Meenu and strippers are coming in front of his eyes one after the other. Raja feels nauseated. Seeing his condition, Lisa quietly walks holding Raja out of the door.

When she looks back, she is relieved that no one noticed her and Raja coming out. Lisa brings Raja to an open place. Raja lies down on the grass. Lisa gives him a bottle of water. He drinks the water. Lisa is lightly massaging Raja's forehead and shoulders like a caretaker. Lisa asks Raja in a very casual tone.

“What happened?” Raja replies,

“I don't know, by the way, sorry I made you miss your class.”
Lisa says,

"I am repeating again, what are friends for? After a while of silence, Lisa asks,

"Did you have dinner last night?" Raja says,

"Last night my host Bijon took me to a strippers' place. Lisa quickly says,

"Then you must have seen the babes of LA, you know, these strippers are the aspirants who will become Hollywood stars of tomorrow. By the way, how did they look?"

Then Raja says, "Like that cadaver."

Lisa is a little surprised to hear this. Raja continues his talk,

"Lifeless as if an artist has created him with his beautiful artwork and has put in all his heart and soul."

Lisa says,

"You talk very intensely."

She starts looking at Raja with a very affectionate expression. Michael and Tom's gang watch Lisa going from a distance. Lisa shows her middle finger towards them, by then Raja dozes off. Suddenly something strikes Lisa's mind and Lisa's attention goes to Raja's injured hand which is still swollen and looks strange. Lisa gently takes his hand in hers, takes out moisturizing lotion from her bag and applies it on his hand. Raja feels pain, he opens his eyes. Lisa looks at him and says

"Those people almost broke your hand." Raja pretends to be unaware and says "No, who told you?"

Lisa says

"Don't lie, I know everything,"

Raja says

"They were asking me to draw your picture." "When."

Lisa interrupts,

Raja bows his head and says,"

"They were asking me to make your nude picture and I refused."

Suddenly, hearing this, Lisa gets angry. Raja's silence increases Lisa's anger. She says,

"Tell me why did you not call the police? You know nobody will help you if you don't help yourself? There should be at least one reason why you didn't call."

Raja says, "So ...

Lisa,

"Why didn't you tell me?" Raja says,

"They will burn your face by pouring acid on it if I call the police."

Lisa is surprised that

"They will pour acid on my face." Raja says,

"Yes, this happens in India." Lisa says,

"This must happen in your India, but it doesn't happen here. They are trying to scare you."

Lisa is shocked. Raja slowly goes to sleep. Lisa carefully places his injured hand in her lap. Her eyes shine with tears, thinking that Raja took such a big trouble upon himself for her.

Chapter 24

Raja, Frank and Lisa are standing outside the office room. They look tense. Professor Zarilli comes out of the room and calls Frank inside. Raja also starts following Frank Professor Richmond's voice comes from inside "No,one at a time please."

Frank looks at Raja with a blank expression. Raja gives him a gesture of assurance and comes out and sits on the chair lying outside with Lisa.

Lisa, looking at Raja, says

"Be confident, just tell them that you were going to give that picture to Professor Strauss, consider it a surprise or gift."

Raja says

"But I did not make her picture for this reason."

Lisa reacts

"So there was a reason behind making the picture."

Raja says

"Motivation or inspiration is always required to make a picture. If this happens, the pencil starts running on the paper automatically."

Lisa gives a very disappointed look and Professor Zarilli signals Raja to come in. Raja is nervous and follows Professor Zarilli. Raja sees a group of Professors sitting at a big conference table. It looks like a serious panel is sitting. Raja's eyes are looking for Margaret. She is seen sitting on a chair a little behind the Professor's. When Raja arrives, her eyes widen, she does not believe that this is Raja's handiwork. She stands up from her seat and wants to say something but Professor Zarilli interrupts her.

"You stay quiet Professor Strauss, we will talk." He addresses Raja -

"Hey Mr. Mukherjee, thank you for coming in, please sit down."

When Raja sits in front, the same page of his sketchbook is seen open on the table on which Professor Strauss's incomplete picture is clearly visible. As soon as Raja sits, Professor Zarilli says to Raja -

"Mr. Mukherjee, meet Dr. Bedard. Doctor Bedard, you ask first." Doctor Bedard asks Raja -

"Have you drawn this?" Raja -

"Yes."

Dr. Edminston asks

"What was your exact motivation behind drawing this sketch Mr. Mukherjee?"

Raja says

"I did not know that this would become such a big issue. I have painted portraits of so many people in my country, they

always praised me for painting portraits and in this country as well.'

Doctor Edminston says

"But we have a policy in this campus that before taking a photo or drawing a professor, his permission is necessary. What you have done is considered an interference in someone's privacy. In the past, such issues have happened which later became legal cases of sexual harassment."

Raja points towards the picture and says

"What is sexual in this drawing sir? How dignified she looks in this portrait."

Doctor Edminston

"Okay, you only drew the face but you could have drawn a nude body with it and posted it on the internet."

Raja gets irritated.

"This is atrocious. How can you say such a thing. How can I do this? This is not our culture."

All the professors start staring at Raja at once. Raja looks at them and says surrendering.

"Okay, whatever punishment is there for this, I am ready to bear it."

Hearing this, Margaret stands up to say something. She gives a look to Raja. Dr. Zarilli gestures her to sit down and while addressing Raja says,

"Look, consider this as a warning because this is your first offence but please read this disclaimer carefully and sign it. Read it comfortably and then sign it."

Raja snatches the paper from his hand and signs it very quickly. The committee members look at him with surprise. Margaret looks guilty. Dr. Bedard asks Raja,

"Don't you want to read this paperwithout reading it?" Raja says,

"A team of such qualified and steamed professors has prepared it. It will not be a trash. I believe it. If I don't believe you people, it will be a matter of shame for the reputation of the institution." Dr. Bedard has another point.

"That you cannot meet Dr. Strauss except in the classroom, lab and office hours. Clear"

Raja says

"It is clear."

Professor Edminston says "Okay, you can go."

Raja gets up, about to leave. Professor Bedard says to him

"Wait Mr. Mukherjee, you did not tell the reason for this drawing."

Margaret raises her head. She is also eager to listen. She adjusts her rim. Raja takes a look at Margaret and looking at all the professors says

"She always looks like a special person to my eyes very special.."

Margaret is very impressed to hear this. The committee members become emotional. Raja leaves the room. The group is watching him leave. Margaret steps forward and says,

"I didn't know it could be this boy." Doctor Bedard says,

"Rules are Rules, Professor, you're right. You always say that."

Margaret is speechless. Her eyes are fixed on the window through which Raja is seen leaving.

Chapter 25

Today was an emotionally draining day for Raja. As soon as Raja sits on the passenger seat in Lisa's car, his eyes close due to fatigue. Lisa is driving the car carefully. She keeps looking at Raja from time to time but Raja falls asleep on the way. Raja kept sleeping all the way, the darkness of night has spread outside. As soon as Lisa stops the car outside Bijon's house, Raja realizes that he has reached home, he wakes up and stretches. He looks outside the car window, it is raining heavily, and heavy thunderstorm with unusual wind. When Raja's eyes meet Lisa's, he says "Oh I am sorry I fell asleep, you had to drive alone without company."

Lisa says

"I was not alone, your company was with me."

Raja says

"I have to go, my hosts must have slept."

Hearing this, Lisa taps Raja on the shoulder and gestures him to look towards the house. The house looks like a shining palace. All the windows are open and all the lights are on. The bright lights reflect in the rain water and give the house a mysterious look. Raja looks at Lisa and says

"I don't want to waste your time, your family must be waiting for you."

Raja opens the car door to get down. Lisa says "I wish what you said was true."

Raja stops while getting down and looks at Lisa carefully. Lisa further says,

"If I die today, my parents will come to know after a week."

Raja closes the car door and sits comfortably on the seat. Lisa looks at him and says,

"Sorry, you haven't had a good day today anyway. I don't want to impose my problems on you."

Raja looks into her eyes and says, "Hey... that's what friends are for."

Hearing this, a smile comes on Lisa's face. She starts telling her story.

"Look, when I was ten years old, my parents got divorced. I also have a younger brother. My mother has taken custody of him. My father took my custody and he used to come with new women every week. I used to wake up in the middle of the night and see a strange woman roaming around in my living room half naked as if it was her house." Then I started locking my bedroom and started sleeping. This was my world, the story of my life. Tell me, how are your parents?"

Raja says

"I am an only child, my father was against my coming here, he thought that his fate will follow me. You can meet my mother."

Lisa how will I see her, will she ever come here?

Raja says

“No, she cannot come.”

Lisa says

“Well we don't know, fate may bring her here to meet me.”

Raja says

“If my mother sees you, she will make you a part of her family, she will keep you in her heart.”

Lisa feels very happy to hear this comment.

Raja takes a deep sigh and opens the car door to leave. He turns and looks at Lisa as if he has forgotten something. He closes the door and sits on the seat again. He does not want to leave Lisa's side. Both are avoiding each other's looks. Suddenly Lisa comes near Raja. Both look into each other's eyes and kiss each other's lips. Lisa prolongs her kiss and turns it into a French kiss. Raja hesitates a bit at first but he also supports Lisa. This union makes Raja experience true deep love. Time stops. The rain and darkness outside is giving privacy to the car. Lisa climbs on Raja, she reclines the seat and lowers it. The young couple start exploring each other's bodies. Lisa takes Raja's hand and puts it

inside her bra. Raja feels the smooth skin of her bosom. Both are excited and eager to merge into each other. Unaware of the whole world, both have intercourse with each other. Both look satisfied. After relaxing for a while, Raja straightens his clothes, opens the door and goes out. Lisa says

“Good night my love.” to him. Raja also says “Good night.”

Lisa says

“Take care of yourself.”

Raja smiles and closes the car door. He waves from outside. The car slowly moves forward. Lisa looks back at Raja. The tail light of the car disappears in the darkness. Raja moves towards his house. He is still looking at the road. Raja runs towards the house to avoid the rain. The door is open as usual. The lights are on. Even the smallest lamps are burning. Raja rushes inside to avoid the raindrops but he almost falls down after hitting something lying in front of him. When he looks carefully, it is a broken flower vase. He looks around. He is greeted by pieces of broken glass shining on the floor. Potters, planters, everything is ruined.

