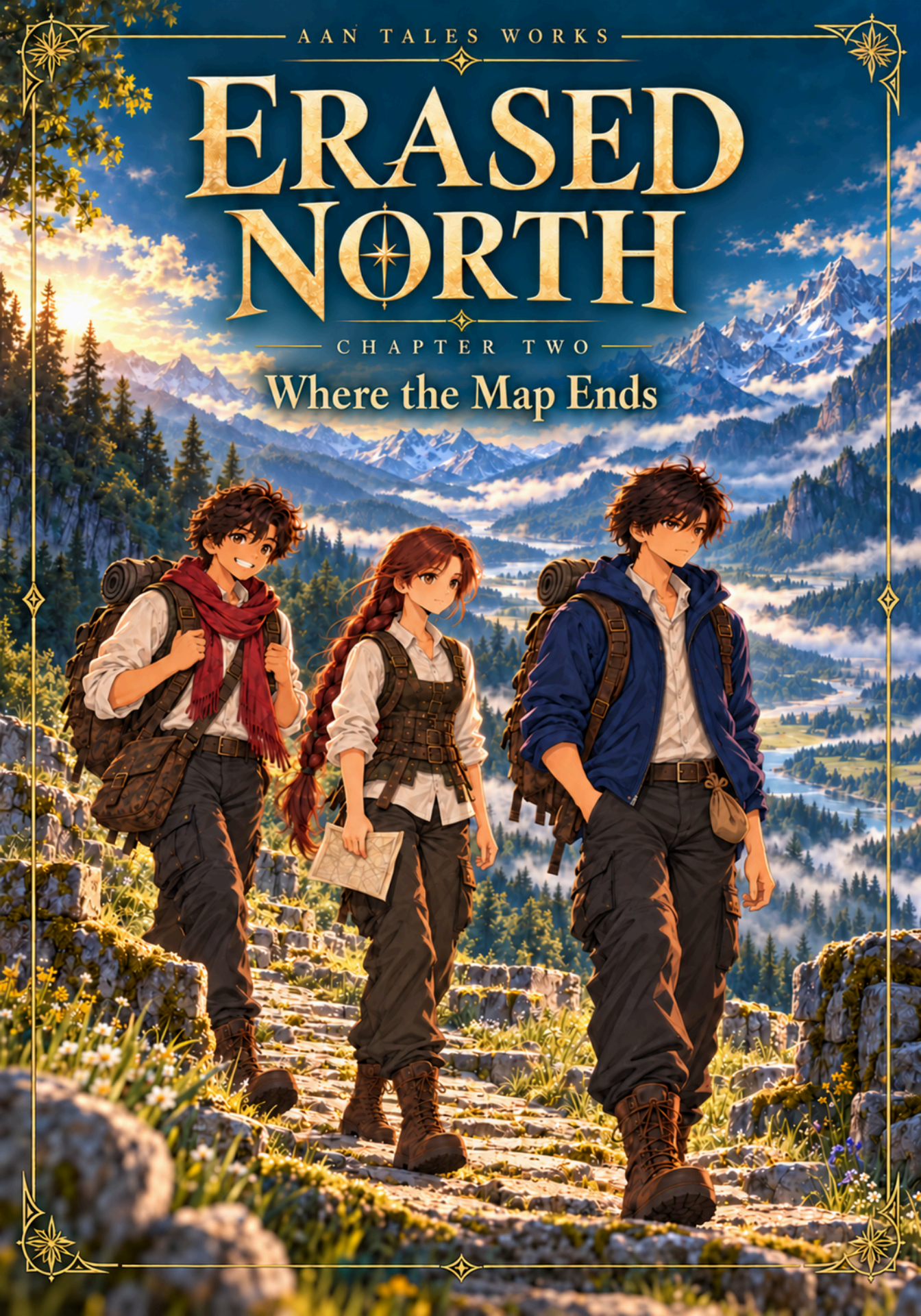
AAN TALES WORKS

ERASED NORTH

CHAPTER TWO

Where the Map Ends



ERASED NORTH · BAAB DO

Jahan Naqsha Khatam Hota Hai

ROMAN URDU EDITION

AAN Tales Works

Jab shehar unhein dikhai dena band ho gaya to sooraj mashriqi pahaaron se kaafi ooper aa chuka tha. Ghar se nikalte waqt Rayan ko nahin laga tha ke koi bari baat hone wali hai. Shuru ka raasta to woh pehle se jaanta tha.

Shehar se baahar jaane wali sarak khule kheton aur patthar ki neechi deewaron ke darmiyan se guzarti thi. Ghaas par abhi subah ki os maujood thi. Kheton ke kinaare lakri ke ghere bane hue the. Door kahin kahin gharon se dhuan uth raha tha. Un gharon mein bhi log jaag chuke the aur apne din ke kaam shuru kar rahe the.



