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An Evening

Chitrlekha Borah

Aparajeeta wiped her eyes with a tissue paper. Her eyes were burning for looking at the monitor for a long time. Since Brijesh's promotion her workload increased. She was handling the front desk alone. But she had not complained to anyone. But for herself, she was in the same post for last five years. Her batch mates were already in the managerial post. Last year, when promotion notification was released, she informed it to Akhil. But he said nothing to her.

She had planned to leave early in the evening. She had something special in her mind. On this very day, five years back, they had tied the knot of uniting forever under the blessings of parents. But, she did not remember nor wish Akhil of their anniversary in the morning

.They had not dine together since a long time due to their hectic work life. Aparajeeta looked through the half open glass window over the streets. Rain had not stopped till now. The sudden rain had filled the roads of Kolkata by water. Some droplets of rain touched her face, but she did not bother to close the window sheet. She touched the cool rain droplet by her finger for a moment and then concentrated on the monitor once again.

She had sent the last left batch .Already, it was six forty five .She heard the giggles coming out of manager's cabin .She felt that some politics was going against her in the branch .She overheard, Mukesh commenting over her in Manager's cabin .She dragged out her leather bag from the cabinet after completing eod process. She had waited a long time for bus .She understood from people's talking; the city buses were blocked somewhere in town. Those came were already overcrowded.

Mohan was crying hard. She heard from the staircase of their Mandakini apartment .Champa, the maid, opened the door for her.

Madam..you are again late. I've to go home.

Sorry..Champa.You go, Chmpa.

She took Mohan from Champa's hand.

Akhil did not arrive.

No m'dm.

Mohan was still crying. She cuddled him .He might be hungry .She went to the kitchen. She opened the door of the cupboard. Brought the Nestle's Nan closer. She opened it hastily .Almost finished. She boiled the water fast .Quickly, she made a full bottle of milk, and through the empty packet to the dustbin. She ran to the bedroom shaking the bottle fast so that no lump remained inside. She brought him to her lap, and started to feed him. The time passed very fast since Mohan's birth .The cramp before Mohan's delivery was still vivid in her mind .His Nana and Aaita came from Guwahati to see their grandchild. Mohan's Dadi was very happy. She put many

dhagas around Mohan's ankle. She did not listen anyone. But, at some point, she felt, her life had stand still somewhere between Mohan and Akhil, between home and office. She could not move freely.

Mohan slept fast in her lap .After crying for a long time, he might be tired. She lied him on the soft mattress, over a pillow of mustard seeds. Akhil's mother reminded her to use this mustard seed pillow. She had not taken a shower after entering home. She was in the same dress for the whole day. The morning smell of deor was not in her cloths. Instead, some smell of sweat was coming. She waited for this shower eagerly. It made her fresh again. Since Mohan was asleep, she could take a shower .She snatched the towel from the hanger, and went to the bathroom.

Akhil had not arrived till now .It was almost ten o' clock. She took the photograph of both from the table .When was it clicked! Oh...yes after their marriage; they went to Shimla for honeymoon .It was clicked by some tourist. Her mother in law, Akhil's mother did not like her much from the beginning. They did a love marriage. Akhil's mother often blamed her for stealing her son form her. She never let any chance to criticize her. Again this job of her. But she never left the job .

Aparajeeta went to the kitchen. She opened the lid of a pan. What Champa had cooked? The paneer masala. She had instructed Champa to cook this dish for dinner.It was Akhil's favourite .Some chutney and mixed vegetables. Champa 's hand had some taste. Usually, she cooked for the dinner before leaving. She had noticed since many days that Akhil turned around very late .He often blamed the pressure in office. Champa's life was also pathetic. Her husband was a drunkard .Whatever she earned, he snatched it from her. Aparajeeta had suggested to leave him. But she rejected it. To her this sindoor had saved her from the lingering views of males.

