

Professor's Cousin

POST-MERGER OF TIMELINES

A FUTURISTIC LOVE STORY

Anne Reporter

Story Idea & Editing

by Ravi Kumar

Foreword

The theme for this story was in my mind for some time. As we have three more books to complete before taking up the sequel for our books, I decided to ask Anne if she would like to take this idea after she completed the first book, 'My love is a mirage'. She agreed and I gave her the synopsis of the idea. There is a professor, and he got a cousin, who stays with him and he invites another professor to his house to live with them and she would come closer to the cousin. I wanted her to develop the story based on this and she agreed to write on this theme of lesbians.

Ravi Kumar

Dt: 8th March 2023

PART 1

Introduction

Chapter 1

“Hello Professor Sir”, Michael heard a lady’s voice and lifted his head from the book he is reading, and seeing Professor Stephany, he said, “hello madam.”

Stephany said, “you don’t need to call me madam, you can call me Stephany.”

He said, “then you don’t need to call me professor or sir, you can call me Mike short for Michael.”

Stephany asked, “ok Mike, what are you reading? Don’t you have class now?”

Mike said, “no, I have a free class now, and I am reading the book My Love is a Mirage by Anne Reporter.”

Stephany asked, “who is she?”

Mike said, “she was my cousin’s student. My cousin Nancy came from Noida, where her former student presented her with this book for her farewell.”

Stephany asked, “what is it regarding?”

Mike said, “it is something to do with time travelling.”

Stephany said, “Ok, where do you stay?”

Mike said, “I stay at Miyapur, I have a villa there. Where do you stay?”

Stephany said, “I stay at Nagole, it is a little difficult to travel all this way. I have to catch the metro and then had to catch a cab or auto from the metro station. How do you travel?”

Mike said, “I have a car for my transportation.”

Stephany asked, “what about your cousin Nancy, you were telling about?”

Mike said, “she resigned from Noida and came to join us. This book is written by her former student and she wants Nancy to give her opinion of the book.”

Stephany asked, “how are the rents at Miyapur? I want to shift from Nagole, somewhere closer to our ISB.”

Mike said, “if you are interested, you can come and stay with us. Nancy is also staying with me, she will have some female company.”

Stephany asked, “can I come with you to see your house in the evening?”

Mike said, “sure, certainly.”

Stephany said, “then I will meet you in the evening, I have to go to the library for getting some books, see you later”, and went away.

Disturbed from his reading by Stephany, Mike closed the book and set it aside. Until his cousin Nancy came from Noida, he kept girls away from him. He had heartbreak in his college days and since then he had not looked at girls with interest. Now due to his mother’s pressure, he had to give Nancy a room in his house. Nancy is a lecturer here in ISB and she teaches I.T. and he teaches Management. At first, he was not interested in having her in his house. But his mother insisted to keep her in his house as Nancy does not know anyone here in Hyderabad.

One thing he failed to do is to keep the house clean, which she managed after coming to stay with him. Over that she is also a good cook. On their weekly off, he would help her with the cooking. And they would enjoy the home-cooked food. He is slowly getting accustomed to having her company as they would watch tv together

and they both have the same taste in watching movies or other programmes. They would pass comments on what they are watching and have a good laugh. He seemed to be drawn to her, but he kept his feelings to himself as he would remember his previous breakup.

It was just a silly reason that Vicky has broken up with him. He was just half an hour late when she called him to meet her. He remembers her till today, her name is Victoria and everyone calls her Vicky, she was his classmate since his School days. He thought maybe it was for his own good she had broken up with him, then he could concentrate on his studies and could complete his degree. Then did his postgraduation and then Doctorate. If not he would have looked for a job after his degree and would be nobody by now. After his postgraduation, he got this seat luckily to do a doctorate at this institute. Then after his doctorate, he continued to work as a professor here.

His mom Megan would pressurise him whenever he visited his home in Goa to marry or at least look for a girlfriend. He would not listen to her and cut down his visits to Goa. His colleagues would ask him to take them to Goa with him on a tour and he would not listen to them, he knows they would want to go to Goa for drinking purposes only. He is only a light social drinker. After asking him a few times, they stopped asking him and would go there by themselves.

When his mother asked him to make Nancy his roommate, he had reservations about having her in his house. But after watching her behaviour he decided she is not here to be with him for a romantic reason, he started to relax and started to treat her as a friend.

After a few days, he felt she is not into men and he started to flirt with her jokingly. Nancy also would take that jokingly and would pass comments back to him. They would travel from house to institute and back and would spend Saturday and Sunday going out somewhere like a theatre or a movie and some musical recital or something like that. They are practically living like good friends. Sometimes he would remember Vicky and then his interest in Nancy would be doused and he would go back to his shell. Nancy does not seem to notice his actions or does not care enough about him to do something about them.

He looked at his time and it is time for his next class, he picked up his books and walked to his class.

It is 5:30 pm and he is back in the staff room, placed the books on the table, picked a cup of tea from the machine, and sat down on a chair.

After ten minutes Nancy entered the room and saw him reading the book and asked him “how is the book, I have to email her my comments.”

Mike said, “so, so. I have not understood the theme of this book yet.”

Nancy asked, “what have you read up to now?”

Mike said, “this story starts in the 1980s. He does a diploma and starts to work as a typist and he goes to a hotel and starts working in the hotel part-time. Then he is given a slap by a stall owner outside their hotel. He wants to take revenge on the stall owner and befriends his daughter and has an affair. Then another girl comes to him and asks him to save her from her evil stepmother and he takes her and keeps her in a rented room. Now

the first girl comes to him and says she is pregnant and asks him to marry her. Up to this, I have read.”

Nancy asks “so, how is the writing style.” He replies “it seems to be a first-time writer’s writing.”

Nancy said, “she said it is her first book and wanted to know about the style of writing. So, nothing about time travel yet?”

He said, “no, nothing yet.” She says “ok, you can continue.”

Mike said, “I have to tell you something.”

Nancy asked, “what is it?”

He asked, “you know Stephany?”

Nancy said, “yes, the HR professor.”

He said, “yes, she is looking for a residence closer to our institute. I told her if she wants she can come and stay with us.”

Nancy asked, “why did you offer?”

Mike said, “I thought you would have some company.”

Nancy pursed her lips and said, “we two are managing well, I don’t know how it will be with a third person.”

Mike said, “just let her visit our house and see what she feels. She may not like it and would want to look at something else close by.”

Nancy said, “if it is okay with you, it is okay with me. Ultimately it is your house.”

Mike said, “don’t talk like that. Did I make you feel any time that it is not your home too?”

Nancy said, “no.”

Mike said, “so, give her a chance.”

Nancy says “ok, baba, as you wish.”

It is 6 pm and Mike is waiting for Stephany to come, and Nancy asked, “where is your Stephany?”

He asked, “what do you mean by my Stephany, does she belong to me?”

Nancy said, “no, I mean your friend Stephany.”

He said, “she is not my friend, she is just our colleague and I hardly know her. I invited her because she showed interest to live in our area and we have extra rooms at our house.”

Nancy asked, “then why did you not offer anyone a room before?”

Mike said, “because you are staying with me, so I thought of offering her room, otherwise, I would not have thought about it.”

Nancy said, “then ok.”

Seeing Stephany coming over, he got up and introduced each other and put his books in the locker and picked up the book he was reading and started to go to the parking and they followed behind him.

Chapter 2

Nancy was working with Amity University in Noida. She could not adjust to the weather of Noida and decided to shift out of Noida and when she got the offer from ISB she jumped with joy. She completed her semester and at her farewell party, one student Anne came to her and presented her with a book, which she wrote and asked her to give an honest opinion. Nancy took the book and said she would email her about her book. When her mother spoke to Mike's mother about her shifting to Hyderabad, Mike's mother insisted she stays with Mike as he had a house and he works in the same institute as she is going to join and she can travel with him. As Mike's mother knew about his breakup and his reluctance towards girls, she thought Nancy would have some influence on him or at least she would get him to fix up with one of her girlfriends.

Nancy did not know what her sexual orientation was. She was abused as a child and she had kept boys and then men away and she had only girlfriends. Even in Noida, many men tried to befriend her, but she refused to be entertained by them. Mike is the only man she came close to because he kept women away and he did not make passes on her, which she felt comfortable to be living with him, otherwise, she would have looked for other accommodations or would have at least would be staying at executive hostels which have mushroomed around. Their tastes match and they would enjoy each other's company. The flirting only started recently when he told her something and she blushed, then he started to call her the same repeatedly to see her reaction. Then slowly she started not to react to his calling then he would make something up to flirt with her. She knows he

did not mean whatever he is calling her and only does that to rile her up and see her blushing. He would say you look more beautiful when you blush. She would take that as a compliment and a compliment from him is like rain on a hot day.

Even though they both were from Goa, she did not remember meeting him ever. He was her senior by five years and they must have met at some function, but she heard about his affair and his heartbreak and decided he is a fool to be duped by a girl and keep that in mind about it till now. Then she thought about herself and would decide what anyone's problem, they only know.

Chapter 3

Stephany was teaching HR for the last five years and she joined ISB last year. She was from Kerala and when some friends from Kerala got her accommodation in Nagole and she was staying there for the last year. The owners were from Kerala and they treat her like their own daughter, their son looks up to her as a big sister and calls her Chechi. She would come to Nagole metro station by bike being dropped off by the house owner and she would catch the metro train and would reach the last stop at Raidurg station from there she would catch an auto to reach her institute. With the on-off problems with coronavirus, travelling has become quite tiring and now with increasing petrol prices, it has become costly to catch an auto also. She was thinking of staying closer and someone told her that Mike stays in Miyapur and he travels by his car daily and she decided to ask him for accommodation near where he stays. He offered her to stay with him and his cousin, and she thought it is a good opportunity for her.

She had some group friends in her college days but nothing serious with anyone. There are always boys who go behind single girls, but as she is in a group, outsiders from her group would not try to woo one of their girls. It is an unwritten law among the college groups not to approach girls from other groups unless the girl approaches them first. By the standards set by her parents, she is happy to be not to be attached to anyone but to her group. They would spend time together going to movies and doing other things groups of people normally do in their college days.

Then after her degree, she joined post-graduation. After her postgraduation, she joined ISB as a Research Fellow

and started working there. Now she told her fellow professor from Kerala about her problem with transportation and he advised her to approach Mike for advice on the matter.

Chapter 4

The three of them went to the parking and when he unlocked the car, Stephany went and sat in the front seat. Mike dropped the book on the dashboard and inserted the key in the ignition and started the car. Stephany picked the book from the dashboard and started reading it.

Stephany said after reading the forward, "it says there are eight books in the series and she has written one of the books after reading the other seven books of the series."

Mike said do we need to read the other seven books to understand this book?"

Stephany flicked to the end of the book and said, "it says here that there is a sequel to these books, which is based on the Life of Kalki."

In the evening traffic, he skilfully drove through the traffic and they reached the house in around 45 minutes. He unlocked the gate and they entered the compound of the house.

Seeing the garden Stephany said, "nice garden."

Nancy said, "we both worked on this."

He unlocked the door and they entered the hall. Seeing the house Stephany said, "very nice house."

Now it is Mike's turn to say a few words about the house, "all the credit goes to Nancy only, she is the one that keeps the house neat and clean."

Nancy said, "we also have a servant to help us out."

Stephany put her bag on the table in front of the sofa and Mike said, “come I will show you the rooms.”

He showed her two bedrooms on the ground floor and said, “these are not used by anyone at present and we use the first-floor bedrooms” and took her to the first floor and showed her his room and Nancy’s room and said, “these are the rooms we are using and this is the common bathroom we have here. And we have another set of bathrooms on the ground floor.”

Stephany thought ‘so, they don’t live together even though they live under the same roof.’

Mike said, “If you decide to stay, you both can have rooms on the ground floor.”

Then Stephany remembered him referring to her as his cousin, so they are not together and he is offering us to stay on the ground floor. At first, she thought about how she could live with the two of them, but now her doubts were cleared.

They came down and sat on the sofa and he asked her what do you think about the house.

Stephany said, “nice, I would like to come and stay with you.”

Mike asked, “how much luggage do you have?”

Stephany said, “not much some clothes and a few personal items.”

Mike asked, “will they fit in the car to bring here.”

Stephany said, “I think so.”

Mike said, “then you tell me when you are shifting here, and I will come and pick you up and your items.”

Stephany said, "this Saturday would be nice to shift."

Mike said, "give me your address and send me the location through WhatsApp."

She said, "when I go home I will send them both."

He took her and dropped her at the metro station, so she can return home.

Chapter 5

On Saturday morning he called her on WhatsApp and asked her to show the luggage to be carried. She showed him two suitcases of clothes and a cardboard box with other items. Seeing them he decided he can carry them in his car and said he is just leaving his house.

He drove the way shown by google maps, via Kukatpally, Balanagar, Secunderabad, Habsiguda, and Uppal and reached Nagole and reached the place where the pin dropped, got out of the car and called Stephany from his mobile.

She said, “look up” and she is standing on the second floor.

He went up to the penthouse and both of them carried the suitcases and the owner’s son carried the cardboard box down. The boy was calling her Chechi and was getting emotional about her going away. She promised him that she would come and visit them. She took leave of the owner’s family and thanked them profusely for supporting her for the last year, and they said you are like our daughter and told her to come to them if she faces any problem.

Mike drove back on the same route shown by google maps. She inquired about the book he was reading.

He said, “I completed reading, and felt the story is far-reaching. Maybe I need to read the other books to completely understand the story. It seems it is an extension of one of the other books mentioned in the book.”

She asked, “what is really the book about?”

He said, "I told you the first part earlier, now when he takes the two girls and empties his bank account and reaches Vijayawada via Hyderabad by bus. There he visits the Durga temple and a man approaches him and gives an address and tells him to go there so they will have some work and a place to live. They sit on the bus and when they reach the place in the address, they skip 24 years of their life."

Stephany "said how is it possible."

He said, "that is the thing about the series of stories, time travel. They have been sent to 2017 to start preparing for their future in a conglomerate of companies. When the corona hits he goes to the company and takes it over."

Stephany asks "how can he do that?"

Mike said, "it is passed on in the will of his grandfather to him and the companies were established by his father who died in an accident. Then a person by name of bob approaches him and passes on to them some blueprints of futuristic equipment."

She asked, "like what?"

He said, "like mind-controlled communications, teleport devices, gravity packs, thrusters, the invisibility cloak and shape-shifting devices."

Stephany asked, "what are these for?" Mike said, "they say they are needed in their future endeavours. That should be in the sequel to the story."

Stephany said, "then the story should be science fiction."

He said, "it says the sequel is a mix of mythology and science fiction."

Stephany said, "I don't know anything about mythology."

They reached the house and parked inside the gate, Mike removed the luggage from the trunk and closed it and locked the car and carried the suitcases inside and placed them in the hall, and Stephany carried the cardboard box and placed it on the table.

Mike asked her to take her pick of the room and she went to the first room beside the kitchen and it is already occupied by Nancy. Next to the room is a bathroom and next to that is the second bedroom. Stephany went and looked into the room. This room is better than the first one. It is bigger and nicely decorated. She thought then why did Nancy take the other room leaving this room for her?

She removed her clothes from the suitcases and put them in the cupboards. Then her personal items from the cardboard box in the cupboard. All this took her an hour and she came and sat on the sofa.

Mike brought two cups and asked, “do you drink tea?”

She said, “please.”

He gave her one and took the other to Nancy in her room and returned to the kitchen brought his cup and sat on the sofa.

Mike said, “you can treat this house as your own house. Nancy also does not have inhibitions when staying here.”

Stephany said, “she is your cousin, so she may not have inhibitions.”

Mike said, “it is not like that, I treat her like a friend only. You can also treat us like friends.”

Stephany nodded her head. Nancy came out of her room and went into the kitchen, put her cup in there and came

and sat on a sofa. She said, “sorry, I have been preparing notes.”

Stephany said, “it is ok, not a problem.”

Nancy asked, “so what is the plan for today?”

Mike said, “while going to Nagole I brought some Blu-Ray movies; shall we watch them today?”

Nancy asked, “what about lunch.”

He said, “we will make something, Stephany do you know cooking?”

She replied “certainly, I used to help my mother prepare food. We are a big family in Kottayam. Then after coming here I used to help our owner’s wife in the kitchen.”

Nancy said, “then one day you prepare and one day I will prepare and Mike will help us, ok.”

Stephany said, “ok by me. If you have coconut I will prepare our speciality.”

Nancy said, “we should have some in the fridge. Tell me what else you need.”

Stephany said, “some vegetables.” Nancy looked in the fridge and said, “a piece of bottle gourd, snake gourd, tomatoes.”

Stephany said, “bottle gourd would do for this.”

So, Nancy removed it from the fridge and put it in the kitchen. They both sat at the dining table and prepared the items required for the curry to be prepared by Stephany. Within an hour, they prepared lunch, brought it, and placed it on the dining table.

Mike said, “you should have called me to help.”

Nancy said, “we have completed the cooking chatting and your help is not needed.”

After lunch, they sat down to watch the movie brought by Mike.

Mike sat down on the sofa as usual and put his legs on the table in front. Nancy came and sat on his right side, as usual, now Stephany came and sat on his left side and Mike started the movie. At first, Stephany did not like the way they are passing comments on the movie, but slowly she started enjoying their banter during the running movie. In the middle of the movie, Nancy got up and brought some snacks. During the movie, Stephany saw another side of Nancy. She was vibrant and full of life. But Stephany felt she is acting with Mike as she acts with her friends and not in a romantic way. Finally decided they are not romantically involved and she sat back with relief. She did not understand why she felt relief deducing they are not romantically involved with each other. She was not interested in either of them, that is what she thought.

After the movie, Mike suggested they work on the garden a little. They went out and removed weeds and cleaned the area and watered the plants and came in after an hour of working in the garden. Mike made tea and the three of them had and retired to their rooms to have a bath and ready to go out in the evening.

They walked to a nearby restaurant and had their dinner and returned to the house. They watched some more tv and retired to their rooms.

Nancy kept her door a little ajar while sleeping, she woke up when she heard a little sound and from the door a streak of light was visible. She got up and went to the

hall. Stephany was sitting on the sofa watching something on the tv.

Nancy went over to her and sat beside her and asked, "aren't you getting sleep?"

Stephany replied "because of the new place I could not get sleep, so I am watching some tv. As tomorrow is a holiday, we can sleep late also."

Finding Stephany not getting any sleep, Nancy advised her to sleep with her. They switched off the tv and went to Nancy's room to sleep. Both lay on the bed and tried to sleep.

Chapter 6

Mike got up at 6:30 am had a coffee and went for a run. He came after half an hour and sat on the sofa. It seemed that the ladies have not woken up and he did not want to disturb them. So, he went to his room, had a bath, went to the kitchen, made himself breakfast, and sat at the dining table. Nancy came out of her room and closed the door ajar.

Mike asked, "why are you keeping the door ajar."

Nancy said, "Stephany is sleeping in my room. She could not get sleep in a new place, so I invited her to sleep with me."

Mike nodded and asked, "do you want coffee?"

Nancy said, "yes, please."

He completed his breakfast, went into the kitchen, prepared two cups of coffee, and brought them to the hall. He gave her one and started sipping his.

Mike looked her over, Nancy seemed her normal self. He asked her "what do you think about Stephany?"

Nancy said, "she seemed to be a nice lady, I am just getting to know her."

Nancy thought why he is asking her that? Did he think we have any closeness last night? We just slept on the same bed, that does not mean anything. After these movies people suspect girls sleeping on the same bed. Earlier no one used to bat an eyelid. These movies change people's perception of reality.

Nancy finished her coffee and took both cups went to the kitchen rinsed the cups and placed them on the stand and came out.

Nancy said, "what do you think about Stephany."

Mike said, "I did not have any opinion about her previously. I had very few encounters with her in the staff room. You know how I had been with the ladies after Vicky, I can't bring myself to look at the woman like that. I get a guilty feeling and I try to compare them with Vicky. I think I have to leave Vicky's memories behind, until then I can't bring myself to come close to anyone. Maybe I have not met anyone who could help me put Vicky behind."

Nancy thought and said, "you could be correct, you would look at a girl and start comparing her to Vicky, what did you think when you met me for the first time?"

Mike said, "don't think otherwise, it was my first impression that who is this girl, mom has burdened me with."

Nancy asked, "then what is your second expression." Mike said, "now I feel you are my boyfriend, not a girl who stays with me."

Nancy pouted her mouth and said, "do I look like a boy to you?"

Mike said, "not a boy but I would be with you as a friend, you know someone I confide in and share a day with without having any inhibitions. Now let us see how it works out with Stephany joining us."

Stephany came out of the room and asked, "what are you discussing so seriously."

Nancy said, "about you only."

Stephany asked, "about me, what?"

Nancy said, "Mike was asking my opinion about you."

Stephany asked, "so, what did you say?"

Nancy said, "I told him you seemed to be a nice lady."

Stephany asked, "then what is Mike's opinion about me?"

Nancy said, "he is saying he has yet to form an opinion about you."

Stephany said, "that is good, it seems I have some more time to influence him."

Nancy said, "it seems so."

PART 2

YouTube video Team

Chapter 1

“What is the next project?” boomed Disha.

“We found an unoccupied building in the interiors of the Maharashtra forests”, replied Phani.

“I made all the arrangements,” said Banti.

They started the van and started to drive towards the area mentioned by Phani. It took them 8 hours to reach the place.

Disha looked at the time and it is after 9 pm. She said, “we will spend the night in the van and we will look at the bungalow tomorrow morning.”

They started to eat what they brought with them and lay on the seats or beds put on the backside.

There were the sounds of the forest around them. They spent a sleepless night and slipped into sleep early in the morning.

They awoke around 8 am and made makeshift cooking arrangements and started to make tea. They had their tea and went to inspect the bungalow. Banti brought cc cameras and started to fix them at strategic places.

Phani prepared breakfast and called them.

After breakfast, they made a round around the bungalow and came back to the van and sat on the seats. Phani started preparing the lunch. After preparation of the lunch, he removed beer bottles from the ice box and handed them to others.

They completed the beer, had lunch and had a shut-eye. Phani got up around 5 pm and prepared tea and woke them up. They had tea and went and looked at the

cameras set up and checked whether they are working or not and came back. Phani started preparing dinner and they made a fire and sat around the fire, telling stories and jokes. After dinner, they sat monitoring feed from the cameras in shifts.

In the morning they woke up and Phani started preparing Tea, and Banti went and removed the cameras and came back. He removed the memory cards and saved them. They started the van and drove towards the city. When they reached a Dhaba they sat down and had breakfast. By evening they reached Hyderabad and they dropped Disha and reached Banti's house.

Banti had dinner and started copying the files on his laptop.

He started collecting scenes from the videos and made a folder.

From the scenes, he prepared a video and added background sound and completed the video. He sent Disha a copy and readied to upload it to YouTube.

Phani reviewed the video and gave the ok to upload the video.

They both sat down and planned for the next week's trip to go to the ghost bungalow in Srisailam forest.

Chapter 2

Nancy received a call from her mother that she and Nancy's elder sister Jessica were visiting Hyderabad, and asked Nancy to take permission from Mike to stay at their house.

Nancy asked her mother, "why don't you check in at a hotel?"

Nancy's mother Sherrie said, "if it is for one day we could stay at a hotel, we will be there for at least a week. What with Corona and all it is better not to stay at a hotel."

Nancy said, "ok, I will check with Mike."

Nancy cut the call and thought should she ask Mike or just lie to her mother it is not possible. She doesn't have a problem with her mother, it is about Jessica, she is one of those people, moody, short-tempered and totally shellfish person.

Finally decided to check with mike. If he says no, she can tell them no too.

Nancy completed her class and went over to the staff room. Mike was about to go to his class. She told him about his family visit and asked him for permission to stay with them.

Without another thought, he said, "what is the need for asking me? It is your house as much as mine."

Now she could not refuse her mother's request and called her and told her Mike had accepted her request for them to stay.

On Sunday morning Mike and Nancy went to the Railway station to pick up Jessie and Sherry.

Mike was courteous with them and picked up their bags and moved out to the parking.

Mike unlocked the car and Jessie came and sat on the passenger seat. Nancy and Sherry sat in the back seat. Mike started the car and drove on.

While the drive Jessie was talking non-stop. Mike heard what she is talking half-heartedly. It took them more than an hour to reach home.

Mike stopped outside the gate and Nancy got down and opened the gate, and Mike drove and parked the car and opened the dicky.

He got down, pulled the luggage out, locked the car, picked up the luggage, and moved inside.

Mike took the luggage to the room beside his bedroom and put the luggage down there. Sherry and Jessica came behind him and put the luggage on the bed and started unpacking.

Seeing them getting comfortable, Mike walked out of the door and went down and sat on the sofa.

Stephany came from the kitchen and handed him the cup of tea and one to Nancy. She enquired with Nancy, shall I take them tea?

Nancy said, "I will take the tea to my sister and mother."

Nancy picked up the cups from Stephany and went to the first floor.

Stephany looked at Mike for a second and went into the kitchen to pick the cups for herself and Nancy.

Nancy came after handing over the cups and sat on the sofa and picked up her cup.

Mike asked, "are they comfortable in the bedroom?"

Nancy replied, "why won't they be comfortable, they have everything they require here?"

Mike detected a slight bit of sarcasm in her voice and looked at Nancy.

Nancy smiled and said, "They are going for a bath and after the bath, they would come down."

Stephany said, "I will prepare breakfast", and went into the kitchen.

After half an hour Stephany brought the dishes and placed them on the table.

Mike told Nancy to call her sister and mother for breakfast.

Nancy shouted, "Jessie, mom, come down for breakfast."

Jessica came to the balcony, looked down and said, "just a minute."

Nancy said to Mike, "you better start your breakfast, they might take some more time."

Stephany served three of them and they started having it.

Jessica and Sherry came down after half an hour. Sherry carried a bottle of whiskey in her hand and handed it to Mike.

