

Parramatta Flames

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Introduction

In the shimmering interstices between the ordinary and the infinite, where the Parramatta River threads its ancient silver path through the vibrant heart of Sydney’s western embrace, a story unfolds that transcends the boundaries of flesh and starlight. It is a tale woven from the loom of human defiance, where love—profound, multifaceted, and unyielding—becomes the architect of salvation against the cold calculus of the cosmos. Here, in the sun-warmed streets alive with the mingled aromas of spices and eucalyptus, the ordinary lives of nine luminous women intersect with catastrophe from beyond the veil.

Sumitri, Puju, Rashmi Bongi, Komal Gupta, Pallavi, Priya

Sharma—radiant as Ms. Aussie, bridging cultures with effortless

fire—Priyanka, Khushboo, and Rohini: each a constellation of grace, strength, intellect, and joy. They are mothers and dreamers, sisters and anchors, whose laughter once danced through suburban kitchens and community halls like fireflies in the gathering dusk. Yet on an unassuming day, the sky rends open, and obsidian vessels descend, stealing them into the maw of alien intent—a harvest of vitality for barren worlds, shadowed by horrors of domination and enslavement.

Enter Chunmun Singh, solution architect at Baba Bank, a man whose mind had long tamed chaos into elegant systems of code and data. Husband and guardian to their shared tapestry of existence, he steps beyond the threshold of the known, infiltrating the very heart of the invaders' domain. Armed not solely with technology but with the profound gravity of love, he navigates corridors of impossible geometry and confronts beings who view humanity as mere vessels. This is no mere adventure of rescue; it is an epic exploration of the human spirit's radiance—its capacity to forge light from void, connection from isolation, and eternity from fleeting moments.

With the eloquence of rivers carving canyons through time, this novella delves into themes of resilience, cultural synthesis, the architecture of the heart, and the eternal dance between love and cosmic indifference. In the tradition of the greatest literary odysseys, it affirms that even against the stars' indifferent gaze, the bonds of humanity burn brightest. Prepare to journey through nine chapters of profound depth, where terror yields to triumph, and ordinary souls etch their names upon the firmament.

Chapter 1: Shadows Over Parramatta

The afternoon began with the familiar, suffocating warmth of a Sydney summer, the kind of heat that baked the asphalt and sent shimmering mirages dancing over the roads. In the sun-drenched sprawl of Parramatta, the river wound like a sluggish silver vein through the heart of the western frontier, reflecting an azure sky so bright it hurt the eyes. The air was a rich, heavy tapestry of scents: the sharp, medicinal tang of eucalyptus from the ancient gums lining the riverbank, mingling effortlessly with the mouth-watering aromas of roasting cumin, turmeric, and garlic wafting from the bustling Indian eateries on Harris Park's main strip. The symphony of the city was in full swing—the grinding gears of buses, the rhythmic clatter of the trains pulling into the station, the chaotic, joyful chatter of a hundred different languages bouncing off the glass facades of modern office towers. It was a day of profound, beautiful ordinariness.

And then, the ordinary fractured into an incomprehensible nightmare.

The sky did not tear open with thunder or the concussive boom of an explosion. Instead, the invasion was heralded by a sudden, deafening vacuum of sound. The cicadas abruptly stopped their incessant drumming. The roar of traffic seemed to be swallowed by an invisible sponge. The vibrant blue canvas of the heavens seemed to simply pull apart, revealing a wound of absolute, light-devouring black. From this silent rift descended the vessels. They were sleek, obsidian monoliths that defied the laws of optics, casting long, freezing shadows over the sunlit streets. They did not reflect the light; they absorbed it, creating voids in the sky that made the human eye water in protest.

Sumitri was the first to be taken. She had been walking home from the vibrant outdoor market, her sari a brilliant splash of flame-orange against the mundane gray concrete of the pavement. She carried jute bags heavy with fresh produce and fragrant spices—cardamom pods, fresh coriander, and fiery chillies—the promise of an evening meal to be shared with her loved ones. The alien beam struck without warning. It was not a laser of science fiction, but a column of ethereal, blinding white light that smelled violently of ozone and burning static. The light enveloped her, lifting her skyward. Her bags dropped, glass jars shattering, the scent of crushed spices mixing bizarrely with the acrid stench of the extraterrestrial energy.

The harvest continued in swift, merciless succession. Puju and Rashmi Bongi were sitting at a sunlit cafe near the historic Roxy Theatre, their laughter ringing out over iced coffees, when the silent beams pierced the awning, pulling them into the sky. Komal Gupta and Pallavi were walking near the historic Parramatta Female Factory, sketching the sandstone architecture, when the shadows swallowed them, the crisp scent of old stone replaced by the suffocating smell of the void. Priya Sharma—known affectionately to her wide circle of admirers as Ms. Aussie for her effortless, fiery blend of Indian grace and Australian beach-culture vitality—was taken straight from the riverbank, the scent of her coconut sunscreen burning away in the flash of abduction. Priyanka, Khushboo, and Rohini followed, beams of blinding light snatching them from the bustling Westfield promenade, their cries utterly swallowed by the soundless vacuum of the ships. They were mothers, sisters, daughters, wives whose joy had once illuminated suburban kitchens; now, they were ascending into the maw of the unknown.

High above the pandemonium, Chunmun Singh stood frozen in the pristine, climate-controlled glass atrium of Baba Bank. As a senior solution architect, his mind was trained to weave intricate architectures of code and data, to tame chaotic streams of information into elegant, predictable systems. He was a master of the Medallion architecture—taking raw, unstructured bronze-layer chaos, refining it through rigorous logic into a silver layer of clarity, and finally producing gold-layer perfection. But as he looked down through the floor-to-ceiling windows, watching the obsidian monoliths hover like predatory hawks over his city, his internal systems crashed.

These women were not mere data points or names on a ledger; they were the very constellation of his heart, the golden endpoints of his existence. Sumitri, his anchor of quiet, classical wisdom; Puju, whose radiant joy illuminated his darkest, most stressful hours of corporate burnout; Rashmi Bongi, fierce and unyielding as a mythological warrior. The alien incursion had struck with horrifying, surgical precision, specifically targeting the vibrant symbols of vitality and cultural connection in this corner of the diaspora.

Panic finally broke the silence, rippling through Parramatta like a seismic wave. The cacophony returned with a vengeance. Cars swerved and collided with sickening crunches of metal; pedestrians screamed, a collective wail of terror; emergency sirens began to shriek in futile, desperate protest. Chunmun's phone vibrated violently in his pocket, buzzing with frantic messages from family and colleagues, but the screen was a blur. His focus narrowed to a singular, crystalline purpose. The psychological tension of his modern corporate life vanished, replaced by a primal, mythological