



## The Silent Heart

**Nagma Sinha**

It was a sweltering summer afternoon. Samanta was looking at her toes which were partly yellow where the sun rays were falling.

She was comfortably sitting on a cane chair pressing her back on the cushion pillow placed as a backrest. Her eyes then moved upwards towards the different plants occupying the edges of the four-cornered boundary wall. The sun rays gradually faded, and a cool breeze started running which made the green vegetation sway in complete harmony.

Samanta closed her eyes and the strands of her hair on either side of her face followed the direction of the wind and brushed her face every now and then.

When she opened her eyes she saw her neighbour, Rohan walking towards the entry gate. Samanta had a smile on her face and walked outside the porch to receive him.

“How are you?”

“I am excellent and you?”

“Very fine. Come inside”

They both sat on the cane chairs facing each other.

“I wanted to meet you before I return back to Kochi.”

Samanta was happy to hear this and blushed slightly. “Oh! When do you leave?”

“I have an early morning train.”

“Then, you cannot go without having lunch.”

“No, do not bother. I have lot of work pending and have not even started packing.”

“It will not take much time. Just sit and relax for few minutes.”

Samanta’s mother was an assistant clerk in the post office and would return only by evening. She had lost her father two years ago.

Samanta did not want to miss the excellent opportunity of spending time with Rohan.

Rohan on the other hand did not want the moments with her to end.

She rushed inside the kitchen. There was lunch prepared by her mother before she left for work. Rohan came inside the house and took a seat on one of the chairs facing the dining table.

Samanta carefully served him the food which was freshly prepared in the morning. She fulfilled her diet by putting fruits and namkeen on her plate.

"Hey, why aren't you eating a proper lunch? Just transfer half of the food to your plate"

"It's completely fine!! I usually skip lunch. I am just eating these to give you company. So, please enjoy it and do not worry."

Rohan felt restless but gave in. He was pleased with her gesture and was hoping that she might have some special feelings for him. It was the best two hours before leaving Kochi.

Rohan and Samanta had grown together in the same neighbourhood. Although they studied in different schools and colleges, they often met each other at birthday parties and family picnics. With time, they became good friends. After graduation, Samanta went into a teaching profession and then left it to manage her father's retail business. Rohan fell in love with criminal law and applied for the bar membership.

In the present day, Rohan was practising law at the district court in Kochi.

Eight months passed with no news from him. It was December when Samanta saw Rohan going towards his home from the airport. She was excited to meet and talk to him about all that was missed to be known about.

"Hi Sami! Nice to see you".

"Hi, how have you been?"

"Very good. In fact, I left Kochi for good and now I will be working at the district court here."

"Wow! That is amazing news. Aunty and uncle must be so happy."

“Yes, very much. Now I can have mom’s food every day.”

“Nothing better than that. Ok, I will leave you now. Take a good rest. You must be very tired.”

Rohan smiled and he was even more happy that he would see Samanta every day. He did not let out this secret to her.

She turned around and walked towards the gate to leave. Rohan had his eyes fixed on her and watched the sight of her svelte figure swaying swiftly as she went farther away from sight.

One afternoon, Samanta was sitting in her kirana shop, when she saw Harish charging in high motion towards another man. He caught him by the collar and the other man pleaded with him to let him free and was apologising to him breathlessly. Harish took out a revolver from his jacket and shot the man on the head. People started fleeing from the spot and Samanta ordered her labourers to close the shutter of her shop at once. She shuddered with utter shock. Harish was her classmate in college, and she could not imagine what led him to commit such a gruesome crime.

She dialled Rohan's number and explained about the shock and fear she was going through.

Rohan was at the court and asked her to stay there until he came to her rescue.

He entered the shop from the back door after lightly knocking on the door. One of the labourers gently opened the door and let him in. Samanta was sweating and extremely nervous. She hugged Rohan tightly to wash away the apprehensions running in her brain.

"Don't worry Sam. Nothing will happen to you. Relax! Come on, I will drop you home".

After locking the shop, she walked towards his four-wheeler. Rohan quickly moved the pile of files and his black coat from the front seat to the back seat.

Samanta looked around and sat inside quickly. "How can he do this? This is what he learnt in college?"

"What if I am next?"

Rohan looked at her with intense eyes and told her to stop all unrealistic thoughts.

"Do not imagine all this nonsense please. I am there to protect you."

Samanta's heart skipped a beat and she looked at Rohan in the eye and said, "Thank you for everything."