Kuch der tak Rayan khud ko yahi samjhata raha ke woh bas subah ki aik lambi sair par nikla hai. Magar jab bhi us ka haath compass wali jeb se lagta, use apne safar ki wajah yaad aa jaati. Teenon aik aisi sarak dhoondhne nikle the jis ka sarkaari record mein koi wajood nahin tha.

Peechhe un ka jaana-pehchaana shehar tha. Wahan ke darwaaze, galiyan aur aawazein un ke liye nai nahin thin. Wahan aise log the jo unhein naam se jaante the. Aage pahaar the. Raasta dhoondhne ke liye un ke paas sirf aik puraane record se naqal ki hui chand paimaaishein thin. Rayan yeh nahin sochna chahta tha ke itne bare safar ke liye yeh maloomat kitni kam hain.

Bag ki pattiyan us ke kandhon mein dab rahi thin. Us ne unhein zara theek kiya, phir jeb ke ooper haath rakh kar compass ko tatola. Yeh chhoti si harkat bhi Mira ne dekh li.

“Woh kahin nahin gaya,” us ne kaha.

“Mujhe maloom hai,” Rayan ne jawaab diya.

“Jab se hum lakri ke pichhle ghere ke paas se guzre hain, tum teen baar compass dekh chuke ho.”

Sami ne peechhe reh jaane wale lakri ke ghere ko dekha. “Teen nahin, chaar baar. Main to bataane wala bhi nahin tha.”

Rayan ne jeb se haath hata liya. Teenon hans pare. Thori der ke liye use laga jaise ghar itna door bhi nahin hai.

Woh doston se chand qadam aage chal raha tha. Geeli zameen par chalne se us ke joote gehre rang ke ho gaye the. Safar ka saamaan unhon ne aapas mein baant liya tha. Wazan mehsoos ho raha tha, magar Rayan ka zyada dhyaan saamne ke pahaaron par tha. Woh kabhi raaste ko dekhta, kabhi un oonchi chotiyon ko.

Shehar se yeh pahaar bahut door dikhai dete the. Yahan pahunch kar woh pehle se bare, sard aur ajnabi lag rahe the. Unhein dekh kar ab woh sukoon mehsoos nahin ho raha tha jo shehar mein rehte hue hota tha.

Sami apna mazboot safri bag liye chand qadam peechhe chal raha tha. Kabhi woh aik kandhe ki patti theek karta, kabhi doosre ki. Shuru mein woh khoob baatein kar raha tha. Magar jaise jaise jaane-pehchaane raaste peechhe reh gaye, woh bhi khaamosh hone laga.

Mira dono ke darmiyan thi. Us ne AR-317 se naqal kiya hua kaaghaz sambhaal rakha tha. Us par puraane survey ki paimaaishein thin, yaani sarak ki jagah, oonchai aur faasle ki maloomat. Kuch der baad woh rukti, kaaghaz dekhti aur saamne ki zameen se use mila kar dekhti.

Rayan ne chalne ki raftaar kam ki aur peechhe dekha. “Kuch pata chala?”

Mira ne foran jawaab nahin diya. Pehle us ne kaaghaz dekha, phir saamne aik neechi pahaari ko dekha. Woh har nishaani par ghaur kar rahi thi.

“Oonchai record se milti hai,” us ne aakhir kaha. “Aur saamne pahaari ka woh hissa bhi waisa hi hona chahiye jaisa is mein likha hai.”



Sami ne idhar-udhar dekha. Use koi sarak nazar nahin aai. Wahan sirf ghaas, jhaariyan, bikhre hue patthar aur oonchi-neechi zameen thi jo pahaaron ki taraf ja rahi thi.

“Humein poora yaqeen hai ke yahan kabhi sarak thi?” us ne Mira se poochha.

“Paimaaishon ke mutaabiq to thi.”

Rayan ne jeb se toota hua compass nikaala aur dhakkan khol diya. Subah ki roshni us ke puraane peetal par chamki. Daraar wale sheeshe ke neeche aik hi sui thi. Woh kaanp rahi thi aur shimaal ki taraf nahin ja rahi thi. Aahista-aahista us ka rukh pahaaron ki taraf ho gaya.

Rayan ne use dekhte hue kaha, “Lagta hai yeh bhi yahi bata raha hai.”

Sami zara aage jhuka. “Tumhein is se jitni tasalli ho rahi hai, mujhe to nahin ho rahi.”

Rayan halka sa muskuraaya, magar usi waqt sui dobara jhatke se hili. Teenon ne yeh harkat dekhi. Us ki muskuraahat khatam ho gai aur Mira us ke qareeb aa gai.

“Use hilaana mat,” us ne kaha.

“Main nahin hila raha.”

Chand second tak compass ke andar chhote purze bare halke halke kaanpte rahe. Dhaat ki halki si aawaaz aai, phir sab ruk gaya. Sui aik taraf thehar gai. Us ka rukh na shimaal ki taraf tha, na poori tarah us raaste ki taraf jis par woh ab tak chal rahe the. Woh kheton se aage ki oonchi-neechi zameen ki taraf ishaara kar rahi thi.