He hesitates to call out to anyone. He climbs the stairs carefully and quietly. As soon as he crosses Bijon's room, he clearly sees Bijon sleeping on his bed through the open door. The windows are wide open, allowing strong winds and cold rainwater to come in. When he crosses Meenu's room, it appears empty. He does not see Meenu there. He even peeks in, but still does not see Meenu. He starts wondering where Meenu has gone. Suddenly he enters his room and closes his door. In his room, only one lamp is burning at a far corner, whose light is dim. All the windows are closed, lightning is crackling, everything is visible.

Raja sits on his bed and starts taking off his clothes, then a wave of shock runs through his body, his heart starts pounding, someone has pressed his hand hard. Due to the cold hand, his body shivers and becomes stiff. He slowly turns his neck towards the hand and sees that it is Meenu, sleeping naked on his bed.

When Raja sees her in the flashlight coming from the window, her body looks like a European painting. Raja tries to get up from the bed slowly but the grip of her hands tightens as if a hunter does not want to let go of his prey. Raja uses his strength. Meenu also resists. Raja realises that Meenu is awake. Her eyes are shining like a ghost. Her long hair till her hips is scattered on the bed like a flame of fire. Suddenly Meenu pulls Raja hard. Raja falls on Meenu's naked body with a jerk. He tries to get up. Meenu embraces him with all her strength. He struggles to get free but Meenu is not leaving Raja. He tries with all his might to get free but is unable to do so and screams.

“Meenu what is all this? Meenu please leave me.. you are like my sister.”

Meenu puts a hand on Raja's mouth to silence him. Raja gets shocked again. Meenu speaks in a Coarse strange possessed voice.

“Come my love I am all yours now. There are no restrictions. Cuddle me, explore me, love me my Raja... don't I look beautiful?”

Raja screams like a madman. “Bijon ...Bijon ... wake up.”

Hearing this, Meenu laughs like a devil and loosens her grip on Raja a little. Raja tries to get up. She pulls him towards her body again. Raja falls from the top on her. Meenu grabs him with her bare feet. She brings his face close to hers. Plays with his lips like a sodomasochistic lover and says with great confidence “Don't you know that Bijon is sleeping. He will not wake up even if you scream. He will never wake up again....never.....he is sleeping forever.”

Raja's face turns from fear to paranoia. He trembles and says "What...what did you say?"

Meenu says

"Yes, Bijon is dead. He is dead."

She releases her grip. Raja gets up and runs away from her. He runs towards Bijon's room opening his door. Looking at Bijon, he now realises that a little while ago he had seen his dead body on which the rain showers are still falling and the cold wind is blowing through the window. Raja cannot believe it. He slowly moves towards Bijon. He lifts his wrist and checks his pulse. He also tries to listen to his heartbeat but there is no sign of life. Then he hears Meenu's voice from behind. She is standing blocking the door. Raja has no chance to escape. She slowly slides towards the door and squads in the middle of the door. Raja picks up the phone standing nearby. The line is dead. He sits helplessly near Bijon. He is still trembling due to shock. Meenu speaks very slowly but eloquently. Raja is surprised. Meenu says.

"Don't ruin him by showing pity. I need pity. I was living with this impotent man for many years. He could not produce children. He was even disgusted by the idea of sperm donation. He was filled with humongous male ego. If I even said hello to a man, he would think I was asking for his sperm. Look at these signs of my marriage."

She shows her thighs and Raja can see the cigarette burn marks. Meenu caresses her thighs lovingly and says

"We had a fight tonight...do you know why...because of you."

On hearing this, Raja's head starts spinning and he is not able to believe what Meenu is saying.

"Yes he asked directly, did you fuck Raja." Raja's eyebrows raise in disgust.

"Yes he asked...why did he ask...do you know...look there." On Meenu's gesture, Raja's gaze goes to Bijon's other hand. In which he is holding a pencil sketch of Meenu made by Raja. Meenu says "He found this in the sketchbook in your room and after that he picked up whatever came in his hand and started hitting me. But for a change, today I started enjoying his beatings. You made my picture...with this happiness, I kept tolerating everything. I felt that someone loves me, this is enough for me. He had drunk so much that he lost his balance and fainted. I took off his clothes, opened all the windows and the cool breeze from the mountains did the rest. It took only five hours for his lungs to choke. I treated him with respect. Like a loyal wife."

Raja leans against the wall and starts looking out of the window with a blank expression. Meenu comes and sits beside him and says

"Raja, for how long did you keep thinking about me... this is love... now we can stay together for the rest of our lives."

Raja speaks with difficulty.

"Meenu it is not what you are thinking."

Raja gets up and runs towards the door. Meenu gets worried. She also runs after him and pulls him. Raja falls in front of her. Meenu's voice becomes cold now, like a maniac..

"Don't ditch me..Raja..please."

Meenu wants to take him in her arms again. Raja holds her hands tightly and pushes her. Meenu falls on the ground and her head hits the edge of the bedside table. She looks hurt but is okay. Raja runs towards the stairs. He slips and rolls down the stairs like a falling tree. His knees are almost fractured. He screams in pain. He gathers whatever strength he has left and gets up. He limps and drags himself towards the main door. He runs out of the house in a roaring storm. Today's storm in Los Angeles is terrible. The city has not seen such a storm for a long time.

Raja is running aimlessly like a wounded deer. He loses his balance many times like a drunkard. He does not know how far he has gone. Many cars on the road screech and honk at him. One gentleman stops his car and invites him to get in , Raja sits in the car. After some time He sees a familiar sign and tells to stop the car. He gets down starts running towards the familiar sign road dragging his feet.

Chapter 26

The sky is clear, belying the storm and rain of the night, and the morning sun shines brightly over downtown Los Angeles. Margaret has arrived early on campus today. She parks her car and takes a shortcut to the lab through the lawn. She is about to enter the cancer research lab when she sees a body lying on the far side. Her eyes show concern and she moves to check it. She is surprised that it is Raja lying there, completely unconscious, his clothes wet, his body covered with mud. There are injury marks on his right knee, forehead and left hand. Margaret thinks of picking Raja up like a child, but then an unknown voice stops her from doing so.

“Doctor Strauss, we should call 911.”

Margaret sees that the security guard is standing there. Margaret, seeing Raja in such a state, says nervously. “The hospital is a hundred feet from here, will you help me lift him. The security guard gets confused and hesitantly says.

“Doctor Strauss, it is not right to do this. You know this better than me.”

Saying this, he talks to his walkie for medical help. When worried Margaret checks Raja's pulse, she feels a little relieved. In a while, ambulance, fire and police vehicles reach there.

Paramedics quickly come out of the ambulance with stretcher, oxygen and other things.

When they are putting Raja in the ambulance, they ask Margaret, who is walking along with them as if she is their own, to stay away. They even complain about Margaret to the police. The police push Margaret away. When the ambulance starts moving, Margaret runs towards the hospital building through the lawn.

The medical team is promptly using various types of gadgets to provide comfort to Raja. Raja's knees and elbows are bandaged. A big plaster is visible on his forehead on which some fresh blood stains are visible. The room is so quiet that only the beeping of the heart rate monitor can be heard clearly. The TV is muted and the news on it is of a reporter standing on Bijon's lawn whose camera is seen alternately by the police, FBI and medical people present there. The whole house has been yellow taped. The volume of the TV is very low. The nurse and the doctor also glance at the TV. The voice of the TV news reporter is heard very softly.

“Pacific Palasades is considered a peaceful community in Los Angeles but last night a heinous crime broke the peace here. The influential families here had never witnessed such an incident of domestic violence before. The people living in the neighborhood are saying that a mysterious guest was seen in this house for a few days.”

Raja is watching the news with half-opened eyes. Margaret looks at Dr. Dang and signals him to turn off the TV. Dr. Dang warns while turning off the TV.

“If you people want to watch the news, please go and watch it in the cafeteria. I apologize for this Dr. Strauss.”

Raja is so unconscious that he is not able to talk about anything. Margaret is sitting in front of his bed with a line of worry on her face.

Chapter 27

Kolkata

Bimal is having dinner sitting at the dining table. Vijaya is serving. Bimal says to Vijaya while eating.

“He said that he will call tonight.”

Vijaya says

“He will call when he gets free time, you stop worrying unnecessarily.” “I don't know, I am not feeling well.”

Bimal says. Vijaya replies

“You have been telling him this since before he left. When he wants to finish the work started by you, then you should co-operate a little. “

Bimal says with a morsel in his hand.

“How can he finish it when he doesn't even know what I couldn't finish.” Vijaya watches Bimal eating for a while and says.

“In your time the world did not know about Ayurveda but today the western world knows about it very well.”

Bimal washes his hands, glances at Vijaya, and moves his wheelchair to another room.

Los Angeles

On the other side, Margaret sitting next to Raja hears Raja's cell phone ringing. For a while she hesitates whether to pick up the phone or not but finally picks up. Margaret says "Hello, this is Mr. Mukherjee's call, may I know who is speaking?"

"I am Mrs. Mukherjee, Raja's mother. May I know who is speaking to you?"

Margaret says in a composed voice.

"Mrs. Mukherjee, I am Raja's professor, did you get the news of the incident."

Vijaya says nervously.

"What kind of incident, Madam?"

Margaret says

"It is such that I am not authorized to tell you anything, only his doctor or police can give information, I will give them the phone. They will tell you."

Saying this, Margaret goes towards the other room. And here Vijaya, worried, runs towards Bimal's room and hands him the cordless phone and says.

"She is talking about some doctor." Bimal says,

"If he is in medical college, they will talk about the doctor."

Vijaya says quickly

"And what about the police?"

Hearing this, Bimal puts the receiver to his ear and gets worried. He hears Margaret's voice and says.

“Yes sir, please, I am Raja's father.”

