

The Light That Remains

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The Light That Remains

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Introduction

In the sprawling, labyrinthine metropolis of Kolkata, where ancient traditions brush against the frantic pulse of modernity, life often unfolds in layers of quiet complexity. For Chunmun Singh, a man whose intellect thrived in the precise, ordered world of server architecture, the intricate structures he designed for InfoCys stood in stark contrast to the fractured framework of his own existence. Logic, the steadfast compass that guided his professional life, offered no solace, no blueprint to navigate the emotional wreckage left in the wake of his wife Sita's departure years prior. Kolkata, his home, had become a landscape of memory and melancholy, its familiar streets echoing with the silence she left behind. The smoggy air, thick with the scents of diesel, spice, and decay, seemed to mirror the internal haze that clouded his days. Confined not by choice but by circumstance to the periphery of his brother's household, Chunmun existed as a ghost at the feast, a quiet reminder of obligations felt and affections withheld. As the world outside braced for the unprecedented storm of a global pandemic in 2020, Chunmun found himself facing an internal siege, a convergence of physical illness and existential dread that would force him to confront the very nature of life, death, and the unexpected light that can pierce even the deepest shadows. This is the story of his descent, his fall, and the astonishing journey that followed – a testament to the enduring power of love and the strange, unpredictable paths to finding peace. Bengali translation has been provided at the end of the book.

Chapter 1: The Descent into Shadows

Chunmun Singh, a solution architect whose mind navigated the complex, sprawling architectures of InfoCys servers with an elegant, almost intuitive precision, found his own life's structure crumbling

beyond repair. The clean lines of code, the satisfying click of logic falling into place – these were comforts that belonged to a world increasingly distant from his lived reality. Logic, his lifelong companion and professional tool, offered no framework, no algorithm, for processing the emotional debris left swirling in the void created by his wife, Sita. Years had bled into one another since she'd walked out, exchanging their quiet, intellectually stimulating Kolkata life, filled with shared books and quiet evenings, for the glittering, superficial allure of Mumbai and a new, wealthier partner. She had deemed his steady, respectable InfoCys salary insufficient for her ambitions, leaving Chunmun adrift in a vast, bitter sea of unresolved questions and simmering resentment. He replayed their final arguments in his mind, her sharp words slicing through his careful reasoning, dismissing his stability as stagnation.

His existence had shrunk, contracting to fit the meagre confines of his younger brother Ashish's house, nestled on the perpetually smog-choked outskirts of Kolkata. He wasn't truly living there; he was stored, like obsolete hardware. He occupied the small spare room, a space filled with discarded items and the lingering scent of camphor, feeling less like a family member and more like a piece of forgotten furniture – tolerated, occasionally tripped over in the cramped hallway, but rarely engaged with in any meaningful way. Ashish, a mid-level accountant burdened by his own financial anxieties and the pressures of supporting a family in uncertain times, offered a strained, almost formal politeness. Their conversations were clipped, functional, skirting the edges of the unspoken tension between them – Ashish's resentment at the indefinite obligation, Chunmun's shame at needing the charity. Ashish's wife, Mita, was less adept at concealing her feelings. Her resentment was palpable, a constant, low hum beneath the surface of domestic life. Chunmun was an extra mouth to feed, an

unwelcome drain on their limited resources, a quiet, melancholic presence whose very stillness seemed an accusation. Her interactions with him were minimal, often consisting of sharp instructions about chores never explicitly assigned or pointed sighs when he emerged from his room. Their two children, a boy and a girl immersed in the vibrant, demanding worlds of school, friends, and smartphones, barely registered his presence, accepting him as a fixed, unremarkable part of their home's background noise.

The year 2020, already draped in a shroud of global anxiety, brought a devastatingly personal siege: the novel coronavirus. For Chunmun, already weakened by emotional neglect and a subtle decline in self-care, it began insidiously. A mere tickle in his throat, a dryness easily dismissed with the ubiquitous ginger-lemon tea and the stoicism he'd painstakingly cultivated over years of quiet endurance and disappointment. He told himself it was just the seasonal change, the polluted air. But this was no common cold, no fleeting irritation. It dug its claws deep into his lungs, manifesting as a relentless, dry hack that echoed disturbingly in the small house, stealing his breath in terrifying gasps and leeching the remaining colour from his already pale face. Sleep, his only regular escape, became fragmented, shattered by violent coughing fits that rattled his thin frame, shook the flimsy bed, and inevitably drew sharp, annoyed sighs or muttered complaints from the adjacent rooms. His already spare diet dwindled further; the simple dal and rice Mita sometimes left outside his door tasted like ash, flavours muted by the illness and his deepening despair. He lost weight rapidly, his clothes hanging loosely on his shrinking frame.

Through the thin, poorly insulated walls, he heard the fragmented soundtrack of his brother's family life – Mita's sharp, often impatient commands to the children ("Finish your homework now!" "Stop

making that noise!"), Ashish's weary, monosyllabic responses, the incessant, saccharine buzz of the television spewing out endless melodramatic serials that seemed to be Mita's primary source of comfort. They rarely checked on him directly. Occasionally, a steel glass of water would appear silently outside his door, or Ashish might shout a brief, perfunctory query from the hallway – "Need anything, Dada?" – without waiting for a genuine response. These minimal gestures felt less like concern and more like the discharging of a necessary, inconvenient duty. Their indifference was a heavy shroud, woven from years of unspoken grievances, Mita's undisguised resentment, Ashish's weary sense of obligation, and the sheer awkwardness of Chunmun's prolonged, dependent stay. He was a living reminder of family ties stretched thin, a burden they bore with ill grace. He spent hours staring at the damp patches on the ceiling, tracing the cracks in the plaster, his sharp mind, once occupied with intricate data flows, now trapped in a loop of physical misery and emotional isolation.

Weeks bled into each other, marked not by days but by the deepening ache in his chest, the growing weakness in his limbs, and the fluctuating intensity of his fever. News of his worsening condition, initially confined to the strained silences within the house, eventually filtered out through the intricate, unavoidable web of mutual acquaintances and concerned relatives. Phone calls were exchanged, hushed worries shared. Inevitably, the news reached Sita in her luxurious Mumbai high-rise, a world away from the dusty outskirts of Kolkata. As a well-meaning cousin relayed the details of Chunmun's deteriorating health, a cold, calculating smile touched Sita's lips. Chunmun. The man she'd discarded as lacking ambition, the quiet intellectual she'd deemed too passive for her grand designs. He possessed assets, she remembered clearly – the small but well-located flat he owned outright from before their marriage,