Mira ne compass se nazar hata kar saamne dekha. “Aage chalte hain.”

Rayan ne dhakkan band kiya aur teenon dobara chal pare.

Aas paas ka manzar aahista-aahista badal raha tha. Shehar ke jaane-pehchaane nishaan achaanak aik hi jagah khatam nahin hue the. Woh bas kam hote ja rahe the. Pehle kheton ke gird lakri ke ghere zyada dikhai dete the, phir un ki tadaad kam ho gai. Kheton ki jagah jangli ghaas aane lagi.

Chhote raaste tang hote gaye. Kuch door baad woh zameen par khinchi hui lakeeron jaise lagne lage. Phir woh lakeerein bhi ghaayab hone lagin. Ab saamne jahaan nazar jaati, pahaar zyada saaf dikhai dete the.

Hawa mein geeli mitti aur sanobar ke darakhton ki khushboo thi. Kahin door paani behne ki aawaaz aa rahi thi. Rayan ab har aawaaz par pehle se zyada dhyaan de raha tha. Shehar mein khaamoshi bhi poori tarah khaamosh nahin hoti thi. Kabhi khirki se kisi ki baat sunaai deti, kabhi pahiyon ki aawaaz aati, kabhi darwaaza khulta, aur kabhi koi gali ke doosre sire se kisi ko pukaarta.

Yahan aisa nahin tha. Aik aawaaz ke baad kaafi der tak kuch sunaai nahin deta tha. Isi liye darakhton mein baithe parinde ki aawaaz bhi saaf sunaai deti thi. Qadmon ke neeche khushk patton ki aawaaz bhi zyada tez lagti thi.

Mira achaanak ruk gai. Rayan us se takraate-takraate bacha. Woh mura. “Kya hua?”

Us ne zameen ki taraf ishaara kiya. Pehle Rayan ko kuch khaas nazar nahin aaya. Wahan bhi ghaas, keechar aur chhote patthar hi the. Phir Mira aik taraf hui aur joote ki aeri se ghaas ka aik hissa daba diya.

“Yeh dekho.”

Sami us ke paas baith gaya. Ghaas ke neeche zameen bahut hamwaar thi. Woh dhalwaan ke saath aik chauri patti ki tarah ja rahi thi. Lagta tha ke kisi ne zameen ka yeh hissa hamwaar kiya tha.

Rayan ne us ki seedh mein aage dekha. Ab use bhi baat samajh aane lagi. Ghaas aur mitti ke neeche raaste ki aik lakeer chhupi thi. Jab use maloom ho gaya ke kya dhoondhna hai, to woh lakeer use zyada saaf dikhai dene lagi.

Mira chand qadam aage gai aur joote se lambi ghaas hataai. Neeche halke rang ka aik patthar nazar aaya. Woh baith kar us ke ooper se mitti saaf karne lagi. Patthar ka kinaara bilkul seedha tha.

Sami qareeb aa gaya. “Yeh sarak ka hissa hai?”

“Shaayad,” Mira ne kaha.

Woh patthar ki seedh mein aage barhi. Chand meter baad aik aur patthar mila, phir aik aur. Rayan ki dharkan tez ho gai. Ab teenon alag alag jagah dekhne lage.

Pehle jo cheezein bikhri hui lag rahi thin, ab samajh aane laga tha ke woh aik hi raaste ka hissa ho sakti hain.

Kaanton wali jhaari ke neeche patthar ka aik puraana khamba terha khara hua tha. Kuch aage hamwaar zameen ke saath aik kam gehri naali ja rahi thi. Mira ne use dekh kar kaha, “Yeh paani nikaalne ki naali hai.”



Sami ne us ke andar bhari hui mitti dekhi. “Ab to kisi kaam ki nahin lagti.”

“Ab nahin,” Mira ne kaha. Phir woh khari hui aur dhalwaan ki taraf dekhne lagi. “Lekin use banaaya isi liye gaya hoga. Yahan paani jama hota tha aur use nikaalna zaroori tha.”

Rayan ne aahista se idhar-udhar dekha. Ab woh samajh sakta tha ke yahan sarak kaisi rahi hogi. Yeh koi tang pahaari pagdandi nahin, balki baaqaida bani hui sarak thi. Sarak itni chauri thi ke us ke saath paani ki naali aur had bataane wale patthar lagaane pare the.

AR-317 mein darj raasta sirf kisi ka mansooba nahin tha. Log us par chal chuke the. Log us se aate-jaate bhi the.

Rayan aik patthar ke paas baith gaya. Us ka darmiyaani hissa kinaaron se zyada ghisa hua tha. Woh halke se use chhoo kar dekhta raha. Us ne socha kitne log is jagah se guzre honge. Itne qadam pare ke patthar bhi hamwaar ho gaya tha.

