



The Unfortunate Widow

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Aahan seldom picked calls, unless they were from unknown numbers. But why? Curiosity?

Might be.

Oh dear! But the curiosity killed the cat!

Hadn't he picked the call; he wouldn't have talked to her. Hadn't he talked to her; he wouldn't have been part of her emotions. And then what? The twist!

Since then things weren't normal. Everything had changed. However it hadn't been noticed until the D-Day was arrived.

It was a call from one of his old colleagues of the school he had worked for. She got a beautiful name and it was called as Aanya. She had also a pretty face and it was prettier every following day.

"Hi sir!" She said in a lovely tone. "It is Aanya. Your colleague at Little Flowers School."

"Hello Aanya!" Aahan cried. "What a pleasant surprise! It has been three years since I left out school and I never heard from you."

"Ah! I know sir, that you...Aren't free and... I know that you are busy in writing books and participating in social events. I have been always following your poetry in Telugu. However I never read any of your English Novels. You know, right... I'm not that good in English. But I love your Telugu literature. Especially that one you have written on mother concept. Every single statement touched me and turned my eyes wet."

"Oh! That's really great. Thank you so much. So it's only me who forgot you. Of course not completely but I am sorry for what happened to your husband two years ago... That thing I came to know from someone."

"Yeah..." Aanya sighed, difficultly. "It was a terrible thing happened in my life. Everything changed since my husband's death. You know my past right? It has been so hard to survive in this world. All I'm living only for my two children."

"I... I'm sorry but can you share me your complete story with me?" Aahan said. "Nothing to insist. Only if you are interested."

"Oh! No. That's nothing but tragedy. Let me keep it to myself and sob myself and die myself," Aanya said in a dry tone. "Why to bother an always-happy-man like you sir, with my so-terrible-that-no-one-likes story?"

"Please don't say that!" Aahan exclaimed. "Treat me as your brother. Share me your story. Tell me your problems. If I can do something, I'll certainly do. After all, if you share your pains with someone, you will be greatly relieved. That's the only health secret for the problem you are facing right now."

"That's really touching, sir," Aanya said and began narrating everything that had happened in her life. "It all began when I was eighteen. After my intermediate education, I have joined in a computer course in a computer center. There I met a boy who used to sit at the system next to me. He was an ugly-looking handicapped young lad. His right leg was little shorter than his left leg. Also he didn't seem to be well educated, which I could easily find by the way he communicate. Despite all these drawbacks he was a kind-hearted person. He used to speak to me like nobody had ever spoken. It was so good for an eighteen-year old south Indian girl. We started skipping the computer classes and were spotted ourselves in theaters, cafes and parks. Days passed quicker than ever. But I know it was just not that. We have to get married. Because I'm not that kinda of woman who can easily forget what all happened and move on with someone else. Once my brother spotted me with my boyfriend kissing me in a park. He was there with some strange girl, a fifth or sixth I don't remember. It didn't seem a problem to him. But in his point and of course in everyone's point in our family, I shouldn't be with any boy, even if I was seriously in a relationship with him, unlike my brother's fantasy romantic relationships. I was grounded for twenty days by my brother with the permission granted by my father. I lost my mother when I was two. You see there was still great concern of caste in our society. Besides, my boyfriend was a handicapped guy. My family could only see the darker side of him. They felt so bad about his physical characteristics. Even, one day my brother went to him with his friends and bet him until he was hospitalized. My situation was so bad at home. After twenty days of being grounded, one night, I escaped from home. I went to the hospital where my boyfriend was resting. From there we went to a temple and got married the next morning with the help of his friends. But only later I got to know how he cheated on me faking his wrong assets and properties. He got nothing but a tiny hut bearing his cruel-hearted mother. She began torturing me like hell. However I didn't much bother about her. I was just wanted to be positive and keep leading my life with my husband. One day he bought an auto with the help of one of his friends. But you know nobody gives you things free these days, how close they might be to