She put the bedroom light off and she came to the dining room. It was already eleven .After Mohan's birth everything changed. She gained some weight. She passed her whole maternity leave caring

Mohan. It passed like a week .She went to Rajgarh with Akhils's parents .Akhil was here. She followed a routine from cleaning dirty clothes to washing dishes. Sometimes she envied Madhu, her sister in law, Akhil's brother's wife. Her scholarly past hampered her in becoming a perfect bahu. She did not like to take the permission before doing a little change. It may be from somewhere in those fighting, the love become dull. Every discussion with Akhil suddenly took the form of arguments. Long arguments or counter-arguments that stayed for months.

Akhil and Aparajeeta did MBA from the prestigious college in Ahmedabad .She did not want to marry soon .She had seen painful endings of love marriages .She delayed their marriage for almost two years. On the other hand, Akhil was confident that he would never let their marriage to break apart .The late comings of Akhil had deepened her fear. She had not the courage to question of his late arrival .She feared of encountering another argument ending in nothing.

Akhil was a loving person. No one can deny it. Something might have happened, which caused his indifference. Sometimes, she suspected Akhil of having some affair .The doubt began after Mohan's birth .She could not give time to her husband .Mohan needed her a lot .It was not easy for being a mother. She had to spend unslept nights. Mohan got jaundice when he was three months old. Mohan needed attention. She needed support. Perhaps from here, Akhil got distraction. Perhaps many months back.

Aparajeeta joined office after a long gape .She could not concentrate on her work for some days. She called Champa again and again. While, she got irritated. She was busy in Mohan's needs . She wanted to finish her work in time. Her Boss, Mr Paul, often kept her busy in the evening. She felt that he did it intentionally. She had heard of his affair with someone here .His wife and children were in Siliguri. They might be unaware of his affairs in each cities. Whether Mohan had some affair like Mr Paul?

Tong tong tong..it was eleven. Akhil had not come till this hour. Suddenly, the phone rang. She picked up the phone.

Hello

Hello.. I am calling from GNRC hospital.

Yes (Her heart beats increased)

A person is admitted in our hospital. His condition is very critical. In his purse, we found this telephone number.

She gave a purse to Mohan in one of his birthdays .Did Akhil still carried the same purse ?Akhil put a passport size photograph of her in his purse .He wrote his full address in the back of that photo in a very neat handwriting . Did she misunderstand Akhil for a long time? She doubted whether Akhil had never been disinterested? Did she misunderstand his late arrival? Was she so much engrossed in herself that she had not noticed Akhil's presence? Otherwise, why was he carrying her gifted purse?

Hello

Hello

The phone cut.

She must hurry .She brought her phone .what she would do? Mohan was deep sleeping .A buzzing from his nose she could hear. She dialed Champa's number.

Phone ringing...continuously....

Hello, what happened Madamji. You are calling at this time.

Listen Champa Akhil had an accident. He is in Gnrc .Can you come here right now. Aparajeeta felt lonely. In this crowded city, she was lonely. Her life was a vicious circle which included Mohan, Akhil and Champa.

Madam

Madam

But how will you go to the hospital? I will sent Rama. He has a taxi. He can take you up to GNRC.

She went to bedroom, took her hand bag. Enquired for money. It was there. She again came to the living room. She waited in the sofa for half an hour. She heard the crack sound of the gate of their apartment .Rama might have arrived .She peeped through the window curtain. She did not have a clear vision of the visitor. Someone knocked their main door. She hurriedly came to the living room. A blue checked shirt in the upper body and a pair of black jeans in the bottom. She snatched it from the almirah and ironed it in the morning. The visitor was Akhil. Then who pranked it. Was she dreaming in the sofa?

What happened to your purse?

A very happy marriage anniversary.

Thankyou

I went to the mall to buy some gift for you. Last month, I got the bonus . But my purse was lost. I have not given you anything for a long time .You remember ; once you liked a gold chain with a heart. I wanted to gift this to you .But while coming back ,my purse was lost somewhere .

But why you were late ?

I directly went to the police station to file a complaint .But due to rain all roads were blocked.

Akhil went closer to Aparajeeta, wishing her for the second time. He tied the knot of the chain in her neck which had a locket of heart shape.

Chitrlekha Borah

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