Rohan gave a slight smile and started the car engine. The car neared her house and once it halted, Rohan hurriedly came out of his side of the car door and then escorted Samanta until she entered inside her house. Samanta's mother came towards her and said "Beta, are you ok? I just heard the news about Harish."

"Yes mom, I am fine. It is just that it happened right in front of my eyes and something which I would have never imagined from Harish."

"You need not step outside the house at least until it is safe for you."

Rohan then interrupted, "Actually Harish has now surrendered to the police, so the crime witness' harassment may be ruled out."

"This is a good development, but Samanta should stay at home until everything settles down."

"Yes, aunty you are right. OK, I will take your leave now."

"Sit for some time, why are you in a hurry" exclaimed Samanta.

“I need to be in court soon...ok, bye.”

In the evening, Samanta received a call from Sachin who was a close friend of Harish during college days.

“Hi Sachin, how are you?”

“I am good. I wanted to tell you something.”

“What is it?”

“I heard that the man whom Harish killed was someone he used to be friendly with and this happened in a fit of rage and within seconds he reproached himself and regretted.”

“Oh god, why did he do this?”

“Did you know about Harish’s feelings for you?”

“No. I mean somewhat but he never expressed it to me.”

“He is head over heels in love with you and the victim kept telling Harish that he would never marry you as he was no match for you.”

“Oh!”

“Harish kept listening quietly to these jovial remarks for a few days but could not suppress his anger anymore and then the rest is history.”

Samanta was in utter shock. She did not know what to say.

She sat quietly in her room thinking about how violence can grow like a monster in one's brains and destroy their lives forever.

Two weeks passed and one evening Samanta was looking out of the window. She spotted Rohan’s car and was excited to see him.

“How are you?”

“I am bored. My mother has incarcerated me in my room. Although, I deserve it.”

“Not again! You should stop feeling guilty about what Harish has done. You had nothing to do with it. It is not your fault.”

“Somehow, I feel as if I am the root cause of what happened. One died and the other one in jail.”

“Harish’s trial is going on and the final verdict is expected by next month.”

Samanta stepped out with Harish for some fresh air.

“I actually didn’t know about his feelings.”

“You still don’t know many things” said Rohan with a secretive smile.

“About what? Tell me”

“No, there is something I want to talk about, but I can’t share it with you.”

“Why?”

“My choice. I want you to find it yourself.”

“How?”

Rohan laughed and looked at her with admiration.

“Do you want to tell me something you haven’t told me yet?”

Samanta knew that all these years she never had the courage to pour her heart to him and did not want to do it at this moment too. She chose to keep quiet about it.

“I don’t think so!” Samanta said with reticence.

They had kulfi at the Lala kulfi centre and then headed back.

“Thanks for the evening. It was a good change. I will be going to the shop from tomorrow.”

“Very good. You will feel better and normal.”

“Yes. Ok good night”

“Whom would you dream about?”

“What?”

“Just joking. Good night”

Rohan was feeling good about the evening, and he finally had some courage to plant a few romantic ideas into her thoughts.

It was a Thursday evening when Rohan paid a visit to Samanta.

Samanta’s mother answered the doorbell and invited him to the drawing room.

She served hot samosas and jalebis and went inside the kitchen to talk to Samanta.

The kitchen was next to the drawing room, and he could hear their conversation clearly.

“Beta, I have bought the Rakhis for tomorrow. What should be the lunch menu?”

“You decide”

“Accha beta, call Rohan also tomorrow. He has been supporting you so much.”

Rohan went red on the face and could not swallow the jalebi he had just bit to eat. He struggled to finish the snacks on his plate and got up to leave.

Samanta followed him to the main door and then to the street silently without talking.

After a few metres, Rohan stopped and turned towards Samanta.

He put his arms around her waist and pulled her closely towards himself.

“If you ever treat me like a brother, you will never see me again.”

Samanta gave him a huge smile, freed herself and started walking towards home.



She turned back to look at him. Rohan winked at her, and they both smiled.

## **Nagma Sinha**

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Nagma is the Business Head, North & East at Outokumpu who loves creative writing. Her blogs on varied subjects related to politics, socio-economic, culture, art etc. are published at [nagmasinha.blogspot.com](http://nagmasinha.blogspot.com). Her short stories “The Constant Shadow” and “The Dance of Victory” have been published in the CLRI (Contemporary Literary Review India) journal in the February 2023 and August 2023 Issues respectively. She holds an MBA degree from Goa University and currently resides in Faridabad, Haryana (India).

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