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Just processing the thought that I am really doing this.



## PROLOGUE

“If not for her, I would’ve left you long ago.”

Earthquakes. Nightmares. Or just a barren land instead of a home.

She couldn’t decide if she has suddenly grown up or this is the moment where world has become silently numb to welcome her in this life. Her steps staggered on the other side of the closed door. Tucking the kitty bracelet under the sleeve of the long shrug, the shivering fingers got hold of the rigid handle.

Her feet were stuck on the edge of the door, not running in the arms of her parents.

"Stop making a scene here, Dhara-." The voice cracked and hissed outside the washroom door.

"Let her come and see what we truly are."

"She is a kid Abhi."

"Abhimanyu." Stillness settled in the chattering crowd. “And it will be painful, but at least she will be aware of the world she lives in, where everything breaks, including us." He whispers at the end like every word was breaking him apart.

The cascading tears didn't drenched the red shining sandals as the six-year-old girl was rubbing them with not-so-great ease.

Dhara was shaking badly under the hand dryer, small space choking her in the oblivion and she just wanted to... hold the little finger of her father, lock her mother in her tiny yet strong arms and go home.

This is her home.

*Was.*

Blinking back the new forming tears, she promptly opened the door where her destiny awaits.

His resigned head saw the upcoming scared but jiffy steps, coming behind his wife.

The bag from his shoulder slipped on the floor and Shreya hunched down with him in sync, his hand brushed the end of her stole while getting the hold of the strap.

Shreya looked at Abhimanyu, his gaze already on her, pursuing a hidden battle of his emotions, the helplessness condemned to hurting each other and a silent agreement, this remains between them.

"Aru, you must be tired." He got up when Dhara reached near his legs. "But the excitement and touchup of your mother will never be. Everything must define her when we meet Nanu."

The curtain of hair concealed the emerging tears, barely knowing darkness casted her little family along with it.

Larger than life blinking eyes saw the exhausted form of her heart and could only utter..."What happened Mumma?"

The shield of her eyes tightened by worry in the voice, quickly dropping and picking up the phone, she muttered, "Baby, my phone is not sticking at one place". Handling the device to her daughter, the hold of cold hands came in contact. "I'll come after fixing some...things." She rushed away to the door, which automatically got closed after her entrance.

Both father and daughter watched in silence, their life somehow not making sense anymore.

Sense to feel warmth where a wandering traveler beside the baggage claim area, scrolling at midnight in search of open restaurants serving *dahi parantha*. Sense to feel routine where the consistency of a ground staff worker has the pulse to arrange a dozen of trolleys in the background of departing flights. Sense to feel certain about the decisions that will probably reach where it's meant to be.

Sense to feel relief in the plunge of thunderstorms *galloping towards the shaded castles*.

THANKYOU FOR READING.