Margaret just listens and doesn't say anything. Bimal's voice comes. “I mean Aditya's father.”

Margaret is silent.

“Madam, he is my only son, take care of him like your own child.”

Margaret says

“I will, sir I will definitely take care of him.”

Saying this she gets emotional and hands over the phone to Doctor Dang standing in front. Doctor Dang starts talking in an official tone. Margaret moves towards the window in front and starts looking at the skyline.

Bimal requests Doctor Dang.

“Doctor, can I talk to his host family?”

Doctor Dang hands over the phone to the LAPD officer. The LAPD officer tells him about Bijon's death incident. Bimal's face becomes shocked. Vijaya's worry increases on seeing Bimal's face. Bimal is quietly listening to the police officer. When the conversation is over, he puts down the phone and turns the wheelchair and moves towards the window. He sees an airplane passing through the sky, tearing through the darkness.

Chapter 28

Margaret is walking in the hallways of the hospital building. Raja's classmates are seen in the hallways and they move towards the trauma unit. Lisa, Frank and Aaron give Margaret dirty looks as they pass by. Margaret wants to say something to them. Lisa ignores her and moves ahead and makes an angry face and murmurs.

“This bitch is still after him .”

Everyone reaches the trauma unit. There is an LAPD make shift counter there where they enter Raja's room after showing their IDs. Everyone gathers near Raja's bed. Lisa has tears in her eyes. As soon as she holds Raja's hand, a teardrop automatically falls on her cheek. All the students are looking at her. Doctor Dang greets them and says.

“He will be fine. He was exhausted because he kept running continuously after the shock.”

Lisa says

“We can talk to him.”

Doctor Dang says

“He is still not normal, he needs rest.”

Lisa says

“Can I keep him as his caretaker.”

Doctor Dang says

“He already has a caretaker.”

Lisa says in surprise

“Who? His host has died and his hostess is in police custody, apart from that he has no one else.”

Doctor Dang says

“I told you that he has a caretaker”

Lisa says

“These social workers do not do anything special. I am ready to sign by giving full liability.”

Doctor Dang says

“Everything is being taken care of Miss and for your information let me tell you that his caretaker is not a social worker.’

“Can I talk to that caretaker please?”

Lisa says. Doctor Dang flatly replies

“Sorry I can't do this. I can't release the information to anyone except his family.”

Just then a tall black lady cop signals everyone to leave. The group reluctantly leaves from there. Lisa stops for a while and looks at Raja. A

nurse asks him to go out. Lisa is looking at Raja with teary eyes while leaving.

Chapter 29

Since the day of this incident of Raja happened, people of Kolkata associated with Raja are also worried about him. Sumit, who played a major role in Raja staying at Bijon's place, is sitting in the lawn of Raja's Kolkata house. He is very disturbed. Other friends are also consoling him. Tears are ready to spill in Sumit's eyes any time. Vijaya comes out with her servant. The servant serves tea to everyone. The atmosphere is filled with sadness. Vijaya comes to Sumit and while caressing his back says,

"Don't worry, Raja will be fine."

Los Angeles

Here, late at night, Raja rolls on his bed, perhaps he has seen a bad dream. The nurse present there rushes and tries to put him to sleep. The nurse refills the medicine in the trip and watches until Raja falls asleep completely. Outside Lisa arrives at the LAPD booth with a packed dinner. She tries to convince them for getting inside. But she gets a blunt, No. Booth people refuses, to take the food pack and asks her to leave. Lisa is anxious to see Raja and she peeks in through the door. An old cop smiles at this and opens the door fully. Standing at the doorway, she sees Raja sleeping. His drip is on. She rushes in. The old cop catches her, takes her out and closes the door.

Chapter 30

The red sun rises over Los Angeles City. An airplane passes through the center of the sun. Raja wakes up and sits on his bed. He looks shattered but there is a relief on his face. The nurse makes his breakfast. LAPD officers come in and sit next to Raja to do paperwork. Dr. Dang sits next to Raja. The LAPD officer starts talking.

“Mr. Mukherjee meet Prosecutor Duvall.” Prosecutor Duvall questions Raja.

“Mr. Mukherjee, we need to check some facts with you. Were you at the house at 1977 Wick Lane, Pacific Palisades at 7:00 pm on September 19?”

Raja gives a blank look and says.

“I have a headache. I want to sleep.”

Prosecutor Duvall says “Mr. Mukherjee you are almost acquitted of any involvement in this murder case but if you don't cooperate now then you will be in big trouble. Because you are the sole witness.”

Raja closes his eyes, he is completely stressed, his hands start trembling. Doctor Dang signals the nurse. The nurse holds Raja's hand tightly and makes him lie down on the bed. The officers become restless. The public prosecutor wants to say

something but a strong command interrupts him. This command is of Margaret.

“What the hell is going on, will you let my patient rest..please...thank you.”

No one noticed Margaret coming, the police officer says. “Mam this is not limited to a medical matter, let the prosecutor do his job, will you please go out for a while.” Margaret raises her hands.

“I am sorry, I am his legal guardian. I just want him to recover completely, then you can torture him with your questions.”

Prosecutor Duvall says.

“Dr. Strauss, you are holding the investigation process, this also comes under the category of criminal offense.”

“Will you be satisfied with the answer given in such a situation, he will stay here for a few more days, why don't you do your work later,”

Margaret says to the prosecutor. Dr. Dang says to Margaret.

“Dr. Strauss, our psychiatrist and physiotherapist have also given clearance, he is fit to go home, yes, he will just have to come here for some follow up sessions.”

Margaret says,

“So, GHI cannot leave even a single bed for him to rest and you also got convinced by their words.”

Dr. Dang says,

“You are well aware of how we operate in this profession.” Margaret says “Why have we become slaves of corporate giants? Will you give your expert opinion?”

Doctor Dang says,

“Well, all motor functions are normal. CNS has no trace of damage.” Hearing this, Prosecutor Duvall says,

“Doctor Strauss, are you satisfied now? Can we do our work now?” Margaret says,

“Are we not trusting the CNS doctor so quickly?” Prosecutor Duvall says irritatingly.

“I don't know how you are connected to this gentleman, but you are interfering in every department, Doctor Strauss.”

Margaret suddenly says to Doctor Dang,

“Doctor Dang, can you discharge the patient now?”

Not seeing any reaction from Doctor Dang, Margaret says,

“Is there not even one person in this room who has a little compassion?”

Everyone is stunned by Margaret's statement and everyone looks at each other with guilt. Dr. Dang says

“My hands are tied, this is an LAPD case.” The police officer standing nearby says,

“If you take responsibility, you will have to pay a bond of 200 thousand dollars.”

Margaret says,

“Okay, let's do the paperwork right now.”

Just then a knock is heard on the door and everyone's attention goes towards it. Lisa comes in with Frank and Aaron. Seeing them coming in, the police officer rebukes them.

“Can't you guys wait outside?”

Lisa looks at Prosecutor Duvall and walks towards him. Seeing this the officer gets angry. Before he can be strict with Lisa, he sees Prosecutor Duvall getting up and hugging and kissing Lisa. Prosecutor Duvall asks Lisa.

“Whatsup honey, are you working in the clinic today?” Lisa replies.

“No, we have come to see our friend.”

Lisa points towards Raja who is sleeping on the bed. Margaret pulls up her glasses and casts a stern look at Lisa and Prosecutor Duvall. Duvall looks at Raja.

“Well this is your friend, that's good, he looks like a nice guy. Go ahead and say Hi to him.”

Margaret suddenly interrupts and says

“Sorry the patient is still resting and I am taking him home now.” Lisa asks worriedly after hearing this.

“Where?”

Margaret says

“And I will not let any visitor come to my place, you know I am taking a risk by filling a bond of 200 thousand dollars, so I will never let this happen. “

All the friends are shocked to hear this. Margaret takes the help of the nurse and puts Raja on the wheelchair. The nurse

takes the wheelchair out of the room. Margaret and two LAPD officers also accompany her. Lisa is standing angrily at the door. From a distance she sees Raja being put in the ambulance. The ambulance starts moving. Margaret's car is following it. Lisa is watching all this helplessly, her father Duvall comes to her and puts his arm on her shoulder. Lisa has tears in her eyes. She regrets that Professor Margaret took Raja away in front of her. She runs from there and reaches the parking area, opens the door of her car and goes inside. Her eyes fall on the passenger seat where Raja's pencil set is lying. She picks up the pencil set and kisses it lovingly as she turns the set. She sees Raja's Kolkata address written on it along with phone number.

Meanwhile, Margaret comes to her house with Raja. She settles Raja in the bedroom. The maid keeps the water bottle near Raja. Margaret writes on a big play card with a marker, "You are in your caretaker's place, just relax" and keeps it in front of Raja so that he can read it. Margaret goes and sits on the couch, her eyes are fixed on Raja. Slowly, Margaret goes to sleep.

Chapter 31

Early this morning, Lisa and her friends are sitting on the college lawn drinking coffee. Everyone looks upset due to the incident of the previous day. No one is saying anything. Aaron breaks the silence and says “I think we should report to the SH & D committee Frank tells Aaron.

“What to report about her, that she is helping a student and this is sexual harassment.”

Aaron says.

“None of us can take him home, that is the truth.”

On hearing this, Lisa says

“I will do anything... I will do anything for him.”

Everyone in the friend circle knows that Lisa's feelings for Raja are very strong.

Chapter 32

Margaret is sitting in her living room working on her laptop. The maid is seen mopping the floor. Suddenly they hear a loud metallic sound which has come from Raja's bedroom. Margaret and the maid both rush towards the bedroom, as soon as they reach the bedroom they see that Raja has regained consciousness and he is awake. A tumbler is lying on the floor and water is scattered. Raja tosses on his bed and is muttering to himself. Margaret goes ahead and sits on the bed next to him to listen. The maid also comes and stands nearby Raja is saying.

“No..no Bhabhi, relationships are very sacred. All divine..... We should not insult our sacred relationship.... Love is sacred Bhabhi is divine I cannot insult it... can not.”

