

## **Aparajita – The Invincible**

**Jisha Rajesh**

“Can I meet Ms Mehra please?”

“Who? Dr Verma’s patient?”

“Yes”

“Are you a relative of hers?”

“No” I nervously tucked my hair behind my ears as the scanning eyes of the mean-looking lady at the reception pierced through me. “Actually, she is my friend.”

“Well, then you have to ask Dr Verma for permission.” She said curtly and buried her eyes once again in the magazine she was reading.

“Could you please tell me where is Dr Verma’s cabin?”

“He is doing rounds and you have to wait.”

I made myself comfortable on the sofa in the parlour of the BM mental hospital and research centre. My mind wandered to the time when I was a first-year student of BBA. It was on the occasion of our College’s Annual day that I saw Aparajita Mehra for the first time. She was our chief guest that day and her splendid speech on the ‘Scope and Future of the B- world’ still rings in my ears. She was in her

early thirties at that time but had succeeded in carving a niche for her in the business world at such a young age.

‘She is, of course, a strong and determined lady as everyone has said.’ I deduced from the strength of her words as I listened to her speech like an awe-struck doe. And that was my first impression of her. She was a diva during my college days and everyone in our college had dreamt of becoming the next ‘Aparajita Mehra’ of the B-world. While all others had idolized her for her achievements, I had developed a kind of affection towards her for the kind of person that she was. Although on our first meeting, I didn’t get a chance to get acquainted with her but still deep down I felt as if I was bonded to her for life.

“Hey Varsha, what are you doing here?”

“Hi Abhi, what a pleasant surprise!”

It was Abhimanyu, my classmate during the schooldays. I had lost contact with them after school but had come to know through some common friends that he has become a psychiatrist.

“Everything fine upstairs, I guess.” Abhi said teasing me.

“I am here to meet Ms Mehra.” I said as I playfully hit Abhi as a revenge for making fun of me. “I was once her subordinate but the bond between us is that of friendship.”

“Well” Abhi shrugged, “I don’t think she will recognize you. Her symptoms are worsening with each passing day. Most

of the times, she can't remember anything not even herself. But on some rare occasions, she does."

"Whatever Abhi" I threw my hands in the air, "I really do want to meet her. I am in Bangalore only for a week. After that only God knows whether I will get a chance to meet her ever again."

"Fine, I will arrange that for you."

Abhi made his way to Dr Verma's cabin and I resumed my seat in the parlour. After completing my MBA, I got placement via campus recruitment and was assigned to work with Aparajita Mehra and her team. I still remember my first day in Ms Mehra's cabin. I was as nervous as I was pleased for having a chance to work with my idol of admiration. She was a sweet and polite lady and not mean and bossy like bosses usually are. But it wasn't that easy to become friends with her. After spending a few days with her, I painfully realized that she avoided getting personally attached to people around her.

"The lady has a broken heart." Mrs Nazreen Khan, her personal secretary explained the reason to me." Haven't you heard of Vikramjit Rathore?" Rathore who topped the list of the most influential people in the B- world was the ruthless ex-husband of Ms Mehra. "He was her classmate during their college days. He was charming, intelligent, quick-witted and everything else that a girl dreams of and she fell madly in love with him. Unfortunately, the man she adored turned out to be a macabre beast. He had subjected her to brutal physical torture and even on some occasions he used to assault her in public. She suffered everything in

silence for the sake of their marriage but at last he walked out on her and their love culminated in a divorce.”

“But she seems to be so strong as if nothing matters to her.” I asked astounded.

“She just acts to be strong and happy but actually she is a lost soul.” Mrs Khan clarified.

It was hard for me to accept Mrs Khan’s version of the story at that moment but as I grew close to Ms Mehra it proved out to be true. Most of the times, Ms Mehra’s face glowed with the triumph of being a smart and successful businesswoman that she was. But there were times when the broken woman inside her popped-out and left me bewildered. Many-a-times, I have seen her at the parties where Rathore appeared with his wife, behave as if he has ceased to exist for her. But there were also occasions when her swollen lids and blood-shot eyes have revealed to me the clandestine story of those sleepless nights that she had spent mourning her lost love. Sometimes, her words portrayed Rathore as an atrocious villain but on others, her words have made me believe that her tender feelings for Rathore are still alive.

“She still loves him and that’s why she’ll never get married to anyone else ever again.” Mrs Khan’s words made a tear slide down my cheeks as I could do nothing that could probably fill her doomed life with colours. But then a thought flashed through my mind that lifted the dark veil of pity for Ms Mehra from my soul. She had her stood-up to justify her name ‘Aparajita- the Invincible’. She was and will always be the strong and determined ‘Iron- lady’ as the B –

world knows her. Nobody or nothing could ever be able to beat her.

In her, I have seen all the shades of Indian women. Though she was abandoned like Ahalya she still had the strength of Durga to bear it all. Though her dignity was trampled by a man like that of Draupadi, still she fought the battle with her life and society with the courage of Rani Laxmibai. Though her own life was in dark, she used to light-up life for others with her charity and benevolence. She was always there to help me out whenever I needed her like an older sibling. Since I was the only child of my parents, I had always longed for the love of a sibling. As I became more and more drawn to her, I prayed with all my heart for having her as one in lives to come.

After my marriage, I decided to settle abroad with my husband and had to leave the job. As I handed my resignation to Ms Mehra I wished to tell her, that if reincarnation is a truth let me take birth as your little sister so that nothing could ever separate us. Though, I could never muster courage enough to put my feelings for her in words. I have returned to my roots after an interlude of two decades only to find the invincible Aparajita losing the battle with sanity owing to the mental trauma she has been carrying within her all these years.

“Varsha” Abhi’s voice jolted me, “You can meet her but as I had said she may not recognize you.”

“That’s okay. Thank you so much, Abhi.”

I knocked on her door and walked in as I used to do when I was her subordinate.

“Who’s that?” A pale and worn out reflection of Ms Mehra asked as she fumbled with her glasses.

“I am your little sister, *Didi*.” I said as I was sure that she would not recognize me. Moreover, I wanted to fulfil my life-long wish of addressing her as ‘*Didi*’ and not ‘Ma’am’ as I had always done before time runs out.

“I know Varsha,” she said, “I have always loved you as my own little sister.”

The torrential flow of tears from my eyes conveyed the love I have been secretly nurturing for her all these years.

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