Is chhoti si baat ne use bechain kar diya. Yeh sarak kisi zamaane mein logon ki rozmarra zindagi ka hissa thi. Shaayad koi is ke har mor ko utni achhi tarah jaanta tha jitna woh General Store ke aas paas ki galiyon ko jaanta tha. Ab wahi patthar jhaariyon ke neeche dabe the, aur unhein dhoondhna bhi mushkil ho raha tha.

Rayan ne pahaaron ko dekha. “To unhon ne waaqai use mita diya.”

Mira ne kaha, “Humein yeh maloom hai ke record badla gaya tha.” Us ne apne paaon ke paas dabe patthar ko dekha. “Aur ab yeh bhi maloom hai ke sarak waaqai yahan thi.”

Sami ne poochha, “Kya sarak sirf is liye chhup gai ke logon ne is par aana-jaana chhor diya tha?”

Mira khaamosh rahi. Rayan samajh gaya ke Sami kya kehna chahta hai. Istemaal na hone wale raaston mein ghaas ug aati hai, darakht phail jaate hain. Baarish aur sardi pattharon ko nuqsaan pahunchaati hai. Yahan bhi aisa hua lagta tha. Had bataane wale patthar aadhe dabe the aur naali mitti se bhar gai thi.

Rayan ko laga ke sarak ke kuch hisse toote nahin, balki jaan-boojh kar dabaaye gaye the. Shaayad kisi ne sarak ko sirf mitti aur ghaas mein chhupne nahin diya tha, balki khud bhi use chhupaaya tha. Rayan ko dar laga, magar woh wajah jaanna chahta tha.

Kisi ne sarak ko record se nikaala tha. Kya kisi ne zameen par bhi us ke nishaan mitaaye the?

Use shak to ho raha tha, magar abhi koi saboot nahin tha.

“Lekin kyun?” us ne aahista se poochha.

Kisi ke paas jawaab nahin tha. Mira aur Sami dono khaamosh rahe. Aik sawaal ka jawaab dhoondhte-dhoondhte unhein doosra sawaal mil gaya tha. Aur aage kahin, barson ki mitti aur paudon ke neeche, woh puraani sarak ab bhi maujood thi.

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Dopehar se pehle hi raaste ke nishaan dhoondhna mushkil hone laga. Kahin sarak ki seedh saaf dikhai deti, phir ghaayab ho jaati. Teenon ne chhoti chhoti baaton par dhyaan dena shuru kiya. Kahin zameen bahut hamwaar thi, kahin patthar seedhi qataar mein rakhe the. Kahin darakht baraabar faasle par uge the, jaise kabhi wahan sarak ka kinaara raha ho.

Jab unhein sarak ki seedh samajh na aati to Mira AR-317 ki paimaaishein dekhti. Aur jab un se bhi baat waazeh na hoti to Rayan compass nikaalta. Koi bhi tareeqa poori tarah kaam nahin karta tha, magar sab cheezon ko mila kar woh aage barh rahe the.

Aakhir woh darakhton wali aik oonchi jagah pahunche. Yahan raasta do taraf bat raha tha. Baaen taraf darakhton ke darmiyan aik tang raasta ooper jaata tha. Lagta tha ke log us par chalte hain. Daaen taraf oonchi-neechi zameen, ghani jhaariyan aur ubhri hui chattaanein thin.

Mira ne kaaghaz dobara dekha. “Puraani sarak daaen taraf jaati thi.”

Sami ne mushkil dhalwaan ko dekha. “Haan, hamaare liye aasaan raasta ho bhi kaise sakta hai?”

Rayan ne compass khola. Sui kaanpi, phir aik lamhe ke liye ruk gai. Andar se halki si aawaaz aai aur sui daaen taraf mur gai, jahan zameen oonchi-neechi thi. Rayan foran aage barha.

“Yahi raasta hai.”

“Ruko,” Mira ne kaha.

Woh mura. Mira abhi usi jagah khari thi jahan dono raaste alag ho rahe the.

“Survey bhi usi taraf jaane ko kehta hai,” Rayan ne kaha.

“Main jaanti hoon.”

“Aur compass bhi usi taraf hai.”

“Woh bhi dekh rahi hoon.”

“To phir rukne ki kya wajah hai?”

Mira ne kaaghaz ehtiyaat se teh kiya. “Humein abhi yeh maloom nahin ke compass ki sui kis wajah se harkat karti hai.”

Rayan ne haath mein rakha compass dekha. “Yeh humein yahan tak laaya hai.”

“Nahin,” Mira ne aaraam se, lekin saaf alfaaz mein kaha. “Hum record aur raaste ki nishaaniyon se yahan pahunche hain. Compass ne bhi madad ki hai.”

Rayan ne ulajh kar poochha, “Is mein farq kya hai?”

“Zameen ki nishaaniyan hum samajh sakte hain.” Mira ne compass ki taraf ishaara kiya. “Lekin compass kaise kaam karta hai, yeh hum abhi nahin jaante.”