This thing hits Margaret emotionally, she looks at Raja in awe. The lines said by Raja settle in Margaret's heart. She gets up from there and goes towards the living room. While walking she loses her balance. The maid looks perplexed. She goes to Raja and comforts him. Raja slowly falls asleep. Margaret is looking at the picture of a young girl hanging in the living room. Raja's voice is echoing in her mind.

“We should not disrespect our sacred relationship. Love is sacred, it is divine.”

The incident of 25 years back comes in front of Margaret's eyes like a movie. The sun was setting that day and the place was Graffith Park. There a young man is saying the same lines in front of her.

“We should not insult our sacred relationship. Love is sacred, Maggie. It is divine.”

The young man is addressing Margaret as Maggie with love. Young Margaret says,

“Listen to me, we have not done anything like that, we have just kissed, a passionate kiss which was full of love and affection and nothing else. Don't call it dirty.”

The young man says,

“No NoMaggie, please try to understand me. If two human beings leave their intellectual and philosophical selves and come on animal instincts, then this relationship is no longer sacred.”

Margaret says,

“You know how many people stand in line in the lab to see my cleavage.”

The young man says,

“They are after your body and don't want to see anything else.” Young Margaret says,

“Hey, you are not only dumb, you are also jealous of those people who want to have me. Okay, I understand, okay, I say goodbye to you without any hug, if according to you all this is sacred.”

Margaret gets up and walks away. The young man follows her. They head towards the parking lot. The young man hears the sound of a car and the screech of tires.

Margaret wakes up. She wakes up from her thoughts. She looks at her ankle which has a scar on it. The sound of cars honking is coming from outside Margaret's house. The maid comes running to Margaret and shouts.

"There are so many cars blocking the traffic on the road." Margaret stands up and looks at the road. A line of cars is seen on the street. The residents are having trouble getting their cars out of the driveway because the students' cars have blocked the way. Everyone is gathered outside the Margaret's house. Everyone is thinking about who will go inside first. Then Margaret opens the door and comes out and reaches the gate. Looking at the students, she says, "Good evening, why are you people doing all this?"

Then Frank comes in front of Margaret with a bouquet of flowers in his hand and says "We have gathered here just to say thank you because you have helped our friend Aditya Mukherjee a lot. You did a great job."

Frank extends the bouquet of flowers towards Margaret. Margaret sees sarcasm in Frank's gesture. Without moving an inch forward, she says.

"So you guys want me to give this bouquet to Raja on your behalf."

Margaret also replies in sarcasm. The color of all the students' faces fades. Lisa moves forward and comes in front of Margaret and says.

“Professor Strauss, can we meet Raja? If you don't mind, we just want to see him.”

Margaret says

“It would have been nice if I could do this for all of them, but you guys know that the county court is involved in this case. I cannot take the risk of Raja's interaction with anyone other than the L.A.P.D.(LOS ANGELES POLICE DEPARTMENT)”

Hearing this, Aaron says.

“Don't worry Dr. Strauss, we are keeping it confidential.”
Margaret says.

“Are you sure... who knows the government might have left a spy in your group?”

Margaret says this and stares at Lisa. Lisa avoids eye contact with Margaret. The students notice all this. Lisa angrily says.

“Let's go from here friends, she is standing like a wall between us and Raja, she will not let us meet.”

Hearing this from Lisa, all the friends get confused. They cannot believe how Lisa changed so easily. Everyone moves towards their cars behind Lisa. Margaret closes her door slowly. Lisa is moving towards her car.

Aaron stops her and says.

Lisa, what is all this and why was Dr. Strauss staring at you?”
Danish is also there and says.

“Something is going on between these two women, well I don't care about that, I am not involved in all this anymore.”

Lisa says

“Ok listen I will tell you.”

“My dad is a public prosecutor in the county attorney's office and he is handling this case.”

Aaron reacts.

“What the fuck.... why didn't you tell us we are wasting our time here let's go.”

The group of discouraged students start keeping their distance from Lisa. All the cars get out one by one. Lisa's car is still parked on the road. She sits inside the car in the driving seat and closes her eyes, tears are flowing down her cheeks. Frank rubs her back and consoles her.

Chapter 33

It is night. Raja is half asleep. Margaret is checking his temperature with a thermometer. Margaret sits in Raja's room and gets busy working on her laptop. Raja moans mildly. Margaret's attention goes towards Raja.

She turns towards Raja, lowers her glasses and gets up and comes to Raja. Raja's lips are drying. Margaret pours a glass of water and puts a straw in it. Raja sips water with the help of a straw with his eyes closed.

Outside Margaret's house, Lisa is sitting in her car, staring at the house. Lisa is watching Margaret walking near the window. Suddenly Margaret switches off the light and everything is lost in darkness. Lisa falls asleep in her car. In the morning when she wakes up, she sees Margaret getting out of her car. An unexpected smile appears on her face. Getting out of the car, she quickly reaches Margaret's door and rings the doorbell. The maid opens the door and Lisa insists on going inside but the maid refuses. Lisa takes out a 100 dollar note from her pocket and hands it to the maid. The maid laughs and takes out a bunch of 100 dollar notes from her pocket, which she has kept very carefully and shows it to Lisa. Lisa walks away from there sadly, she understands that the maid will not let her go inside.

Chapter 34

When Margaret parks her car in the college campus and comes out, today she sees a changed atmosphere of the campus. All the students are looking at Margaret. Margaret is crossing the lawn and heading towards her study room, as soon as she comes in the hallway, she sees a cartoon drawn on the notice board on the wall. In the cartoon, a student is sitting on the lap of a lady professor and breastfeeding her. There is also something written on it. Margaret goes closer and reads. Professors, why are you crazy about foreign language... Is Kama Sutra a branch of medicine? Margaret gets angry after reading this and takes out the cartoon sheet and tears it into pieces. Throwing the pieces in the trash can standing nearby, she moves towards the conference room. As soon as she enters the conference room, she sees the professors of SH & D committee sitting there. Margaret tries to explain something to them, then the professors spread a lot of cartoons and playcards on a big table. Margaret sees that there are obscene cartoons made about her and Raja. It is written on a play card that Margaret is taking care of her favorite student and she makes the law, can she break the law? Margaret looks at the faces of all the professors. All of them are looking very aggressive, she understands that doing anything now is futile. A professor extends the resignation letter towards Margaret. Margaret signs that paper without reading it and leaves the room.

Chapter 35

Aaron, Frank and Lisa are seen in Lisa's car parked outside Margaret's house in the dark of the night. All three are looking towards Margaret's house. Frank says,

"I am feeling silly, why are we spying on them?"

Lisa reacts to this. Seeing Lisa's reaction, Frank changes his topic.

"I mean, first she gets him in trouble for a drawing and now she has become his protector. I don't understand anything."

Lisa says to Frank,

"Shut up, I didn't ask you to come with me. If you want to go, leave right now. I am staying here."

Inside the maid is feeding Raja soup and bread. Raja asks the maid, "How did I reach here?"

The maid says,

"Margaret found you almost dead in the campus early in the morning." Raja says,

"Can I talk to her, where is she?" The maid says,

"She had to resign from college because of you, but she goes to the lab every day, she has been waiting for you to get well for so long."

Raja gets into deep thought. He doesn't even know how many days have passed since the incident. Outside, Margaret's car passes in front of Lisa's car. Lisa, Frank and Aaron duck. Margaret closes the door as she goes inside the house. Margaret climbs up the stairs. The maid pushes Raja's wheelchair to the bedroom. The bedroom is clearly visible from Lisa's car parked outside. Margaret enters the bedroom and sits opposite Raja. Margaret is talking to Raja while drinking coffee.

"It is okay for me Raja because I live alone in a very big place and it is a matter of a few days, there is no problem."

Raja looks at Margaret with gratitude and says,

"I don't know how to thank you Professor Strauss, I have hurt your feelings but you helped me."

Margaret says.

"No, you have not hurt my feelings at all. I did not even know that it was you, otherwise I would not have let this matter go this far."

Raja asks. "Why?" Margaret says.

"Because you are ..."

Saying this, she leaves the sentence incomplete. She says, "Never mind."

Raja sees that Margaret is putting pepper in her coffee. He asks in surprise,

"Do you put pepper in your coffee?" Margaret says.

“I am sorry, I may have put it in your coffee by mistake.”
Raja says.

“I like it too.”

Margaret does not believe Raja's words. She gets into deep thoughts while adding black pepper to Raja's mug. Raja says

“I don't know why I feel that you are hiding something from me. Whenever I see you...”

Margaret says.

“Time will answer all your questions but right now you need to change your clothes.”

Raja gets a little shy. Margaret continues her talk

“You said that I am a special person for you, so I should also behave in the same way.”

Raja gets touched on hearing this.

Outside in the car, Lisa is alert keeping an eye on the bedroom windows. She taps Aaron and Frank sleeping in the car. She points them towards the window. Their eyes widen and their mouths remain open. Seeing such a scene at the window. Margaret takes off Raja's shirt and changes into another shirt. She asks Raja to get up. As soon as she holds Raja to stand up, Raja loses his balance and falls on Margaret's body. It seems as if both are hugging each other. Lisa cannot tolerate all this. She gets angry and starts the car and leaves from there.

Raja looks fresh due to change of clothes. He is eating with the help of the maid. Margaret also helps a little, but her eyes are glued to the laptop. While eating, Raja asks Margaret how many days have passed since that night. Margaret says,

"It's been a week." Raja says,

"Oh God, I missed class for a week." Margaret says,

"You will catchup. Health comes first. Would you like to talk to home? You can use the phone."

Raja nods. Margaret hands him her phone. Raja takes the phone and says,

"My parents will be heartbroken if they find out what happened?"

He dials a local number. Margaret looks at him and asks, "Who are you calling?"

Raja says.

"To my classmate Lisa." Margaret says.

"I don't think this is a good idea. Her father is the county prosecutor in your case."

Raja defends Lisa.

"But Lisa is a good girl." Margaret says.

"I know she wanted to meet you, but the same legal conflict came up. Anyway, her father's behavior towards you was not good. He was going to put you in jail anyway."

Raja says.