Mike said, "I don't drink."

Sherry said, "keep it for your guests."

Mike took the bottle and kept it on the table.

Jessica sat in front of Mike eyeing him while eating. Mike felt a little uneasy at her looks, finishing his breakfast, he got up and went and sat on the sofa, and switched on the tv.

After finishing breakfast Stephany brought tea for all of them.

Mike picked up a cup and started to sip tea watching the news.

Jessica picked a teacup, came and sat beside Mike.

Mike moved a little and adjusted himself on the sofa to give space between himself and Jessica.

Nancy came with her cup and asked Mike to move a little and sat between him and Jessica.

Sherry came and sat on another sofa. Stephany went to her room with her cup of tea.

There is an awkward silence in the room with the tv playing some program. Sherry tried to strike up a conversation, but Mike concentrated on the program on tv and did not respond to her.

After finishing tea Mike got up and went into the kitchen, rinsed the cup and put it on the stand. He came out of the kitchen and went to his room.

Chapter 3

Rashmi woke up from sleep suddenly and came out of the bedroom. Her mom Anita is cooking in the kitchen.

Rashmi went to her and asked, “mom when dad will return?”

Anita replied, “I don’t have an idea. He is supposed to be abroad, but there is no communication from him.”

Rashmi asked, “really where did he go?”

Anita replied, “I had a doubt when they came to pick him up. What dad said he is going abroad, but it seems they are taking him for some secret mission the way dad hid the details.”

Rashmi asked, “why do you think so?”

Anita replied, “the way he took them to the conference room at the hospital even though only two people have come to visit him. He could have the meeting in his cabin only.”

Rashmi asked, “what? Does he know that they could take him for a secret mission?”

Anita replied, “you know from the time that Lady Nandini came to visit him, I felt she is not from around here. She says she was pen pals from the time dad was in Bombay before marriage. From her looks, she doesn’t look like she could be his pen pal. If it is true, and the way he acts with her as if he knew her, it seems she came from the past.”

Rashmi asked, “how she could come from the past? Did she have some kind of time machine? I don’t think those exist from my knowledge.”

“You know your aunt Sugandha said your dad has some guardian angel and another angel has come to save him. Sugandha came to me to go meet dad, she wanted to tell sorry to dad and return the assets they had accumulated from his hard work.”

Rashmi asked, “how could they take dad’s lifelong earnings from his hard work?”

Anita replied, “I didn’t understand her blabbering but when I took her to meet dad, she threw blank papers on his face and abused him. When she went out of the hospital, she met with an accident.”

Rashmi asked, “so, what do you want to say?”

Anita replied, “your aunt Sugandha said she went to meet her guru when Priya met with an accident, and he told her to apologise to dad for her wrongdoings and return whatever she took from us. He told her your dad has a guardian angel and one more angel has joined him to help him out. Your aunt called me and asked me to take her to your dad. She wanted to apologise to him for playing a prank on us. When I checked he was working with Rao’s hospital. When we went there, she told him she was sorry for causing him all this pain. She wanted to absolve herself of all the evil things she did to us, and she brought these property papers and bank account details. When dad opened the folder, it contained only blank papers. Then she told him what do you think, I will let go of my lifelong earnings like that, and she asked about Nandini, is this your new guardian angel who came to save you? I will see what she can do. If required I will spend all this money, but I will not give you a rupee.”

Rashmi said, “I did not understand a thing what you said, you mean to say that Nandini has come as a guardian

angel? And Aunty was cheating us and siphoning off our money.”

Anita said, “I don’t know how she could do that. She herself has revealed that to us. She said she hated and despised dad and threw the papers on his face and stormed out of his cabin.”

Rashmi asked, “what about Nandini? Who is she, what is she doing with dad?”

Anita said, “she has given your dad the project to computerise her hospital. I heard from someone in the hospital, she disappeared and returned after 20 years. Now when the persons came to take dad, they were telling Nandini they will return her to her husband with her kids and dad needed to come with them, then he took them into the conference room. When he returned he said he is going abroad and he could not be contacted.”

Rashmi said, “if he is going abroad what is the problem with giving his cell number, he could have given his number once he reached there.”

Anita said, “that is what I thought. I was waiting for dad to call us, but after one year, he has not called us.”

Then Anita’s mobile rang. It is Rashmi’s elder sister Leena, who is working with a vaccine manufacturing company. After corona pandemic, she has become very busy and was staying at the company quarters.

Rashmi went to have a bath and returned to the kitchen. Anita served her breakfast and said, “Leena is going to Bombay for a meeting, do you want to go with her?”

Rashmi asked, “why do you call it Bombay, it is now Mumbai?”

Anita replied, "just a force of habit, after our marriage we were there for five years."

Rashmi asked, "how she is going?"

Anita replied, " Leena said she is going in the company car, they had to carry some samples with them for testing. Now your exams are completed and you have some free time, so she asked you to accompany her. You both can stay at your uncle's house, he was asking you to come to visit him."

Rashmi said, "ok, tell her I will go with her."

Chapter 4

Mike felt disturbed by Jessica's presence. He started remembering Vicky and her idiosyncrasies. How she would come and sit beside him and how she plays with his hair or how she used to hug him. He lay on the bed and closed his eyes.

Mike felt a kiss on his cheeks and opened his eyes. At first, he thought Vicky has kissed him and he was about to kiss her back, finding Jessica in front of him he stopped himself and sat up on the bed.

Jessica sat down on the bed and looked at Mike with a loving stare. She heard from Sherry about his heartbreak and wanted to try to win his heart. And from Nancy's actions, she understood she cares for him but did not have any romantic feelings. She is the only one who understood Nancy's sexuality. Even Nancy did not know her true feelings. She also felt the same about Stephany. She wanted to know how she came to stay with Mike.

Mike felt a little twinge in his heart with Jessica's closeness. He felt transformed to his college days, where he used to spend all his waking moments with Vicky. But he did not know how to react to Jessica.

Jessica waited a few minutes and decided Mike is hesitating about how to proceed with her and put her hand on his shoulder and looked into his eyes. Mike was reliving the time with Vicky and Jessica thought his eyes were filled with love for her and put another hand on his other shoulder and pulled him closer.

With her hugging, Mike shook a little. Jessica thought about what happened to him and released him and looked at his face. His eyes were closed and pain can be

seen on his face. Jessica thought he must be reliving his time after the breakup and hugged him tightly.

Mike loosened his grip on her back, caught hold of her face and started kissing Jessica passionately.

Sherry called Jessica from the ground floor. Jessica released him fearing her sister may come to the room and Mike came out of the trance and looked at Jessica stupidly. Now Jessica understood Mike mistook her for Vicky.

Jessica got up from the bed and said, "Mike, I will just return, my mom is calling me."

Jessica is not scared mom will find her with Mike. It was Sherry's idea to seduce Mike. Mike's family is well off in Goa and when her plan to hook him up with Nancy failed, Sherry planned their trip to Hyderabad to hook Mike up with Jessica.

Mike sat back on the bed and Jessica went down to enquire why her mother called.

Jessica took Sherry into the kitchen and enquired why did she call her.

Sherry said, "did I call you, I forgot what is it for."

Jessica admonished her, "why did you disturb us? Next time wait for me to come down."

Sherry said, "what if I forget what I want to say to you?"

Jessica said, "there won't be anything urgent, don't call me."

She stormed out of the kitchen and went to the first floor. Mike's door was closed, so she went into her room.

Chapter 5

Leena went to the CEO for confirming their trip to Mumbai.

The board on his cabin door named him Prakash Reddy, CEO of Reddy's Biotechnology Labs. Leena knocked on the door and opened and entered the cabin. Prakash lifted his head from the file he is reading and looked at Leena. His face lighted on seeing her and he said come and sit down, what can I do for you.

Leena said, "it is about the Mumbai trip, my sister wants to come with me to Mumbai and we would be staying with our uncle."

Prakash said, "it is ok, you can take your sister with you. I will make arrangements for an SUV to take the samples with you. Mahender would accompany you to Mumbai. He possibly will stay at a hotel."

Leena got up, said, "thank you sir", and came out of the cabin.

She went to Mahender and said, "our boss told me you are coming with us to Mumbai, my sister is also coming with us. We are going to stay with our uncle."

Mahender asked, "your uncle stays in Mumbai? You never told me."

Leena said, "when I am small we also used to live there, we came over to Hyderabad later."

Leena went to her cabin and started preparing for her trip.

Chapter 5

Disha called Phani to confirm their trip.

On Friday night they left in their van and drove into the forest.

Early in the morning, they reached an old house inside the forest. It is pretty isolated around there. They camped there and prepared morning tea.

By the time they finished their tea, the sun came up lighting the forest in its white glow.

Phani and Banti went to have a look at the house. It is filled with cobwebs and dusty from being unused for a long time. Most of the doors were closed from the outside but none of them was locked.

After going through the house, they came back to the van.

They had breakfast and took the cameras and went inside to fix them. It took them one hour to fix the cameras.

They came out and started preparing lunch. Phani put the beer to chill. It took 2 hours for the lunch to be prepared.

After lunch, they all went inside the building and supervised the arrangements and checked the feed and came back and sat down in the van.

They had a shut-eye and got up around 5 pm. Had tea and went and switched on the cameras, came back to the van and started monitoring the cameras.

Phani got up and started preparing for dinner.

Banti and Disha kept an eye on the monitors watching the feed from the cameras set up.

After dinner they decided, two of them would keep a watch on the monitors in shifts. First Disha and Phani started the watch.

Nothing happened until 12:30 am.

Phani woke Banti up to watch the feed.

The three of them watched the goings on in the building in horror.

Chapter 6

Nancy and Stephany prepared the lunch together. They placed the dishes on the table and looked for Mike. He was not in the hall. Nancy asked Jessica where is Mike.

Jessica replied he must be in his room.

Nancy said, “normally he would be sitting in the hall watching TV. What happened today?”

She went to the first floor knocked on the door and opened the door.

Hearing Nancy’s knock, Mike opened his eyes and asked, “Nancy what happened?”

Nancy said, “lunch is ready Mike, come for lunch.”

Mike got up from the bed and came to the dining room behind Nancy and sat down on his chair.

Stephany asked Jessica where is your mom?

Jessica shouted mom, come for lunch.

Nancy said, “if I had known mom is up there I would have called her when I went for Mike.”

Jessica said it is ok.

Sherry looked down from the balcony and asked, “what is it, Jessy?”

Jessica said, come down for lunch.

Sherry said, “coming and went back to her room. She came down after 5 minutes.”

They completed lunch in silence.

Normally they would sit before the tv and enjoy a movie or something. Today Mike went back to his room.

Nancy went to his room and had a look, he sat at the table working on his notes. Seeing him working, she came down.

But Mike's mind is not on the notes he was working on. His mind is on Jessica's jesters. He was in two minds about her. He could not understand what is going on. He could not understand whether she is wooing him or playing him.

Mike heard a sound from his side and turned his head. Jessica was sitting beside him on a chair, and asked what are you doing Mike?

Mike said I am checking the exam papers.

Jessica asked, "how do you check exam papers? Where are the papers?"

Mike replied, "now everything is computerised. I have to check them on the computer. I check the papers and the marks are automatically calculated."

Mike got disturbed by Jessica sitting beside him, so, he got up and went and sat on the bed back to the headrest and closed his eyes.

Mike opened his eyes when a kiss landed on his lips. He opened his eyes and found Jessica in front of him in her innerwear and the door was closed and locked. He saw the lust in her eyes.

After a long time, he was turned on by a lady, so he reached for her mouth and kissed her on the lips. He felt a heat rise in him with the coolness of the ac trying to cool him down. He put the legs down and Jessica came and stood before him. He reached behind her and caught her ass and pulled her close and kissed her.

He felt like he was floating on the clouds and when he came to his conscience he was on the bed fully naked and Jessica beside him. He turned to her and put his hand on her boobs and caressed her. He felt like he found his long-lost lover.

Chapter 7

Leena came home and packed her things and asked Rashmi to pack her things, we need to leave early in the morning.

They got up at 4 am, readied and waited for the car to reach their house

The driver with Mahender reached at 7 am. Mahender was telling her sorry, I was delayed to load the samples at the office.

Leena said it is ok, please put the luggage in the car. They took leave of their mother Anita and started from their house.

From there they took to the ORR and reached Patancheru and took to the Mumbai National highway.

After travelling for 3 hours they stopped at a dhaba and had lunch and continued their journey.

Before they could reach Solapur, there was a massive traffic jam due to an accident on the road.

It was 7 pm by the time they reached Solapur. They had dinner and resumed their journey.

They must have travelled for another hour their car's tire punctured and the driver stopped the car aside and they both tried to change the tire.

Leena and Rashmi came out of the car and stood there looking at them working.

Chapter 8

They were all having dinner and Jessica said, "I had to go to Mumbai, I have got a meeting day after tomorrow."

Mike said, "Shall I accompany you, we are having holidays."

Jessica said, "if you have no problem, you can come with us."

Nancy said, "mom if you are also going to Mumbai, I would like to come with you."

Mike said, "if we are all going, why leave Stephany behind? Stephany, why don't you come with us."

Stephany said, "why trouble, I will stay home."

Nancy said, what trouble, we can enjoy our vacations.

Stephany agreed to accompany them.

Mike said, then we will go in my car. We will leave in the afternoon. I will submit my exam papers and come.

They all agreed to leave in the afternoon for Mumbai.

They had lunch and left for Mumbai. They took the highway, and they reached Solapur, had dinner at a Dhaba and resumed their journey.

They drove for perhaps half an hour, they found a van crossing them and Mike saw that the passengers were drinking beer. He was following them and saw a car stopped on the side, and two men were changing the tire and two girls were standing beside it. He saw the van cross and stop a little further. Mike stopped the car a little behind the stopped car.

Mike saw two girls getting down from the van and approached the girls who stood behind the car.

So, Mike said to the occupants of the car, "see those girls getting down from the van."

Stephany said I know the girl who stood beside the stopped car, I think her name is Rashmi.

Mike said, you both go and see what they want, if you need any help just wave to me. Stephany and Nancy got down and approached Leena and Rashmi.

Disha said to Leena, "hi Leena, any problem with the car?"

Leena said, "hi, how come you are here?", she turned to Rashmi, "this is Disha, my classmate in college."

Rashmi said, "hi Disha."

Disha said showing a girl standing beside her, "this is Ravali."

Leena and Rashmi said, "hi."

Disha said, "we investigate abandoned houses, record things, and upload them to YouTube. That is my team sitting in the van with our equipment. Where are you going?"

Leena said, "we are going to Mumbai for getting samples tested. We develop vaccines and we are taking them there to test and while there we want to visit our uncle."

They saw two ladies approaching from the car stopped behind.

Rashmi said, "they are professors in our institute. Hi Stephani madam, what are you doing here?"

Stephany said, “Hi Rashmi, we were going to Mumbai for vacation. What happened to the car?”

Rashmi said, “not a big problem, we had a flat and they are changing the tire.”

Mahender approached them. Leena said, he is Mahender, he is a senior researcher with us.” And she introduced others to Mahender.

Leena asked, “Disha where are you going?”

Disha said, “we are going to an abandoned Ashram near Pune.”

Mahender said, “we will meet in Pune, I have a house in Pune, take the location, and we can freshen up and resume our Journey.” He took their numbers and sent them his Pune house location on WhatsApp.

So, this way they resumed their journey, driving behind each other. Keeping others in sight.

Disha asked, “Phani what is the story of the abandoned Ashram.”

Phani replied, “in January 2021 an Ashram appeared out of nowhere. With a main building and other huts scattered around. No one can open the main building’s locks. They have a kind of advanced technology locking the doors, with a hand scanner and some kind of DNA lock. You remember in the last investigation, how people appear out of the cabinet door. It reminded me of the movie Narnia.”

Disha asked, “what is the connection between that building to this?”

Phani replied, “while removing the cameras, I noticed something like that on that cabinet. I tried to open it, but I could not do so. After seeing that night’s scenes, I don’t want to waste my time there. So, I did not try much to open the cabinet.”

Disha said, “you have not uploaded that night’s videos, what did you do with them?”

Phani said, “I handed them to the police. Let them deal with them.”

Disha asked, “did they tell you anything?”

Phani replied, “they said, they will let us know if they know anything. I doubt we will hear anything from them.”

Disha asked what do you think is behind the cabinet door.

Phani replied, “I think there is another way into the house, might be underground tunnels or things like that.”

It was 7 am by the time they reached Pune.

It took another 15 minutes of morning traffic to reach Mahender’s house. His parents are staying there. He introduced each one and asked them to freshen up.

By 8:30 everyone was ready and Mahender called them for breakfast. Mike said what is the need for preparing breakfast, we could have something on the way.

Mahender said, “it is not much of a problem.”

Mike asked, “Phani, Nancy told me you were going to an abandoned Ashram, where is it?”

Phani replied, "it is on the way to Mumbai, five minutes from Highway. You might want to visit it with us. It won't be much of a detour."

Mike looked at the ladies who came with him. They nodded their heads. Leena and Rashmi also nodded their head in agreement.

They all sat in their vehicles and Phani lead their van in front.

In an hour they reached the Ashram.

The ashram was filled with a few vagrant people who took shelter in the night. Phani leads the way to the lone building in the ashram.

Beside the door, there is a small box protruding from the wall.

Phani opened the box and there was inside a palm touch panel. He put his hand on that and nothing happened. One by one the members tried to touch the panel. At last, when Rashmi touched the panel, it opened to reveal another panel the type used for fingerprint scanners used for attendance at many institutions.

There on a board is written 'touch your finger with your saliva on the tip of your finger.'

Phani said excitedly this is the DNA scanner, you better try yours, Rashmi. Your hand worked on the scanner, it might work with this too."

Rashmi cleaned her finger with a kerchief and touched it to her tongue and touched the scanner.

There is a sound on the door as if a bolt is released, and Phani touched the door and it moved inside. He pushed

open the door. It fully opened to reveal a kind of reception area.

Rashmi and Phani entered the room and others stayed out.

There is a locker behind the reception and another door leading to a room. Phani said, "we will check this room first, and there is a small box beside the door like on the main door. You better try, it seems these doors are responding to you."

Rashmi went to the panel and repeated what she has done at the main door. The door opened to reveal packed boxes and a telephone booth-like box in the corner.

Rashmi opened the door and said, "it looks like a lift, but there is only one floor in this building. Maybe it goes down. But it seems to be switched off."

Phani looked behind and said, "there is a power cord for this box." He put the power cord in a socket and switched it on.

Rashmi said, now this is powered on. There is an LCD panel and up down switches and an on-and-off switch.

Rashmi pressed the up and down switches and said excitedly, "this panel does not show floors, it is showing locations. Bombay, Calcutta, Cochin, Madras, Manali, New Delhi, Pune, Vijayawada, Visakhapatnam, etc.

Phani went to inspect the packed boxes. He said excitedly, "see these boxes, they are all marked with futuristic items. Mind-controlled communications, anti-gravity Packs and thrusters. What are these, Shapeshifting and Invisibility cloaks? What they are used for?"

Rashmi said, "I heard about them somewhere. I will go and call others."

After they inspected all those boxes in the room, they came out and sat in the reception area.

Mike asked what are these boxes, where did they come from?

Rashmi said, "I heard about them but could not recollect where."

Leena said, "I remember Nandini telling us about her husband has a factory that developed them and manufactures them."

Mike asked, "who is this Nandini?"

Rashmi replied, "she is a friend of my dad's. She owns Rao's Hospital. She took dad there for treatment and made him a new man."

Mike asked, "what shall we do about them? But why all these doors are activated by Rashmi's touch? Leena, why don't you close the door and see if they activate to your touch also."

Leena closed the door and it locked itself. She then checked her palm on the panel and it opened to reveal a fingerprint scanner. She touched her saliva to the scanner and the door bolt opened.

Mike said, "your DNA opens the door. That means you have something to do with these items. But why they are stored in this Ashram?"

Nancy said, "why don't we try these items?"

Phani said, "shall we try these Mind-controlled communication devices?"

They all agreed and Phani opened the box to find a kind of earbuds in them.

He took a set and put them in both his ears. He heard a voice in his head, 'please tell me your name and phone number.'

He thought his name and phone number.

He heard a voice in his head your phone is now configured.

He thought 'call Disha' and Disha's phone rang. She looked at the phone and asked, "why are you calling me? where is your phone?"

Phani replied, "I am calling using these devices."

So, each one took one box and inserted it in their ears and configured the devices. They checked them and Phani said, "we should take one each of these boxes and contact Nandini and see how they can be used."

All agreed to that and Leena said, "if we have to collect them again, one of us has to come. Disha, you must be going back to Hyderabad, you can accommodate them in your van, we will go to Mumbai and return, and then we will have a meeting and decide what to do."

Mike said, "that is the best course of action, I will inform you when I return. I think we are all linked by our devices."

Mike helped them load the boxes. Phani and the group left for Hyderabad and Mike and the group and Leena and Rashmi left for Mumbai to meet after finishing their work.

Part 4

The story of the Boxes

Chapter 1

Mahender dropped Rashmi at her uncle's house and went over to their office and dropped samples there.

They decided to send the samples the next day for testing and the Driver dropped Leena at her uncle's house.

Leena find her uncle Ram sitting in the hall, he greeted her and asked, "Where is your dad, has not called us for the last year?"

Rashmi replied, "Dad went abroad to work on a government project. They said he can't contact us during the project. It seems it is some secret government project."

Their Aunt Nishitha came from inside and greeted Leena, "did your work complete?"

Leena replied, "no, we have to go tomorrow to drop the samples off for testing."

Nishitha brought some pakora's in a plate and placed them on the table, calling them to have.

Nishitha went back into the kitchen to make tea.

By the time Nishitha brought tea, they finished the plate.

She handed them tea and sat down on the sofa and asked, "so what is the news?"

Ram asked, "why are wearing the earbuds? Don't wear them for 24 hours."

Leena said, I tried removing them, but they struck in my ear."

Ram asked where did you get them?

Rashmi replied, for that, I have to tell you our travel story and narrated what happened during their journey to Mumbai.

Ram asked, do you think your dad stored them there?

Rashmi said, “do you remember dad was treated by Rao’s Hospital and its owner Nandini, who is dad’s friend? I remember her telling dad about these items. She was telling her husband develops and manufactures them.”

Nishitha asked where is her husband.

Leena replied, “she said she can’t communicate with her husband directly, that is why she is taking dad’s help to communicate with him.”

Ram asked, “how your dad helped her?”

Rashmi said, “that is what I can’t understand, she says if she talks with dad her husband can listen. Dad is like a communication device for her. Could that be the reason they took dad?”

Nishitha asked, “your dad didn’t contact you after going abroad, not even once?”

Rashmi replied, “not once, mom lost hope he will call any time soon.”

They all kept silent for some time.

Rashmi kept her gaze down. She lifted her head after a minute and said, “Stephany called, they have gone to Mud Island and taken rooms there, she is calling us there to spend some time.”

Nishitha asked, “when did you get the call?”

Rashmi replied, “we receive the calls through these earbuds. We don’t need to speak. We had to think about what we wanted to say, that is all. Do you want to try them, I have picked a few boxes?”

Nishitha replied, “no for me, you told me they struck in your ear.”

Nishitha got up and said, “I am going to prepare dinner.”

Leena got up and said, “I am coming to help you out.” And they both went into the kitchen.

Mike and the group went to where Jessica is supposed to have her meeting. When Jessica went to meet her contact, they all went and sat at a nearby restaurant and ordered lunch.

Mike and Jessica were never far away with the help of earbuds. They can have a conversation without ever uttering a word.

When her meeting finished Jessica informed Mike that she would be coming out of her meeting.

Mike paid the bill and they came to Jessica, and they all went in their car to Mud Island and booked rooms and went to their rooms.

After changing and having evening tea, they came out and sat on the beach enjoying sundown.

Stephany said, “Leena and Rashmi will come by tomorrow evening. Leena’s work has not been completed. She had to go tomorrow morning for submitting the samples at the lab.”

Phani and the group reached Hyderabad and placed the boxes in Bunty's house as it has a free room.

They decided to wait for Leena and Rashmi and decide the next course of action. As both of them has the ability to open the doors, they must have some connection to these items. It could be their father has some connection to storing the boxes there.

He informed Leena about storing the boxes at Bunty's house.

Leena along with Rashmi went to their office and along with Mahender to the lab to drop off the samples for testing.

Then Mahender dropped them at Borivali Jetty. From there they took a boat to reach Mudh. From there they caught an auto to reach the hotel booked by Mike.

By the time they reached the hotel, it is 2 pm. So, they all went over to the hotel's restaurant for lunch. After lunch they all returned to their rooms, deciding to meet at 5 pm in the lobby.

They met after 5 at the lobby and decided to spend the time on the beach. They sat on the beach and exchanged stories. Leena said she was born in Bombay only. After their grandmother's death, her parents decided to shift to Hyderabad and Rashmi was born in Hyderabad.

Mike invited them to Goa for the next vacation.

Jessica said, "you can come to stay with us."

They all decided to meet in the summer holidays in Goa.

They spent up to 7 pm on the beach and went back to the hotel for dinner.

They spent two days there and returned to Hyderabad.

They decided to meet at Mike's house the next day.

They met around 1 pm at Mike's place.

Leena informed them that Nandini also went abroad on 7th January 2021, and she has not communicated since then.

Mike asked, "did Nandini also go with your dad?"

"It seems they are not available at the same time", said Rashmi.

Mike asked, "how do they know each other?"

Rashmi replied, "When she met mom for the first time she said dad and she were pen friends. Now their age difference is about 20 years. Dad told mom that they were supposed to be penfriends in the 1980s. When mom asked how is it possible. Nandini said, she travelled 20 years into the future and landed here. She came to dad to communicate with her husband. Dad has a link to her husband across timelines."

Mike asked, "if Nandini's husband was in the past 20 years back and he developed these products, how they could land here? What is the link to those ashrams?"