Rayan ne phir sui ko dekha. Woh ab bhi daaen taraf thi. Un ki behas se us par koi farq nahin para tha. Kuch der sirf ghaas se guzarti hawa ki aawaaz sunaai di. Phir Sami dono raaston ke beech aa khara hua.

“Faisla karne se pehle zara idhar-udhar dekh lete hain,” us ne kaha.

Dono us ki taraf mure. Sami ne kandhe uchkaaye. “Puraana survey daaen taraf ka kehta hai. Compass bhi daaen taraf hai. Aur Mira kehti hai ke is ajeeb tooti hui cheez par aankhein band kar ke bharosa na karo.”



“Main ne is tarah nahin kaha tha,” Mira ne jawaab diya.

“Bilkul inhi lafzon mein nahin,” Sami ne kaha. Phir us ne zameen ki taraf ishaara kiya. “Chalo dekhte hain. Shaayad puraani sarak ki koi aur nishaani mil jaaye.”

Rayan chahta tha ke foran aage chal de. Pattharon aur paimaaishon ko dekhne mein waqt lag raha tha. Use yoon mehsoos ho raha tha jaise har guzarta lamha use un baaton tak pahunchne se rok raha ho jo shaayad us ke waalid jaante the. Phir use Mr Halden ki naseehat yaad aai: jaldi karne se pehle socho.

Us ne compass band kar diya. “Theek hai.”

Is baar us ne pehle khud zameen ko ghaur se dekha. Woh zameen ke hamwaar hisse ko dekhta hua yeh dhoondhne laga ke jhaariyon ke aage raasta kahan jaata hai. Mira apni likhi hui maloomat se dhalwaan ko mila rahi thi. Sami darakhton ke paas gaya, jahan insaanon aur jaanwaron ke nishaan milne ka imkaan zyada tha.

Woh chand qadam ke faasle par alag alag kaam kar rahe the. Baatein rukin to Rayan ko Sami ke bag ki patti par lage dhaat ke clip ki khanak sunaai di. Mira ke kaaghaz kholne ki halki sarsaraahat bhi aa rahi thi. In aam si aawaazon se Rayan ko kuch sukoon mila.

Kai minute guzar gaye. Rayan aur Mira raaste ki seedh dekhte rahe, jabke Sami darakhton ke kinaare talaash karta raha. Phir us ne pukaara, “Rayan.”

Us ki aawaaz mein kuch aisa tha ke Rayan foran mura. Sami aik neechi shaakh ke paas baitha tha.

“Kya hua?”

“Yahan aao.”

Rayan aur Mira us ke paas gaye. Sami ne shaakh ki taraf ishaara kiya. Woh hawa se nahin tooti thi, na kisi jaanwar ne use tora tha. Use kaata gaya tha. Chhaal ke andar ki khuli lakri abhi halke rang ki thi. Mira ne use ungli se chhua.

“Yeh shaakh zyada din pehle nahin kaati gai.”

Rayan foran aas paas ki zameen dekhne laga. Sami pehle hi yahi kar raha tha.

Darakhton ke neeche baarish ka paani jama hone se keechar ban gaya tha. Us par patte pare the aur chhote jaanwaron ke nishaan bhi the. Magar aik kinaare par joote ka adhoora nishaan dikhai diya. Sirf aeri aur joote ka baahar wala hissa saaf tha.



Woh us ke paas baith gaya. Kuch der bol na saka. Koi yahan aaya tha. Aur yeh baat sarak banne ke zamaane ki nahin thi, na kai dahaaiyan puraani thi.

Kisi ne haal hi mein yahan qadam rakha tha. Us ke dil mein foran aik khayaal aaya.

“Mere waalid...”

Mira ne use dekha. Rayan ki nazrein nishaan par hi rahin. “Agar woh is raaste se aaye hon to?”

“Rayan.”

“Agar yeh un ka...”

Mira ne baat mukammal hone se pehle kaha, “Nishaan taaza hone ka matlab yeh nahin ke woh tumhaare waalid ka hai.”

Yeh sun kar use bahut dukh hua. Us ne sar uthaaya to Mira ke chehre par narmi aa gai.

“Lekin aik baat zaroor pata chalti hai,” us ne kaha. “Koi ab bhi jaanta hai ke yeh sarak maujood hai.”

Rayan ne dobara nishaan ko dekha. Use umeed bhi ho rahi thi aur maayoosi bhi. Mira ki baat durust thi. Yahan aisi koi cheez nahin thi jo is nishaan ko us ke waalid se jorti. Woh bas khud chahta tha ke aisa ho.

Us ne doosre nishaan talaash kiye. Shaayad koi zyada saaf nishaan milta jis se woh apni baat par qaaim reh sakta. Magar aage sirf dabi hui ghaas thi. Mira us ke paas khaamosh khari rahi. Us ki khaamoshi, Rayan ko jhooti tasalli dene se behtar thi. Woh yeh nahin keh rahi thi ke is nishaan ki koi ahmiyat nahin hai. Bas use aisi umeed nahin dilaana chahti thi jis ka abhi koi saboot na ho.