"I was afraid that they would accuse me in this murder. How did you trust me and bring me here?"

Margaret says.

"I know what it feels like to take the blame. I have made terrible mistakes in life. This is the only chance to make up for them."

Raja says.

"What are you trying to say." Margaret says smilingly.

"Leave it now."

Margaret changes the topic and says. "Tell me about your family."

Raja says after a long pause.

"Father is involved in charity. Providing free medical facilities to the poor is his full time job and hating America is his part time job."

On hearing this Margaret says.

"Oh really, I got it ...Now its your rest time. Goodnight

Margaret gets up and leaves. Raja has also finished his food. The maid gives him a napkin. Raja cleans his mouth. The maid leaves from there. Raja slowly lies down on the bed.

Chapter 36

Margaret's car enters the college campus. She gets out of the car and walks across the lawn toward her research lab. She sees Lisa and her friends sitting on the lawn. Lisa stands up and comes in front of Margaret. Tauntingly she says.

“I want to talk to you about something, can you share your young boyfriend with me....I mean just for a day as a swinger.”

Margaret expresses regret at her words and says

“Lisa please....I am already going through a lot and now I am not in the mood to do all this.”

Lisa says

“What have you gone through....apart from ruining our lives...our love...I love Raja and the truth is that you have stolen my love.”

Margaret says in a convincing tone.

“Lisa look when the right time comes I will explain everything to you.” Lisa says.

“I have seen my dad dealing with many criminals but I have never seen someone as disgusting as you. Down right whore....”

Lisa's friends also join in supporting her

“Whore..Whore..Whore”

Margaret feels very insulted and turns around and walks towards her car. The students follow her. Lisa tries to stop them but they get so excited that they shower Margaret with paper balls.

Suddenly Lisa looks at Margaret's car window. Her eyes meet Raja who is sitting in the car and is looking at her. Lisa gets worried and tries again to stop the students but she is unsuccessful. She shakes her head and tries to tell Raja that all this was not planned but Raja turns his head away. Margaret's car drives off. Lisa runs after the car waving at Raja but the car keeps moving at its full speed and gets lost in the traffic.

Chapter 37

Some candles are placed on the dining table. When Raja enters the living room, he finds the lights a little dim. Raja starts wondering what all this is. He goes to the dining table and finds a cake placed in the middle of the table along with plates and glasses. A champagne bottle too. Raja hears a sweet voice. He looks in the direction of the voice and finds Margaret standing at the door who wished him.

“Happy Birthday.”

Raja gets confused. Margaret walks towards Raja and says

“When I saw your passport, I came to know that ... I just wanted to surprise you.”

Raja keeps looking at Margaret. Margaret is neatly wearing a saree (Indian dress). He is surprised to see this. She gestures him to sit on a chair and herself sits on a table standing nearby. Margaret continues.

“Today I have cooked Indian food for you.” Raja suddenly asks.

“How do you know how to cook Indian food and where did you get this saree?”

Margaret says

“Leave everything to time, I don't know whether I will be alive by then or not.”

Raja says.

“Don't say such things please ... may you live long, you are a very beautiful human being.”

Margaret says

No..actually I am notI have committed a lot of sins. Well, forget it. We should not ruin this session. She opens the cake box. Raja's name is written on it. Raja is very quiet. Margaret lights the candle in the middle of the cake. She plays a music system. Raja seems to have heard this music of Sitar and Sarod. He gets lost in memories. Then, he asks Margaret,

“Where did you get this album? “Someone gave it to me.”

Margaret tells. Raja says.

“This is my favourite music piece.”

Raja blows out the candle. Margaret cuts the cake. She mischievously puts the first piece in Raja's mouth. Raja also picks up a piece and mischievously puts it in Margaret's mouth. Both of them keep quiet and clean the cake stuck outside their mouths with a napkin. Both are quiet for a while. Then Margaret opens the Champagne bottle and pours it in the glass kept there. Raja says,

“I am sorry because of me you lost your respect in your campus.” Margaret quickly says.

“It was my decision. You did not tell me to take care of you. I did it.” He asks.

“Why?”

Margaret pours Champagne in the second glass and says "Because you are a special person."

Raja says.

"But I have always put you in trouble." Margaret says.

"There is no such thing, why would you put me in trouble, listen, I have just received an honour from AICR."

Raja asks.

"What is this AICR?" Margaret tells Raja.

"The Association of International Cancer Research."

Tomorrow is the annual convention of the AICR, They are honoring our research work with a grant. Now you see, you have come as a good luck charm for me."

Raja interprets these words in many ways. Both of them toast with glasses. Margaret says that.

"This is for the great future and for the most special person in my life."

Both of them drinking with great pleasure and eat Indian snacks. Suddenly Margaret says,"

"Come on, let's dance just for fun."

She pours more Champagne in Raja's glass. Raja gets slightly intoxicated due to fatigue and emotional roller coaster. Margaret has also become slightly intoxicated. They are dancing slowly. While looking at each other, Raja does not understand where he should hold Margaret because Margaret's belly and waist are exposed due to wearing the saree in the wrong way. He finally holds Margaret's waist while blushing.

Margaret giggles as Raja is looking for a place on her waist to grip. Both of them get engrossed in dancing. Fusion music is playing softly. Raja is enjoying the music with his eyes closed. Both of them are getting more intoxicated. Raja opens his eyes and goes closer to Margaret. Raja's hand covers Margaret's waist. Both their faces are facing each other. Raja moves forward and tries to kiss Margaret's lips. Margaret immediately pushes him. Raja again comes closer to Margaret and wants to kiss her.

This time Margaret slaps Raja hard on his cheek and frees herself from the grip of Raja's hands. A very awkward atmosphere is seen in the room. Margaret, without looking at Raja, quickly goes towards her bedroom at upstairs and closes the door of the room. Raja keeps looking towards Margaret's room for a while, then slowly walks towards the sofa and falls asleep on the sofa. In the morning when he wakes up. In front of him is lying is Margaret's writing pad with the words "The cops called for you. They'll be here at 8:30 AM. Good luck with your statement. See you at the award function at 12 noon at Staples Convention Centre."

Chapter 38

Kolkata (Mukherjee House)

It is night, Sumit has come to Raja's Kolkata house when he gets the news of Bijon and Meenu incident. He wants to know what really happened? But from whom should he get the news? Bijon died and Meenu had to go to jail and Raja has not yet recovered. He is desperate to know about Raja. He is still reading the updates of Bijon-Meenu case on his laptop. Bimal is busy writing something in his room. Just then an announcer comes and starts speaking on CNN news running on the living room TV set.

“Till three decades ago, CCRAS was the only institute in New Delhi, India, which used to preach the importance of a great tradition Ayurveda to the whole world and now the western world is paying attention to it.”

Bimal's attention is attracted to hearing Ayurveda and he moves his wheelchair towards the living room. Announcer continues speaking “UK first took the initiative with AICR and then US followed it. Dr. Scott Gerson of NIAM challenged allopathy in a very revolutionary way.

Los Angeles (County Attorney's Office)

LAPD car stops outside County Attorney's Office. Raja is escorted by two policemen. He gets out of the car and is taken towards the hallways.

Los Angeles (Staples Convention Centre)

The hall of Staples Convention Centre is filled with formally dressed medical professionals, press, TV, prime channel cameras. The walls of the hall are adorned with banners which read AICR Annual Convention Sponsored by Merck, Johnson & Johnson, Ranbaxy and other company names. The Vice President of AICR is in the middle of his speech.

Cameras flash. Everyone is listening attentively to the Vice President's speech.

“In the 7th century BC, Atre and Dhanvantari used herbal medicines to treat early-stage cancer and surgery for advanced cases. In the 8th century AD, Bagabhatta, a Buddhist physician, composed two texts, Ashtang Hridaya and Ashtang Sangraha, which introduced a new approach to cancer treatment. When the allopathy revolution shook the medical world, it rejected all the medical traditions of the world which had valid systems.”

Los Angeles (County Attorney's Office)

Raja is sitting in the attorney's office signing papers and the police officer says.

“You have been acquitted of any charges in this case. Our primary suspect Meenu has confessed everything. You are free to go.”

Raja looks very relaxed and stands up enthusiastically and shakes hands with the police officer. His eyes go to the wall clock which shows 11:00 A.M.

Los Angeles (Staples Convention Center)

The Vice President's speech is still going on. He is saying.

“The great tradition of Ayurveda is again getting a place in the medical world and this has been possible due to dedicated individuals like Dr. Margaret Strauss. Now I will request Rear Admiral Kenneth P. Mortitsugu, Surgeon General of the United States Government to present an award to Doctor Margaret Strauss.”

The hall erupts in applause. The Surgeon General and Margaret are climbing on the stage. Camera flashes are flashing. Raja enters the hall almost running. He looks for a seat to sit but as soon as he looks at the stage, he sees Margaret who is going to give a speech. Raja stands aside and focuses on Margaret. Margaret says.

“My dear audience, the honour conferred on me this morning by AICR is not mine alone. It is also of all my colleagues and students who have constantly supported me in this long and tiring research. I want to confess in front of all of you today that principally this honour belongs to a gentleman. A pure soul from the East. He started this project in 1990 as a Doctoral Fellow at AUCM. His only mission in life was to make the western world aware of the use of Ayurveda in cancer treatment. He was like a messiah, the champion of the East. He cared for nothing except his mission. I used to work as an intern in his research but one fateful night an incident happened and all his dreams were shattered and he returned to the East. The name of that pious soul was Mukherjee... Doctor Bimal Mukherjee.”

Raja cannot believe what he hears. He feels weak at this shocking new turn of Margaret, perhaps because of the stress of the past few days and also because of drinking alcohol at night. Margaret says while looking directly into the television camera.

“He was my Guru, my friend, my... my... She hesitates and changes the topic in shame.

“Bimal, if you are watching then you know that this is for you.”

Kolkatta (Mukherjee House)

Bimal's eyes shine with tears, he tries his best to stop the tears. A stream of tears makes its way to his cheeks. Due to tears his vision becomes blurred. Margaret is looking at the TV camera as if she is looking into Bimal's eyes. She is looking at the TV camera in such a way that she says “Bimal, I hope you will forgive me now. Bimal is in a trance state, his face is wet with tears.”