you. Sometimes my husband used to bring his friends home to have their alcoholic parties. I was merely a victim of their tortures. Although none of his friends ever dared to throw me a rude behavior, I know it would happen some day because they were boys after all. By then I was a pregnant and it was hard for me without any money at home as my filthy husband used to bring nothing home. So I have joined in a private school as a primary teacher. Days were passing. It seemed everything was fine. I just stopped listening to my mother-in-law's murmuring about me. The teaching life began to give me a new hope. I was happy. Three years passed quickly. You know time passes fast if everything is fine.. but surely any tale doesn't end without a twist. There came a twist. My husband was died in an accident. That's what I had worried about his alcoholic habits, and it happened that day. I had no words left to say, and no tears to drop. All were over. I wanted to die. It was the only option I felt. Because I know the society. My position then was not just that of a normal widow. I was widow absconded by my own family and the family of my husband. Now, finally by my husband himself. There were nobody to help me financially or emotionally. Still I had to move on for my children.. I had to cross this hardest situation ever a woman would face. Only a few weeks later, sexual harassment started. It all began with the sarpanch of our village. He said that with the contacts he had, he would let me granted the ex gratia for the accidental death of my husband and also he would look after the pension of a widow to be processed soon. He also said that for that favor he offered me, he wanted me to offer him something. He asked me to sleep with him whenever he wanted to. I just ignored him. He used his political influence and stopped the ex gratia to be granted. However the pension thing, I applied it by myself. It was a tiny amount for a widow like me to survive. I couldn't stay more than a few months at my husband's house for I was being tortured not only by my mother-in-law but also by the friends of my dead husband. His friends often visited our house and started offering me gifts or money by holding my hands and looking at me differently. I knew those looks. It tortured me. That's what happens in this world after someone's death? I sobbed. My situation became critical. I couldn't go to my house as my brother never

allowed me. Now I couldn't even stay at my husband's house. Finally, I dared to move to the nearest town and rented a little house. My pensions would be enough to pay the rent. I needed to bring up my two little kids. So I joined in another school as a primary teacher who offered three thousand per month. That's what we get in a small and medium-sized private schools here. But I couldn't do anything else. Somewhat relief to me was that the school offered my children free education. After two years, when everything seemed settled, another twist came. That's what life, isn't that? The school I've been working for has suddenly been shut down. Later it was given for lease to some other organization, who started hiring new teachers with highly qualified people and a good experience as well. So I'm back to home again. Everything seemed to be gone again. I've joined my children in a government school for I couldn't pay their fee in that school. Now, I couldn't even find a way for living. Later I had been contacted by one of my husband's friends, who offered me a contract job in a government office but for that I must favor him something. These things again started. I never understood how these people were tracking my life. A few of them even started asking me to marry them. Only later I came to know that my own brother had given my contact to those strangers who were torturing me to marry them. Later I had a serious fight with my brother who began calling me a prostitute questioning me if I hadn't have a husband how had I been managing my living in a town. It was like saucing chilly powder on a serious wound. But actually the wound was on my heart. Post all this mess, I approached a local Superintendent of Police. He was worse than others. Once he directly came to my house and smooched me forcedly. If the punisher did the blunder, whom should I complain? I gave up complaining. I changed my contact and shared not even to my brother. This is my first call. I... I am in terrible need of money but I couldn't ask anyone. I don't want to be a dependent. I am getting ideas to suicide. So I felt like calling you, so that talking to you might relieve me to some extent. I.. I'm sorry to bother you with my uneven story."

"That's fine... Ah! That's fine!" Said Aahan, sighing heavily. "You just send me your account, I'll send some amount."

"That's so kind of you but no sir!" Aanya said. "I can't return. Let me live this way. I'm used to it. I just wanted to talk to you."

"Please, send your bank account number!" Aahan insisted. "You needn't return me. We are like family. I'm here for you."

Whatsoever he sent five lakhs to her without a second thought or verification.

Now wait... Are you imagining like anyone else would have imagined?

Then wait on. She didn't cheat on him, rather he cheated her.

Aahan had a close friend named as Zion. He lived along with him in his bachelor room. They had been friends since their B. Tech days. Now they were pursuing for their master's degree.

Since the day of emotional discussion with Aanya, Zion kept on warning Aahan not to put his fingers in other's emotional contents. But once he had transferred five lakh rupees to not-so-well-known lady, Zion was furious on his friend. They had an unfriendly argument.

"How foolish you are to transfer all your savings for a story that didn't have a proof?" Zion yelled.

"I could feel the proof in her emotion," Aahan returned.

"It is your dream to climb Everest and I know that you need a lot of money for that. And every possible rupee that you saved all through your life, was thrown away for some widow who cried her cock-and-bull story. You did a terrible mistake. What are you thinking? A savior, ah? Everyone is fake here. If I'm not wrong, she should have been maintaining more than one affair to look herself safer in this society. Who on Earth these days can be that perfect, eh? I bet my head, she had affairs. And definitely her family or her husband's family are not that bad as she explained. All she wants is to be away from them, so that she could live a different life. Who on Earth spare a daughter-in-law maintaining an affair?"