Aakhir Rayan ne sar hilaaya. “Koi to aaya tha.”

“Haan, koi to,” Mira ne kaha.

Sami khara ho kar darakhton ke andar dekhne laga. “Jo bhi tha, shaayad woh bhi isi sarak ko dhoondh raha tha.”

Rayan aahista se utha. Kati hui shaakh ne jhaariyon ke darmiyan guzarne ki jagah khol di thi. Joote ke nishaan ka rukh bhi puraani sarak ki tarah pahaaron ki taraf jaata tha. Us ne compass khola. Sui kaanpi. Is baar jab woh daaen muri to kisi ne us ke kaanpne par mazaaq nahin kiya.

Raasta ab ooper charh raha tha. Dopehar tak khule khet bahut peechhe reh gaye the. Puraani sarak ke dono taraf darakht ghane ho gaye the. Un ki jarein zameen se baahar nikal gai thin aur dabe hue pattharon par phail rahi thin. Shaakhon ke darmiyan se dhoop chhote tukron mein zameen par parti thi. Hawa chalti to roshni ke tukre bhi raaste par hilne lagte. Ab hawa pehle se thandi thi.

Rayan ko aage kahin paani behne ki aawaaz aa rahi thi, magar woh abhi paani dekh nahin sakta tha. Compass ko samajhna bhi mushkil hota ja raha tha. Kabhi sui saaf taur par raaste ki taraf murti, kabhi kisi taraf thehre baghair kaanpti rehti, aur kabhi bilkul ruk jaati.

Us ne aik ungli se compass ke khol ko halka sa thonka. Koi farq nahin para. Us ne dobara aisa kiya to Sami dekhne laga.

“Mera khayaal hai, puraani ajeeb cheezon ko maarne hi se museebatein shuru hoti hain,” us ne kaha.

“Main use maar nahin raha tha.”

“Haan, bas zara zor de kar baat manwa rahe the.”

Rayan ne us ki taraf dekha. Sami ne sanjeeda rehne ki koshish ki, magar do second baad us ki hansi nikal gai. Rayan bhi hans para. Mira ke chehre par bhi muskuraahat aa gai. Joote ka nishaan milne ke baad se un ke dilon par jo bojh tha, woh kuch halka hua.

Rayan ne compass band kar diya. “Theek hai. Use sochne ka waqt deta hoon.”

“Bari meherbaani,” Sami ne kaha.

Teenon pahaari raaste par aage barhte rahe.



Kuch minute baad paani ki aawaaz zyada tez ho gai. Yeh kisi chhoti nadi ki halki aawaaz nahin thi. Paani tezi aur zor se beh raha tha. Phir darakhton ke darmiyan khuli jagah aai aur Rayan ruk gaya.

Puraani sarak aik patthareeli khaai ke kinaare pahunch kar khatam ho gai thi. Neeche pahaari nadi beh rahi thi. Paani siyaah chattaanon se takraata to safed jhaag banta. Jahan chattaanon ke beech raaste tang hote, wahan paani gehra sabz dikhai deta. Doosre kinaare par zameen tezi se ooper uth rahi thi, aur us ke ooper darakht the.

Mira ne AR-317 ko dekha, phir nadi ko dekha. “Sarak yahan se paar jaati thi.”

Sami ne khaai dekhi. “Yeh to mushkil ho gai.”

Rayan kinaare ke qareeb gaya. Dono taraf patthar ki puraani tameer ke tukre baaqi the. Yeh pul ke sahaaron ke bache hue tukre the. Jo pul kabhi logon ko paar le jaata tha, woh muddaton pehle khatam ho chuka tha.

Us ne compass khola. Sui aik baar hili, phir ruk gai. Rayan intezaar karta raha, magar kuch aur nahin hua. Sami us ki taraf jhuka.

“Kya is ne bataaya ke ab kya karna hai?”

“Nahin.”

“Bahut khoob.”

Mira us simt dekh rahi thi jahan se paani aa raha tha. “Shaayad pul ki marammat karne waalon ke liye koi raasta ho.”

“Tumhein kaise pata?” Rayan ne poochha.

“Dhalwaan dekho,” Mira ne kaha. Us ne chattaanon aur darakhton ke beech zameen ki aik tang patti ki taraf ishaara kiya.



“Pul ki dekh-bhaal karne wale isi raaste se us ke sahaaron tak pahunchte honge.”

Sami ne bhi usi taraf dekha, phir us ka haath aik aur jagah ki taraf utha. “Aur woh?”

Nadi ke aik tang hisse par bara darakht gira hua tha. Us ka tana aik kinaare se doosre kinaare tak pahunchta tha. Rayan ne ghaur se dekha.

“Shaayad us par chal kar paar ja sakte hain.”