Los Angeles (Staples Convention Center)

The auditorium of Staples Convention resounds with thunderous applause. Everyone stands up from their seats and gives ovation. It has been more than five minutes and the applause is not stopping. Camera flashes start flashing. When Margaret is made to sit on her seat, Raja tries to balance himself while standing. A spectator helps him sit on the seat. As soon as Raja sits, he starts remembering the incident of the night when Margaret slapped him hard for his dirty act. He gets up in a disturbed state and goes towards the road outside. He is walking aimlessly. Different expressions are coming on his face.

Kolkatta (Mukherjee House)

Bimal slides his wheelchair towards the sarod (Indian musical instrument) lying in the room. He touches its broken string and closes his eyes. With the sound of the string, he reaches the world of his past.

Chapter 39

When he was young, in America, how he and young Margaret were sitting in Griffith Park in the evening, playing the Sarod and Sitar as if there was a musical duet program going on. They were so engrossed in playing their instruments that they even forgot that they were sitting in a park. The music produced by the fusion of their instruments was giving a heavenly feeling. As soon as they both rested their instruments, they were greeted with thunderous applause. Joggers, bystanders and many people kept clapping. Margaret picked up a tape recorder from a stone lying near and ejected the tape from inside it. The crowd started to disperse but some people did not stop from saying to them,

“Wow, it was great music.”

Margaret drew a half heart on the tape cover. Bimal said, "Not again, I am tired and anyway I do not like this kind of show-off in public."

“We can practice privately in my apartment. I told you earlier.” Margaret feels proud and excited and gets up smiling. Margaret says “Can you trade your apartment for this ambience.”

She opens a coffee flask, pours it into two cups, sprinkles black pepper and shakes it as she is used to. She picks up one cup and offers it to Bimal. Bimal takes the cup and starts sipping

it while he is also packing his scattered things. Margaret is enjoying the coffee and puts the tape in the tape recorder again. Seeing this Bimal reacts and says "Enough Maggi, no more show."

Margaret says

"I am just making a copy of this tape. You keep the original and I will keep the copied one."

She makes the second part of half heart on this tape cover and turns on the dubbing mode so that the second copy is ready. Margaret picks up the cassette cases in her hand and joins them. The drawing of two incomplete hearts combines to form a symbol of a complete heart. Bimal starts rolling his eyes on seeing this. Rolling his eyes he says,

"Some people don't grow in their entire life." Margaret says.

"They don't know the signs of love." Bimal gets serious and says, "Maggie, I think we should go a little slow, don't you think?" Margaret says,

"Oops, I pressed the wrong button. I don't want to erase my memories, I mean our composition."

Bimal asks,

"How long does it take to copy?"

Margaret looks into Bimal's eyes and says, "

"Enough time so that we can do a couple of kisses and cuddles."

Before Bimal can realize, Margaret gives him a passionate lip kiss, locking her lips completely. Bimal somewhat accepts

this, his eyes looking around to see if anyone is staring at them. Margaret gets totally excited and cuddles Bimal.

Bimal resists slightly but Margaret takes one of his hands and puts it on her chest so that he can feel it. Bimal struggles to remove his hand.

Margaret takes his other hand and puts it inside her skirt below her belly button. Bimal has to struggle here too to remove his hand. In the process he loses his balance and falls on the grass and rolls. Margaret now comes on top of him. She playfully giggles and quickly puts her hand inside his pants. Bimal struggles to defend himself from this act. He does not understand anything and slaps her. This was unexpected for Margaret. She gets shocked and the pain and humiliation is clearly visible on her face. Seeing this, Bimal says,

“I am sorry Maggie, I just want our love to remain safe until you complete your graduation. You know there are rumors about us in the campus. It will be easy for them to say that you took all your grades by making me sleep on your bed... and then... this research is my life. I cannot destroy my dream. Love is sacred, divine, I don’t want to insult it.”

Young Margaret reacts to this and says,

“We just kissed, nothing else... hey, don’t make it a dirty thing.” Young Bimal says.

“I am sorry Maggie, I don’t know about others, but I respect commitment. If we fall prey to our weakness, we can never understand true and unique love.”

Young Margaret says.

“You are very proud, this is the problem. You know how many men stand in line in the lab to see my cleavage.”

Young Bimal says seriously.

“These people don't want to see anything else. If that is the case, they are insulting you.”

Young Margaret doesn't like this. She says in a sarcastic tone.

“Right now I am feeling very respected. Because you are rejecting me.”

She gets up and starts to leave. She moves very fast towards the car parking where her car is parked. Bimal also stands up after collecting his things and looks around. His eyes fall on the tape recorder whose copy is almost ready. He picks it up and puts it in his bag. He walks ahead and looks around for Margaret but she or her car is nowhere to be seen. Just then the sound of a car honk comes from the lawn. Margaret's car has been hit by another car. Bimal's hands become numb. The sarod falls down from his hands. He tries to get it back up but one of the strings breaks as the sarod gets stuck in a bush. He leaves the sarod and stuff on the ground and runs towards Maggie, he is deeply worried.

Chapter 40

Bimal enters Margaret's apartment bedroom slowly and finds her fast asleep. Her right arm and leg are bandaged. He checks by placing his hand on her forehead. He goes to the corner of the room and sits down slowly. His eyes are on Margaret.

In the morning, when he opens his eyes, he sees Margaret helplessly staring at him. He gets up and helps her go to the bathroom. He takes her from the bathroom to the bed and makes her lie down and straightens the bedsheet. After a while, he brings soup and bread and feeds her. A cartoon show is playing on TV. Both of them laugh at each other's antics. The silence between them is broken. Bimal helps Margaret change her clothes and gives her a sponge bath.

Bimal is sleeping on the floor near Margaret's bed at night. He keeps looking up to see if Margaret is fast asleep or not. He sits near the bed and starts typing something on a traditional typewriter.

A week has passed. Margaret insists Bimal to take her out to the lawn. Both of them come to the lawn. Margaret is trying to walk on her own. She has put her arms around Bimal's waist. Bimal is also holding her waist. While walking together, Bimal tells some light jokes to Margaret, in response to which Margaret

laughs. After walking a little further, she feels tired. Bimal takes her back to the bedroom and puts her on the bed.

Margaret is awake with her head on his chest. Bimal is reading a medical textbook to her. After some time, he sees that she has fallen asleep in his lap. Bimal adjusts her hair while looking at her face.

Chapter 41

A month has passed. At night Bimal is lying on the bed with Margaret. She is now slowly becoming healthy and normal. Both are looking at the ceiling of the room. Suddenly breaking the silence Margaret asks

“What is your definition of marriage?” Bimal replies with a question.

“Why are you asking all this now?”

She says “Because I feel like I am married.” “What do you mean?”

Bimal asks. Margaret says

“I feel like we both are married.”

Bimal gets lost in deep thought. Margaret continues speaking.

“I don't know how you feel but in the last one month you have done everything for me that a husband does for his wife. Don't you agree?”

Bimal says.

“I have never thought like this?” Margaret says

“I knew you will say this. You are just sticking to a patient out of pity.” Bimal says,

“No, no, that is not what I meant. Marriage means a bond, a lifelong commitment. That is why there are so many rituals related to marriage in different cultures.”

Margaret says.

“Listen, I am saying that you need a covenant. I want to spend the rest of my life with you, I want to live and die with you. This is my heart saying, maybe something like a wedding ring or a wedding thread of your culture is not authentic and you also need witnesses. If I am right, then I swear.”

Margaret goes and opens the window and looking towards the sky shouts, “I, Margaret Strauss, say with all my senses and heart that I marry Mr. Bimal Mukherjee and you all are my witnesses.”

Bimal does not like this. He quickly pulls the blinds of the window and tells Margaret.

“Shut up Maggie, don't act childish.”

She looks straight into Bimal's eyes and says.

“I have made a commitment, I promise that I will accept you as my husband for life and nothing else. Good night my new husband.”

She goes and lies down on the bed.

Bimal is completely confused. He goes to the window, opens the blinds and looks outside at the sky for a while. He turns back to the bed, looks at Margaret's innocent face and then at the sky. After standing like this for a while, he moves towards

the bed without closing the window blinds. Margaret sleeping on the bed looks very cute to him. He spreads a sheet on the floor near the bed, covers himself with a blanket and closes his eyes and goes to sleep.

Late at 3:00 am, Bimal who is in deep sleep suddenly feels some weight on his chest. When he opens his eyes, he sees that Margaret is clinging to his chest like a child. He looks at her face lovingly and kisses her cheek. In response to the kiss, Margaret slides over his chest without opening her eyes and makes her position. Both slowly get into the process of love making and both merge into each other with body, mind and soul.

At four in the morning, both are lying naked on the floor and looking at the stars outside the window. Margaret says, "My mother is worried about me. She wants to meet me. I will have to go for a day. I will come on Friday my lovely husband. Love you."

Bimal is silent. Margaret is looking at him to see if he will say something but Bimal gives a blank look. Margaret is not able to guess anything. She also looks skeptically at his blank eyes.

Chapter 42

When Bimal reaches college, he sees posters everywhere on which it is written that “Mentors should stop sexual affairs with interns”. Bimal is crossing the lawn with measured steps. A group of boys are gossiping among themselves and start booing Bimal as soon as they see him.

The discussion of Bimal and Margaret's relationship was not hidden from anyone. A committee of Professors is questioning him in the office room. Bimal is speaking in his defense, "We both are good friends, I admit, our relationship is more than good friends, but we both never want to exploit each other and do not want to cross the line."

Dr. Henderson shows him some photographs and says, "You mean to say that this picture is fake, false."

When Bimal looks at the photo, he finds that the photos are from the interim time he spent with Margaret in Griffith Park. He goes silent. Dr. Henderson continues his talk and looking at Bimal says, “We want you to resign from the leadership of the Research Fellow team and your grant application will be held with you. What do you have to say about this?”