Rashmi said, "we have to ask our mom what else she does know. What else Nandini might have told her? Who has taken dad and what they told her when taking dad with them?"

Mike advised why don't you call her and find out?

Rashmi said, "she was confused from the time dad went away. We have to sit down with her and ask her to speak clearly."

Mike said, "you find the details and fill us in. Phani, did you try other items brought from the ashram?"

Phani replied, "we are waiting for Leena, and Rashmi to return from the trip. Because they have access to the items, so they must have some control over the items."

Leena asked, "did you bring some samples, so we can test them."

Phani replied, "we did bring some boxes of those items." Showing some boxes he said, "these are anti-gravity packs. Let us see how they work."

He opened the box and removed a leaflet describing the use of the pack. He read, "attach this pack to the item you want to lift. Then Press this green switch, which will lock the item. Then set the dial to the required lift. Then press this red button to activate the anti-gravity. To deactivate the anti-gravity press the white switch."

Leena said, what will we have use for that? Go to the next item.

Phani opened the next box and read this is a thruster, this is used for moving the items with power. It can be used in conjunction with an anti-gravity pack to move heavy items."

Phani picked another box and read the leaflet, "this is for Shapeshifting device. You put the DNA of the person or animal on the device and switch it on and wear this coat to turn into the person or animal. This Invisibility cloak

can be worn like a coat and the person would be invisible.”

Leena said, “at present, we don’t need these items. But Phani and the group might need them in their work. They can use invisible cloaks while doing investigations.”

Phani asked, “will they work on vans?”

Leena replied, “I don’t think so.”

Mike asked, “Phani what is your next investigation?”

Phani replied, “we want to revisit the house in the Srisailam Jungles. Maybe either Leena or Rashmi might come with us.”

“There is a big box marked Transporter, from the items in the box. It seems like the lift or telephone booth we found in the ashram”, said Phani

“Did you get the box here?” Asked Rashmi.

“No, it is at Bunty’s house”, replied Phani.

Rashmi asked, “can you get us a box, we will check it out.”

Phani said, “ok I will bring you a box. We will check it out.”

Stephany called them for lunch.

After lunch, they left Mark’s house and Phani told them he will bring a box to Leena’s house and went away in his van.

He went to Bunty’s house and picked up the transporter package and drove to Leena’s house.

Leena left for her office on emergency work and Rashmi was there with her mother Anita.

Leena explained to her mom about the box and they want to check it out.

Phani opened the box and removed the contents laying them on the floor in a heap.

By trial and error, he put the planks together and screwed them together. There is a small circuit board with a power cord. He put the circuit board on the panel provided and screwed it from the back. He put the power cord in the back of the machine in the socket and plugged in the socket on the wall and switched it on.

They looked at the panel and it is flashing with ID and the message, enter your location. He typed Hyderabad with the help of a small keyboard on the panel. Then it asked to enter your area. He entered the area as Uppal and it flashed you can start using the machine.

Using the arrow keys he checked the locations. When he came to the Pune Ashram, he stopped and looked at Rashmi.

Phani asked, "shall we go to Pune and pick some more boxes?"

They both stood in the transporter and Phani pressed the button indicating transport. When the door opened after a second they found themselves at the Pune Ashram warehouse. They picked a box of mind-controlling devices, a box of shape-shifting devices and a box of invisibility cloaks.

Phani selected Hyderabad, and Uppal and pressed the button.

When the door opened they are in Leena's house. They removed the boxes and switched off the machine, or else those people in the Srisailam forest might come through it.

He narrated to Leena what they recorded in the forest house.

"First, a few people entered the room through the transporter. One person brought a chair and a person sat on it. It seems the person sitting on the chair is their leader.

Then two people brought a man tied at hands and ankles.

They sat him on a chair and started to interrogate him. We did not understand what he is asking him. But he was referring to some person, that could be understood. They want to get some technology from that person. It is not clear if that person stole the technology or if they want to steal the technology from him. When he did not give satisfactory answers, they put a bullet in his head and the two persons who brought him took him to the transporter.

Leena said, "you did good by switching it off, we can switch it on whenever we need it."

Phani took leave of them and went away.

After two days, Rashmi received a missed call when she was in the institute. She called back when she came out of the class during the break. It was the owner of the building they have rented their flat.

He said, "there were two men who came to your flat asking for your dad. When they asked the watchman, the

watchman said your dad was away abroad and he did not contact you again. Then the two men asked him aggressively to tell the truth. He brought the men to me. I told them, you and your mom only stay at the house and your elder sister stays at the company quarters. And I have not seen your father for a long time. Then they gave their phone number and said to call them when your father returns.”

Rashmi asked, “Uncle, did your cc tv cameras record them?”

The owner replied yes, do you want a copy of the same.

Rashmi said, “please send me a copy of them, and I will check them out.”

The owner said, “he will send a copy and cut the call.”

Rashmi called Phani and told him about the two men visiting her house.

Phani asked where was your mom when they visited?

Rashmi replied, “mom went to meet her mother and she will not return for another week.”

Phani asked did you have anywhere else to stay?

Rashmi said, “I can go and stay with my sister in her quarters.”

Phani said, “you go and stay there and when you receive the copy forward it to me.”

Rashmi said, “I will send the copy”, she forwarded the copy received from the owner.”

Phani said, “let me check the video.”

After a minute he spoke, "it is the ones who brought the man into the jungle. You be careful until we know who they are."

After the class, Rashmi went over to Leena's quarters. She called from the gate and asked Leena to come over.

Leena showed the supervisor the photo of the two men and asked him not to allow them under any circumstances. I will get copies of their photo and put them on the notice board.

They went to Leena's room and She asked, "Rashmi what happened?"

Rashmi explained everything. It seems they are looking for dad.

Leena exclaimed, "we don't know where is dad, how can they be searching for him? Does it mean he is in India only? Is he hiding from them?"

"I don't think dad would be hiding for this long. He must be away."

"Away where?" asked Leena.

"That is what I can't understand. There is a link between dad's work and these boxes we found at Pune Ashram. From what Phani says, they must have got control of some of these transporters, that they are using. They might be looking to get more items. It seems they don't know about the Pune Ashram's room. If they had known they would have emptied the room."

Leena said, "we should have switched off the transporter. Now they will know about it. But to switch it off, we have to go there by car. Switch it off and return

it. And one of us should accompany them to open the doors. I think we should ask Mike to accompany us. Maybe we should check the safe too.”

Rashmi called Mike asking him to take them to Pune Ashram. They would like to switch off the transporter there.

Rashmi asked, “if we can leave in the evening, we can be there by tomorrow afternoon. It is very important to switch off the machine there.”

Mike asked, “what is so urgent?”

Rashmi said, “I will explain when we meet.”

Mike said, “then I will come and pick you up.”

Rashmi said, “I will come to your place. No need to come all this way and return the same way.”

Mike said, “ok, come over here we will leave by evening.”

Rashmi asked Phani to drop her at Mike’s house. Phani said, “I will also accompany you to Pune.” So he brought a bike and drove her to Mike’s house. They parked the bike at Mike’s and left in Mike’s car to Pune.

They had dinner at the Zaheerabad check post and resumed their driving. They drove alternatively and reached Pune by 6 am.

Rashmi entered the room and switched off the transporter. Then she closed and locked the door and came to the locker.

Rashmi inspected the locker and pressed a small button, which opened a panel on the door. She pressed her hand on that panel and a fingerprint sensor is revealed. She

touched her finger on the tongue and touched the fingerprint sensor. The lock released on the door and she pulled the door open with the help of the handle.

Rashmi found bundles of money and some files. She removed the files and looked through them. Two of the files seemed to be some kind of story.

She collected some money and the files and closed the door.

They locked the doors and came out and took the car and reached Pune. They took a hotel room and freshened up, had lunch, and returned to Hyderabad.

Phani took the bike from Mike's house and dropped Rashmi at Leena's quarters and went away.

Chapter 2

Jessica said, "Mike my work here is complete, I would like to go back to Goa."

Mike thought a minute and said, "I will come and drop you off. I have not been to Goa for the last three years."

Jessica asked, "Nancy would you like to come to Goa?"

Nancy replied, "no, I will stay here and give company to Stephany."

Jessica said, "then we three of us go to Goa, Mike."

Mike booked the tickets on tatkal.

Mike, Jessica, and Sherry left for Goa by train.

Now Nancy and Stephany were in the house alone.

They were alone after two weeks. Nancy's sister and mother were there and constantly watching them, that is what they felt.

But in reality, it was Jessica who was hoping they would go forward with their intimacy.

They had lunch and sat down on the sofa, switched on the tv.

They cosied up to each other watching a movie on the tv.

Around 3 pm, Stephany got up to prepare tea. They had tea and continued watching tv.

At 5 they decided to take a walk to the nearest Super Bazar to do grocery shopping.

They returned from shopping after 6:30 pm. They sat down to prepare dinner.

After dinner, they watched tv for some time and retired to Stephany's room.

Rashmi sat down to read the stories in the files.

First, she took the smaller file and started reading. She did not understand much as the book started in the year 2000 and seemed to miss the beginning and she took the big file and checked the story. It seems the story started in the year 1980. The protagonist's name is Kumar, the same as her father. The flashback of his previous studies seemed to be similar to her father. So, she sat down and started reading it.

Their first year of Intermediate studies seems to be the same. But in the second year, her father shifted to Bombay, and in the book, he continued his studies for the second year. Now after the end of the second year, his girlfriend Sneha has been sent away to her village. So, he joined in Hyderabad for his studies and eloped with Sneha in his second year of the degree. After completing his degree he shifted to Bombay with Sneha. He joined with Kirit who was running a factory at Bhandup.

Now when they went to Hyderabad for his sister's wedding, Sneha goes missing. She was taken away to her village by her grandfather who kept her there. She found she was pregnant and gives birth to twins Atul and Reena. She comes back to him when the kids were six months old, finding he already married Sahithi, thinking Sneha won't return. Later Sneha dies in a fire accident. The story makes lots of turns and he is killed on the eve of the new year 2000.

In the smaller file, she finds a look-alike has been sent to replace the dead Kumar to set things right in the companies.

The look-alike married Sunitha, girlfriend of Kumar. and runs companies only to die in his sleep in the year 2015.

Her thoughts after reading the books:

The notable point in the first book is that he brings a small girl younger than Atul and Reena, Named Leena to their house and she disappears after 5 years. Now Leena had the same family but they live in different circumstances. This Kumar stays at bungalows at Juhu Koliwada and his parents live at Wadala quarters and Leena's parents Kumar and Sahithi live with Leena's grandparents at Wadala Quarters. In the book, Kumar tries to explain she was either from the future or from a different dimension. She can't be from the future, then they had to lose all the money and had to go to live with his parents.

After reading these two books Rashmi decided that someone wrote these books using her dad Kumar's life as a reference.

What about Nandini? In the book, she had a son named Vivek Kumar and here she had Atul and Reena. According to Mom, she did not try to introduce her children to mom or us. Did she come from another dimension as in the book? That could be the reason she did not invite us to her house. In the book, there was a mention of Paradox. Let me check what it is. I googled it and I could not find what is mentioned in the book, that two persons from different dimensions can't be met as it will create a paradox and he does not know what would be its effects

Nandini must be having some knowledge of these things, to avoid meeting with us. She told mom that she came to dad for the only purpose of communicating with her husband, who is unreachable. Does it mean he is in another dimension and dad could communicate with that dimension's Kumar? How to know about Nandini? I have to go to Rao's hospital and check.

Mike, Jessica, and Sherry reached Goa. Stephany and Jessica went to their house and Mike reached his house.

Megan asked, "how come you are here?"

Mike said, "I came down with Sherry and Jessica."

Megan asked, "what is your story with them?"

Mike said, "I think I like Jessica. We have been spending time together for the last fortnight. We even went to Mumbai."

Megan asked, "do you want to marry Jessica?"

Mike said, "I have not decided anything. I wanted to take your advice on this."

Megan said, "I am happy if you want to settle down. We will speak with their family. You take rest, we will speak later."

Disha called Phani and asked where are you? Very busy with work or what?

Phani replied, "No, I went with Rashmi to shut down the ashram's transporter. She is scared, some people will go there and those two who brought a man to the forest house, they came looking for her dad. She suspects that

the man was tortured to find some technology Rashmi's father might process. Now she is staying with her sister at the quarters and her mom is away at their grandparent's house."

Disha asked, "so what is our next week's trip?"

Phani replied, "we have not decided yet. We want to see what is Rashmi's take on all this."

"Why are you interested in Rashmi?"

Phani said, "she is intrigued by her father's disappearance. In this mobile age, he would have called at least once he is safe somewhere. Where he could disappear to where he can't contact them?"

"So, what will we do this weekend?"

Phani said, "Rashmi brought some files from the Pune ashram, let her go through them, we might get an idea. Also, there is a lot of money in the safe at the ashram. She took some money, we can ask her for expenses."

Disha asked, "why did you let her take the money, you could have taken some?"

"I only let her take it because she has access to the locker. In what way we can claim ownership?"

Disha said, "it is ok, I don't have anything against her. I don't want others' money too."

Rashmi called Mike and explained about the files she picked from Pune Ashram. She told him that these stories in some way were connected to her father.

Mike said, "after returning I will check the files and stories."

She cut the call and called Phani to come to the quarters, she wanted to check with Rao's hospital.

Phani came over after one hour.

When Phani stopped at the petrol bunk for filling, Rashmi paid for it and also gave some money to Phani for expenses.

They reached Rao's hospital and went to meet the hospital administrator.

They looked at the board on the door. It said Mrs Mithali Sharma, Hospital Administrator.

Rashmi felt she heard the name somewhere. They went inside the room and Mithali lifted her head and asked what can I do for you.

Rashmi said, "mam, we came for any information on Nandini."

Mithali said, "I don't know anything about her. Why are you interested in her?"

Rashmi said, "Mr Kumar who had installed your software is my father. He was missing from 2021. It seems madam is also missing from that time."

Mithali said, "Nandini appointed me to look after the hospital and told me she might be going back to her husband and might not return. She handed the hospital to a trust to run and I need to look after the hospital."

Rashmi said, "so, she must be aware of what is coming up to take care of the hospital activities. Can you give me the address of her house, so I can go and enquire about her?"

Mithali said, "it is very easy to find her house. You know Obul Reddy School in Jubilee Hills; her house is side by it. It's just before school."

Rashmi thanked and they both came out. Rashmi said looking at the board, "it seems I know the name, but could not recollect it."

They came out, took the bike, and reached Jubilee hills. Inquired about the school, and reached the school. Before the school, there is a bungalow spread over a big land. They went to the gate and knocked on it. When no one responded, they opened the gate and stepped in looking suspiciously around for any dogs. They went to the door and pressed the bell.

After a minute a servant opened the door and looked at them from head to toe.

Rashmi said, "I am the daughter of Kumar, who stayed here for some time."

The servant asked, "do you have any identity?"

Rashmi removed her Aadhar card and showed her. She looked at the name of the father and said, "come and sit down. I will make a call."

They both sat down on a sofa and she told the cook in the kitchen to give them tea and called from a landline."

She returned and said, "Please wait, the lawyer is coming. Madam left a cover to give to you when you come calling."

Phani and Rashmi looked at each other, Rashmi whispered, "what could be on the cover."

They waited for half an hour. Then one person came and looked at her identity and took a receipt and handed her a cover and left.

Rashmi opened the cover and looked at the papers. Nandini passed on the hospital to Kumar's children. And there is a printed and bound book. She looked inside the book. It was Nandini's autobiography. She called the number mentioned on the cover.

The lawyer said, "as you have read Nandini's instructions. You come with your sister and file the claim. We will file for transfer of ownership."

Rashmi said, "thanks, I will speak with my sister and come back to you."

Rashmi turned to Phani and said, "Nandini passed on the Rao's hospital to us."

Phani asked, "what is your relation to Nandini to pass on the hospital to you?"

Rashmi said, "if we read this book our doubts should be cleared. Let us go to the quarters, I will speak with Leena and decide what should be our next course of action."

On the next Saturday, they sat down in Bunty's house.

In the meanwhile, they uninstalled the transporter and shifted it to Leena's quarters. If the two persons who came looking for Kumar might break into their house, they don't want it to be found there.

Rashmi explained the story she read in brief. She told them about Nandini leaving Rao's hospital to them before going away.

Rashmi told them the story of Nandini, how they met at Kumar's sister's marriage and how they got married. How Kumar set up the software business. How using his memories downloaded, he expanded his business empire. When at his brother Ram's wedding night how she was lured to come here.

According to what Nandini wrote, after a month of this interaction with Bob, Kumar started to receive information from his alter ego. His alter ego had read a book on the dead Kumar; which is the same one Rashmi got the book from Ashram. He not only read about the book on the dead Kumar but his alter ego's day-to-day activities were also received in his dreams. Nandini's husband Kumar took advantage of his dreams and set up the companies and rose to be a big businessman. On the night of Kumar's brother's wedding with Nishitha, they send them to Manali in the transporter. She was accosted by two men and they took her to their lab, and from there they sent her to this timeline or dimension. So, when Nandini landed here in the year 2015 she was pregnant with twins. She only came to know later on that she was pregnant. It took her nearly 5 years to find Rashmi's Dad. At the time he was in precarious health, she took him to her hospital and gave treatment, and took him to her house. Later she helped him financially to sell his software and also gave him a software project for Rao's hospital.

Mike asked, "do you mean to say Nandini had time travelled?"

Rashmi replied, "she not only time travelled, but she was also sent across to another dimension, that is to our dimension?"

Mike said, “Nancy do you remember your student from Noida, gave you a book to read and asked you to give an opinion?”

Nancy replied, “yes, it was My Love is a Mirage, by Anne Reporter.”

Mike said, “I remember reading that Kumar was sent 25 years into the future to replace another dead Kumar, who was dead in the year 2015. She has written clearly about his past and the dead Kumar’s past. She also wrote that his girlfriend was killed with some poison meant for him. I will give you that book, you might find some references there. There was also mention of Bob giving him blueprints to develop some futuristic items. But how did she know all this to write in her book? Did your father give her the details to write the story?”

Rashmi said, “it seems there is a link to all these stories. We will come and collect the book. You take these books and read them, you will have full knowledge.”

Mike said, “you collect the book and we will meet next Thursday, which would a holiday for us all.”

Everyone nodded their heads in agreement.

Leena and Rashmi went over to meet with the lawyers. He took their details and took a few signatures and told them he would file for the transfer of Nandini’s assets and the hospital to Leena and Rashmi as mentioned in her transfer deed filed with the lawyers.

After the transfer deed is proved in civil court, they can take ownership of the assets mentioned in the order.

They met next Thursday at Nandini's house. Even though they have not received official documents, they were asked to visit the house by lawyers.

Rashmi explained how reading the book My life is a mirage helped her understand some points. As the smaller file is leading from the larger file in the story. After the death of Kumar from the smaller file, the story continues with Kumar claiming the company and the bungalow and all with the help of some will and succession documents filed by the lawyers.

He was met by Bob and Bob gives him the blueprints to develop the items in the company they recently acquired. As the story concludes with all the family members are asked to meet at the Taj Mahal hotel in the month of January 2021.

From these stories, it is evident they are somehow connected with each other.

If we give them numbers, first Kumar who is from the large file marries Sneha and had twins named Atul and Rashmi same as Nandini's children raised here. If we take Nandini's husband as Second Kumar, his alter ego was sent to replace First Kumar after his death in the year 2000. Second Kumar's alter ego dies in 2015 and third Kumar was sent to replace him from the year 1993 to 2017. He claims ownership in the year 2020. And was asked to develop these futuristic items.

Now from the biography of Nandini, the second Kumar gets all this information on his dreams and becomes a big businessman. He also develops these futuristic items by downloading his dreams through a machine. Now, this Nandini replaces a Nandini who was missing in the past. She claims she was sent to the future by unknown

people. She took the help of our dad to communicate with her husband. It is only one-way communication, as she doesn't have any idea if he received the messages or not.

Nandini claims that she did not arrange for the meet-up of her children with Kumar's children as she fears the consequences. Also, she felt Leena and Rashmi are like her own children and arranged to have her assets transferred to their name. She did not want them to go to waste or be transferred to unknown people.

So, what do you think of all this?

Mike said when I read the story, I did not understand what is this time travelling. We contacted Anne to know how she did write this story. She said when she was travelling from Bangalore to Delhi, she met Mr Kumar, who was editing some books. He said he is going to work in Noida in sector 167. He said he is working on some books and if she likes to try some writing he had some ideas for her. He told her the idea for the book and also provided her with the manuscripts for the remaining of his books. Now according to Anne, he said he got the story ideas from his dreams. Anne used to study at Amity university which is in sector 166 of Noida. They used to meet in the evening and discuss the story she is working on until his office was shifted to Sector 2 of Noida. Then they used to speak on phone and she sent the manuscript to him via email. Anne said she will send the remaining books' manuscripts to us.

Rashmi said, "we will read those manuscripts and decide further course of action."

Leena asked, “if dad knows about these stories and had written them, why he did not tell about them to any of us?”

Rashmi said, “maybe he thought no one would believe him. Also, the incident with Aunt after coming back from Noida might have something to do with it.”

Mike asked what is the incident with your aunt?”

Our Aunt Sugandha played a prank on mom and dad. Mom got angry and threw dad out of the house and he took a single room and stayed there. Then he was infected by the corona and then Nandini came to his rescue.”

Nancy said, “if your dad wrote those stories, he would have the copies with them. At least he would have the manuscripts on his laptop. Did you not check his laptop after his disappearance?”

Rashmi replied, “until today I was not aware of my dad working on the stories. But why did he not inform Nandini about getting these stories? She would have been happy that her husband Kumar was receiving her messages.”

Mike said, “it might be he was receiving the stories from the time of Nandini landing here. From Nandini’s memoir, her husband started receiving information about other timelines from the time his alter ego landed on another timeline and about others from the time Bob went to meet them. Maybe it has something to do with Nandini landing here. If he received information from Nandini’s husband about Nandini’s presence here, he might have thought about revealing the future to anyone could have grave consequences.”

Rashmi asked, “then does he know he had to go with Nandini?”

Mike said, “when we read his books then only we might get a correct idea about what is happening.”

Leena said, “I will check his laptop. Maybe he kept something here. I will check with the servant.”

Rashmi called the servant and asked, “Padma, our dad Kumar stayed here for some time, where did he stay when he stayed here?”

Padma said, “at first he was staying on the ground floor, then he shifted to the guest house.”

Leena said, “can you show us the guest house.”

Padma said, “come I will take you there.”

They all went to the guest house. Padma opened the lock and went inside. She had kept the room neat and clean. They looked in the cupboards.

In one of the cupboards with other computer accessories, they found the laptop. Rashmi picked up the laptop and Leena put all the accessories like external hard disks in a bag and they returned to the main house.

Leena said, “the battery must have drained, let us connect to a power source. They found a wall socket and connected the laptop.

Rashmi switched on the laptop. It booted and on the desktop were some files. There is a text file named important.txt. Rashmi opened the text file and there are all the links to the published books and bank account details with passwords and debit card numbers with CVC and phone numbers they are linked with numbers.

Rashmi tried to connect the laptop to the internet. It seems the internet was not renewed in Nandini's house. Rashmi connected the laptop to her mobile hotspot and checked a bank account by logging in. She checked the balance, there is around 50 lakhs balance in that account. It seems her dad did not get time to inform about the bank accounts to them. When she checked the bank statement, there are a series of payments made to a builder, totalling more than a crore of rupees.

She checked the folders on the laptop. There is a folder 'books_manuscripts'. She opened the folder; all the books were present written in MS word.

Rashmi went back to the guest house and checked through the cupboard. There she found a bag containing documents. There she found the registered documents pertaining to the house. The address is close by.

Rashmi brought the documents and handed them over to Leena.

Leena asked where did dad get all this money?

Rashmi said, "Nandini wrote that she helped dad sell his software. Some of that money he invested in the house. It seems he did not get time to inform us of this."

Leena said, "send me the manuscripts to my phone, and I will check them out."

Rashmi said, "I will read them on this laptop."

Mike said, sent them to my mail, I will check them out.

Rashmi asked, "when shall we meet?"

Mike said, "let us go through these books, we will have an idea of what is going on, and then we can come to a conclusion of what our future course of action should be.

For the time being you shift over to the new house, your dad brought. This way you won't have a problem with those two men."

Leena said, "let us keep in contact", and they dispersed.

Chapter 2

Mike's mom Megan called and said, "I spoke with Sherry, she wanted to fix your wedding after a month. What is your opinion?"

Mike said, "please fix the wedding during the summer vacation. We can all come there."

Megan said, "ok I will consult with Sherry and fix a date and will inform you", and cut the call.

Mike rang up Leena and said, "we are fixing my wedding with Jessica for the summer vacations, you all should come to Goa for the wedding."

Leena replied, "we will come to Goa for the wedding, next week we are having house warming ceremony for the house dad brought. You should come for that."

Mike said, "we will certainly come."

On the day of house warming ceremony, after lunch, they all sat around to discuss the issues.

Mike said, "after reading the books I noted two points. One is about the Ashram in Pune, it seems to belong to Pujari Kumar. The second point is, Businessman Kumar who was taken to Mars. Now he was taken to a bunker on an Island. He was told about some danger upon us. Nowadays weather patterns have changed not only on the Indian subcontinent but all over the world. Heat in the summer is surpassing all the records, and cold in the winter too. The rains stopped being moderate and would dump rain in a particular place flooding the whole region. It all points to extreme weather conditions. Then there is a war going on between Russia and Ukraine. Until now

the USA or other countries have not stepped in fully. If that happens then the third world war might start. And this coronavirus pandemic is not dying down. New variants are coming out to drive the spike in infections.”

Rashmi said, “Bob was also talking about a Rakshasa hiding in China. He might be planning all this from China. I also read about the Indian government sending a space probe to Mars and planning a space mission in the future. These two are mentioned in relation to Indians having a special gene to enable them to travel to Mars. If he had the gene, possibly our dad might have the gene and we might have the gene too.”