Mira kuch der khaamosh rahi. Woh tane ke neeche tezi se behta paani dekh rahi thi. Phir us ne kaha, “Pehle achhi tarah dekh lein ke yeh mazboot hai ya nahin.”

Woh zameen ki usi tang patti par chalte hue darakht ke qareeb gaye. Yeh patti unhein tane tak le aai, magar paani ke paar nahin jaati thi. Us se aage aik khari, chauri chattaan thi aur raasta bahut tang ho jaata tha.

Gira hua darakht nadi ke ooper zara tirchha para tha. Us ka jaron wala sira un ke kinaare par tika tha. Doosra sira patla tha aur saamne ki chattaanon ke ooper mitti ke ubhre sire par rakha tha. Tane se tooti hui shaakhein baahar nikli hui thin. Neeche paani aik bari chattaan se takra kar hawa mein chheente uchhaal raha tha.

Rayan ne aik joota tane par rakha. Pehle halka sa dabaao daala, phir kuch aur wazan daala. Tana apni jagah se nahin hila.



“Aik aik kar ke jaayenge,” Mira ne kaha. “Aur un shaakhon ka khayaal rakhna.”

“Main pehle jaata hoon,” Rayan ne kaha.

Mira ne doosre kinaare ko dekha, phir use. “Aahista jaana.”

Rayan ne compass band kar ke jeb mein rakha. Bag ki pattiyan kasin aur tane par qadam rakha. Shuru mein tana chaura tha. Darmiyaan ke qareeb woh patla hone laga to Rayan ne khud ko sambhaalne ke liye baazu phaila diye. Paani ka shor chaaron taraf tha.

Us ne aik baar neeche dekha aur foran nazar hata li. Safed jhaag siyaah patthar se takra kar aik tang, andheri jagah mein gum ho raha tha. Us ne khud ko samjhaaya ke saamne dekhe aur agla qadam rakhne ki jagah par dhyaan de.

Woh aik aik qadam barhaata gaya. Doosre sire par pahunch kar us ne mitti ke ubhre hisse par paaon rakha. Tab us ne woh saans chhori jo kaafi der se rok rakhi thi.

“Main paar aa gaya.”

“Dikhai de raha hai,” Sami ne aawaaz di. “Zara kam khush hone ki koshish karo.”

Rayan ne bag utaara aur tane ke sire ke paas mitti par rakh diya. Us ke kandhe dard kar rahe the. Us ne unhein zara harkat di, magar nazar Sami par rakhi jo ab aage aana shuru kar raha tha.

Mira pehle kinaare par hi rahi. Wahan se use tane ka pichhla hissa aur woh shaakhein bhi dikhai de rahi thin jo Rayan nahin dekh sakta tha. Sami ehtiyaat se qadam rakh raha tha. Pehle joota achhi tarah jamaata, phir apna wazan aage le jaata. Baazu uthaane par us ka bag hilta tha.

Woh tane ke darmiyaan tak aaya, phir us se aage nikal gaya. Ab us ki ghabraahat kuch kam hone lagi thi. Usi waqt bag ki aik dheeli patti tooti hui shaakh mein phans gai.



Patti khinchne se woh achaanak ruk gaya. Sami ne peechhe dekhne ke liye jism mora to us ki aeri geeli chhaal par phisal gai.

“Ruko. Main phans gaya hoon.”

Rayan tane par laut aaya. “Hilna mat. Main patti nikaalta hoon.”

“Rayan, ruko,” Mira ne pukaara. “Pehle use khud ko sambhaalne do.”

Magar Rayan Sami ka baazu pakarne ke liye haath barha chuka tha. Dono ka wazan para to tane ka patla sira geeli mitti mein dhansne laga. Kinaare se khinchne ki aawaaz aai. Tana nahin toota tha. Us ke neeche mitti khisak rahi thi.

Phir mitti ka woh hissa bikhar gaya. Tana neeche ki chattaanon par gira aur dono larkon ko zor ka jhatka laga. Kinaare par rakha Rayan ka bag nadi mein gir gaya. Tez paani use apne saath le gaya aur woh nazron se ghaayab ho gaya. Usi waqt Sami ka paaon tane se poori tarah phisal gaya.

Rayan ne Sami ka baazu kalaai se zara ooper pakar liya. Woh aik ghutne ke bal jhuka aur apna doosra baazu tooti shaakh ke gird lapet liya. Hatheli mein tez dard utha, magar us ne haath nahin chhora. Sami tane ke pehlu se latak raha tha. Paani ke ooper us ka aik paaon sahaara dhoondh raha tha.



“Abhi use mat kheencho!” Mira ne zor se kaha.

Woh jaron wale sire par aage jhuk gai thi. Us ki nazar Sami ke bag ki patti par thi. Wahan se woh patti tak nahin pahunch sakti thi, lekin dekh sakti thi ke patti kahan phansi hai.