"I think you have totally gone mad! You should keep your tongue in control. How dare you say about a woman so badly without even knowing her?" Aahan said furiously.

"Ok. Then let me say this way. Visit her house in the early hours of the day. If you find anything suspicious, I'm right. Else you may be right."

This was a daring statement, wasn't it? Would Aahan take a step forward and have a surprise visit to Aanya's house or just ignore his decade long buddy?

After Aahan had sent five lakhs to Aanya's account, she was so pleased. But they didn't again talk for next few days. Might be a dozen days later, he caught up with a crazy idea -- WHAT IF SHE WAS CHEATING ON HIM? WHAT IF SHE HAD MANY ILLEGAL AFFAIRS WITH PEOPLE AROUND? WOULD THE FAMILIES FROM BOTH THE SIDES REALLY BE SO HARD ON A WIDOW WITH TWO LITTLE KIDS? Might be Zion's words were not ignored but only became bigger and bigger in Aahan's mind.

He doubted her the whole day and night. Finally he decided to visit her and check himself if anything went wrong.

He visited her house the next day.

Spotted. A middle-aged gentleman stepping out of the front door, adjusting his overcoat.

Who could visit at ten to six in the morning? A milkman? An Ermanegildo Zegna was too much for a milk man. So was for a paperboy. Then who he could be? The early morning gentleman in Ermanegildo suit. Unless he must be--

Aahan was a good listener. But didn't speak much. He didn't discuss much. He didn't know how immature it was for a twenty-nine year old man.

Aanya was surprised on his sudden visit. He didn't even ask her about the man he just saw outside. Because he had already been decided.

After having a friendly chat, when she was busy preparing something in the kitchen for this new family member, he stole the ATM card from her handbag and skedadled down his jacket.

She offered some tea for him. He drank it and left from there quickly.

An hour later, the total amount from the ATM card was withdrawn. There was only two thousand used from the amount he had sent.

Aanya got a message to her mobile about the amount debited from her ATM. She was shocked. Immediately she called for the aid of the bank but the disaster was already happened.

Aahan filed a complaint against Aanya in the local police station saying that he had transferred five lakh rupees to her after hearing her emotional content but she cheated on him, so he wanted it back from her, but upon asking the same she was persisting. He had also shown the proof of the amount transferred to her from his net banking account and let the inspector hearkened phone conversation between them.

The inspector called Aanya for an explanation. But she said what had happened that morning and filed a return complain against Aahan saying that he had visited her home in the morning and had stolen the ATM from her handbag and withdrew the amount he had transferred a few days ago and then filed a complaint against her illegally. She also claimed that it was all because Aahan might be expecting something from her just like every other asshole in the world. However Aahan claimed that he went to her house that morning but didn't steal anything.

The inspector was surprised. He performed some interrogation on both of the main characters and their friends. Later he began investigation. In fact, the inspector thought, it was a cakewalk for him to find if Aahan was the culprit.

The inspector took the bank details of Aanya and commanded one of his constables to visit the respected bank and gather the information about the latest withdrawal of amount. When the constable was back with the details of the ATM from where the amount had been

withdrawn and the time of the withdrawal, he was commanded to collect the CCTV footage of the ATM for the given time.

The constable was back in an hour with the required data in a pen drive. The inspector played it in his PC.

Both Aanya and Aahan were astonished looking at the man who had withdrawn the amount.

"Who the hell is this third person?" Inspector perplexed.

"Oh my--" Aanya was totally astounded as if something unbelievable happened.

"It's the man in that costly suit!" Aahan screamed. "Possibly only Aanya could explain this."

"How on Earth could I?" Aanya puzzled.

"Because you both were slept last night!"

"Another wrong word and I'll kill you pulling out the pistol from this jack ass's belt!"

The inspector was shocked for her words. But he didn't say a word for he was scared of her raging face at that moment. He feared she might really pull out the gun but shoot him instead.

"Then who the hell he was and why the hell he was coming out of your house early in the morning?" Aahan questioned.

"Who knows?" Aanya exclaimed, looking into Aahan's eyes. "I never saw this guy in my life."

"What the--" Aahan surprised. "I saw him coming out of your house before I knocked at your door."

"That gives perfect explanation when he broke into my house and stole my card," Aanya said.

"But you--" Aahan had some vague thought so halted for a moment. Then asked, "So you don't know who the hell he is?"