Mike said, “from the last book it is clear he was referring to intelligent beings led by Bob doing experiments on timelines. The point to remember is that all these books stopped on the eve of 2021. Now, what happened at the beginning of 2021? Nandini and your dad went missing. Does Bob have something to do with that? If he had brought Nandini here, did he send her back? What Bob did do with all these timelines? Did he merge them? Is that the reason we find the Ashram near Pune? Are they the after-effects of the timeline merger? If so, who are the two men who come looking for your dad? Who is their leader at the forest house? Why they are coming there and from where? We have lots of questions without answers.”

Rashmi said, “let us think Nandini was sent back to her husband, but where did they send our dad?”

Nancy asked, “do you think those people who took Nandini took away your dad too? Or did he hide from those people who were searching for him?”

Stephany said, “your dad might have thought he is in danger and he did not want to put you all in danger, it could be the reason he did not contact you.”

Mike said, “that is also there. It might also be that he wants you to find these details on your own. He must have an idea one time or another you would try to investigate and find these details. That could be the reason he did not try to inform you of the house he purchased or it seems he did not have time like Nandini to fix up everything for you. Otherwise, why would she leave everything to you?”

Nancy asked, “do you believe all that you have read in the books?”

Rashmi said, “I am in two minds about believing the stories. In one way they felt like just stories, but on the other hand, they felt like they really happened otherwise, why Nandini would say she came from the past into another timeline and why she would leave all her inheritance to us? What we are to her?”

Leena said, “do you think Nandini had a soft spot for dad because he is like her husband Kumar? She may not have feelings for my dad as she had for her husband but she might have thought her husband might be like our dad only older, and she did leave all her inheritance to us thinking we are like her children. Her husband’s first daughter is named Leena and her own daughter is named Reena. I did not meet with Nandini’s daughter, she might be looking like a twin and she is a lot younger than me. There were a lot of instances where they treat children born to other wives of Kumar as though they were born to them because they were children born to themselves in other timelines. That kind of feeling persists throughout the series of books.”

Nancy asked, “Rashmi, did you come to the conclusion that these books are true and have actually happened?”

Rashmi said, “they could be true, but what happened to them? Where is dad? Who are the people from the house in the forest? What is their agenda and why they are searching for our dad?”

Phani said, “there is a possibility they could be hiding somewhere using these products they developed. To avoid detection they could be using shape-shifting devices. They could be travelling using the transporter.”

Rashmi said, “if they are using the transporter it could show in the list of destinations on the list.”

Leena said, “they could be using different frequencies to avoid detection.”

Mike said, “that could mean they are working in the background. If so, why would Nandini leave all her inheritance to you.”

Leena said, “what will happen if Bob and the group merged the timelines? It should combine and consolidate whatever they build. Like appearing of Ashram out of nowhere, which must have belonged to Pujari Kumar’s timeline.”

Mike said, “so the companies Nandini’s husband Kumar built should be around somewhere. We must look out for the Lab, IC Manufacturing facility and Future India, which develops those products. What about the consortium?”

Rashmi said, “yes we should make discreet enquiries. But if we are searching for them, the people from the forest might be searching for them too. So, they must have done some hiding those companies too. It could also mean that when those people from the forest must have

become active after learning about those companies appearing out of nowhere.”

Mike said, “that is also there. They must be searching for the founders of those companies. That could be the reason they were searching for your dad, thinking he is one and the same as Nandini’s husband.”

Leena asked, “if so, which timeline they could belong to?”

Rashmi replied, “I think they belong to the timeline where Kumar eloped with Sneha and later Sneha died in a fire accident.”

Leena asked, “why do you think so?”

Rashmi replied, “it is where two of the Kumars died and an attempt was made on the third and his girlfriend died instead of him.”

Nancy said, “you have a point there. So, they have come from that Kumar’s timeline and finding the situations different, trying to make sense of the circumstances.”

Rashmi said, “we have to assume we are living in the original timeline after merging. Then where did all the merged people go?”

Stephany said, “if what we understand from all this, they must be in hiding at present.”

Leena said, “there were two other Leena’s who were into Vaccine Development. One Leena was working in the USA and another one must be running the Lab near Vizag. Now myself is working in a Lab in Hyderabad.”

Rashmi said, “then if we look at Atul, Reena and Dhruv one group having a software company in the USA, another Atul was running a software company from

Pujari Kumar's timeline and his sister Reena. Others in Kumar's life like Sunitha, Sneha, Loveleen and others would be in their late 50s like our dad."

Leena said, "and the children would be in their twenties or thirties."

Mike asked, "so what would be our next course of action?"

Phani said, we better get those items shifted from Pune Ashram. One of them, Leena or Rashmi should accompany us."

Rashmi said, "Phani is correct, they should not fall into wrong hands."

Leena said, "then we should check out other places accessible through the transporter."

Mike said, "do you think there is a possibility your dad would be hiding in one of the places accessible through the transporter?"

Rashmi replied, "I don't think he would be somewhere he can be reached easily. I think they would be hiding until things cool down. Like the underground bunker on the island."

Mike said, "you have a point there. They would be kept safe until they are required. We have seen what kind of people they are in the video Phani recorded. Let us check the transporter for the areas where they are located."

Rashmi said, "we will switch it on briefly and check up the areas and shut it down."

Phani said, "I dismantled the transporter when shifting here. I will fix it and call you." He got up and went to fix the transporter.

Phani came back after 5 minutes and said, “come we will check the transporter.”

Phani switched on the transporter and Rashmi noted down the locations on the display. Most of the locations were showing in grey, they must have been switched off. Rashmi marked off those in grey and asked Phani to switch off the transporter.

They all took leave and went back to their houses.

Rashmi looked at Leena as to what should we do.

Leena nodded her head to indicate wait and see.

Chapter 3

Disha said, “mom, I got a job with ISRO for sourcing people for the Mars mission.”

Sakshi asked, “what will you be doing?”

“I have to source people from the job board suitable for the mission. I have to get them a physical and after they are found suitable they will be sent for training.”

Leena received a letter through her HR to attend a physical test for selection to space travel to Mars.

She went to HR and asked what is this.

HR replied, “they are taking selections for the Mars Trip. They have selected some people first to have a physical and then they will give training for space travel.”

Leena asked but why me?

HR replied you were selected for Virus Research. We can't refuse to send you. It is a prestigious post and our board has approved your selection.

Leena asked when do I have to go?

HR said, if you sign this form, we will send it to ISRO, and then they will send an approval letter and date of the physical.”

Leena said, “ok”, signed the form and handed it over to HR and came back to her cabin.

Mahender asked her, “what happened? Why did you go to HR.”

Leena said, “ISRO called me for selections to send to Mars”

Mahender asked, “are you selected to go to Mars?”

Leena replied, “not yet, they are making selections. First, they will select some people and then physical, and training then they will make selections based on their performance.”

Mahender said, “congratulations, you will certainly be selected.”

Nancy is in the staff room preparing for her next class. The peon came to the room and said Nancy mam, Dean is asking for you. She picked up the books and walked to the Dean’s room.

Nancy knocked on the door and entered the room, “sir did you ask for me?”

Dean Shrivastava looked up and said, “come Nancy sit down, I received a request from ISRO for you to be included in their travel to Mars. They are making selections for the trip. You will be assisting in IT-related work.”

Nancy asked, “when I had to report for the trip?”

Shrivastava said, “nothing is finalised yet. First, they will have a physical and then training for travel on the spaceship and then they will make selections. They are selecting a few from each department. If you agree to this please sign this form and I will forward it.”

Nancy signed the form and thanked the Dean and went to her class.

After finishing her class, Nancy returned to the staff room, finding Mike there she narrated the events in Dean’s room.

Mike said, "Leena also received an invitation to be part of the Mars tour."

Nancy said, "I think she would pass as her father travelled to Mars."

Mike said, "would they know about his travelling to Mars?"

Nancy said, "they might have an idea about his travel, otherwise why would they select her? If so, why did they select me?"

Mike said, "in one of the books Kumar wrote about receiving a letter from NASA about a few of the Indians having a gene which helps them survive on the surface of Mars."

Nancy asked, "do you think Kumar is helping ISRO for preparing to travel to Mars?"

Mike replied, "it seems so, he must be working in the background."

After a few days, Nancy and Leena received letters requesting to attend a physical at Rao's hospital, to come in the morning after fasting.

Leena and Nancy met at the diagnostic centre for the check-up.

A full body check-up was done for both of them. Leena and Nancy came out to have breakfast.

Nancy asked, "do you know why our names were selected for the Mars trip?"

Leena replied, "I think my dad must be working in the background. Or it must be Nandini's husband who has

the foresight, he must have known who will be going on the trip.”

Nancy said, “I doubt he would have any influence at this juncture. What kind of influence he would have? Is he running the mission or is he supplying the technology?”

Leena said, “He might be supplying the technology for the spaceship. Did you not read he was doing research in space technology.”

Nancy said, “that is true, he has set up Space research. He must be helping the government by sending a space probe in the first place. Maybe he had developed the gravity floor and Space drive.”

Leena said, “we have to shift the materials and money from the Pune Ashram.”

Nancy said, “for that one of you had to go to Pune.”

Leena said, “I am thinking of Sending Rashmi or going myself with Phani and Bunty and we will place the materials in the transporter and we will switch it on briefly and send the materials. That way we can be secure.”

Nancy rang up Leena and said, “I received a letter for starting the training. I passed the physical.”

Leena said, “I also passed the physical, Disha called and informed me that I would be receiving the letter for calling for training.”

Nancy asked, “how Disha knows about it?”

Leena said, “Disha is working to source people for the Mars trip. She is the one who selected us for this trip and

sent the physical test letters. She also sent a letter to Mahender, but he did not pass the physical.”

Nancy asked, “what is the problem? Did he have any health issues?”

Leena said, “no, he did not have health problems, his DNA did not match the requirements. That is what Disha told me. Normally they don’t tell the candidates, but she told me that and told me not to tell other candidates, they might ask what are the DNA requirements. She herself did not know, there was another team who goes through the DNA profiling.”

Nancy said, “it must be they have received the report from NASA about the gene.”

Leena said, “I also thought about it. Rashmi, Phani and Mahender are leaving for Pune on Saturday evening. They will be at Pune Ashram by afternoon.”

Nancy said, “I will come to your house on Sunday. We can unload from the transporter.”

Leena said, “ok thanks.”

Mahender, Phani and Rashmi left for Pune. They reached Pune around 8 am. They freshened up and had breakfast and left for Pune.

They reached the Ashram and found the Ashram in shambles, except for the building.

They stopped in front of the house and Rashmi opened the door with her credentials and they went in. Rashmi opened the safe and removed all the money and documents and put them in a bag. They opened the door and placed the bag in the transporter and started loading

the transporter with the boxes from the room. When the transporter is filled, Rashmi called Leena and told her to switch on the transporter. Phani went with the transporter and helped in unloading and came back on the transporter. It took them three trips to offload all the boxes.

Phani told Rashmi you go back on the transporter, we will lock the building and will return by car.

Rashmi went back home on the transporter.

They put the boxes in a room and locked the room.

Leena checked the money in the bag. There are around 35 lakhs in cash. There were papers pertaining to Swiss bank accounts. Local bank accounts too.

Leena said, "Rashmi let us check these documents, whether they are genuine or belong to another timeline. Then we can decide what to do about them."

Leena locked the documents with the cash in the cupboard.

Nancy told Rashmi we are going for training in 2 days.

Rashmi said, "you will have Leena's company."

Nancy said, "what is going on about the Hospital?"

Rashmi said, "they are asking to appoint two directors. I need another director as Leena will be away for training."

Nancy asked, "shall I ask Mike to help you out? He teaches Management, he might be helpful to you."

Rashmi said, "ok, I will speak with Mike about this directorship."

Nancy said, "maybe Disha might also help."

Rashmi said, "I will also check with her. We will have a meeting before you go for training."

On Sunday evening Mike, Stephany, Nancy, Leena and Rashmi met at a restaurant for evening snacks.

Mike asked, "did you not call Disha?"

Leena looked at the time and replied, "I called her, she must be running late."

Then Disha breezed in and said, "sorry guys got delayed."

"Phani and Bunty went to Pune and are yet to return."

"Congratulations Leena and Nancy for getting a call for Mars Trip. How do you feel?"

Nancy replied, "great, maybe we will be one in a few crores of people who get this opportunity. I heard some people are ready to donate crores of rupees for a seat on the spaceship."

Disha whispered, "I heard a politician's son offered to pay 100 crores to take him and his wife on the trip. But they are only selecting certain DNA profiles."

Leena asked, "how do you know all this?"

Disha said, "my dad is General Manager in the company that developed the technology."

Nancy asked, "who are your parents?"

Disha said, "my dad is Surya Kumar and my mom is Sakshi Singhanian Kumar"

"Where is your dad's office?"

Disha replied, "they have a research institute near Vizag."

“Where is your mom?”

Disha replied, “mom used to run a hotel in Manali. In 2021 there was an earthquake and the hotel was damaged. So, she sold the hotel and we came to stay in Hyderabad, where dad had a house.”

“Your dad has a house here, but he works near Vizag?”

Disha said, “yes. He had brought the house when he was working here.”

Stephany asked, “Where did your dad worked?”

Disha said, “I don’t have an idea, we were studying in Manali.”

Nancy asked, “were you not close with your dad?”

“No, he was working all over the world. He was moving around and he was visiting us once in a while. But whenever he visited he would bring us costly gifts. So, we used to look forward to his visits. But we did not want for anything. We were staying in the hotel quarters and food we can have anything we wanted. We used to call our friends for parties.”

Leena asked, “did your dad have any relation to our dad?”

Disha said, “I don’t have an idea.”

Disha got a call on her mobile, she spoke and said, “sorry guys I have to go, they are asking for more candidates’ profiles.”

Disha went away. There was silence around for some time, as everyone was engrossed in their own thoughts.

Mike spoke at last, “is Disha’s mom Sakshi Singhanian anyway related to the Kumar who visited Mars? She was

Sunitha's sister-in-law who ran the hotel in Manali after Sunitha's husband's death."

Nancy asked, "do you mean, she was dropped in this timeline after the merger?"

Mike said, "there is a possibility, otherwise why was their hotel destroyed in the earthquake?"

Stephany said, "that means there could be others who have dropped in our timeline."

Leena said, "from the books, it seems we belong to the original timeline."

Nancy asked, "what about others from other timelines? Most of them have common names, would they have come to this original timeline? If so where are they?"

Rashmi said, "they would be somewhere, we have to find them. My intuition is they will come in front of us sometime or other."

Leena said, "we have to start with their companies. Most of them have software companies. Pujari Kumar also had a software company run by Joy and later Atul. He also has lots of business ventures. Timelines from two of the dead Kumars has a young Kumar and they are running their software company from Cyber Towers. Then the Kumar who went to Mars has multiple businesses. He must be the one who has got the Space Research. And he must be the one who is planning this Mars trip. Once we reach the training centre we might find out more about the company."

Rashmi asked, "do you think he will be working in the open? He might be doing all this in the background and he must be giving all the credit to the Government."

Mike said, "someday they will come forward. They must be waiting for that day or it might be they want to find out who is their opponents."

Leena said, "that is correct, they must be searching for their opponents like the one from the forest searching for them."

Nancy asked, "so can we expect a war between these two groups?"

Mike said, "I am waiting for the day when these two groups come in front."

Chapter 4

Leena and Nancy went to Vizag and registered for the training at the address mentioned in the letter.

They were put up in a hotel and were told they would be taken to the training centre in groups. For the time being get to know each other.

After freshening up they came down for breakfast.

Disha came there checking the trainees. Noting down who had registered and come down for breakfast.

A girl, the same age as they approached them and said, “hi I am Reetu Khanna. I am in software engineering.”

Nancy and Leena gave their introductions.

Reetu said, “wow, virus research! Do you research vaccines?”

Leena said, “yes, after the coronavirus, our workload has increased.”

Reetu said, “our uncle has a virus research lab nearby, they converted it into this space research lab.”

Leena and Nancy exchanged glances.

Nancy asked, “Virus lab nearby? What were they researching? Why did they stop the research?”

Reetu said, “when an asteroid hit the jungles around Vizag, they set up the lab. Then they were patenting the medicines and vaccines. My uncle found a way to research the medicines and vaccines and the lab is found unnecessary. So, when he wanted to start space research, he shifted the lab and converted it into this space research. My cousin Shreya is going to join Nancy in virus research. She was working in the lab until now.

Our training centre is situated there only. Once I visited the research centre.”

Nancy asked, “what were they researching in the space research centre?”

Reetu said, “they were doing research primarily on speed drive. The speed drive helps in travelling long distances at a cheaper cost. I was told they were using a combination of Nuclear fuel and a kind of space petrol, at least what they were calling it.”

Leena asked, “they researched only the speed drive?”

Reetu said, “not only that, it is their primary research product. But I heard they made an antigravity floor for training purposes and a gravity floor for the spaceship. So, we don’t have to float like the space lab. We can just walk on the spaceship. The training on the antigravity floor is for emergency purposes only. If you lose gravity during the travel, it readies you to act appropriately.”

Nancy asked, “what else they were researching.”

Reetu said, “they also developed the spaceship prototype. They took help from ISRO for the production of the spaceship.”

Nancy said, “I thought ISRO is taking us on this space trip.”

Reetu said, “no, it was this research company, who did the whole preparation. They have put the money for the spaceship and all.”

Nancy asked, “how do you know all this?”

Reetu said, “I have done software development with a group of developers.”

Leena asked, “how do you know what to develop.”

Reetu said, “my uncle is a software developer. He had given us the prototype and we worked on that and developed the software. He had us working on the software as we may need to make tweaks during the travel or when we reach Mars. He had AI develop the whole software.”

Leena and Nancy looked at each other. They read about this in the book. So, Reetu must have come from his timeline.

Leena asked, “how were you related to this uncle you were refereeing to.”

Reetu replied, “he is my aunt’s husband.”

Leena asked, “what is your aunt’s name?”

Reetu replied, “Loveleen Khanna Kumar.”

Leena and Nancy looked at each other and exchanged all known looks.

Reetu said, “you know I was telling you Shreya who is into virus research, her cousin Disha is working as a recruiter for this space tour.”

Nancy said, “we know Disha. She is Leena’s sister’s classmate during junior college. We met her when we were going to Mumbai for a trip and Leena was going to submit samples for testing. Disha and their group were going to Pune for their YouTube channel research.”

Disha came with a girl in her tow. Reetu said, “hi Shreya, I was telling about you only.”

Disha introduced each other and said, “I met Nancy and Leena when we were going to Pune for YouTube channel

research. We were going to Pune Ashram and there is a building with a secured door. Only Leena and her sister Rashmi could open the door. Then I understood we are all related somehow.”

Nancy asked, “is that the reason you have recommended our names for this space trip?”

Disha said, “your names came already recommended along with Shreya, Reetu, and some more people. I only sent you letters for physical.”

Leena asked, “who could have recommended our names?”

Disha said, “Reetu, I heard your cousin Dr Dhruv Kumar is also coming with us on the trip.”

Reetu said, “yes he is going to assist Dr Mithali Sharma, who is a gynaecologist.”

Leena asked, “is he also a gynaecologist?”

Reetu said, “no, he is a general surgeon. They will be joining us in a week.”

Disha said, “more people will be joining us. We will meet them when they join us. I will be checking up on the others, we will meet at lunchtime.”

Disha went away to call those who have not come for breakfast.

When Disha completed the rounds and returned to the reception, she saw Rakesh Mukherjee and Preethi Kumar registering. They both are security heads, they would work in shifts.

She went and greeted them and invited them to breakfast. They told her they would be there in 10 minutes.

Leena, Nancy and Reetu are sitting in the lunch room.

Disha brought two people to introduce them.

She said, "this is Rakesh Mukherjee and this is Preethi Kumar."

Nancy said, "Preethi appears to be a foreigner."

Disha said, "yes, Preethi served in US Marines for five years."

Nancy asked, "but why Preethi Kumar?"

Preethi replied, "Swamy Kumar adopted me."

Then they remembered Swamy changed the name Stephany to Preethi and declared her his daughter.

They thought reading those books, the knowledge is coming to good use here. Leena thanked her dad in the mind for providing them with the books. She was saddened by the thought will she never see him again.

Disha handed them their ID Cards. You have to wear these ID cards when at the training centre. They will check these IDs when you are transported.

Disha is going around the lunch hall handing them the ID cards. She informed each one that they would be leaving for the training centre in the evening at 4 and to be ready.

Nancy thought if Stephany is here it will be fun. She called Disha and asked if Stephany can join them on the trip.

Disha said, "I will get her physical and check if she is suitable."

At 3:45 pm an AC bus stood before the Hotel. Disha informed the candidates, she will take 30 members today and the remaining will be sent on the next trip.

Disha informed the candidates that the bus arrived, and who want to go to the training to come and get on the bus.

When 5 seats were vacant Disha went and enquired if anyone else would like to come. Some candidates made some excuses and some said they would like to go on the next bus.

So, Disha accompanied them to the training centre, which is around an hour's drive from the hotel.

They went through the gates and there is a very big single-story building covering 2 acres of land in the centre. And there is another set of buildings near the fence which must be designed as living quarters. The buildings were interconnected by a kind of closed walkway. The same walkway is connected to the centre building.

Disha explained the buildings are all interconnected and are all filled with artificial atmospheres. During the trip and on Mars, we have to live in an artificial atmosphere. So during the training, you will be living in an artificial atmosphere. They will be checking alternate days for physicals. Daily your vitals will be noted before and after the training. This training is especially for acclimatising you to the artificial atmosphere and low gravity floor for living on Mars.

They got down from the bus and moved to the entrance with their luggage.

A few of them got on the lift-like structure and the lift man pressed the button and they were inside the building. When they got out the liftman went to the other side and brought a few more inside.

Disha explained this is for the purpose of not leaking the atmosphere in the building.

There are double occupancy rooms and Nancy and Leena occupied a room. After some time Reetu came and told them she got the side-by-room and she is with Shreya. She will be coming in a minute.

The four of them sat and chitchatted until called for dinner.

Reetu explained to them that the food would be prepared outside the building and was brought here. It will be different when we are travelling. Slowly you will be introduced to the food served on the spaceship.

After dinner, they went and sat in the lounge. A few ladies came and introduced themselves. Samantha, Anupama, Chaya and Sandhya were among them.

They sat around and exchanged stories. Nancy and Leena did not tell them about reading the books and their knowledge about the timelines. But told them about their other experiences.

After spending two hours conversing they retired to their rooms.

Nancy and Leena got up with an announcement to come to the training centre in half an hour in a group of 5 candidates.

They readied and waited for the next announcement.

Disha came to their door and called them and sent 5 at a time.

There is a moving floor leading to the training centre. It took them 5 minutes to reach the centre. They were taken to a room, where they saw the people floating in the air can be seen through the glass. This group was taken to the next room and when they stood in the centre, they started to raise slowly into the air as the gravity was reduced.

They were kept this way for some time and lowered to the ground.

From there they were taken to Lunch Room for breakfast.

After breakfast, they were taken to another room. There were chairs and sofas to sit or lay.

Disha explained this would be the gravity on the spaceship. You get accustomed to the gravity and atmosphere.

They sat down on the sofa and there were books and tv for timepass. Leena picked a book from the shelf and Nancy picked the remote and started watching a movie. Reetu sat beside Nancy and started watching the movie.

After some time they were called for lunch.

Disha explained on the spaceship there won't be a fixed time like on earth. So, we will follow this kind of time on the ship.

After lunch, they were taken to another room. Where they felt the gravity is lower. Here there are different kinds of jobs the candidates can take up. There is building the houses from pre-fabricated materials. There are gardening tools, where they can grow their own food. There are instructions on how to do the gardening. One can adopt an area and do the gardening they like.

The team will inspect the gardening and you can try out different options while at the training centre. This will be helpful once they are on Mars.

Shreya came to Leena and said, “let us go and check the lab. They have retained a part of the lab for research here.”

They went to the door marked Lab and Shreya flashed her badge and the door opened. There is a mini lab there. Shreya said, “we will have the same lab on the Spaceship. Then we have to take the lab to the ground and rebuilt it there.”

They checked the instruments and returned to the floor.

They saw Rakesh and Preethi helping a group to build pre-fabricated houses. They stood there watching them build. Even experienced people are having trouble building them on low-gravity floors.

They went back to their room. After a few minutes, they were served tea in their room. For the first time, they felt the effect of drinking tea in a low-gravity environment

They spent the whole day like this in different gravity environments. At last, they were directed to the area where their vitals were checked and went sent back to the living quarters.

Now the floor was moving towards the building. Each one stood up on the moving escalator and reached the quarters.

Nancy and Leena freshened up and reached the lounge.

One by one others joined them and they started exchanging their experiences and what work they took up.

Nancy and Leena sat there listening to them, trying to understand their mindset.

Leena felt she is being watched. She looked around the hall, there is no one watching her. She looked for hidden cameras, but she did not find any. She whispered in Nancy's ear, "someone is watching us."

Nancy looked around and said, "I can't find anyone. We will inform security. Someone might be using the invisible cloak and watching us."

Leena said, "are you sure someone is using an invisible cloak?"

Nancy replied, "I think someone stole those boxes. There is a great possibility, we have seen how they were using the transporters."

Leena said, "if they are using the transporter, there is every chance they would know about others."

Reetu came to them and asked what are you discussing so seriously.

Nancy said, "Nothing, we are talking about anyone watching us secretly."

Reetu said, "I am sure there are no secret cameras here, only in the training centre to keep a tab on accidents."

Leena said, “we are not talking about cc cameras, I felt someone is watching us and found no one.”

Reetu said, “when you told me this, I also felt the same. The hair on my neck stood up.”

Leena said, “let us speak with security and see.”

Reetu said, “I will speak with him.”

Leena and Nancy got up and went back to their room.

The next day they did not feel about the invisible person so they did not complain and they forgot about him.