Bimal says,

“I can do anything to save my research. You people don't know how much my research means to me.”

Dr. Henderson says.

“Ok, the committee will reconvene after two weeks. It will be 20th September. Meanwhile you handover all your responsibilities to your colleague Dr. Jack Forman.”

Young Bimal comes out of the room broken at every level. Anyone can easily read the lines of depression and worry on his face.

Chapter 43

Kolkata

It is late night. Bimal is observing the airplane flying near the window. Bimal has come out of his memories of his stay in America and he slowly turns his wheel chair towards the bedroom. His face and expressions are telling that he is in some thought.

Chapter 44

Raja is walking on the road in a completely shocked state. He is thinking about his father and Margaret's relationship. He remembers his father's words when he said about the sarod that I have seen a roll of string lying in the puja room. I will bring it and replace it. Bimal replied, but this is not that string, you don't know, it cannot give the same feel. Raja is not in his senses, he does not care about the heat, he seems as if he will cover all the streets of Los Angeles by walking. A car escapes from hitting Raja on the street of downtown Los Angeles. Raja does not pay much attention and keeps moving in his own tune, the car is constantly chasing him and honking continuously. Raja gets irritated and stops walking in anger. He turns back. As soon as he sees the car, he recognizes that it is Lisa's. Raja does not react when he sees her in the driving seat. Turning around, he starts walking fast on the road. The cars are following him like a shadow. Lisa's car is moving slowly. There is a line of other cars behind it. It is constantly honking. Chaotic atmosphere is created. Raja is walking like a madman on the curb. Lisa's car is also following him. Suddenly Raja starts running. Lisa follows him by increasing the speed a little. Raja turns into a dead-end lane. It seems difficult for the car to enter the lane. Raja is running into a shady dead-end lane. Lisa stops her car outside the lane and quickly gets out. She runs behind Raja while going

away. Raja is still running with fast steps. Anyone can guess by looking at him that a weak drunkard is walking. Lisa runs fast and catches his hand and pulls him towards herself. Raja says as soon as he sees her. "You are a heartless devil, you defamed goddess like Professor Strauss, how can you do this?"

Lisa says

"Raja please give me a chance to speak for a minute, I will explain everything to you."

Raja becomes silent for some time but he is not looking at Lisa, he keeps his attention on some children playing in front. Lisa continues her talk.

"I made a big mistake, I know she is a great woman but I felt that Professor Strauss is exploiting you."

Raja says.

"It is so. I felt that your father is exploiting me. Lisa says.

"No, he did not know anything about us then. When he came to know that we are friends, he dropped the case.

Raja says

"And what about you.?" Lisa says

"Forgive me for whatever happened. I did not want Doctor Strauss to take you away from me. I did not want to lose you. I love you from the bottom of my heart."

Raja says,

"Okay, then you will have to make ...believe me. Come on, tell me what is the proof of this? Give me some proof that you care for me or love me, whatever it is."

Just then, a voice calls Raja from behind. Raja turns around and is surprised to see that his mother Vijaya had called him. She has just come out of Lisa's car. The fatigue of the long-distance flight is visible on her face. She slowly moves towards Raja. Raja jumps with joy on seeing his mother in front of him. He also goes forward and hugs her. Vijaya tells him, "I will tell you what is the proof of her love. Ever since your accident,

Lisa has been talking to us every day. She arranged for my visa and forcibly called me here so that I can see my son. She has just picked me up from the airport."

Hearing this Raja's anger vanishes. He looks at Lisa with gratitude. He touches Lisa's shoulder like a friend. It seems that all his prejudice towards Lisa has ended.

Chapter 45

Lisa's car is moving on the road. Raja is sitting in the backseat with his head on his mother's shoulder. Lisa is filled with an indescribable joy seeing this. Vijaya says.

"We have to go to Maggie's house first." Raja asks.

"Who?" Vijaya says.

"Maggie...means...Margaret."

Raja asks in surprise "Mother...how do you know her?"

Vijaya says

"She doesn't know me but I know everything about her."

Raja is surprised to hear this. Lisa says while driving "Thanks to your mother Raja, who opened my eyes too. I can't believe I used to think all sorts of nonsense about Dr. Strauss but now I know that she is a noble person."

Raja says.

"I don't know if I will be able to face her...I mean show her my face." Vijaya says,

"I want to see her. If I return without meeting her, my trip will be in vain. I can do this much for Bimal."

Raja gives a confused look to his mother.

Chapter 46

It is almost evening. Lisa's car stops outside Professor Margaret's house. Raja, Vijaya and Lisa get down and head towards the house. Raja is still in a state of confusion. Reaching the door, he rings the doorbell. The maid opens the door and asks all three to come inside. Raja enters first, followed by Vijaya. Lisa hesitates to enter but follows Vijaya. All three are looking at each other and listening to the sweet tune of Sitar which is echoing in the house. The maid asks them to come upstairs. All three start climbing the stairs. The tune playing on the sitar is the same tune that Bimal always played. The jugalbandi part of sarod is Indian music fusion. Raja and Vijaya find it very intimate. They reach the door of Margaret's room and stop and look. Margaret is sitting, her back is visible. Raja is standing at the door in confusion. Margaret slowly turns off her music. Without turning around, she asks Raja a question "How did your statement go?"

Raja says

"It was good, they freed me."

Margaret says

"You missed the award function. I don't know where you were roaming for so long. You left without having breakfast. You didn't even have a

car, do you even know how big a heat summer is. How will you know me or understand why I care for you so much?"

Raja is silent but Vijaya replies. "I know Maggie."

Margaret is stunned to hear a female voice. She slowly turns to see the woman with the voice. She looks at Vijaya and many questions arise on her face. Then she guesses something when she sees Raja and Vijaya together. Then Vijaya says

"After all, you are his mother."

Margaret gets up and stares at Vijaya in wonder. Now she understands completely who this woman is but she has no words to express her surprise.

Vijaya says

"I am Vijaya, Raja's mother."

Margaret feels confused and touched at the same time. Vijaya walks into the room and sits near the sitar and strokes it as if it were a living person. She touches a string. A sweet sound emanates. Raja and Lisa also enter the room. Vijaya says

"Bimal stopped playing the sarod years ago. One string of the sarod was broken. Jugalbandi (fusion of two instruments) cannot be done with a single instrument. I am only his wife but could not become his soul."

Margaret is listening to Vijaya very attentively. She comes forward and comes near Vijaya and taking her hand in hers, looks at her face and says.

"You look perfect, pure and sacred."

Raja says

“Dad never told us that he had an affair. He was never in favour of me coming to the US. Why? I understand now.”

Vijaya says.

“Raja stop talking nonsense. Don't insult your father. Margaret is like your mother. The cheap relationship you are talking about is not like that.”

Raja after listening to his mother asks Margaret,

"Professor, how did you do this to me? Why didn't you tell me anything?"

Margaret says

“I wanted to tell you Raja. That very day when you introduced yourself to the class for the first time, but when I thought about it, I felt that it would not be right. I did not want to tarnish the respect you have for your father. I don't even have the right to do that. I cannot even think anything bad about my dear Bimal. I was responsible for all the mistakes or series of errors... I pushed him away from life. I played a useless game of marriage...I had behaved childishly...when I returned the next day after visiting my mother's house, my Bimal had gone so far that my ruthless hands could not catch him. No information, letter, message. He left his life's mission aside and I got only loneliness.”

Saying this, Margaret moves towards the vanity kept nearby. Raja, Vijaya and Lisa are spellbound after listening to her autobiography. Margaret picks up a photo from the few photos kept in the vanity and comes to the three. She gives the photo to Vijaya. Vijaya sees that it is a photo of a young girl. Raja and Lisa

standing nearby also see the photo. Margaret says after looking at their photo.

“This is the symbol of my love, the symbol of my selfishness.... This is my... Bimal’s daughter, in whose opinion I am a fool. On her every birthday, when I ask her what do you want as a gift? Jewellery or toy? She has only one answer, I want my father as a gift, I want only my father from you, nothing else. I used to give every possible answer to her questions but I was helpless. At one point she did not have even an iota of faith in me and left me completely. She ran away from me like Bimal, no conversation, no phone call, sometimes I forced her to talk to me. I have hurt her heart.”

Margaret sadly puts both her hands on her head. Vijaya goes to her and consoles her and says, “You did nothing wrong Maggie. Bimal also loved you as much as you do... I am just his wife but you are still his soul, a part of his soul. He did not run away from you, he was running away from himself. That dark night wreaked even more havoc in his life, of which I am a witness.” Raja, Lisa and Margaret all three look at Vijaya. Everyone is curious to know what happened to Bimal. Vijay says “That night when he returned home and checked the mail box, he heard Professor Henderson's voice.

“A telegram has come for you from Kolkata on which it is written that come immediately, parents are in trouble.

Bimal did not have time to inform anyone. When Bimal reached Kolkata, he was happy to see his father Harishankar and his mother healthy. My widowed mother and I were also sitting there. He asks his parents with relief.

"Why did you send such a telegram? I was worried that something might have happened to either of you."

Harishankar tells Bimal

"Don't say this again, it was a very serious matter and that's why I called you. Perhaps you will not see the seriousness of it because your father is not lying on his death bed. Look at Vijaya sitting in front of you, look into the eyes of this poor girl and answer whether this is not such a serious matter that I can call you here overnight.

Bimal says in a low voice in protest,

"But father, what will happen to my research and studies? How can I do this?"

Harishankar says,

"In our times, we were married off in childhood, but we still completed our studies well."

Bimal said.

I respect Nihar uncle (Vijaya's father) and the family. I also remember very well that these people supported us a lot in our bad times. I am ready to do anything to express my gratitude."

Harishankar says,

"I have taken a decision for you. You will marry her only."
Bimal was helpless and could only say.

"Baba, you cannot do this to me." Harishankar says,

"At the time of death, I had promised my friend Nihar. He had handed over the responsibility of his poor daughter to me."

Bimal was listening to his father calmly. He was saying, "

I am a man who keeps his word. I would prefer to die rather than losing my reputation. Everybody listen to me carefully. I will not touch food until Bimal regains consciousness and agrees to what I say."

