

Beneath the Parramatta Towers

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Introduction: The Crown of Ambition

Parramatta, a vibrant suburb pulsing at the western edge of Sydney's sprawling metropolis, is a kaleidoscope of sights and sounds—where sleek glass towers pierce the often-hazy, cerulean sky, reflecting the golden hues of sunset, and historic sandstone buildings whisper tales of a colonial past along tree-lined streets. The Parramatta River, its surface often shimmering with reflected light, flows languidly, carrying the metallic tang of industry mingled with the fresh scent of eucalyptus from nearby parks, bearing both the weight of silt and the buoyant dreams of its inhabitants. In this melting pot of cultures, where the spicy aroma of Indian curries mingles with the salty breeze carried from the distant ocean, and the cacophony of a hundred languages creates a vibrant urban symphony, one man dared to crown himself king. Nitin Seth, a 28-year-old Punekar immigrant from Pune, stepped off the plane and into the humid Sydney air, the scent of jet fuel and distant rain clinging to his clothes. He arrived in Parramatta with little more than a crisp new visa and a gnawing hunger for greatness. To him, this was not just another suburb, with its familiar chain stores glowing under fluorescent lights and the rumble of buses echoing through the streets, but a kingdom waiting to be claimed, its asphalt streets ripe for conquest. With a swagger born of youthful bravado and a bold WhatsApp status proclaiming his dominion in

digital script against a backdrop of a digitally enhanced Parramatta skyline, Nitin set out to rule, heedless of the muffled warnings of his own conscience and the subtle cues of a world that didn't acknowledge his self-proclaimed sovereignty. His story is one of hubris, of a man who mistook a city's polite indifference, the casual nods of strangers on Church Street, for an invitation to reign, and of the tangled lives—Nikitha Giri, with her perfume that hinted at both jasmine and something sharper, Rema, whose quiet strength emanated like the steady glow of a bedside lamp, and others—caught in his turbulent, self-imposed orbit. This is the tale of the King of Parramatta, a crown forged in the flimsy metal of ambition and destined to crumble under its own delusional weight. Marathi translation has been provided at the end of the book.

Chapter 1: The Throne of Nitin

In the heart of Sydney's bustling Parramatta, where jagged neon signs advertising everything from phone repairs to late-night kebabs cast a lurid glow on rain-slicked pavements after a sudden downpour, and the insistent hum of peak-hour traffic on the Great Western Highway blended with the melodic chatter of diverse tongues spilling from brightly lit restaurants and bustling bus interchanges, Nitin Seth reigned supreme—at least within the echoing chambers of his own mind. A wiry 28-year-old Punekar transplant from the vibrant, dusty streets of Pune, Nitin navigated the cool, air-conditioned corridors of a Business Process Outsourcing (BPO) call center during the graveyard shift, his fingers tapping furiously on the keyboard as he fielded a barrage of frustrated complaints from irate Australians, their voices crackling through his headset, about their endlessly buffering internet connections. But to Nitin, the monotonous drone of customer service was merely a temporary inconvenience, a necessary side hustle that allowed him

to squirrel away enough Australian dollars to fund his true calling: being the undisputed Raja of Parramatta. The fluorescent office lights hummed overhead, casting a sterile, blue-white pallor on his focused face, a stark contrast to the vibrant dreams swirling within him.

Nitin's flat, a cramped, slightly musty two-bedroom apartment on the fifteenth floor of a generic high-rise, its thin walls offering little respite from the distant wail of sirens and the rhythmic whoosh of passing trains, was his self-proclaimed palace. He had claimed it with the silent territoriality of a stray cat marking its patch, or with the ferocity of a Maratha warrior reclaiming lost territory, or so he liked to dramatically narrate to himself in the pre-dawn silence. His WhatsApp status, updated with the regularity of a royal decree, proudly declared, "Parramatta ka Raja, Modi ka Bhakt," the text shimmering with digital bravado alongside a slightly pixelated selfie with the generic glass and steel of the Parramatta skyline as a backdrop, his forced grin wide enough to seemingly outshine the distant, blinking lights atop the Westfield towers. He held a near-religious reverence for Narendra Modi, often launching into fervent, unsolicited monologues to his largely uninterested flatmates about the perceived triumphs of the BJP, confidently asserting that India was rapidly ascending to the status of a global superpower under Modi's unwavering rule. Yet, when gently questioned as to why he didn't simply return to this supposed utopia, where he could presumably bask in the reflected glory, Nitin would invariably scoff, waving a dismissive hand, "India's too chaotic, yaar. Too much noise, too much... everything. Parramatta's my empire now. Here, my genius will be recognized."

His self-proclaimed empire, however, was a constant, low-level battleground for his three largely long-suffering flatmates—Ravi, a

quiet Tamil IT worker whose gentle nature seemed perpetually overshadowed by Nitin's boisterous pronouncements, his fingers flying across his own keyboard in the adjacent room, the soft click-clack a counterpoint to Nitin's booming voice; Sarah, a fair-haired Australian university student with a dry wit and an ever-present air of weary tolerance, the scent of her lavender shampoo often clashing with the lingering aroma of Nitin's spicy cooking; and Vikram, a burly Punjabi delivery driver whose booming laughter occasionally punctuated the tension, though even his good humor was starting to fray under Nitin's self-importance, the faint smell of diesel and takeaway containers often clinging to his clothes after a long shift. They were, in Nitin's skewed perception, mere subjects in his benevolent (in his eyes) domain, tolerated only as long as they contributed their share of the rent and utilities and, crucially, didn't dare to openly challenge his flimsy, self-constructed rule. Emerging from the periphery of his limited social circle was Nikitha Giri, a recent arrival to Parramatta, her eyes holding a spark of ambition that mirrored, yet far surpassed, Nitin's own, her perfume a complex blend of sweet florals and a hint of something sharper, like rain on hot asphalt. Her own aspirations would soon dangerously intertwine with Nitin's imagined reign, threatening to unravel the already fragile fabric of his self-deception.

Chapter 2: The Spoils of Woolworths

Nitin's self-proclaimed reign was characterized by a particularly petty form of audacity. Every Saturday, like a monarch surveying his domain, he'd saunter with a deliberate air of nonchalance into the brightly lit aisles of the local Woolworths in the heart of Parramatta, the automatic doors hissing open to reveal the cool, air-conditioned interior filled with the Muzak melody and the rustle of shopping carts. His worn backpack, slung casually over one