This way they spend a month at the training centre and returned to their places of residence.

Next group of candidates are sent to the training centre for the training.

Disha was fully busy with the training of the candidates and did not get any time to meet with her YouTube members.

Phani and Bunty left the YouTube recordings for the time being scared of the gang from the forest.

They are not short of work as Rashmi put them to work to search for her daddy and others from other timelines.

Mike waited for Nancy to return from the training to fix the wedding. They fixed a date for the wedding to be performed in Goa.

Disha informed Nancy that to get Stephany to accompany them, she had to be a spouse of the team member.

So when Nancy received confirmation that she is selected for the trip, she decided to marry Stephany to make her part of the trip.

So they all went to Goa for Mike's wedding and were informed that Nancy would wed Stephany too.

Phani and Bunty went to enjoy the Goa beaches and Disha would reach by the Wedding time.

Sherry can't say anything in the matter of Nancy and Stephany's wedding. Nancy convinced her that she had to marry Stephany to get her a seat on the Mars Trip only. Jessica knew the truth but did not tell her mom.

They called Anne for the wedding as they want to consult her on the matter of Kumar, who has provided her with the story.

They all sat on the beach and asked Anne about her interaction with Kumar. How she met him and what happened later on and how he told the story.

Anne told them her story with Kumar. She was going from Bangalore to Delhi by train when Kumar got in at Hyderabad to go to Delhi. He sat on his seat and was working on his laptop. Anne asked him what job he does. Kumar replied he is a software developer and going to join Timex in Noida, and he asked Anne what does she do?

Anne replied she is going to join an MBA at Noida university.

She asked him what are you working on?

Kumar replied I am working on some stories. Anne asked him how he get inspiration for his books.

Kumar said, he had been getting some dreams like he was in different situations and he is compiling them into different stories. If Anne is interested he had some storyline for her. He told her the story of a Kumar who started his life in Bombay, and he did a diploma and joined as a typist. He met two girls at a tiffin centre and to take revenge on one girl's father he maintains a relationship with her. The second girl was in a problem and he takes her and puts her in a room. The first girl comes to him to claim to be pregnant. He calculates she can't be pregnant with him but he did not want to abandon her and takes both girls and goes to Vijayawada. There he meets with Bob who sends them into the future and gives them a tiffin centre to run. When the coronavirus breaks and it is evident the whole country will be shut down he goes to claim his inheritance and finds he inherits lots of businesses. The first girl dies in sleep. The story concludes with him being given some futuristic items to be developed by Bob.

This story he narrates to Anne from time to time when they meet near her university which is near his place of work.

When Anne finished the book, she gave a copy to Nancy who is her favourite lecturer at the university.

This way the book fell into the hands of Mike.

When the wedding finished, Leena and Rashmi gifted Mike and Stephany a package trip to Switzerland for their honeymoon.

Nancy and Stephany wanted to spend time in Goa only.

Disha went away citing urgent work with the training.

Others spent some time in Goa and returned to Hyderabad.

After a week they received communication that they will be required to attend full training, which means every one of the selected candidates would be present during the training exercises.

This time Nancy and Stephany both reached the training centre with Leena and others.

Now Leena shifted her room to Reetu's and Disha roomed with Shreya.

Now the daily routine has changed to training on spaceship-type gravity. For the duration of the trip what kind of activities they are required to do?

Leena and Shreya were given access to the lab and were asked to check a few inmates daily, so they can cover all the members in a week.

They need to check the member's vitals and take blood and urine samples weekly for the members. Check their blood if they are suffering from any kind of illness. In-house doctors Maithili and Dhruv would help them.

For the group, this is the first time they get to meet Dhruv.

When they met him they were surprised, he looked so young. He was looking like a 15-year-old. Reetu asked, what happened? Where are your moustache and beard?

Dhruv replied, "last year I had a mysterious disease and I lost my moustache and beard."

Leena and Nancy understood that he must have returned to his younger self.

Leena asked, “so where are your mom and dad?”

Dhruv replied, “they are staying in Hyderabad.”

Leena asked, “Where in Hyderabad?”

Dhruv replied, “we have a bungalow near Obul Reddy High School.”

Leena said, “we also have a house near the school.”

Then they met 10 couples who are required to be on Mars for at least 5 years. They can't return before that time. There is a possibility if they want to return, they can take the next flight back after the completion of the said period.

Leena asked, “what made you decide to spend 5 years on Mars?”

Mr Sengupta replied, “we wanted to go on an adventurous trip, and when we got this opportunity we decided to take this trip. I will be with my wife and money apart we are excited to spend five years away from the general public.”

Mr Rajput said, “we want to get away from this life on earth.”

Nancy asked, “do you think the atmosphere on Mars would be any different?”

Mr Rajput said, “whatever it might be, something different it would be.”

Leena asked, “Disha, where are the VIP guests?”

Disha replied, “they would be coming only on Sundays until we depart.”

Leena and Reetu were sleeping in their room on separate single beds.

Leena woke up with a flash on her face.

She opened her eyes and looked around. She did not find anyone in the dim light. After a while, she saw the door opening and closing. But she did not see anyone coming or going. She waited a minute and woke up Reetu.

Reetu asked sleepily, "what happened?"

Leena said, "someone came into our room."

Reetu asked, "did you not lock the door?"

"I locked the latch but not bolted the door."

Reetu asked, "so, you mean to say someone opened with the keys?"

"It is possible, who would have an extra set of keys?"

Reetu replied, "it must be with the estate officer. Maybe Disha knows. But, what happened to scare you?"

"That person took photos of us. I woke by the flashlight on my face."

Reetu said, "I will put the bolt on, you try to go back to sleep." She got up and put the bolt and locked the latch and came and sat on her bed.

Reetu said, "all these windows are closed and shut to prevent accidental opening of the windows, else the atmosphere may get compromised."

Leena said, "that could be the reason they could not take photos through the windows, over that we keep the

curtains closed. Maybe he must be a candidate trying to send information out.”

Reetu asked. “who could be it?”

Leena replied, “someone who wants to compromise the trip and get it cancelled. Maybe your aunt Loveleen can help out on this.”

Reetu asked, “how can she help out?”

I heard she had the ability to see through the shape-shifting cloak, maybe she can see through the invisible cloak.”

Reetu asked, “how do you know? How can she have the ability to see through these gadgets?”

Leena replied, “I read somewhere.”

Reetu looked at Leena astonishingly, “how can you read about her? Did they release books on uncle and aunt’s lives or what?”

Leena said, “not released but, our dad wrote about them in a series of books.”

Reetu said, “I don’t know about a single book, and you are talking of a series of books. But, where are they, I have seen them for more than a year?”

Leena said, “same here about our dad. Recently we came across some of his writings on his laptop, when Nancy came across one of the books written by one of her students. When we enquired, we were told she got the story idea from our dad. Then we checked his laptop and found the books.”

Reetu asked, “does your dad knows our uncle?”

Leena hesitated and replied, "I don't know what kind of relationship they had. I don't even know if they ever met. We only came to know about his books after he went missing for more than a year."

Reetu asked, "did he not contact you after going away? Our aunt has also not contacted us since they went abroad. Until they called me for the space trip, I did not know what they are doing. Maybe they made a trip to Mars to see the situation there."

Leena asked. "don't you know your uncle went to Mars and returned?"

Reetu said, "did uncle go to Mars? I did not even know that?"

Then it struck Leena that this Reetu might be from another timeline than the one where Kumar went to Mars."

Leena said, "I also don't know, I thought he went to Mars, so he was planning for this Mars Trip. You might be correct, they must have gone to Mars to check up. Did you not check with Dhruv about them."

Reetu said, "I did not think of that, let us speak with him tomorrow. Let us go back to sleep"

After breakfast, they got hold of Disha.

They explained to her what happened in the night.

Disha told them we will inform the security team. They went in search of Rakesh. They did not find Rakesh or Preethi. They found their Assistant Allison.

Disha explained to her the situation about an intruder.

Allison said, “how there can be an intruder, it could be one of the members.”

Disha said, “that could be true, but why would a member take photos?”

Allison asked, “do you mean to say there is a spy in our midst?”

Leena said, “that is what we are fearing. Don’t we have an in charge here who can be contacted in an emergency?”

Allison said, “there is no one in charge here, we put the reports online only. We receive instructions through messages only.”

Disha said, “then you report this incident here, and let us see what decision they take.”

They came back to the room and sat down.

Disha said, “Is there a way to find someone using the invisible cloak? Let us check with Nancy and Stephany.”

So, they went over to Nancy’s room and knocked.

After three knocks there is a call from who is at the door.

Leena said, “I am Leena with Disha and Reetu.”

After two minutes Nancy opened the door and they all went inside and sat where ever possible. Stephany came from the bathroom and sat beside Nancy.

After pleasantries, Leena said, “someone came into our and photographed us. We suspect they are using the invisible cloak. Do we have any references of invisibility cloak users getting exposed?”

Nancy said, “we did not read of any such incident.”

Leena said, “maybe because they have not used that.”

Stephany asked, “how can we check the weakness of the invisibility cloak from here?”

Leena said, “we have to take help from outside, I will ask Rashmi to check it out. They have access to Invisibility cloaks and they can check its weaknesses.”

Leena called Rashmi and explained the situation and asked her to check the invisibility cloak to find its weakness to find out the persons using it. It could be some kind of light or possibly water or some chemical.

After two days a scanner is installed on the way to the training centre from the quarters with cc tv cameras.

Disha was asked to keep a record of the people going to the training centre.

After a week Disha came back saying a couple who were selected for general population training were caught with the camera.

When asked how they found out about the couple, Disha replied, “they must have used the scanner and cc tv cameras. When their room was checked, they found the camera with the photos taken of the members. They also took photos of VIP members too. Maybe their intention was to find out about the VIPs. They were taken away by the security for interrogation.”

Nancy asked, “can we sleep peacefully? From that day we were scared to sleep on the same bed.”

Disha said, “I think it is safe now, better to lock the door with a bolt too. That way no one can enter your room.”

After 3 months of training, 50 candidates were transferred to another facility waiting to be sent on Mars Tour.

Disha was selected as the coordinator for the trip. Still, they were in dark about the pilot.

PART 5

Mike's marital life

Chapter 1

It was after six months since Nancy and the party were sent on the tour of Mars. Even though Mike missed Nancy, Jessica tried to fill the gap.

Mike completed his classes and reached his house. He parked the car and rang the doorbell.

Instead of Jessica, Sherry opened the door.

Mike said, "hi mom, how come you are here without intimation."

Sherry replied, "Jessy is not feeling well, so she called me."

Mike asked with worry written all over his face, "what happened, let her be taken to the hospital."

Sherry smiled and said, "nothing serious, only a morning sickness."

Mike asked, "morning sickness?"

Sherry said, "I think she is pregnant, take her to the doctor and get her checked."

"Why doctor? I will get a test strip from the pharmacy. If Jessy having any problems we can take her to the doctor. If pregnancy is confirmed we need to have scanning and other tests."

Sherry said, "ok you do that", and went to her room.

Mike went to a nearby pharmacy, brought a pregnancy test strip and gave it to Jessica."

She went to the bathroom came back and happily said the test is positive.

Mike kissed her and thanked her.

Mike called a few friends for a party on Saturday evening.

Phani, Bunty and Rashmi came together and congratulated Mike and Jessica.

Phani and Bunty went to the party area. Rashmi sat with Jessica and asked did she receive any information about Nancy.

Jessica said, "Disha said once they reach Mars they can communicate. Until then we have to wait.

Jessica asked, "Rashmi, your sister Leena is elder than you, no?"

Rashmi replied, "yes, she was elder than me by 5 years."

Jessica asked, "then why she is not married? What kind of marriage she wanted, family fixed or love marriage?"

Rashmi said, "I don't know, we never had that conversation."

My Mom would want her to have family fixed. But if she wanted to marry someone she liked, she won't have any problem. This coronavirus had spoilt all my mom's plans."

Jessica asked, "How corona spoilt your mom's plans."

Rashmi replied, "some relatives brought some proposals. Mom thought to consider them. Then this pandemic stuck, and Leena was busy finding medicines and vaccines. Earlier she was travelling to and fro from home to work. After the first quarantine, she stayed at official quarters and stopped coming home. I completed my degree with difficulty."

Sherry came and joined them, she asked, “what are you discussing so seriously?”

Jessica said, “we are talking about her sister Leena.”

Sherry asked, “is she the one who went to Mars with Nancy?”

Jessica said, “yes, she was not married, now when will she return and when she will get married?”

Sherry said, “she might not even find a suitable groom on Mars.”

Jessica asked, “what about Dr Dhruv?”

Rashmi said, “he is like our younger brother.”

Sherry asked, “how come, he is Punjabi, no?”

Rashmi said, “his half-blood is South Indian.”

Sherry asked, “how do you know about him?”

Rashmi said, “I know about his whole family history.”

Then from the kitchen team, a boy came asking for a masala item. Sherry said, “I am coming”, and went over to arrange for the masalas.

Sherry asked, “what is your story with Phani and Bunty? You did come with them, no.”

Rashmi said, “they are Disha’s friends. They helped us a lot after we returned from Mumbai. Earlier they were doing YouTube videos, but after they saw the murder on cc tv cameras, they stopped going into shootings. Nowadays, Disha is also not there, so they are helping me with research.”

“What kind of Research?”

Rashmi said, “we are trying to unravel the mystery of our missing dad. Same thing with Disha’s dad and others.”

“Who are the others?”

Rashmi said, “that is what we are trying to find out. If our dad is hiding or kidnapped or anything like that. We are sure there are some very dangerous people looking for him.”

“Mike was telling me that your dad wrote some books and it could be the reason he went into hiding.”

Rashmi’s voice trembled, “It could be anything, it could also mean he is no longer with us. Otherwise, why did he not contact us after 2 years?”

Jessica asked, “how could that be possible? Where would he go without a trace?”

“In his writings, there was a talk of a merger in the year 2021. There is a possibility that he could be lost in that merger.”

Jessica asked, “you mean to say those books could be a reality?”

“From his writings, my dad lost everything by the year-end of 2014. Then my mom and dad had a fallout and he started to live separately. When corona struck he was in very bad shape. At this time his friend Nandini came to his rescue. She got him treated and he became normal again and started working again. Then he sold off his software and brought a house for us and left us some money. After 2021 along with our dad she also disappeared with her kids and left us, the hospital, her house and everything. Now, do you know Disha is the step-sister of Dr Dhruv? And Dhruv, Disha and Reetu Khanna are all from different timelines than us.”

“What happened to the hospital?”

Rashmi replied, “the trust that runs the hospital asked us to appoint directors. I am thinking of asking Mike for help.”

“How can he help you?”

Rashmi replied, “Mike is a Management Professor, he should know something about management. I want to take his help in setting the management.”

Jessica said, “I don’t know if he had practical knowledge, you can try him out.”

Rashmi said, “thanks for approving his giving time to us. See you later.”

Rashmi looked at the phone and said, “bye, I called a driver from the hospital to drop us off.” She went to Phani and Banti, “come, I called for a driver to drop us off.” They went away, first driver dropped Rashmi off and then dropped Phani and Banti at Banti’s house.

Rashmi came out of the University going toward her car, which she recently brought. She asked the hospital to provide a temporary driver to drive her around.

Rashmi was about to enter the car, she saw Mike coming toward the parking. He saw her and waved. She went toward him and said, “hi Professor”, seeing another student approached him and she stopped speaking.

Mike said, “Hi Hrithik, what can I do for you?”

Hrithik said, “sir, can you give me some reference book names?”

Mike said, “ok, I will give them tomorrow in the class, so everyone can note them”, and turned towards Rashmi and asked, “new car?”

Rashmi said, “I am having trouble booking cabs, so I brought a car and asked the hospital for providing a driver too until I could learn to drive. Sir, why don’t you come to advise our hospital.”

Mike said, “Jessy was telling me that only, you were speaking to her about helping in Managing the hospital.”

Hrithik who was silently listening to these two said, “sir, does Rashmi has a hospital?”

Rashmi said, “yes it was passed on to us by our Aunt.”

Hrithik asked, “Rashmi can you get me a job there? I am in need of a job very badly.”

Rashmi asked, “what kind of work do you want to do?”

Hrithik said, “any kind of work.”

Rashmi asked, “do you know the driving car.”

Hrithik said, “yes, we have a family car too, I normally drive that.”

Rashmi asked, “do you want to work as my PA? I can give you independent charge of some works.”

Hrithik said, “I don’t have a problem.”

Mike said, “I can give you a day in a week. Will Saturday do?”

Rashmi said, “yes sir, I will give you a call later.”

Rashmi moved towards her car, Hrithik came behind her and asked, “are you going to the hospital?”

Rashmi replied, “yes.”

Hrithik asked, "can I come with you and see the hospital?"

Rashmi said, "let us go, I will show you the work. You can come full-time after the exams."

On Saturday Mike, Rashmi and Hrithik sat in the board room. Rashmi was showing Mike the workings of the hospital. Various departments and their workings and Income from each department. There are income-generating departments like Out Patients dept., In-Patient Dept, Diagnostics, Operation Theatre, Emergency, Pharmacy, etc.

There are departments like Maintenance, House-Keeping, and Stores, these are where the money goes.

Mike said, "now we have to increase the revenues from the departments and we have to cut down the expenses from other departments."

"Check this Nursing and house-keeping, we think we don't get any income from these, but they are required for most of the departments to run. We have to find out how to manage these resources."

"Pharmacy should be treated as a separate entity. It is where we get the highest returns. Because the margins are high. To transfer part of the profits to the hospital we can issue the medicines and surgical items to the hospital at cost. If the patient paying to get them, they can give them at MRP."

"Then there are ways Pharmacy people can siphon off money from the pharmacy. They can ask the dealers to sell at higher prices and then pocket the difference. They can ask the dealers to give invoices without actually

supplying, pocketing the whole bill amount. Then there are people who sell costly medicine to known patients at a cheaper price and pocket a percentage of the amount. So we have to plug the holes in draining of money.”

“Then we have to audit the accounts. By auditing, we can find the Loopholes and stop them.”

Mike gave pointers to Rashmi and they both went to Mike’s house, so Rashmi can visit Jessica, who is in full term.

Rashmi invited Jessica to deliver at Rao’s hospital, every care would be taken.

Jessica agreed and they went to stay at Rashmi’s house to be close to the hospital.

Phani got a call from Disha’s mom Sakshi. She was distressed, Phani asked, “what happened?”

Sakshi said, “you know my elder daughter Rachana was married.”

Phani said, “We did not know Disha had an elder sister.”

Sakshi said, “ok, she was staying with her husband Raj at Nellore and his parents stay at Vizag. Now Raj works in a government job. He went to Vizag to write an exam and after the exams, he came back home to his house there and was reading in his room.”

Phani asked, “so, what happened.”

Sakshi said, “their house was so old, it must have been built 50 years back. The part of the ceiling where Raj was studying fell down. He was hurt on his right side. They

have put him in the hospital. Now I have to go and visit him.”

Phani said, “Aunty if you want I will accompany you to Vizag.”

Sakshi said, “I will book the tickets and inform you.”

Phani said, “I think Rashmi also wants to accompany us, I will confirm her coming with us.”

Sakshi said, “you confirm whether Rashmi would come or not, and I will get the tickets booked.”

Sakshi booked them tickets in Tatkal after receiving confirmation from Phani about Rashmi coming with them.

The three of them reached Vizag by the next morning.

After freshening at the nearby hotel they reached the hospital where Raj is admitted.

After meeting Rachana they came to know lots of information about her in-laws. Until now they did not let Rachana speak to her mother. Whenever she called her mother, they would be hovering around her.

According to what Rachana said, Raj has already married a girl named Joy. They have troubled their family and Joy. So Joy divorced Raj. Now when the alliance was brought to Sakshi they hid the fact and as Sakshi from Manali, she did not have any relatives to get the verification done. At first, Rachana did not mind their hiding the fact of his previous marriage, as they said they had a fight within a fortnight and they separated. After some time she started getting more information about their nefarious activities. Raj’s brother is hot-headed and his wife is a

calculating bitch. Over that she is from the agency area and she would use Blackmagic to control her in-laws. Her parents would supply her with these items which were prepared with black magic. He would not listen to Rachana and he would listen to his mother and ask her to follow what his mother would say, even if it is disgusting food habits. They are so cheapskates, they would bring spoilt vegetables because they are cheap. They would spend Raj's money on their own comforts, they don't even buy a normal chappal for Rachana. Raj is the kind of person who would ask their parent's permission to even buy a kerchief and they are the kind of people who would say no. He even takes their permission to buy water cans and how much milk to be brought. Now even Raj would treat his niece as his own and he would treat her over his own son.

His credit card is with his parents and his brother would use it and the bills have to be paid by Raj. His brother left his software job and joined a job which the government provides to SSC failures as an employment guarantee scheme. His brother's wife also joined the same and they would siphon off money meant for poor and old people. Nowadays Raj becomes violent when Rachana refused to go to his Vizag house. Rachana came to Vizag only because he was hurt in the accident. She is at her wit's end.

They went to visit Raj in his bed. His right side was damaged in the accident. Rashmi and Sakshi went to visit the doctor. After enquiring with the doctor about his condition, the doctor said a part of his right hand and right leg had to be amputated.

Sakshi said, "we need a second opinion. The doctor said you can have it."

Now Rashmi said, we should shift Raj to Hyderabad to put him in Rao's hospital.

Rashmi said, "I can arrange to transfer him to Hyderabad easily."

Sakshi said, "how can you do that?"

Rashmi said, "Phani can you ask Banti to come with a transporter machine by flight."

Phani said, "we can arrange that."

Rashmi said, "ask Banti to get it immediately, and we will arrange for Raj to be sent to Hyderabad. This way we can reduce Raj's dependence on his parents."

Phani called Banti and with the transporter arrived in 5 hours at Vizag hospital. They got Raj's discharge and they built the transporter in the doctor's room and asked Mike to switch on the transporter at Rashmi's house and sent them. After Raj, Rashmi and Sakshi were transported after giving instructions to Phani to collect the transporter and reach Hyderabad.

From there they shifted him to Rao's Hospital. There they consulted an orthopaedic surgeon. His opinion matched the doctor's advice of Vizag hospital. So Rachana signed the consent papers for the amputation of his leg and hand.

By the time surgery was completed on Raj, Jessica was admitted to the hospital with labour contractions.

Now after an hour, the doctors decided to do a c-section as the foetus had a bowel moment and had passed stool in the stomach.

They not only had to c-section, but they also had to call a neonatologist and had to resituate the baby. After all

these medical emergencies were completed, they brought a baby boy and handed him over to Jessica.

Mike said, “we did a good thing to bring Jessy to a hospital, instead of a small clinic near our house. They would not be able to handle this emergency. And thanked Rashmi for suggesting their hospital.”

After 3 days Jessica was discharged and they went back to their house after a week.

Now Raj was in a bad position with his arm and leg got amputated. With the help of Rachana, he sent an email to his superiors at his office. They asked him to send the doctor’s report on his condition. Seeing the report, they discharged him from duties. When Raj’s father came to know about this he got Raj’s brother to apply for his job on compassionate grounds.

Knowing about this Rachana was furious. She contested their claim. This brought friction between Raj’s parents and Rachana.

As Disha was away on the Mars trip, Rachana and Raj stayed at Sakshi’s house. Now Raj was fully dependent on Rachana for his everyday needs. Now at the time of wedding Sakshi put a lakh of rupees in Rachana’s bank account. When enquired about the money, it was found that Raj had transferred the amount to his father’s account and asked him to put in a fixed deposit.

“Why did he have to transfer to his father?”, asked Sakshi.

Rachana replied, “that is what I can’t understand, if not to let them use the money, why he would transfer the money? He must be treating it like dowry.”

Sakshi said, “ask them to transfer the money back, you need them for treatment.”

When Rachana asked for the money, Raj’s father said they have used all the money for his treatment. Now when discharging Raj at Vizag, Sakshi paid the whole bill over that, it is a government hospital, and Raj had access to the Central Government health scheme. Where the need for paying the bills comes up.

Now they did not inform the people who rented the other portions about the accident, instead, they made a story of an accident somewhere else.

From this or that source, they came to know about the accident in the house, they vacated the house and complained to the police about the state of the house and for Raj’s father not informing them about the state of the house and asked for compensation.

Now instead of receiving monthly rent, they were pressurised by others. Raj’s father gave bribes and got Raj’s brother the job Raj was discharged from.

Now Rachana was burdened with an invalid husband with no job.

Now fed up with Raj and Raj’s parents, she told Phani and Banti to drop Raj at his house in Vizag. They took him in the van and dropped him in Vizag and Rachana filed for divorce on the grounds of cheating and cruelty by him and his parents and brother for getting the job she was supposed to have.

Now Rachana joined Rao’s hospital as Billing Manager. Which is a responsible post. At nursing stations they enter the billing items, these have to be coordinated with

case sheets at the time of billing and bills have to be prepared.

Now when Rachana came to know he is planning to ask for maintenance from Rachana at the time of divorce proceedings, she changed the divorce suit to cancel the marriage, as he had married her by cheating and not informing her about his marital status and cheated her by taking 1 lakh of rupees from her account as dowry. Raj's whole family is a toxic family.

Later it has come to be known that Raj's father sold off the house at the cost of land. Raj's brother cheated them with the help of his wife and took the whole money in the name of getting a house purchased and put it in his wife's name. Raj's father had to pay his sister's balance money as part of their inheritance. In the course of time, she threw them out citing it is her house. Now Raj and his parents are staying at a nearby ashram, run by Swamy Kumar Trust.

Now the court, instead of giving a decree of divorce, had nullified the marriage and asked Raj to pay her damages.

Chapter 2

Mike and Jessica named their son Justin and registered him as Justin Michael D'Costa.

They celebrated Justin's first birthday at their house.

They all assembled at Mike's house for the party, Anita asked what is Rachana's story.

Rashmi told them Rachana's story.

