

Twin Time

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PUNASCHA
PUBLISHER

CHAPTER I

Sssiiizzch ! The sudden screech of a braking car disrupted the serene night.

'Are you crazy !', the driver of the gray mica Toyota Innova shouted loudly.

The sound and the shout made her alert and she found herself standing amidst a few speeding cars in Eastern Metropolitan Bypass. The sodium vapour lights made the dark night rather mystic - an ambience altogether unknown.

'Sorry !', hurriedly, she tried to reach the road divider.

He parked and got down.

'Are you okay ?', the curly-haired young man looked curiously

She looked at the stranger. The blue eyed guy was in a foam-white pullover and denim.

'I am fine ! Sorry to bother you'

'Never mind. Where to go ? Want a lift ?'

'Thanks, I stay nearby !'

The solo rider stared at the stunningly beautiful shock-headed girl, incongruously clad in a rather tight fitting sleeping suit which was offering the hint of her body contours.

She was about to cross the road. He came nearer.

'I am Sanurag. Your good name please !'

'Sandra'

Sanurag was looking intently. Sandra felt embarrassed for her queer outfit. She could appreciate his curious goggling. 'If you don't mind, I can help you I mean if you ! Please allow me to offer you a lift. I am afraid, you must have came out of your house hastily or ! Please feel free are you in problem ? I mean I find you crossing the road preoccupied need any medical assistance? Anyone ill ?'

'No. I told you, I am a local resident. Isn't it enough ?'

'Sorry to bother you ! Actually, I am a doctor this is my business card I feel !', he gave his card.

She took it, gave it a cursory glance and habitually searched for her purse. Embarrassed, she smiled, 'Sorry I don't have mine I forgot to take my purse thanks I am okay, my home is just two minutes' walk'

'Sorry ma'am ! I don't have any intention to bother you ! Anyway, good night !'

She was looking at the speeding Innova. The yellow street lights were creating queer geometrical patterns on its silvery body. She looked at the card again.

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She looked at the passing vehicles distractedly and walked towards a nearby by lane. Later, she could not remember whether she forgot to bolt the door from inside before going to sleep. Frustrated, she kept the card on the bedside table, put out the reading lamp and went to bed. She could not sleep. The screeching sound of the braking car was still in her ears. She switched on the lamp again, took out the card. Giving it a once-over, she rested in her purse and went to bed again. Unknowingly, the image of the deep-voiced, gentle and sympathetic young stranger left an impression deep within her psyche. For reasons unknown, the blue eyes kept her sleepless for the rest of the night.

The long queue in the autorickshaw stand reminded her that today was a call for industrial strike.

'What a joke ! I.T. town is exempted from the strike ! But no means to reach there !', a young man with a laptop slung on his shoulder expressed his resentment.

Sandra smiled.

After a long wait, she got a shuttle car. She found a white slip on her table. 'V.K. Malhotra wants to meet you'.

'Hi ! You have a good news !', Neha said from her table.

'News ?'

'Meet Malhotra !'

She went to the DGM, Finance.

'Good morning'

'Hallo Sandra ! It's a real good morning for you ! You will be getting two additional increments from this month. Happy?'

'Thanks'

'Welcome, we have high expectations from you !'

Sandra returned to her table. Neha, Arnab, and Vicky came to her table.

'Congrats, what about the treat ?', Vicky asked

'Don't forget me !', Vinita shouted from the despatch desk.
'Me too !', Jaspreet raised his voice.
'Okay ! Okay ! Let's have a party tonight'
'Excellent, where ?'
'Mainland China'
'Fantastic ! Befitting for the Creative Director of Ogilvy and Erickson'
'Cool !'
'Let us start with Crabmeat-Sweet Corn Soup and Crispy Prawns with Chili Plum Sauce', Neha opined.
'Okay, next ?', Arnab asked.
'Steamed Chicken with Straw Mushrooms', Vicky's suggestion.
'No, Drunken Chicken in Shaoxiang Wine', Vinita proposed.
'Okay both !', Vicky agreed.
'Carbohydrate is essential for health ! So, Chicken Clay Pot Rice !', Jaspreet's addition.
'Okay, my choice at the end ! Vodka for all at the start and Sizzling Brownie with Ice Cream to round-up!', Sandra smiled.
The friends were engaged in jovial chatting. Her cell phone light blinked.
'Yes Rik !'
'You did not come last Sunday !'
'Sorry dear ! I had an emergency appointment'
'Where are you now ?'
'Having dinner with friends'
'Where ?'
'Mainland China'
'South City ?'
'No, Silver Arcade'
'Any special occasion ?'

'Nothing special just got two additional increments'
'Congrats ! You owe me a treat !'
'O sure, I'll offer you a special one !'
'Okay, let me finish the goddamn exam !'
'How is Dipankar uncle ?'
'Fine I hope gone to mom'
'Oh, uncle is in Darjeeling ! Alone at home ?'
'For a week. He will return with mom'
'Oh, Neeta aunty is coming ! Very good, bye Rik, take care.
Meet you soon'
'Bye'
'The Drunken Chicken is superb', Vinita said.
'Only Drunken Chicken ?', Arnab asked.
'No I mean'
'Superb menu but we can't depend on your opinion,
Arnab !', Vicky winked.
'Why ?'
'A glutton's opinion is meaningless!', Jaspreet added.
'How dare you be harsh to my Arnab ! Yes, he is a little
obsessed with food ! But he is a gourmet, not a gourmand !',
Neha smiled.
'Oh, what a fool I am !', Vicky smiled meaningfully.
'Candid realization !', Neha laughed.
'I forgot that you joined cooking course for him !', Vicky
laughed.
'Divine love !', Jaspreet sighed.
'Okay, enough of leg pulling ! Getting late', Vinita reminded.
'Get up duds and gals. Farooq is waiting for Vinita !', Arnab
said.
'Night is too young for Farooq ! He will come only after ten !',
Vinita smiled.