And saying this, he went out of there. Bimal's mother took me along with her to the room. Bimal was standing there alone, caught in a dilemma.

Vijaya remains silent for a while. She looks at Raja, Margaret and Lisa. The eagerness to tell the rest of the story is clearly visible on the faces of all three. She speaks further:

"Bimal's father followed Mahatma Gandhi. Bimal knew very well that what his father said was not a joke. I decided to talk to Bimal that night. I remember every detail of that night 25 years ago. When I slowly opened the door of Bimal's room, I heard some sound from the window. The room was dark. As soon as I stepped forward, I collided with his suitcase. The suitcase fell on the floor and all his stuff got scattered on the ground. I quickly hid myself behind the door. Bimal comes into the room and lights the night lamp and looks around but is unable to see me because of the cover of the door. He goes out of the room. When I look at the papers scattered on the floor, I see some photographs in which Margaret and Bimal are together. I go and pick up one of those photographs and hide behind the door again. Bimal cautiously comes inside and repacks the suitcase. He picks up the suitcase and jumps out of the back window of the house and disappears in the dark road. I stood in the dark and started crying. I still had that photograph in my hand. I immediately went to the back of the house and started looking for Bimal. After chasing him for some distance, I could not see him anywhere. I sat there on the grass and started

crying. Just then my mother put her hand on my shoulder. I got up and hugged my mother and started crying even more. Bimal was running to reach his love for you, but while running on the dark road, a truck ran over him. Poison spread in both his legs. The doctor amputated both his legs. Bimal became wheelchair bound. He spent most of his time sitting near the window, watching the planes fly by. Bimal's father could not bear the grief of his only son dying in his youth and passed away. Bimal was also not optimistic about life, he had become suicidal. One night when I suddenly went to his room, I saw that in one hand he had put a lot of pills in a bottle of sleeping pills in the other hand. He was about to take it when I shook his hand and all the pills fell on the floor. He started crying bitterly and while crying he said to me, "

Let me die, I do not want to live."

One day I told him why he is not returning to America and live with Maggie, I offered him that I will accompany him in the journey. He replied that he doesn't want to face Maggie as a crippled man and ruin her life.

Seeing his sorrow, I told him that if he stays here then he would have to marry me. I said this because I thought that with this excuse I would be able to take care of him. Bimal also agreed. We got married in a very simple manner in the presence of some friends and relatives. He was ashamed of himself that he did not keep his promise to you and at the same time his research also remained incomplete. He was always afraid of how he would face you. He thought that he had let you down."

Hearing this, Margaret's eyes well up with tears. The emotional impact of the story told by Vijaya is clearly visible on her. She seems weak.

There is immense peace in the room. Raja and Lisa become aware of a new dimension. Which the innocent looking Indian woman Vijaya made them face. They suddenly felt as if a goddess had incarnated who wants to do good to everyone and can take anyone out of sin and sorrow. Raja feels guilty because he doubted his father. Lisa puts her hand on his shoulder and consoles him.

Chapter 47

Margaret dials a number alone at night. A young girl answers. "Sorry mom, I am busy right now. I will call you later." Margaret says,

"No, if you waste this time, you will regret it for the rest of your life." The girl says after a long pause,

"Stop sending emotional blackmail mom, it's been enough, not anymore. Our midterms are going on here."

Margaret says,

"You are going to get the biggest gift of your life." Suddenly the girl says in a rude tone,

"Are you going to get a golden Mickey Mouse or a toy stethoscope?" I have everything mom,

Margaret says "Your dad."

The girl starts choking, she doesn't say anything, she is quiet, breathing fast

Margaret says

"Ana, are you okay."

Margaret hears Ana's sobs. Ana's voice comes "Please stop kidding with my life mom."

Margaret says “Why would I do this with my life.”

A long silence prevails on both sides. A stream of tears shines on Margaret's cheeks.

Chapter 48

There is a long queue of patients in the back courtyard of Mukherjee House. Bimal is grinding some special herbs in a mortar. After grinding, he makes a paste of it and carefully applies it on the forehead of a 90- year-old woman. The old woman says, "What do I need this now, Baba? Why are you trying to infuse life into old wooden bundles like us? I am not going to get any good news from my life now. I have reached a dead end."

Bimal puts one hand on the old woman's mouth. The crowd gathered there laughs. Raja arrives from the back courtyard at this time and sees the patients laughing merrily. Raja waits for his father to complete his work with the patient. Bimal tells the patients present there,

"You know one thing, don't try to become God. You can get your life back. Even if you are on death row, always keep your eyes open. Your eyes will well up with tears of joy for the magic show of life, any moment."

Then Raja calls his father from behind "Baba..."

Bimal turns and smiles at Raja. Raja moves forward and touches his father's feet. Bimal gives him a warm hug and looks at the crowd and says, "The junior doctor has arrived. Now he will give you medicines for the next two weeks."

The crowd bows to Raja. Bimal writes some notes on his small medicine handbook and asks Raja "So, was your journey good? Where is your mother? Raja hears this and turns Bimal's wheelchair towards the back door

"Here she is..."

Bimal becomes restless with this sudden move. The line of confidence on Bimal's face intensifies when he finds Margaret standing at the door.

Raja says lovingly "Here is my mother."

Margaret is wearing a traditional Indian sari and has made a long braid. She looks all decked up in jewellery like an Indian bride. Seeing her,

Bimal is transported to a dream world which cannot be explained. Time has stopped. This was an unexpected event in Bimal's life which he could not even imagine. Margaret is so emotional that she has to lean on the door to stand for support. She is afraid that she might fall. Tears shine in her blue eyes as she gazes at Bimal. She slowly moves towards

Bimal, controlling herself and on reaching him, she kneels down. Bimal also gazes at her from the front and in his choked voice says in a long drawl,

"Ma...M...a...g...g...i...e."

Margaret also calls him "Bimal."

Raja signals the crowd of patients to move away from there. They slowly start to move out but cannot stop looking at the doctor and the American woman again and again. Margaret goes close to Bimal sitting on a wheelchair and bends down and puts her head in his lap. Tears are flowing from both their eyes

and they are not stopping. Bimal closes his eyes and strokes Margaret's golden hair with his hands. Through the window, the sarod and sitar hanging on the wall are visible together. The golden light of the setting sun is creating a glow on them. Vijaya comes and stands at a distance. Raja and Vijaya look at each other. They witness this moment which both of them have contributed to creating.

Their souls are satisfied by seeing this scene. Bimal's eyes are closed and he is holding Margaret close to his chest. After a few minutes, when Bimal opens his eyes, his sight falls on Vijaya standing far away at the door. He is overwhelmed and opens his mouth to say "Thank you."

to Vijaya. Tears come to Vijaya's eyes but she responds to Bimal's thank you with a smile. Vijaya holds the 24-year-old girl's arm in her hand and brings her out from behind the door. Bimal wipes his tears and starts staring at the girl curiously. Vijaya takes the girl towards Bimal. The girl looks half Indian and half Caucasian. Her eyes are beautiful and blue.

Bimal's fatherly instinct awakens. He holds the girl in his hands and asks "What is your name?"

The girl says "Ana."

Vijaya standing nearby says

"Anamika...Anamika is her full name."

Bimal embraces Anamika. Anamika starts crying like a child. After a few moments she sits on her knees near Bimal and looking at him says

"Dad."

Bimal feels happy hearing this.

Chapter 49

Today, the atmosphere in Mukherjee House is like a domestic celebration. Everyone is happy. Raja's friends Rajat, Sumit, all have arrived. Bimal and Margaret are sitting in the hall opposite each other and playing Indian music on Sitar and Sarod. There is a very nice musical atmosphere. Raja is sitting in a corner of the room and sketching the scene with pencil sketches. Sumit is making a Videotape of the event. Vijaya has a lot of Indian dishes in her hands. Rajat and a servant set everything on the table. Vijaya also stands at a distance and watches Margaret and Bimal playing Jugalbadi on sarod and sitar. The music stops at a crescendo. Everyone claps. It is dinner time and everyone has gone to the terrace to have dinner.

Bimal, Margaret, Vijaya and Anamika are having dinner in the hall below. Vijaya and Margaret are talking to each other. Bimal looks at Margaret and asks her through gestures what they are talking about. Vijaya says to Margaret,

"This is the time, tell him what you want." Margaret says,

"Please you tell him."

Bimal's attention is focused on both of them. Vijaya says, "The thing is that Maggie wants Raja to go back to the US and complete his studies."

Bimal says,

"I think he should not go back. Everyone lives together here." Margaret says,

"Wait... I know... now this research is not my mission alone. It is our and Raja's mission and we will get a grant as well. They have funded us with five million dollars and it is extendable as well."

Bimal says,

"I cannot stay away from my son. Please Maggie, enough is enough."

Just then Raja enters the hall and says

"Please Baba I want to complete my studies and along with that... Raja hesitates to say the full thing.

Bimal asks.

"And what do you mean by along with that?" Raja lowers his eyes and says.

"I am in love with a girl named Lisa. Do you want her to marry another..."

Bimal interrupts Raja

I don't know what to say but I made a mistake son. I don't want you to repeat the same that happened but the thing is that I can't live without you for a long time."

Margaret says.

"That's good. How about I make a deal with you."

Bimal

“Hey Maggie you haven't changed at all, the same old Maggie.”

Saying this he smiles

“Okay tell me what's the deal.”

Margaret says

“How about I take one child with me and you can keep the other one with you.”

Anamika says

“I am not a child.” Everyone laughs.

Bimal hugs Anamika sitting nearby. Everyone gathers in the room. Rajat arranges the Mukherjee family together and takes out photos.

Chapter 50

Sunlight is shining in the sky and a plane is seen going towards the west. Bimal, who used to sit sadly and watch this scene alone for years, is happy today and Anamika is also watching this scene with him. When the plane goes out of their sight, both of them look at each other and smile. Anamika goes from behind the wheelchair and hugs her dad and kisses him on the cheek.

The End