"As I have referenced Dad's books again, I came to know of Joy's story. She was the daughter of Kumar and Loveleen and the sister of Atul. Kumar got Joy married to Raj, and when the alliance was brought to him by his cousin, he believed in his cousin and married his daughter Joy to Raj. Now Raj started to show his true colours and would ignore Joy and started harassing her. He would stay in Bombay and he would leave her at Vizag. He started using Joy's credit cards for himself or for his family without distinction. Then Raj's family started asking Kumar indirectly about dowry or what is he giving Joy. Kumar explained to them he had put the money in a trust and Joy would only receive it after a certain time. They stormed out and Raj started behaving oddly after he left the job in Bombay and went over to Vizag without informing Kumar. After some incidents at Vizag, Joy was brought to Bombay with the help of some relatives at Vizag, Raj's whole attitude has come in front. Kumar filed for divorce and he brought Raj to his knees. Now all this has not happened in our timeline, our dad did not do all this so, it must be some other timeline. They must have been dropped in this timeline in the merger.

Sakshi said, "whatever, do they need to enter our lives?"

Jessica asked, "so what are you doing now?"

Rachana replied, "I am working with Rao's hospital as Billing Manager."

Jessica asked, "so what happened to Joy?"

"We don't know anything about them. We don't know anything about many of the families."

Jessica asked, "but Sakshi how did you believe them when they did not tell about themselves?"

Sakshi replied, "one thing he is young, he is just under 25 when the wedding is fixed. We could not expect him to get married and divorced. Another thing is we don't know many people around here. Surya got me a house here, that is the only reason after selling off the hotel we landed here. Until recently I did not understand why the hospital was damaged. I was in dark about lots of things."

Rashmi asked, "from our reading we understand Surya Kumar was the father of Disha, but we did not read about Rachana. Is she the product of merging?"

Sakshi said, "Surya Kumar was father to both Rachana and Disha, he had run the hotel with me after my brother's death. Then at the time of the earthquake, he went missing. Then I remembered Surya brought me the house here in Hyderabad, I sold off the hotel and came here."

Mike asked, "what that could mean? How Sakshi's life is different from the book?"

Rashmi said, "It could be because of the merging. I read in one of the books, where Kumar went from 1983 to 2017, and he found some inconsistencies. Like he found the people from dead Kumar's timeline, but his sister

Revathi acted as if he is his brother who was missing 25 years back. When Kumar who went to Mars read the story of that, he said that could be because of timeline merging. So Sakshi who married Surya Kumar had two daughters or at least had Rachana. Then when the timelines merged they all come together. That is the only conclusion I can make.”

Mike said, “when you tell that way I could understand the situation.”

Rashmi said, “as time progresses we might be meeting more people like this. But one thing I can’t understand is why they are in hiding. But we came to know about an Ashram near Vizag, which must have belonged to Swamy Kumar. We better go and check it out.”

Rashmi asked Phani and Banti to accompany her to Vizag for verifying the Ashram. As she wanted to find out who is running it on the pretext of checking Raj and his parents.

They went over to Vizag in Rashmi’s car. By the time they reached Vizag, it was 4 pm.

They went and met Rachana’s ex-husband and enquired about him. He was accusing Rachana of abandoning him.

Rashmi asked him about their assets, they were talking so much of. Raj did not have an answer to that.

Rashmi said, “I will speak with the people running the ashram and offer them some donations so they will look after Raj and his family.”

They went to meet with the management. The door was open to the office room. They went inside and a man was

sitting behind the table. He said, “please come in and sit down, what can I do for you?”

Rashmi said, “we came to offer donations for the ashram. We would like to know more about the ashram.”

The board in front of them mentioned ‘Swamy Sachithananda, Manager’. He said, “we were set up by Swami Kumar, in the year 1990.”

Rashmi asked, “Where is Swami Kumar?”

Swamy replied, “I have not met him for the last two years. But we receive instructions on running the ashram and about its activities.”

Rashmi asked, “how are you placed for the money to run the ashram?”

“We are a little short on cash nowadays, our earlier cashier is missing and we can’t open the safe”, pointing to the safe behind him.

Rashmi asked if you can’t access the cash in the safe, how are you running the ashram nowadays?”

Swamy said, “we don’t have a problem with food items. But some maintenance has to be done to the huts, that is the reason we had to look for donations.”

Rashmi looked around to see if any other people were present.

Satisfied they were genuine people she said, “I might help you out there. I am Rashmi, Swami Kumar’s daughter. I might be able to open the safe for you.”

He looked at her as if he could not believe her. He said, “I know swami had a son Atul and a daughter Reena and a goddaughter Preethi. I met the other but never met

Rashmi. So, I could not recognise you. But how can you help us out.”

Rashmi said, “I might be able to open the safe.”

Swamy asked, “but how can you it has the latest safety features.”

Rashmi said, “let me try to open it.” She went to the safe opened the cover on the hand scanner and put her hand on it. It opened another fingerprint scanner. Rashmi touched her finger to her mouth and put the finger on the scanner, which released the lock with a click.

She opened the door and removed a lakh and gave it to Swamy and said, “I think for the time being this would be enough, if you need any more let me know”, and handed him her visiting card.

She wanted them to trust her before she can look into the affairs of the ashram.

Jessica wanted to visit Goa to attend the wedding of her friend’s younger sister. So, Mike booked her a ticket on a first-class flight. Mike said he could not accompany her as there would be exams during her visit.

Mike dropped her at the airport and came back home.

Knowing he is free at home, Phani and Banti reached Mike’s house on Friday night with a bottle of whiskey. Mike said he doesn’t drink. Phani said if you don’t drink why don’t you drive, we are planning to make a video.

Mike asked, “why you were not doing videos?”

Phani said, “after finding that house in the forest we were scared to make videos and over that Disha went on a Mars trip.

Mike asked, “who replaced Disha.”

Phani said, “Ravali would be coming with us this time.”

Mike agreed to drive for four or five hours.

They picked up Ravali on the way and went over to the place where they will be shooting the video. It is in the jungles near Khammam, which is an hour’s drive from Khammam.

They reached a small hamlet around 5:30 am. They had tea and biscuits there and enquired about the house nearby where they suspected the devil lived.

They got the directions and went in search of the house.

As usual, they fitted the cameras and came back to the van to prepare lunch. They let Ravali sit at the monitors and went back to the house to explore. They checked for any hidden doors or any transporter present. They did not find anything there, so they came back to the van. They prepared their dinner by 5 pm and sat inside the van locked the doors.

There was nothing on the monitors until 1 am.

Ravali wanted to go for the urinals. So, Phani took her a little distance and stood guard turning to the other side.

He heard a sound from behind and he turned to see Ravali walk past him and he followed her to the van. She went inside and lay on the bed placed there. Mike was sleeping in the front seat. So, he sat beside Banti to watch the monitors.

After a while finding nothing serious on the monitors, Phani asked Banti would you like to sleep.

Banti said, “you take a nap, I will watch the monitors, and I will wake you up later.”

Phani went and lay beside Ravali and went to sleep.

It is almost morning, Banti told Phani he is going to lie down on the bed, lay on the side bed and went to sleep.

Mike got up put tea on the stove and went and relieved. Brushed, and filtered the tea and woke up Phani and Banti to have tea.

Ravali is still sleeping and she does not drink tea.

After completing tea, Phani and Banti went and collected cameras. They heaved a sigh of relief as they had not encountered anything dangerous.

From the time they encountered those monsters in the forest house, they were reluctant to go on video tours. The way two men killed the person they were enquiring with, and these two got scared and were hesitant to do videos.

They started to drive back to the city thinking they were safe but what they don't know about the night, and what they are taking back with them.

They stopped the van at the tea shop in the hamlet and asked the shopkeeper about the devil in the forest and what is its story.

The shopkeeper named Yadayya narrated the story of the family who lived in the house in the jungle.

There lived an old couple and they had three children, one girl and two boys. The younger of the boys died in an accident and the other two were married and living in the city. The woman wanted to bring back their dead son and was doing some black magic in the forest. At first, they would kill the hen they reared in front of the altar they built. When they no longer get their hands on the hen, they started to steal hen from the hamlet and would kill them in front of the altar.

When the hamlet people came to know about the stealing, the head went and warned them not to steal from hamlet and instead they better get them from the forest. When their warnings failed, they put up a barbed fence around the hamlet and electrified the entrance to the hamlet at night.

When the couple tried to enter the hamlet they died by electrocution. Their son and daughter came and completed their last rites. Now the woman has become the devil and roams the forest at night. It is surprising that they have not encountered her in the night.

Phani asked about the son and daughter's details who stay in the city.

Yadaya said, the son stays in Khammam and her daughter stays in Vizag. I heard their house ceiling collapsed, and one of the family members was injured in the accident. Then they have to sell the old house and from the proceeds from the sale they brought another house, and she threw her in-laws from the house and they are living in some ashram.

Phani thought this story seemed familiar.

He checked his gallery and found a photo of Raj's family and showed it to Yadayya and asked if it was her daughter and family.

Yadayya recognised the women's daughter from the photo and replied in affirmative.

Knowing about the devil's story from Yadayya, they paid for the items brought from him and they started back to their house. But Yadayya was not fully truthful about the death of the woman. She was not electrocuted but was killed by the hamlet people fearing what she may do next.

They stopped the van on the way for lunch at a dhaba.

Phani tried to wake up Ravali, but she did not wake up. He saw her breathing regularly, he let her sleep and went to the dhaba for lunch.

Phani and Banti were habituated to this kind of life, but Mike was not habituated to this kind of life. He felt a little thrill in this kind of trip and outdoor spending his time. He called Jessica and spoke to her and his son. He told her he is travelling with Phani and the group, they did not have a signal there, so he could not call earlier.

By the evening they reached Hyderabad and after dropping Mike Phani reached his house.

Phani tried to wake Ravali, but she did not move at all, so he lifted her up and put her on the bed. They thought she would wake up on her own and went into the kitchen to prepare for the night.

Banti removed the chicken from the deep freezer and put it in the water to thaw. He removed eggs and beat them

up to make omelettes. Then he made chicken fry, which took him around 45 minutes. Then he made omelettes and put them on the table.

Phani brought a bottle of Bacardi Rum and two glasses and put them on the table.

Phani poured two glasses and mixed Sprite and called Banti to start the party.

Phani sipped a little and placed the glass on the table to pick a piece of chicken.

He saw Ravali walking out of the bedroom and asked her did you wake up?

Ravali did not reply to him, came to the table picked up the glass in front of Phani gulped and picked up the plate of chicken went and sat on the sofa and started eating the chicken.

Phani looked at Ravali surprisingly and made another peg, drank it and started to attack the omelette on the plate.

Ravali finished her chicken and came to the table and snatched the plate of omelette and went back to the sofa.

Banti came and asked where is chicken, seeing Ravali attacking the plate of omelette.

Phani replied, "Ravali ate it."

Banti asked surprisingly, she had chicken and now omelettes too.

Phani replied, "I don't know it seemed she woke up hungry."

Banti went and brought some chips and nuts to eat with their drinks and continued to have the drinks.

Ravali completed the plate of omelettes and slumped on the sofa.

Banti looked inquiringly at Phani, Phani said she had a peg of my drink.

They completed the bottle and lay on their beds, leaving Ravali on the sofa.

Phani woke up with Ravali shaking him. He half opened his eyes and asked her what?

Ravali said, "I am feeling hungry, give me something to eat."

Phani said, "go and check in the kitchen."

"There is nothing in the kitchen, make something for me."

Deciding she won't leave him without feeding her, Phani got up and went to the kitchen and looked in the cupboard.

Finding chicken noodles, Phani asked, do you want some chicken noodles? Ravali nodded her head.

He put a utensil with water on the stove and waited for it to boil. He looked at Ravali sitting on a chair. She is looking at the floor and her hair is in disarray. She seemed like a devil sitting there.'

Phani shook his head and started preparing the chicken noodles.

He put the plate of noodles on the table and handed her a fork and told her to eat.

She looked at the plate and said, there is no chicken in this.

By this time Phani was fed up with her antics. The whole day she spent sleeping, she drank his peg and devoured the chicken fry and omelettes too. Now she woke him up and demanding food and over that she is saying there is no chicken in noodles.

Phani told her there is chicken in that, and you eat it and went into the hall. Finding the bottle empty on the table, he called Ravali and asked, where is the drink in the bottle?

After opening the bottle, they each had a peg and they left the bottle on the table.

Ravali said, "I drank it."

Phani was surprised and asked, "did you drink the whole bottle raw?"

Ravali asked, "what is raw?"

Phani asked, "without mixing water or a cool drink?"

Ravali replied I don't know.

Phani said nonchalantly, "finish your food and go to sleep." He went inside the bedroom and lay on the bed.

After a few minutes, he felt someone lying on the bed, he did not open his eyes and went back to sleep.

Phani got up around 8 am. He looked for Banti, he readied to go to his office.

Banti said, "I prepared breakfast, you have it and I am leaving for my office."

Phani went to have a bath, and before that he shouted to Ravali to get up, she will be delayed to the office. When he came back Ravali still sleeping. He tried to wake her. Like yesterday, she did not respond to his waking her. He let her be and went and had breakfast.

Before going to the office he shouted at Ravali to get up and went away.

At lunchtime, he called Ravali to see if she had reached the office. She did not pick up the phone.

In the evening while going home he picked up a family pack of chicken biryani and reached home around 7:45 pm.

What did he see when he opened the lock and went inside, Ravali was sitting on the sofa with one leg folded on the sofa and looking at him with angry eyes.

When he reached her, she pulled the bag of biryani from him and started eating from the bag itself.

Phani did not understand Ravali's behaviour. She never acted like this previously. They had been dating for a few months and he did not have much knowledge of her family or her history. He only knows she was from a village in Andhra. She came here to get a job and work in a firm. She was from his caste but he did not think he would marry her as her marriage was fixed in her relatives long back. Ultimately she would return to her village and marry the man fixed by her family.

She completed the pack of biryani meant for 3 people. She drank from the bottle on the table in front of her and slumped on the sofa.

Unable to comprehend what is happening with Ravali, he called Rashmi and explained the situation with Ravali.

Rashmi asked, “did you go anywhere?”

Phani said, “we had been to a forest near Khammam.”

Rashmi said, “she might have caught a bug, you bring her to the hospital we will get her checked.”

Phani said, “ok”, and cut the phone.

Seeing her sleeping, he went to refresh, thinking he will see her status for one more day.

When Phani informed Rashmi that Ravali did not wake up, she sent an ambulance to pick Ravali up to bring her to the hospital.

At Rao’s Hospital, they had done all kinds of tests on Ravali like blood tests, EEG, ECG, and tests that can be performed in a day.

As he had an idea about Ravali’s routine, Phani said he would take her back home and bring her the next day.

So, Rashmi sent her back home in an ambulance.

Phani went and brought her a packet of mutton biryani and handed it to her when she woke up.

Like the previous day, she devoured the mutton biryani and went back to sleep. Rashmi told him we will do CT Scan the next day and she would send the ambulance early, so they can do the CT Scan before the patient rush starts.

Phani got up and prepared breakfast and was ready for taking Ravali to the hospital.

The ambulance was half an hour late, the driver said apologetically, "sorry sir I had to drop a patient and come."

Phani said, "it is ok, come let us take the patient to the hospital."

Seeing Ravali the attender said, "so young, what happened, sir?"

Phani replied, "I don't know, she was sleeping the whole day, and only getting up in the evening for food and again sleeps."

One attender who is older asked another attender, "do you think she was under the black magic spell?"

The second attender asked, "do they sleep like this? What about a ghost took her over?"

The first one said, "I have seen this kind of black magic in our village. They sent a man to a coma and he never woke up."

The second one said, "sir told us she wakes up in the evening to have food. Sir, what kind of food she has?"

Phani replied, "she only eats non-veg."

They both looked at each other. The first one said, "maybe a ghost took her over."

Phani asked, "what is the proof that a ghost took her over?"

The first one asked why are taking her to the hospital.

Phani replied for tests, today they are going to do a CT Scan.

The second one said, "let us take her to the hospital, we will see about ghosts or black magic later."

They put her on a stretcher and took her to the ambulance and placed her in and sat on the seat. Phani got in and sat beside them. The driver started the ambulance and drove to the hospital.

Rashmi said, “we did not find any problem with her, we have to wait for the Blood Culture which should take another day or two. Let us send her to the CT Scan.”

After the CT Scan, Rashmi said, let us wait for the doctor to check the scan reports and come back to us. According to the technician, there does not seem to be any problem. I will allot a bed in emergency for the time being. We will put her there and keep her under observation.”

They transferred Ravali to the bed and Rashmi received a call from the operator. She said, “there is a call from Ashram at Vizag, you were not responding to their calls.”

Rashmi said, “I will call them and check.”

She called the ashram and asked Swamy what happened.

Swamy Sachithananda said, “yesterday afternoon two persons visited our ashram and asked us to open the door beside the safe. When I said I don’t have keys to the room. They asked me to put my hand on the hand scanner, but it did not work. They tried to pry open the door, but they could not do. They went away. Someone came and tried to break open the door in the night. It seems the door did not yield, and when the security came to check up, those people ran away. What shall I do?”

Rashmi said, “we will come and look into the matter”, and cut the call.

Rashmi called Phani and said, “we have to go to Vizag and get the boxes from there if any. If they lay their hands on those materials, I don’t know what they could do with them.”

“We will go with our van and get the materials, if it does not fit in our van, we can put them on transport. But what about Ravali?”

Rashmi said, “we will take her with us, I don’t think it won’t be a problem taking her with us. She doesn’t have any serious ailment.”

“Yes, we can do that. I will get the van and come, we can leave immediately. We can be there by tomorrow morning.”

They reached Vizag by 5:40 am. They had to take Ravali with them as they don’t want to leave her alone. On the way Phani stopped at a Dhaba and brought her a packet of chicken biryani, she ate it and went back to sleep. Sleep has become her routine, she would get up in the evening after 7 and would eat whatever non-veg was offered and would go back to sleep. She would reject any vegetarian food and would throw tantrums for non-veg food.

They stopped the van in front of the office room and seeing them the security went and brought Swamy Sachithananda.

Swamy opened the door and showed the slightly damaged door, which still stands.

Rashmi put her hand on the hand scanner and it revealed the fingerprint scanner. She touched her finger on her

tongue and touched the scanner. It released the door, revealing lots of boxes.

Swamy asked, "what are these boxes?"

Rashmi replied, "they are products produced in our company and used the ashram as a godown. We have to take them away and put them somewhere secure, if they lay their hands on them, I don't know what will happen?"

Swamy asked, "are these some kind of weapons?"

Rashmi replied, "nothing like that. They are all a kind of futuristic products. There is a group of people who wants to create anarchy in the world. They have a hand in the coronavirus pandemic. They want to push the world towards a third world war."

Swamy asked, "where will you put them?"

Rashmi replied, "we have a godown, where we are storing them."

Swamy said, "if you want to shift them, we have some lorries which we use to transfer food items."

Rashmi said, "ok, you arrange for the transportation of these boxes. Phani, you dismantle the transporter. Then we will shift some important boxes in the van reminder we will ship them on the lorries supplied by Swamy."

They came back to the van and found the van empty. Where did Ravali go?

Chapter 3

Mike called Jessica, but she did not take the call, and he waited for an hour and called her again, but still, there is no response from her.

He called Sherry, but her number is switched off. Now he did not know what to do. He called mom and asked about meeting Jessica or if she went to see Justin.

Megan said, "I was not aware Jessica was in Goa. If I had known, I would certainly go to visit to see Justin."

Mike said, "why don't you go visit them?"

Megan said, "certainly, I will go and visit them", and cut the call.

Megan called after two hours and informed Mike that no one is at their house. Their house is locked and neighbours are saying they have not seen them for the last four days.

Mike does not know what to do in this situation. He thought a minute and said I am coming over there.

He immediately booked a late-night flight to Goa.

Phani and Rashmi started to search for Ravali. When asked the security said he saw a girl going towards a hut.

They went towards the direction shown by the security. They found Ravali walking towards a hut. Phani called her, but there is no reaction from Ravali. They both went to her in a sprint.

When they saw her go inside a hut, they also went inside the hut.

What they find is that it's Raj and his parent's hut. Raj's brother and his sister-in-law with his brother's daughter Indira were present there.

Ravali went to Indira and started kissing her passionately asking her how she is doing.

Then Ravali went to Indira's mother whom she referred to as Baby and started to speak to her passionately asking about their well-being and calling her baby.

Then Ravali touched her stomach and asked is it the fourth month?

Baby nodded her head and Ravali said, "your brother will be born to you."

Rashmi looked at Phani and Phani said, "this is the first time she is awake at this time in the last week. Her behaviour seems odd. She is acting as if she knew Raj's family."

Now, Baby seems to recognise her and called her Amma and started to speak with her in the Gypsy dialect. They both exchanged words in the dialect, which Rashmi and Phani couldn't understand, and they came out of the hut and stood outside.

Phani said, "when we went to the forest near Khammam to visit a ghost house in the forest, we enquired before going there, and the villager warned us not to go. On the return, I enquired with the villager and he narrated the ghost's story. Now from that, I understood that the family from the forest is related to Raj's sister-in-law, Baby. They said Baby's mother was doing some Blackmagic and dead from electrocution. We thought we

did not encounter the ghost, but it seems it has taken over Ravali when she went to urinate in the middle of the night. That could be the reason she was acting abnormally.”

They heard a thud sound and went back into the hut.

There Ravali was sprawled on the floor, unconscious.

Phani asked, “what happened?”

Baby said, “I don’t know, she just collapsed.” There is a smirk on her face.

Phani took a bottle of water and splashed a little water on Ravali’s face. She opened her eyes looked around and asked where am I?

Phani replied, “we are at an Ashram near Vizag. Come we will go and have something.” Phani caught Ravali by hand guided her to the dining hall and Rashmi followed them.

At the dining hall, they had breakfast and went back to the office room.

Swamy was getting the boxes loaded on a lorry and he prepared a transfer of goods delivery challan and handed it to the driver of the vehicle.

Phani told the driver to take the boxes carefully and not to leave them unattended at any time.

When they came back to the van, Ravali was talking with someone. But there was no person in front of her.

Phani asked, “who are you talking to?”

Ravali said, “don’t you see, I am talking with Baby’s mother, she is standing in front of me.”

Phani and Rashmi could not see anyone, so Phani assumed she was talking with the ghost.

Phani asked, “what is she telling?”

Ravali said, “she is thanking me to bring her to her daughter. Now she will go with baby back to Vizag and will stay with her.”

Phani said, “good riddance. Now let us go back to Hyderabad.”

By evening 7 pm they reached Vijayawada, there they had dinner at Anita’s relative’s place and had a rest and started to Hyderabad after 2 am. It is the time most of the lorry drivers start to take rest and the roads would be little free.

By 7 am they reached Hyderabad, they dropped Rashmi at her house and Phani and Ravali reached his house.

Mike reached his house and put down the luggage and asked his mother for details about Jessica.

Now he called Jessica’s number again. This time it says this number can’t be reached, same with Sherry.

Mike went with Megan to Sherry’s house and enquired again with the neighbours. One of the neighbours who are a little far from their house said they saw Sherry, Jessica with Justin going away with lots of luggage. They assumed they are shifting their house. After enquiring with nearby real estate agents, it has come out as Sherry put up the house for sale. Mike gave him his card and asked when Sherry contacts him, he wants to buy the house.

Phani took Ravali to her office and dropped her off at the gate and went to his office.

When asked why she missed the office for a week, she replied she was not well and she was taken to hospital and all kinds of tests were done and showed them all the reports.

So, her boss said, “he will grant her sick leave for the time she was absent.”

Ravali started to go through her pending works.

In the evening Phani called her and said I will pick you up at the office.

Around 6:30 pm, Phani picked Ravali up from the office and drove to the house. There was a little traffic on the way and they reached Phani’s house around 8 pm.

Phani stopped his bike outside the gate and Ravali got down and went to open the gate. When she opened the gate Phani drove in and parked the bike.

Ravali closed the gate and came inside finding an old lady sitting on a chair outside in the garden.

Ravali asked, “grandma, who are you, what are you doing here?”

The old lady asked, “can you see me, papa?”

Ravali asked, “why can’t I? I can see you are sitting here.”

Phani came after parking and asked, “who are you talking with.”

Ravali asked, “don’t you see the old lady sitting there?”

Phani asked, ‘where?’

“There in the chair.”

Phani said, "I can't see anyone."

The old lady said to Ravali, "he can't see me, papa."

Why asked Ravali.

"Because I don't exist in this world, I am a soul."

Ravali asked, "are you a ghost?"

"no, I am just a soul, ghosts are lost souls. I came to visit my daughter who used to stay here, it seems they left the house and went away."

Ravali turned to Phani and said, "she is saying she is a soul looking for her daughter." To the old lady, "ok grandma, you better go back and went to the door and opened the lock and went inside.

Phani asked, "can you see ghosts?"

Ravali said, "this is the first time it happened to me."

Mike went back to the real estate agent and asked him about purchasing the house. Mike thought if he buys the house she will come to register the house.

The agent told him the price of the house. Mike said he will contact the buyers and let them know the price and will come back. Mike don't want Sherry to know he was the buyer and called Rashmi and asked her hospital supervisor to offer to buy the house and gave her the number and came back to the agent.

When he returned the agent was speaking on the phone. After cutting the line he said, they have agreed to the price, and I will send them an email about the sale of the property. It seems Sherry did not want the agent to know her number. Mike told the agent to give him a call when

he contacts the owner, he will make arrangements for the payment.

Mike called Rashmi and informed her of the deal he made with the agent.

Rashmi said, "We will pay for the house, as we want to have a guest house in Goa. Let me know how the payment is to be made.

After two days Sherry sent the papers for the transfer of property with her lawyer and he got the power of attorney for transferring the property and confirm the payment in her account.

Mike was disappointed he could not get the details of Jessica. He tried to press the lawyer for the details, but he said he got the power of attorney more than a week back. Sherry personally handed him the papers to sell the house.