"Absolutely not!"

The inspector was perplexed.

"If neither of you know him, how on Earth he came to know about the money in the ATM card?" Inspector exclaimed. "One of you must be friends with him."

"Then the probability of I'm knowing to him given her knowing him is zero, sir!" Aahan said.

"What is the probability of you knowing him not given me, then?" Aanya said. "One?"

"If I send someone to steal the card, why would I come to do the same?" Aahan said. "However I found a wrong ATM card." He pulled out another ATM card of her and handed it over to you.

"Oh my--" Aanya screamed. "

"How could you be such a fool of stealing an SBI ATM card when you transferred money to HDFC account?"

"I... I just overlooked in haste."

"Wow! Now it's getting interesting!" Inspector exclaimed. "I gave a thought it would be a cakewalk. But might be not. Anyways, it will hardly take a day to find him and drag him into the cell. You both can leave now. But don't leave the district until I give clearance."

The news about the unknown man in the expensive suit was published everywhere in the country. In this age of super technology, it wasn't a great deal to catch a small thief whose identity had been known.

The thief in a suit was caught at Mumbai railway station. The inspector who was looking for him was glad and owed to the Mumbai police a thank you. He thanked them and brought the thief in a suit back to the location. The thief in a suit claimed that there was no one behind him and the theft was purely by himself.

"Then why didn't you take the whole bag, rather than picking just the correct ATM card which was containing money?" Inspector inquired. "You could've stolen other ATM instead if you didn't know it didn't contain any amount at all."

"I just broke into that house randomly around five thirty in the morning. I kept on searching for money," The thief in a suit said. "But I couldn't find anything. Then I looked her bag. I found nothing but two ATM cards in it. I have a good experience that some people write their ATM card passwords inside the paper socket of the card. One of those two cards didn't have it. But the other did have. So I had taken that one and slowly slipped out of the house from the front door expecting no one would see me. But unfortunately this guy had seen me."

"You will be produced in the court soon," Inspector said. "You will stand convicted under section 379 of Indian Penal Code and will be sentenced for at least two years for having stolen Rs. 4,98,000/- from a widow's house."

"No sir!" The thief in suit interrupted. "I've just stolen only ATM card from the widow's house."

"Wow! You are so clear about what you did!" Inspector acted an amazement. "If you speak the truth saying that whom you are trying to protect, I assure you to reduce the punishment down to just one year," Inspector said.

"Are you sure?" The thief in suit asked.

"Take my word!"

"Then... It's Mr. Aahan," the thief in suit said without any hesitation or delay. "He hired me to steal the ATM card and said that he would give me ten thousand rupees if I succeed."

"Is it?" Inspector inquired. "But why did you withdraw the entire money and ran away?"

"Because the money is always tempting," the thief in suit said.

"That's great!" Inspector said, sighing. "So here is the real thief, ah? Now explain me why did you do so? Why did you help her even though she didn't request? And why did you steal it by yourself and filed a complaint?"

"I swear on my mother, I didn't know this guy," Aahan implored. "It is true that I took one of Aanya's cards with an intention to take my money back. Earlier I and my friend had a serious argument about I aiding Aanya by transferring all the savings of mine. He argued that Aanya had an affair. I said he was wrong. Then he challenged me that I would find any man at Aanya's house. To prove he was wrong, I visited Aanya's house. But unfortunately found this idiot coming out of the front door. I mistook him for his appearance and thought that Aanya had cheated me. In rage I took the ATM card but not to torture her. I'm sorry for what I had done. But it all happened like something was planned."

"Mr. Thief in a suit, how will you defend?" Inspector asked.

"Actually his friend hired me saying that Aahan was hiring me!" The thief in suit explained.

"Oofff! You seems to be like an asshole!" Inspector yelled.

"That's how my granny used to call me!" The thief in the suit said, laughing. "It will be eighth time my visit to jail, but with a debutant this time."

The thief in suit and Zion were kept behind the bars with a charge of two years imprisonment. You remember Zion, right?

Aahan tried to give his money to Aanya but she didn't accept it. In fact she returned the two thousand that she had used from the amount sent by Aahan. Do you get a doubt -- all of a sudden how did she get that money? No fiction. She sold her golden wedding finger. Women like Aanya bothers more about dignity and self-respect that money and gold.

Aahan felt embarrassed for listening to his friend's false strategies about a widow.

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Krishna Chaitanya Dharmana is a creative writer.

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