

# When She Looked Away | Samudra

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Arpitha stood staring at her image in the bathroom mirror. Her gaze seldom wavered even as the neighbourhood broke morning with the exploding of fire crackers. The mascara from her eye lashes mixed with her kajal and left a dark trail around her eyes and down her makeup laden face. Her inanimate eyes that had wept rivers the last night now looked like a parched red desert.

The scene at Arpita's bourgeois apartment could be described grisly at the best. The serial lights she and her friends had so excitedly put up all around the place still shimmered and shone. While some lit up the walls; some lay strewn all around the living room as standing testimonies to the horrors that had unfolded the last evening.

The muted space of her bedroom came alive with the buzzing of her mobile phone whose light showed the damage around. The elaborate drapes to the French windows that opened to a grand vista of the lake dangled from the broken pipe that held them.

Arpita now turned her attention to the buzzing cell phone and walked towards to the side table to answer it.

It was her mom calling, probably to wish her Happy Diwali but she would never know as she wasn't the least interested in talking to her right then. She squinted her Goth looking eyes to look at the part of the window that lay shorn of the drape. The sun had almost risen outside as she waded across things, her things that lay scattered all over the carpeted floor of the bedroom, towards the sprawling balcony.

It was cold and damp as she stepped out and the steel rail felt like touching frozen meat. Arpita clenched her teeth and curled her feet as a wave of cold breeze blew towards her. The buzzing of the phone continued relentlessly. Arpita's mom was not expecting her daughter to avoid her calls. After all, she was the first person Arpita had been speaking to every single morning ever since she moved to Bengaluru.

Her face showed a tiny trace of emotion when she looked back towards the phone one last time.

A lot had changed in Arpita's trouble free life in the last three days.

Arpita had made the move to the big city six months back where she had landed her dream job as a business analyst at an Avant Garde IT security firm.

The gorgeous and suave Arpita had no trouble inviting attention and appreciation from her male colleagues and was soon seen around the town with the boss's blue eyed boy Mayank.

Arpita had always been an extremely confident and independent woman and she had always wanted to be at the top of things. Her status in her relationship with Mayank was keeping in line with her attitude. It was clear to both Arpita and Mayank that it was she who wore the pants in their relationship. While Mayank looked the part of a total stud and played it too, he had a very conventional mindset for someone who played uber cool and ultra modern.

Arpita was smart, intelligent, had a great job and to top it all was an above average beauty. Mayank was more than happy to let Arpita to be on top of the game.

It was Arpita who had taken the initiative to take their relationship to the next level. They were both attractive young people and were earning figures many people could only dream of.

Mayank and Arpita had moved into this splendid apartment complex closer to the office as Arpita wanted them to spend more time together.

Mayank had not hesitated to make the move since he had already seen Arpita as his companion for life.

Diwali was on the horizon and Arpita wanted to make this Diwali an occasion that Mayank would never forget in his life. For the first time in her life she was going to take a decision so big that could alter the course of her life and for the first time in her life she had chosen to take that decision all by herself. It would be a surprise for her mother and Mayank as well.

That Diwali Arpita had made elaborate plans to propose marriage to Mayank.

Just like the scores of white collared workers in Bengaluru, Mayank also had stepped out of his hometown in Shimla to make it big in the IT capital of India. Diwali was the one big occasion when Mayank's family had a huge gathering back home in Shimla.

Mayank had promised Arpita he would return to her a day prior to Diwali and that he would be taking off for Shimla to spend time with his family.

Arpita who had always been on charge of things around felt that a few days away from Mayank would be just the right time to break the news to her mother and her girlfriends. She had even finalized plans on how the proposal would progress, the decorations around the apartment, the chocolates, the food, the crackers to light up the sky after Mayank said Yes! The whole thing.

Arpita was her parents' only child and had been brought up with a lot of pampering and loads of attention to her needs and wants. Arpita could hardly remember a time in her life when she had to throw a tantrum to get what she had wanted. She was a bright student and secured good ranks throughout her school and college to add much pride and happiness to her doting parents, especially her mother.

Mayank arrived at the Shimla railway station with two days to spare before he had to come back to Arpita as he had promised her.

What Mayank had not disclosed to Arpita or even insinuated when he left that he had his own plans of proposing marriage to her on his return. Being the conventional – traditional guy that he was he had planned to couple his visit to his home as a "permission seeking" endeavour as well.

Mayank's folks were simple people. His father used to work as a manager with a private bank and had yielded to his son's persistent demands to take early retirement when he had landed a job in the hot bed of the software industry.

Mayank had butterflies in his stomach when he had arrived at the railway station. For someone with a cool guy attitude and personality to go with it, Mayank never was in any real relationship with any girl before Arpita.

Though he was convinced his parents wouldn't reject his decision especially when they would see what a prize catch Arpita would be for their son, he was more worried about the embarrassment that would be meted out to him by his sisters and the lone sister – in – law. He would be welcomed by a gathering large enough to let the entire neighbourhood know that he had arrived.

Back at the apartment, Arpita had broken the news about Mayank and her plans for the future with her mother. The poor old lady could not trust her own ears that her daughter who had just six months back left their home was now having plans of settling down in the big city.

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