After registering the house the lawyer handed Mike the registration papers and the keys to the house.

The lawyer said, whatever furniture in the house can be kept or sold whatever is not useful, and the lawyer went away.

Mike looked around the house and went to the terrace to look around.

He made a round of the terrace. What he finds that there is a three-story building beside this building with a single-story building in between. There he finds Vicky coming out of the door and locks the door and comes down the stairs with a kid holding her hand. He stood there looking

at her, but she did not see his presence there. He looks at her until she disappears from his sight.

He did not know how to react to her appearance in front of him after all these years. He could not understand his feelings for her. All the years he spent with her moved in front of his eyes. He stood there transfixed until the servant came there to inform him that he cleaned the house and he would take leave.

He nodded his head absentmindedly.

Mike came down and put a chair near the window overlooking Vicky's house. Both the house's front gates are on opposite ways. There is a single-story building which has a gate on the side of this house. If he wants to go to Vicky's house he can go in front of the house in the middle or on the other way across an empty plot of land.

He kept looking at her house waiting for her to return.

It took 2 hours for Vicky to come back to her house. It seems she is in a hurry, she did not look at Mike sitting at the window. Maybe the boy must be feeling hungry or want to urinate. She hurriedly opened the door and went inside. He could not see if she closed the door or kept it open. So he got up and went for a walk and came up the road to Vicky's house from further down and turned before her house looking at their building. He did not find anyone at the door or inside.

He went back to his house and his mother called him for lunch asking him where did he disappear.

Ravali and Phani returned home from the office in the evening.

Phani parked the bike and went inside. Ravali found many old people loitering on the outside.

Ravali asked them, “who are you and what are doing outside our house?”

One old woman came in front of Ravali and said, “we want to contact our near and dear, we came to know you can see us.”

Ravali asked, “how can I get you to meet your relatives?”

The old woman said, “you take their details and contact them and tell them to come to meet us.”

Ravali asked, “what is it in there for me?”

The old woman said, “we will help you with information, you can ask us and we can find the information for you.”

Ravali remembered Rashmi and Disha were looking for their father. Can you tell me where they could be?

The old woman asked, “Rashmi is the one who took you to Vizag? Her father is on a mission for god. We can’t speak about them, they will come out at an appropriate time, tell her not to worry. The same for Disha’s father, even though she is not on this earth. She is on the way to Mars.”

“How they are doing on the trip.”

The old woman replied, “we can’t tell about them, you can ask anything about this earth.”

“ok, I will enquire about them, please give me their details, and I will note them down and contact them.” She opened a small notebook and started to note the details.

Phani did not find Ravali in the house and came out looking for Ravali.

He found her noting down something on her pad, he asked,
what are you doing here? Why don't you come in and work."

Ravali said, "just coming in a minute." Nodded at the last soul noted down the details. She got up and went inside.

Phani took the notebook and looked at the addresses and phone numbers, asked what is this?

Ravali replied, "the old people want to contact their relatives."

Phani asked, "what is the need for taking so much risk?"

Ravali replied, "they said they will help us out by giving information."

Phani asked, "what kind of information they can give?"

Ravali replied, "information like Rashmi and Disha's parents. They said they are on god's mission."

"Ok come, let us prepare something for dinner."

Mike went to Sherry's house and sat at the window overlooking Vicky's house. She did not come out and he did not want to go to her house.

Not finding Vicky, Mike booked his return tickets. He went to his mother handed her keys and asked her to keep the house clean.

Megan maintains lots of properties where the owners don't stay in Goa and only come in winter. They also send their friends and inform her about their arrival. Megan

keeps the premises clean and stocks the groceries when a guest arrives and collects the fees from the owner. That is the reason Sherry thought they are well off, they are not very rich but reasonably well off.

During the season, if she finds the guest houses are vacant, she gives them for rent and earns extra income. If the owners inform her of their desire to visit, she would shift the inmates if it is not vacant. Most of them coming to Goa are bachelors or those who come to enjoy the drinks and beaches are not inconvenienced by shifting during the stay. Over that, they get at cheaper prices with all the amenities.

Mike went around Vicky's house, did not find her, came back to the house and packed his bags and returned to Hyderabad.

Ravali selected a few people from the list she noted, if they are nearby she went and spoke to them in the evening. She would pass the information or the message and would return. Otherwise, she would call them if she noted their phone number and inform them and would call them to come to their house if they want to get the message. Most of the old people want to inform their successors or loved ones about missing papers of gold put as collateral or loaned to someone else. Some people want to inform about lent money to others, etc.

So when the people found their papers or recovered gold or money, they came back to her and offered her gifts and told her to inform their old people. This way Ravali started to earn a side income from passing on information from souls to people.

When Mike came to know about this he asked Ravali to enquire about Jessica and Justin. When she enquired with a soul, she came to know that they have shifted to Canada. When asked about giving the exact location they are staying, the soul refused to give information.

When Ravali informed Mike about this, he came to the conclusion that Jessica cheated him possibly to get a child from him. He resigned to the idea that Jessica would not return and it is her prerogative to come or not.

Mike resigned to the life of loneliness. Earlier he had the company of Nancy, now they are on the way to Mars and there is no timeline for when they will return.

So, when Rashmi proposed to him to be a director on the hospital board he accepted the post.

They were in the board meeting and Medical superintendent (MS) Dr Radhakrishnan proposed new medical prosthetics for hands and legs. He said the company is offering these prosthetics which are near close to the original hands and feet. They are AI-enabled and work on the thoughts of the person. These look like the original and nobody can tell the difference.

Rashmi asked are they experimental.

MS replied, they have already completed experiments and are in the manufacturing stage. They can manufacture a leg or hand or parts in just a day from the configuration. They have what we call organic printers which generate the skin from the DNA and inner bone or structure based on hands. If both the hands or legs missing, they can generate them based on approximate calculations. They are also very cheap compared to conventional prosthetics.

Mike asked, "how can they give them cheaper than conventional ones?"

MS replied their intentions are not profits or making money, they would only recover costs not make huge profits.

Rashmi asked, "what is the area is the manufacturers or researchers, do you have any Idea?"

MS replied, "they are a joint venture between Future India Ltd. and Kumar's International. Future India is a Mumbai-based company having a track record of more than 30 years and Kumar's International is a Vizag-based company having some 30 years in the manufacturing of ICs."

Rashmi and Mike thought they are coming out with these products into the open, will they come in front of us?

Mike asked can we meet their company representatives.

MS replied, "Ms Nandini Kumar has come to us with the proposal, she is the Finance Director of this company."

Another director Dr Kulkarni asked, "is she by any chance our owner Nandini?"

MS replied, I have not met our previous owner Ms. Nandini, so I may not know.

Dr Kulkarni said, MS has been appointed by the board, so he may not have any Idea about her. By any chance did you meet her?

MS said, "I met her when I went to the Orthopaedic conference last week. She was explaining to the doctors present there about this prosthesis and treating people with deformities too. She gave examples of people with one leg short and how they can treat them."

Rashmi said, “we know of a person who had lost a leg and a hand in an accident, can they provide treatment to him?”

MS asked where is this person.

Rashmi replied he is in Vizag.

MS said, then he can approach their office in Vizag to get treatment.

Rashmi said, “give me their address, and I will go and coordinate with them about the treatment.”

MS has passed on a pamphlet describing the treatment and address of their facilities.

Rashmi picked up the pamphlet and thanked the MS.

Dr Kulkarni said, “so, what is next on the agenda?”

Rashmi took Rachana and went over to Vizag to check up with the company supplying the prosthetics.

After getting information on prosthetics, when asked about Nandini Madam, they informed her that she stays at the Mumbai Office.

Rashmi got Raj booked at their prosthetics fitting centre and they flew to Mumbai to meet with Nandini.

They went to the Mumbai company address provided with the pamphlet and enquired about Nandini. The receptionist told her Nandini is their finance director, but she may not be available to meet. So Rashmi asked to get a meeting scheduled for her and gave the receptionist her number.

From there they went to uncle Ram’s house.

Nishitha was present in the house. Rashmi introduced Rachana and they freshened up and sat on the sofa.

Rashmi explained to Nishitha everything that is going on and the reason for their coming to Mumbai, which is to meet with Nandini.

Nishitha asked, “do you think she will agree to meet you.”

Rashmi said, “I hope she will recognise me and would like to meet us.”

When she did not receive any call, she decided to go to their office and wait for Nandini.

Both Rashmi and Rachana reached their offices and sat in the lounge waiting for Nandini to arrive.

When Nandini has not arrived until 11 am, Rashmi went to the reception enquiring about Nandini. This time instead of personal work she said she wanted to meet Nandini for business work and gave them her hospital business card. The receptionist call Nandini’s PA and spoke about Rashmi.

She said to Rashmi, “Madam is away in Hyderabad, so she can’t meet you.”

Rashmi asked to give the contact details of Nandini so she can contact her in Hyderabad.

She again spoke to the PA and sent Rashmi and Rachana to meet with Nandini’s PA.

Nandini’s PA explained that Nandini was not meeting anyone after she had a bad experience at the orthopaedic conference. Where some people tried to kidnap her after the conference. So, she was avoiding meeting anyone, she will pass the numbers to Nandini

and Rashmi should hope for her to get back to meeting her. Rashmi better goes to Hyderabad and wait for her call.

Now one thing becomes certain, someone is still targeting these people.

They took leave of the PA and returned to their uncle's house.

They took the luggage and said their goodbyes and returned to Hyderabad by flight.

After a week Nandini's PA called Rashmi and asked her to meet Nandini at her house in KPHB and gave her address and phone no.

Rashmi went with Rachana to meet with Nandini.

The security checked their IDs and let them in.

They went and sat on the sofa in the hall. A servant came and put tea cups in front of them and went away.

Nandini came after five minutes and sat in front of them.

Nandini asked, "what can I do for you?"

Rashmi asked, "we want to know why did you leave Rao's hospital to us?"

Nandini replied, "I have not left the hospital to anyone, we had sold it off after my parents' death."

Rashmi asked, "where are your kids Atul and Reena?"

Nandini said, "I don't have any kids by the name of Atul and Reena, they were Kumar's and Sneha's children. I have a son named Vivek Kumar."

Then it struck, this Nandini is from where Kumar eloped and married Sneha, where Sneha later died in a fire accident.

Rashmi said, “sorry mam, we thought you were someone else. Can you tell us where is Mr Kumar you were referring to?”

Nandini asked, “what did you say your names?”

Rashmi said, “I am Rashmi and this is Rachana.”

Nandini said, “you can’t be Kumar’s daughter Reena, she is much older than you. She would be older than you by at least 10 years. I have not seen them for more than 2 years.”

Rashmi asked, “so, you did not see them after 2020?”

Nandini replied, “yes. In January 2021, our lives changed. I remember I was working with Rao’s hospital, then I started working with this Future India as a finance director. Then when I enquired about Rao’s hospital, I was told we had sold our shares to someone and brought the director’s share with Future India. Everything was a little foggy as I woke up from a bad dream. You said you were running the Rao’s hospital, how did it come to your procession?”

Rashmi replied, “there is a Nandini who has a house in Jubilee Hills and she has helped our dad to get some help from him. She has two twins Atul and Reena. She took our dad with her and went abroad, at least that is what we were told. Before going away, she fixed the papers with the lawyers to pass the hospital and house to us. We came to know about it when we went on searching for our dad.”

Nandini asked, “what is your dad’s name?”

Rashmi said, “he is Kumar and Nandini told him that both were pen pals in the 1980s. My mom asked how you can be friends when she is very young. Nandini replied that she was sent from the past. That is the reason she wants to communicate with her husband through our dad.”

Nandini said, “fascinating, I had the same experience with Vivek’s dad Kumar. I felt I had known him from the year 1987. But he died in the year 2020 and came back the next year as a young one.”

Rashmi said, “yes, we read about it.”

Nandini asked, “how can you read about us?”

Rashmi replied, “our dad wrote about many Kumars from different timelines. Somehow one by one coming in front of us. If you want I can provide those books. I read that Kumar who came back in the year 2020 had died in the year 2015.”

Nandini said, “then another young Kumar came in the year 2017.”

Rashmi asked, “so you know about this Kumar who had come in the year 2017? So what about Sunitha, who stayed near your house? What about Kumar’s children?”

“I don’t know about Sunitha and the children. I heard they are running a software firm in the USA. Recently I came to know Kumar and Loveleen went on a trip to Mars. There were some unofficial photos of them getting in the spaceship. I don’t have an idea they have actually gone on that ship.”

Rashmi said, “actually my sister Leena and Rachana’s sister Disha have also gone on that trip.”

Nandini asked, “is that so? I heard of Leena, who stayed with Kumar for some time and went away. Is she the one?”

Rashmi said, “I don’t think, she was the daughter of Kumar who studied CA and my dad is a B.Com graduate and a software developer. But my sister is a virologist like that Leena.”

Nandini said, “so you know about that family too.”

Rashmi said, “as I told you our dad wrote books on all the families.”

Nandini asked, “how could he write about all the Kumars and their families?”

Rashmi replied, “I don’t have an idea, he could have got the stories in his dreams or someone had narrated them to him. He started his writing after going to Noida. Then on his next trip, he narrated a story to someone and she wrote one of the books.”

Rashmi received a call on her mind-controlled communication device. She was ordered to not go out until she is informed.

Rashmi asked, “madam, is there a way to look out onto the main gate?”

Nandini said, “if you look through this window, you can have a view of the main gate.”

Rashmi went to the window and peered through the curtains onto the road. Nandini looked from behind Rashmi.

What Rashmi finds is that the two men she saw on the video her flat owner sent and Phani showed on the video of the forest house, have come to the gate and were

arguing with the security to let them in. Then a police car came and stopped and took the two men into custody and went away.

Rashmi received another call and told you can now go out.

Rashmi wondered who had called her and how they knew these two men came looking for either Nandini or her.

Nandini asked, “who are they, do you have any idea?”

Rashmi replied, “they are looking for Kumar and associates. It seems they came here looking for you to find out Kumar through you.”

Nandini asked how do you know about them?

Rashmi said, “I have seen them in videos, they were recorded in a video in the forest house. They brought a man to their leader, who asked him about the whereabouts of Kumar and when he did not answer, they shot him in the head. Then later they came looking for our dad at our flat. The house owner had cc tv cameras installed and he informed us that these two came looking for us.”

Nandini asked, “did they come looking for me or for you?”

Rashmi replied, “it seems they are looking for you only. Ok, I will take leave, will speak later.”

Rashmi came out got in the car and told Hrithik to drive to the hospital

Chapter 4

Some people came to Ravali's house on a Sunday morning and asked her to give them information about a treasure.

Ravali told them to come after 7 pm after nightfall, and then some souls come to visit her, so she can ask them and give answers.

The same people came over at 7:15 pm and knocked on the door.

She opened the door and put chairs for them on the veranda. She looked around trying to find any souls that are present. Except for the old lady who came to her at first, there were no other souls.

Ravali asked them what can I do?

One man around 40 years of age said, "I am Narayana Reddy, we came together to find hidden treasures. We came to know you speak with ghosts and inform their relatives of the papers or things like that. We want to know where the treasures are hidden so we can retrieve them. We will give you a percentage."

Ravali said, "the souls come to inform their relative of the papers or gold or about loans they gave. I don't know if they can inform me about the hidden treasures."

Reddy asked, "why don't you ask them about treasures?"

Ravali looked at the lone soul wandering around the house. She could not find her relatives, so she hangs around the house at the night in the hope someday they will return.

The old woman pursed her lips and said, "I don't think any ghost or soul can inform you of the hidden treasures. Most of them are sacred and guarded. We can't peek into them."

Ravali said, "the soul is saying they can't tell about the treasures. If you have any relative ghost, who has some information, then I can speak with them and give you that information."

Reddy and another man went out and had a discussion and came inside.

The old woman's soul said to Ravali, they are discussing you might be withholding information to use for yourself.

Hearing that Ravali said, "Reddygaru, I know what you might be thinking. You think I am hiding the information about the treasures and I might go hunting for them. But I don't have any inclination to do that. Give me your number and if I come across any information, I will let you know. Or if you get any kind of information yourself, like a map or some indication that treasures might be at some particular place, we might ask them for guidance."

Reddy took a business card and handed it to Ravali and said, "let me know if you get any information."

When Ravali showed the card to Phani and told him about the visit, he said, "you should have given them information about the house in the forest. It would be fun to watch both the teams fighting."

When Mike got a week's holiday, he flew to Goa.

He went to his house dropped the luggage took the keys to the house brought from Sherry and went over there.

Mike sat in the chair in front of the window.

After two hours he saw Vicky come to the terrace for drying wet clothes. He waited for Vicky to look at his side.

But she put the clothes on the clothesline and went away.

Mike was dejected she did not look at his side, but in reality, she had seen him watching, she wanted him to approach her.

Two days went like this and Vicky did not look at Mike.

Then when her son is playing on the terrace he waved his hand at Mike. Mike showed him chocolates and showed him to come to him.

He must have gone and told his mother, Vicky came to the parapet wall and looked at Mike. Mike waved at her and she waved and went away. Now Mike did not know what to do.

The next day he came to the house a little early, he saw Vicky taking her son to school and Mike waited until she returned and went to her house and rang the doorbell.

Vicky opened the door and stood there looking at him for a minute. He did not have any words for her, Vicky said, "come in", and when he entered the house, closed the door, and told him to please sit down.

When he sat down on the sofa, Vicky came and sat a little far from him on the sofa, and asked, "so, what is happening? I heard you were married."

Mike looked at his hands and said, "she is missing for some months, it seems they have gone away to Canada."

Vicky said, "why would she do that?"

Mike said, "I don't have an idea."

Vicky said, "Sherry might have caught a wealthy man. They are like that only. You were away so you might not have an idea."

"I don't know, Nancy is not like that. She was different, but she was gay and my mom did not tell me about their family."

Vicky asked, "why would your mom tell about them?"

"It was her idea to send Nancy to stay with me and she had fixed with Sherry about our wedding. So, who is in your house?"

Vicky replied, "I and my son Justin are staying here."

"Where is your husband?"

Vicky replied, "he is no more in this world."

"What happened?"

Vicky replied, "he met with an accident."

"I am so sorry, I don't know."

Vicky said, "it is okay, no one knows what happens next."

They kept talking for a long time. Vicky invited Mike for lunch and they had lunch together.

It was four pm, Vicky looked at her watch and said, I had to bring Justin from school."

Mike got up and said, "I will also come with you."

They both walked to Justin's school, picked him up and returned home.

Mike left them at the door and returned to his house.

Now Baby is in full term, they took her to the nearest clinic for birthing.

After having a c-section, she gave birth to a girl.

Now the ghost of her mother had blessed baby will give birth to a boy, as she wanted her dead son's soul put in the yet-to-be-born baby in Baby's stomach. But by the time the ghost reached Baby, she already crossed four months and the foetus is living with a soul occupying the baby in the stomach.

So, in desperation, she attached the soul of her dead son to the newborn baby girl. Now the baby has two souls in a single body.

In another part of India now known as Mumbai two convicted prisoners have been released by the authorities on Independence Day celebrations. They are Raaj and Suresh aged around 50+. Their masters died in the prison and they don't have anywhere to go, so they made enquiries about the persons who put them in jail.

They remember Molly, who is pregnant at the time and her husband Atul Kumar. They went to Molly's parent's house and were told they have died long back and their house has been sold. Raaj told the neighbours that they were abroad all these years and now come back to the mother country. They want to thank the persons who had helped them to go abroad, that is Molly's father. They indicated they want to gift something to Molly.

So, one of the neighbours went and enquired with others and said they are staying in Hyderabad and have a software company, that is all they know.

So, the duo landed in Hyderabad in search of Atul and Molly.

After the board meeting, Rashmi and Mike met in the canteen.

Rashmi explained to him what happened with Nandini and Mike explained to her about missing Jessica and his meeting with Vicky.

Mike expressed his desire to ask Vicky to come to Hyderabad or he would shift to Goa if she rejects to come.

Rashmi said, "then you better go and ask her, maybe she will wait until the academic year-end, so she can shift her son over here? Or you might have to complete your engagements here. I think you can easily get another job there. Or you can consult with the hospital we are acquiring in Goa. Or you can work here and using our transporter you can travel to fro. There are endless possibilities that can be worked out."

Ravali was hounded by the people who want to find hidden treasures to find a ghost who would help them. Unable to bear the torture by them, Ravali asked Phani for advice. Phani thought for some time and came up with a solution, which will help them save from the constant nagging by the treasure hunters.

Phani told Ravali to inform the treasure hunters about the house in the forest.

So, when Reddy came to enquire about the hidden treasures, Ravali said, "there is a place in the Srisailam

forest, we think there are treasures there. We find people going there secretly. There is a possibility of underground tunnels too. When Phani put the cameras there, instead of ghosts some people appear out of a cupboard.”

Reedy asked do you think there are hidden treasures there?

Ravali said, “there is a possibility, I can’t give a guarantee. They are very mean people. It could be they are hiding the items they are retrieving from treasure troves. Otherwise, what are they doing in the forest? No one uses the doors. But they come inside and there are packed boxes in the rooms.”

Reedy asked can you give me the address?

Phani said, “I can take you to the area and show you the building, but I will not come inside with you. When I saw the men who are coming there, I was scared and did not go there again.”

They agreed to pay Phani for showing them the bungalow and Phani will return after guiding them to the building.

Mike went over to Goa to meet with Vicky.

He put three options in front of Vicky, to come with him to Hyderabad or she can stay in Goa and he can do up and down from Hyderabad to Goa or he can come and stay permanently in Goa.

Vicky asked for some time to decide.

Mike came to the house he brought for Rao’s Hospital and started to assemble the transporter as shown by

Phani. It took him half an hour to assemble the transporter and he connected it to the power switch. He called Rashmi and informed her about activating the transporter and asked her to check it out.

Now he can come and go from Goa whenever he wants. He went home and informed his mom he is returning to Hyderabad and back in Hyderabad through the transporter.

Phani and Banti guided the treasure hunters to the forest house. He left their luggage and told them to call when they finished. While returning they found a mobile signal available near the house. He told the team now they can call from the house also and returned home.

They waited for a week and not finding any communication from the treasure hunt team, they drove to the house in the forest. There is no sign of the team ever there. Their vehicles are not present and when they went inside, there is no sign of them ever being there.

So, they return home and forgot about them.

After a month they saw a news article in the paper that the treasure hunt team missing in action. The police have no information about their whereabouts.

Baby's daughter is now 2 years of age. She is named Suchitra. The boy's ghost soul in the body of the girl is dominant. Baby's mother's ghost has left the house when a new tenet performed a Homam in their house. The ghost could not bear the mantras and went away. The boy's soul is not a ghost, so he did not have a problem with it.

Baby or her family had no idea of the double soul in the body of Suchitra. As she was born as a Gemini sun sign they thought she is exhibiting a double personality.

When Suchitra become 4 years old, she would play with boys games like hide and seek or marbles or tops and with girls with toys and other plays.

Her dual personality started to come in the front day by day.

Chapter 5

Raj's brother Himanshu got a transfer to Hyderabad. When he got the offer Baby decided they would not stay in Vizag any more and they would sell their house and buy a house in Hyderabad.

They put their house for sale and shifted to Hyderabad. They rented a house in Miyapur and were staying there. Baby's elder daughter Indira met with an accident while playing outside. A scooter hit her and ran away. Mike while coming home saw the accident, stopped at the scene called an ambulance.

By the time ambulance reached, there was a group of people assembled. He send Indira on the ambulance with a young man who wanted to go with the ambulance. So, he gave him his number and the ambulance went away. A few minutes later a police jeep came over. He gave them the bike number and description of the person riding.

After some time, he found Baby come searching for Indira and he gave her details of the accident and told her to come with him so he can drop her at the hospital.

From the ambulance people, he came to know they would be taking Indira to Sai Anurag hospital at Chanda Nagar. So, Mike left Baby at the hospital and went home.

Mike, Rashmi, and Rachana are in a meeting with Finance head, discussing the revenues for the last quarter. Rachana received a call from Raj about his niece getting injured in the accident and he wants to shift her to Rao's hospital as their treatment is not up to the standard.

Rachana advised them to take an ambulance and bring Indira to Rao's hospital.

Himanshu finalised the sale of their house in Vizag and decided to buy a house beside Mike. Even though the sales proceeds would not be sufficient to buy the house, he decided to take a loan for the balance.

Within a week they shifted to the new house. Now Mike and Himanshu became neighbours.

Vicky and Justin came to Mike's house for the summer holidays. As Vicky is looking to shift to Hyderabad, Mike is looking for a school for Justin. He found an International school nearby with a CBS syllabus and he went and spoke to them and got admission for Justin there.

Seeing him getting admission to the International School, Himanshu decided to admit Indira to the same school.

As Indira is not fully cured of the accident, she spends most of her time in bed. So, Baby asked Justin to come and spend time with Indira in their house. So, they would spend time playing video games and such things.

Suchitra could not play with them, but she would sit beside her sister and would look at them playing. Sometimes she would ask them to give them the tools to play the games, and Indira would refuse to give her, but sometimes Justin would give her to play the game.

Mike is in a meeting with the hospital board. They were discussing the possibility of the war in the air. The Russian forces were not stopping the onslaught on

Ukraine. The USA is sending weapons to Ukraine, which should have some repercussions on the ongoing war. Already oil transport lines were cut and it might have effects on global prices. Already Sri Lanka and Pakistan's economic crises are proof that more countries would have to face such situations. Especially small countries like Bangladesh. Our country in a better position than these countries when the real war starts.

Rashmi interjected and asked, "is there going to be a world war?"

Mike replied, "I am not sure about the world war, but if Russia starts to use nuclear weapons, then there could be involvement by western countries."

Then a peon entered the board room and told them to switch on the tv in the room. He took the remote and switched on the tv and switched to the news channel.

There is a news clip going on the tv set. There is a nuclear warhead missile heading to New York. The air force planes of the USA are heading to intercept the missile. Now the news reporter is saying that the missile is supposedly fired from one of their submarines. There are reports that the missile was fired after Russians hacked into the submarine systems. They don't have proof at the time but the authorities are looking into the possibility and trying to find the people responsible for the firing of the missile.

Mike said, "this kind of action would start the world war."

Hrithik asked, "so what would be the problems we will face in the event of a world war?"

Rashmi asked, "other than total decimation of mankind, what kind of problems we can expect."

Mike said, “first and foremost the government will declare a state of emergency.”

Rashmi asked, “could they declare an emergency, I think they passed legislation that an emergency can’t be declared by the government.”

Mike said, “there are ways they can still declare an emergency. The prices of essentials will skyrocket. The import and export businesses will suffer. The government has to raise taxes to use for the defence sector. Oil imports will be the most important imports that will be hurt.”

Hrithik asked, “what we can do to stop the war.”

Rashmi said, “I don’t think there is anything we can do after this missile strike.”

Mike said, “all this drama could be a smoke screen to supply weapons to Ukraine. The US can stop the missile, why would anyone try to fire one on the USA?”

After two days there was no clarity on who fired the missile. As per the captain of the submarine, there was no proof of sabotage.

As the missile can’t be fired without the approval of the president, there were rumours going on that the American president has approved the firing of the missile, when he denied vehemently saying that he had no intention of putting millions of people at risk.

The tensions between America and Russia are flaring up with this missile drama going on.

Finally, it has led to the firing of a USA missile on Russia from the China sea.

The USA has vehemently denied firing on Russia. The tension flared up and Russia declared war on the USA.

The world had divided into 3 parts, those who support the USA, those who support Russia and those who are neutral like India and China. Pakistan, Sri Lanka and Bangladesh don't have the resources to fight, so they decided to stay on the sidelines.

America who suspended grants to Pakistan, now came up with offering grant to let them use Pakistani Air Bases for the fight with Russia. Fearing Russia, and Afghanistan Pakistan refused to accept the grant and refused to let America use the bases they used at the time of Afghan conflict.

So the American troops landed in Ukraine and fought to take back the land occupied by Russia. America can't shell the areas occupied by Russia as civilians are still staying there. The only way they can fight Russian troops is on the land through their military with the help of helicopters dropping soldiers on the battlefields.

While the war was going on Justin, and Indira having recovered started playing outside with Suchitra in tow.

When the boy's soul is dominant Suchitra would play with them and when the girl's soul is dominant she would play with her dolls.

In school as Indira missed her exams she could get admission into the last class she was studying, so both Justin and Indira landed in the same class.

Suchitra was too young to attend school, so she stayed at home and played with them after their classes. But she was getting attached to Justin. He is the one who

responds to her requests and her sister looks down upon her. She thinks Suchitra is a queer.

Baby doesn't care how Suchitra behaves. Mothers would look at their daughters like they are beautiful even if they are ugly.

Whereas Himanshu loves his elder daughter Indira very much, he loathes Suchitra as Baby told him she is the reincarnation of her dead brother. Himanshu had a run-in with her brother when he went to visit them at the hamlet.

There are reports that both China and Pakistan are moving their troops towards the border areas. They are moving their troops to many areas of the borders. Now Pakistan may want to divert the attention of their people from the problems on the financial front. But it is not clear why China is doing that. Analysts are opining that they may want to start a war with India with the support of Pakistan on other borders by sandwiching India on both sides.

Whereas India sent minimal troops to the border areas where the enemy is mounting their troops.

When the war broke out India sent their swarm of advanced drones, which rose to the sky and started bombarding the advanced troops with micro bombs.

In seconds the advanced troops were decimated. In a minute the Head of the armed forces for India received calls from the counterparts of China and Pakistan to stop

the war. It was a mistake from someone who started the war on the frontline.

The head warned them that they should immediately withdraw troops, or else no one will be spared, which they agreed to.

China is stumped about how India could develop such an advanced technology They did not have an inkling that India had developed such a technology.

Using the incident India warned America and Russia to stop the war immediately or they can show both countries how the war can be stopped using this new technology. India asked all the countries involved in the war to go back to the discussions.

India not only stopped the world war but emerged as a superpower in the ensuing period trampling USA and Russia to the second position.

Mike said, "I thought what kind of difficulties we had to go through if the war breaks out. We did not even feel a pinch of the war. None of our soldiers was injured. I think one each of platoon was destroyed from China and Pakistan.

Rashmi asked, "is this technology developed by Kumar from another timeline?"

Mike replied, "from the books it is evident that Kumar was developing technology with the Government. Only we don't know what he had developed during that time."

It was one year after Himanshu and Baby shifted over to Hyderabad. They threw a birthday party for Suchitra and invited Rachana, Mike and Rashmi and friends to the party.

Rashmi saw Indira when she was brought to the hospital but this is the first time she lay her eyes on Suchitra. She felt odd about her.

After half an hour Phani and Ravali came to the party.

Ravali felt the double soul in Suchitra. She could not see the soul but she could feel the presence. She took Phani aside and told him about this.

Ravali did not remember telling Baby that Baby's brother would be born in Baby's womb. But Phani remembers and reminds Ravali of the same.

Ravali asked but why two souls in the same body?

Phani replied I don't have an idea.

So, after the cake cutting Ravali sat with Suchitra and started a conversation.

From her conversations, it became evident that the boy's soul is trying to hide behind the girl's soul. So Ravali tried to direct her question to the boy. But she saw him hesitating and went into hiding.

Ravali did not know what to do. So, when Phani went out to have a fag, she followed him and looked around. She wanted to consult any soul present there. But no soul was present, they may not know about her powers to see

the souls. Otherwise, they would be swarming around to seek help.

Ravali watched Suchitra hanging with Justin. It seems when the girl is dominant she would hang with Justin.

Chapter 6

A patient came to Rashmi for details of his old bill. Rashmi came out of her cabin to instruct Hrithik to bring the case sheet. As she did not find him in his seat, she thought he might have gone to the canteen, so she went over to the records room.

The records room clerk is entering the new case sheets in the record book. Rashmi gave him the IP no. He looked at it and said, "Madam, go get it from the cupboard. It would be on the right side."

She went inside, and instead of going right side, she went to the left side. There she finds Hrithik kissing a man from the pharmacy. It seems they have not seen her entering the room. So, she calmly came out and went to the right side searching for the IP Nos on the cupboards.

She found the number she is searching for and picked up the case sheet, came out and handed the file to the clerk there. He noted the IP no and the details in his out register and handed her the case sheet. She picked it up and came to the office and asked them to xerox the required papers.

She picked up the papers and came back to her cabin and handed the patient the copies and went inside her cabin and dropped the case sheet and sat on her chair.

Now, what she watched in the records room struck her. So, Hrithik must be gay the way he is behaving there. She had a soft spot for him and now whatever feeling she had for him had evaporated. She slumped back in the chair and closed her eyes.

Rashmi opened her eyes when the door opened and there standing peon. She raised her eyes, and peon said, "Madam, MS sir is calling you."

Rashmi said, "ok I am coming." She went and knocked on the cabin door of the Medical Superintendent.

MS said, "come in Rashmi, please be seated. I spoke to the board and we have finances available. We are looking to get an MRI."

Rashmi said, "ok, we will get board approval."

MS said, "before we finalise the order, you have to go to New York and check and finalise the prices with a medical devices supplier. Normally they would come here and finalise the deal. But they can't come over to India what with this Corona and all."

Rashmi thought if she can put a transporter there, it will be easier to move around the US."

Rashmi said, "ok sir, I will book the tickets and let you know."

MS said, "the party will arrangements for your stay in the USA."

Rashmi and Hrithik landed in New York and were whisked off to their hotel by the Medical devices supplier's staff. They are told to get ready and call the number on the card given to them.

They got readied, had breakfast and called the number given to them from the phone in the hotel room.

They were called to come down after half an hour. From there they were driven to the office of the Medical devices Supplier.

They were told to wait a few minutes and later called to meet their Sales Director.

They went in and Rashmi exclaimed Nandini!

Sitting in the chair is none other than Nandini.

Nandini lifted her head from the file she was looking at and said, “come in Rashmi, do you know me? Please sit down.” She lifted the phone and said, “Kumar come to my room”, and put the phone down.

Nandini looked expectantly at Rashmi to reply to her question.

Rashmi said, “I recently met another Nandini who also worked as Administrator at Rao’s Hospital and she has a son named Vivek Kumar. What about you?”

Nandini said, “I was in your timeline and I had left the hospital to you.”

Rashmi said, “so, you must be the one having Atul and Reena. But how come you are here?”

Then the cabin door opened and Kumar walked in. Seeing him Rashmi shrieked Daddy.

Rashmi got up from the chair, went and hugged him.

Now they all sat down, Rashmi looked at Nandini for an explanation.

Nandini said, “in the beginning of 2021 I, my children and Kumar, with some other people were shifting to New York and were asked to lay low until we will be informed. Until then we were asked not to contact anyone from our

former life. That is the reason I transferred my assets and the hospital to your name. we were sure you will look after them.”

Rashmi asked, “who else was shifted over here?”

Nandini said, “Sunitha with her daughter Anjali, Loveleen with Dhruv from CA Kumar’s timeline, your aunt Revathi with her daughter Shravani, and Joy who was married to Raj and divorced. They also sent merged Atul and Molly’s daughter Simran. Most of them were students and they have completed their studies. I don’t know why Joy was brought with us. Now we were all staying in the same building from that time. We support each other.”

Kumar said, “Bob must have thought they would be under lens once the timelines are merged. Or he did not want these people not to be merged. He waited until some kind semblance is restored in the world to let us meet you. We are not to contact anyone from India directly.”

Nandini said, “we are keeping abreast of the things going on. I think Bob is waiting for the Rakshasa from China to be caught and brought to justice.”

Rashmi asked, “dad, we read your books. How did you write them, did someone narrate them to you?”

Kumar replied, “you know I went to Noida in the year 2015. Nandini was also dropped into our timeline at the same time. When I went to Noida, I stayed at the same hotel I stayed at the hotel when I was visiting Noida for the Paints company in Bombay. I came back and went again to Noida, I felt like a déjà vu when I entered the room and put my luggage there. That is the time I saw the story of Kumar and Loveleen from the first timeline. I suppose by this time Nandini landed here. Our dad died

when I visited Madras for the same company. Here also his dad died when he visited Noida. I did not know at the time, but that is the time I started receiving the stories from other timelines. I started to note down the stories in my free time. In the beginning, I was not allotted much work and I would have free time. So, I started noting down the points I am receiving. Then your mother came to Noida and later we both came back to Hyderabad. I alone went back to Noida. On this trip, I met a girl studying at Amity University in Noida. When I was editing my book, she asked me what I was doing. I said I was editing books. She showed interest in writing and took an idea or two and wanted to develop the story. So, I gave her my manuscripts. We were meeting once in a while near her college as our office was close by. She wrote 'My Love is a Mirage' and I got it published on Amazon."

Rashmi asked, "so Nandini's coming to our timeline is the catalyst for your writing."

Kumar said, "you can say that."

Nandini said, "Rashmi you check out the MRI machines you want to order. We will go in the evening and meet others."

Nandini called her assistant to finalise the deal with Rashmi. They went away to check the models and prices.

They all assembled in Nandini's house.

After meeting Atul and Rashmi, Rashmi understood why they were not included in the timeline merging. They both look like their mother. Fathers could be from the same DNA, but their mothers are different. There are two Atul and Reena duo who were born to Kumar and Sneha.

Two Atul and Joy duo were born to Kumar and Loveleen. Trio of Leena, Atul and Rashmi were born to Kumar and Sahithi. One Leena was born to Kumar and Sunitha. One more Atul was born to Kumar and Sahithi, and one Rashmi was born to Sunitha. Only one Anjali was born to Kumar and Sunitha.

It seems they sent children from the same parents for Merger and even though have the same names but from different parents were not merged. But Dhruv, who was sent to New York must be an exception. So, that could be the reason they sent Dr Dhruv on the Mars trip.

Kumar and Sahithi's daughter Leena, who was working with the virus lab in New York was called to meet them.

When Rashmi saw her she thought Leena looked different from her sister Leena, even though she is in the same field.

Rashmi seeing all of them felt a thrill. She felt like she is watching people from the book she read come to life. She never expected to see all of them in one place.

She met a few of them from the book, when they came to get trained for the Mars trip. But now all of them are on the way to Mars. Even some of them she did not read about in the books. Like Rachana, Reetu Khanna.

The whole night they sat and discussed what Rashmi read and their personal experiences.

Rashmi asked, "dad did you meet all of these people in your life?"

Kumar replied, "I met some of them long back like Sneha I know from Junior College and Sahithi from the time I was learning typing and shorthand in Vakola. Kirit I met in my college and Mahira from the courier company.

Whereas Sunitha and Loveleen, and I met only after coming here. I and CA Kumar are the only Kumars that don't have extramarital relations."

Rashmi asked, "can I call and inform mom that you are safe and sound in New York?"

Kumar replied, "I don't think it is advisable now. When Bob says we can return to India and can contact our dear ones, then only we should do that. I think arranging this meeting is the way Bob wants them not to investigate our lives."

Rashmi asked, "dad, yours being the original timeline, how do you compare your life to other timelines Kumars."

Kumar explained, "the first two timelines have run almost like my time, meeting Loveleen is the life turning point. But they both became businessmen, I lost the chance when I went over to Hyderabad with your mom. Then the third timeline Kumar went directly to Bombay after his 10th. His dad must have got Vakola quarters earlier than ours."

Rashmi said, "you have gone to Bombay after your Junior Intermediate, that made lot of difference."

Kumar said, "yes. In the third timeline, Kumar had close relations with Sahithi, which I lacked. Then he met Sunitha and Loveleen, that changed his life and pushed him towards business. Then the fourth timeline is CA Kumar, He went to Bombay after his 12th and continued his studies after Sneha was taken away and met Sahithi, married and led his life as CA. Then the next timeline Kumar went to study in Hyderabad, eloped with Sneha and meets Sahithi only as a friend. His life changed when Sneha goes missing. He marries Sahithi, but Sneha comes

back and dies in a fire accident. Then he meets Loveleen who changes his life for her own selfish reasons. He dies trying to save Joy from her husband. Now here a timeline is split and a Kumar from that timeline lands there. He marries Sunitha and dies in 2015 in his sleep. I think he is murdered by some enemies. Then another timeline Kumar lands in 2017 he works for some time in a tiffin centre and takes over his companies. Now another alter ego of Kumar who landed in 2017, his split goes on in a different way. His life changes when Sunitha goes missing in a plane crash. Her living is proof of some miracle. But he meets Nandini and marries her and runs a business with her help. When Nandini lands in our timeline, that must be Bob's handiwork, Kumar had to marry Loveleen. He is the most successful businessman. He develops futuristic technology and builds a business empire. He develops and builds a spaceship."

Rashmi said, "I think we should give all the credit to Bob."

Kumar said, "yes, Bob had helped him to achieve that. He alone has access to Bob of all the Kumars."

Rashmi asked, "dad did you write about Nandini coming to our timeline or did you write what that Kumar had felt? And your background story too, did you write from that Kumar's perspective."

Kumar replied, "whatever I wrote from the viewpoint of that Kumar."

Rashmi asked, "did aunt Sugandha did what you had written to bring clashes between you and mom?"

"Yes, it has happened exactly as I wrote. She was a bad influence on your mom. Your mom did not understand her and their mother's intentions until later. She still doesn't believe what I say till today."

Kumar looked at the time, it is now 2 am. He said, “you better go to sleep. Tomorrow you can have a tour of the city.”

Rashmi and Hrithik with other children had a tour of New York for two days and returned to Hyderabad.”

Ravali called Rashmi, she wanted to discuss Suchitra.

They met at the hospital and Rashmi asked, “what is it regarding?”

Ravali said, “when I went to Suchitra’s birthday, I observed she is having two souls attached to her body. I assumed that girl’s soul is the original one, and the second boy’s soul must have been attached by someone.”

“Phani told me about a ghost that took over you and it left when you met Suchitra’s mother Baby. She left you then. He also told that at that time you were telling Baby that her brother would be born to her. It seems the ghost attached an extra soul to Suchitra when she can’t able to make Baby give a boy with her brother’s soul.”

“What can we do to set this right?”

Rashmi asked, “do we need to involve in their lives? You know what kind of lady Baby is. Did you forget what she did to Rachana?”

“Yes, I did not forget, I just want to do some experiments, with souls. You know I have been dealing with them for the last few months.”

“Dealing with wayward souls is different from ghosts. Ghosts have more powerful negative energy. It might be different with each ghost. The ghost who took you overslept and ate non-veg food only. I heard about other ghosts, who only cry and don’t respond to people. This ghost tried to attach her dead son to her daughter’s unborn baby. From what Phani told, she was doing black magic before her death. If her mother is a witch, you can understand what kind of lady Baby is.”

“I think telling Baby is useless, it is better to tell Himanshu about the dual souls in his daughter’s body.”

Rashmi said, “I don’t think he would believe us, he seemed hen-pecked husband. I think Baby has everyone on her spell. Otherwise, when she took all the money and built herself a house nobody has the guts to question her. They let her have all the money and went and stayed at an Ashram.”

Ravali asked, “however Suchitra is their daughter, why would he resist making her normal?”

“Maybe he can’t go against his wife. Tell him and see what he says.”

Ravali said, “why should I interfere in other’s business as if I don’t have problems of my own, what with these souls and all.”

Next Sunday, Ravali and Rashmi went to Mike’s house to meet with Himanshu. They made Mike call Himanshu to his house. They explained the position of Suchitra to him.

Himanshu said, “you told me it is ok, don’t tell this to Baby, she flip her head. She will go berserk, I don’t know

what else she can do. So, forget about Suchitra or about Baby's brother's soul."

Ravali looked at Rashmi and Rashmi gave her an all-knowing glance.

Himanshu went away to his house taking Justin with him to play with his kids.

Mike asked, "what is this double soul in Suchitra?"

Ravali explained, "you know I have been seeing souls from the time Baby's mother's ghost took over me. Then on Suchitra's birthday, I saw she is having two souls. I don't know how that is possible, except for ghosts taking over. So, sometimes Suchitra is dominant and sometimes the soul is dominant. He seemed scared when I tried to speak to him. It must be his first encounter."

Mike asked, "What kind of problems Suchitra might face?"

"We don't know, she might behave differently from time to time, like Gemini people."

"what do Gemini people have to do with double soul?"

"They act as if there are two persons inside a Gemini person."

"As Himanshu is scared with his wife, let the matter be, they will bear the consequences."

Ravali asked, "is there any news from Nancy and Stephany?"

Mike said, "nothing until now. I think they have to reach the Mars station to send any message. They may not have messaging facilities in the spaceship."

Rashmi said, "if you receive any information please let us know. I am waiting for my sister to message us."

Raaj and Suresh wandered Hyderabad streets, looking for work. They found some daily labours working in the building industry.

They are not shy of hard work, spending years in jail taught them to do any work available. So, they started working with them, and the daily income is good, 500 rupees per day. Most of the workers spend them on daily necessities and drinks and non-veg food. These two lost the habit of drinking in jail and they tried to save money to search for Atul and Molly.

These workers go where ever work is available. They make makeshift tents near the workplace. Normally a building takes six months to one year based on the size.

They were free for the last week when the building they are working is completed. The owners gave a feast to the workers and the head who is called Mestri. He gives the orders what work has to be done and plans the building as the per plans. He also works on the building.

So when he got an order for a building in Miyapur, they all shifted there and made tents on a vacant plot after taking permission from the land owner.

In the evening after finishing their work all other men went to have drinks and these two sat on a cement bench. They are looking at three kids playing outside their house.

Raaj said showing the kids, "if we had married, we would have that age grandkids."

Suresh who never thought of marrying, as he was raping the girls who were brought to prostitute house. He worked as a pimp and would transport girls sold through their gang.

These two worked with a gang who kidnapped young girls and sell through auctioning. Suresh used to transport them to the buyers and when they no longer need them he transports them back to prostitute houses.

Raaj on the other hand worked as the right-hand man to the gang head. It is he who brought Suresh to the gang.

At One time Raaj used to handle dozens of gang members. The jail life has softened him and he started taking orders from gang heads in jail.

Suresh said, "I did not feel the need for marrying. I could satisfy my needs at the brothel house. Our daily needs are met by the workers at the house. What else we need."

Raaj said, "yes that is true. We got three times food, drinks in the night and a roof over our head and girls for the night. But see our life now. We have to wander the streets because of those two."

Here they are forgetting it is their Karma that sends them to jail for the heinous acts they performed in the name of the gang. They had a good run until they tried to perform the wedding of Ruksana with an old man. She ran away and Molly had come in between when they tried to recover her. So, they did not have another option but to bring Molly who was pregnant with them back.

But Rakesh bhai told us to return Molly to her house. That is what spoiled their life. She brought the police with her and even though they already left for the wedding,

the police reached before the wedding and arrested Dolly mam and Rakesh Bhai. They would slip the police, but when they returned home, the police arrested and they were given life imprisonment.

At last, they were released from jail during corona pandemic in overcrowded jails.

Justin hit the ball and it came and stopped before Raaj. He picked up the ball and Suchitra came running to pick it up. Seeing Suchitra they felt an odd euphoria. Raaj handed her the ball and she ran away to play with the others.

They looked at each other and their thoughts united and they decided to kidnap her at that point in time.

Raaj and Suresh waited until their project is completed and seeing her playing in the garden with gates wide open, they slipped in and showed Suchitra some chocolates, picked her up and took her to an empty hut. There they made her unconscious with chloroform and took her to the main road and picked up an auto telling him that she was ill and taking her to the hospital.

They got down at the nearest hospital and paid for the auto and let him go away. From there they caught a bus going towards Tandur and got down at Tandur. There they took a room at a hotel and put Suchitra in the room and went for dinner.

For the first time after a long time, they went and sat in the local liquor shop and had local liquor. After dinner, they returned to the hotel.

Baby called Suchitra to have lunch. When she did not respond, Baby went in search for her in the house. When she did not find her anywhere in the house, Baby came into the garden, she found her playthings there but Suchitra is missing. Indira went to school and Himanshu is at his office.

Baby called Himanshu and told him about the situation.

Himanshu told her to enquire with the neighbours and check if anyone had cc tv cameras. I am coming home.

Baby went to Mike's house, and with Vicky, both of them started searching surrounding houses and areas.

They got a clue of what happened when they saw a cc tv camera pointing to the road from their neighbours. They went to their house and asked them to check the recordings.

From the recordings, they recognised Raaj and Suresh as the workers at a nearby building. They went and checked the abandoned tents, finding no one there they called the police and showed them the recordings.

The police contacted their central division to check the recording around Miyapur and found Raaj and Suresh with Suchitra got down at a hospital in Chanda nagar and caught another bus. They sent police teams to track them.

Raj and Suresh returned to the hotel with food for Suchitra. They gave her food and let her sit on the bed for an hour.

Suresh tried to touch her, but the boy's soul in Suchitra understood their intentions and came to the front and

scared him silly. Raaj wanted to try, but he saw some kind of Satan in her and left her alone. They decided she is no use to them and wanted to sell her off.

The next day they went to the Toddy seller and offered to sell a girl of 5 years of age. The owner called Manemma on mobile and a lady of around 45 years, 5 feet and stout with the face of a villager, came and asked them where did they get the girl.

Raaj said, “we picked her up from Hyderabad. She is from a well-to-do family.”

Manemma said, “she looks from the agency area.”

Suresh asked, “do you want to purchase the girl or not. We are in need of money otherwise why would we sell her? We have done lots of these kidnappings and selling in our younger days. We had to spend time in jail otherwise we are part of a big gang in Bombay.”

Manemma asked, “Bombay gang, whose gang are you from?”

Raaj said, “Dolly’s gang.”

“Dolly’s gang? I know them, I have been kidnapped and sold by them only.” She looked at them closely, you must have become old and jail life must have changed them. I know Raaj, who kidnaps, Suresh who transports them, and her husband Rakesh, who helps her out.”

Suresh said, “yes, I am Suresh. You did remember us after all these years.”

“Why won’t I remember you, you are the ones who spoiled my life. I worked as a prostitute for 15 years and then I did a coup and took over the ring. I am now madam to the ring.”

Raaj said, “sorry for whatever happened to you, it was work for us. Do you want to buy her or not? We will look for someone else if you are not interested.”

“When did I tell you I will not take her? I have to know about the girl otherwise if the police come, what will I tell them.”

Raaj asked, “what will you give for her?”

Manemma said, “I will give 50, that is the final price, no haggling.”

Suresh said, “as you are saying no haggling, we will take it. When will we get the money?”

“You come with me, I will give you money at our house.”

She nodded to the toddy shop owner, and they followed her to her house.

At her house, Manemma made a small agreement with them and handed them 50,000. And they went away.

This way Suchitra with two souls landed at a prostitution ring.

These people buy children and wait until they are matured and hand them over to the highest bidder.

After a few days, the police landed at Tandur and went and enquired at the hotel. The receptionist said they were there for two days and went away. They must have caught a train.

Without any more leads the police returned empty-handed.

Chapter 7

Rashmi is going on steady with a doctor from the hospital.

Hrithik started to live with the man from the Pharmacy.

Rashmi's dad Kumar sends her a message they are ready to return to India.

Rashmi found out about the companies run by Kumar and company, but could not locate them. They are not in news and still hiding from their enemies. Their getting on the Mars spaceship is the last known news about them.

Mike and Vicky got married at last and Vicky shifted to Hyderabad permanently.

Ravali went away to her village to be married to a boy in her relations fixed by her family.

Phani and Banti left their YouTube videos as they don't have any partners.

The Indian government received a message from the Mars station that an Unknown spaceship is coming towards Earth. It has passed Mars and is likely to reach earth in 6 months' time.

The PM informed his counterparts of the USA and Russian governments about the incoming spaceship.

To be continued in "Attack of the Aliens"