“Tumhaara bag abhi atka hua hai. Sami, tane ki taraf dekho. Tumhaare daaen paaon ke neeche aik shaakh hai.”

Sami ne joote se geeli lakri tatoli. Pehli baar paaon phisla. Doosri baar bhi sahaara na mila. Phir us ka talwa shaakh par aa gaya.

“Mil gai,” us ne haanpte hue kaha.

Shaakh par paaon jamne se Rayan ke baazu par wazan kuch kam ho gaya. Us ne haanpte hue saans li.

Mira ne kaha, “Paaon wahin rakho. Ooper aane se pehle bag ki patti nikaalo.”

Sami ne ghutna tane se laga liya. Aik haath Rayan ne pakar rakha tha.

Doosre haath se woh phansi hui patti ko shaakh ke toote sire se ooper charhaane laga. Kapra pehle atka raha, phir aahista-aahista nikal gaya.



Patti aazaad hote hi bag aik taraf jhoola. Sami phir neeche ki taraf khincha to Rayan ne use aur mazbooti se pakar liya.

“Main ne pakar rakha hai.”

“To chhorna mat.”

“Nahin chhorunga.”

Mira ne kaha, “Ab aik saath. Aahista.”

Sami ne shaakh par paaon jama kar zor lagaaya aur Rayan ne use ooper kheencha. Us ka ghutna chhaal se ragarta gaya. Us ne aik kohni tane par jamaai aur khud ko ooper kar liya. Us ki saans bahut tez chal rahi thi.

Dono mein se koi khara nahin hua. Woh baithe baithe sarakte hue tane ke doosre sire ki taraf gaye, phir tooti hui mitti ke neeche maujood chattaan par charh gaye. Rayan wahin baith gaya. Kuch der sirf paani ka shor sunta raha. Us ke baazuon mein dard ho raha tha.

Mira us waqt tak pehle kinaare par hi rahi jab tak dono larke tane se hat kar mehfooz jagah par nahin pahunch gaye. Gira hua sira ab do chattaanon ke darmiyaan phans gaya tha. Us ne kuch der use dekha, phir pukaara, “Kya tana abhi hil raha hai?”

Rayan ne ghaur se dekha. Us ne mazboot chattaan par khare ho kar tane ke sire ko dabaaya. Woh apni jagah jama raha.

“Ab nahin hil raha.”

Mira ne jaron wala sira dobara aazmaaya. Phir woh tane par neeche ho kar baith gai. Dono taangein tane ke dono taraf thin. Woh haath jama kar pehle har jagah parkhti, phir aahista se aage sarakti. Doosre kinaare par Rayan ne chattaan se us ki taraf haath barhaaya. Is baar woh jaldi mein aage nahin gaya. Us ne intezaar kiya ke Mira khud us ka haath pakre.



Jab Mira bhi un ke paas aa gai to kuch der tak koi nahin bola. Sami ne ghutne par phati patloon ko dekha, phir haath khole aur band kiye.

“Yeh bahut bura hua,” us ne kaha.

Rayan ko ab kuch sukoon aaya to us ke munh se halki si hansi nikal gai. “Shukriye ki zaroorat nahin.”

“Main abhi shukriye tak pahuncha hi nahin,” Sami ne jawaab diya.

Mira ne Rayan ki kaanpti ungliyon ko dekha. “Tum is tarah achaanak qadam nahin barha sakte. Tumhein maloom hona chahiye ke tum kya karne wale ho.”

Rayan ki muskuraahat khatam ho gai. “Woh phisal raha tha.”

“Main jaanti hoon. Bag ki patti mujhe dikhai de rahi thi, tumhein nahin.”

Rayan ne neeche darakht ki taraf dekha. “Main use wahan chhor nahin sakta tha.”

“Koi tum se yeh nahin keh raha. Main chahti thi ke tum pehle meri baat sunte...”

Rayan kehna chahta tha ke sochne ka waqt hi nahin tha. Use ab bhi woh jhatka yaad tha jab Sami ka wazan us ke baazu par para tha. Magar use yeh bhi yaad aaya ke mitti tootne se pehle Mira ne aawaaz di thi. Us ne us ki baat poori tarah suni hi nahin thi.

Sami ne apne baazu par nishaan sehlaaya. “Achha hua tum ne mujhe pakar liya,” us ne kaha. “Aur yeh bhi achha hua ke Mira ne humein bataaya ke kya karna hai.”

Rayan ne pehle Sami ko dekha, phir Mira ko. “Mujhe tumhaari baat sunni chahiye thi.”

Mira ne sar hilaaya. Us ne mazeed kuch nahin kaha.

Ab Rayan ki nazar us jagah gai jahan us ne apna bag rakha tha. Wahan mitti ka ubhra hissa gir chuka tha. Us ne nadi mein talaash kiya, magar bag ka koi nishaan nahin tha. Sirf jhaag aur tooti tehniyan chattaanon ke paas se beh rahi thin. Woh unhein dekhte hue kinaare ki taraf barha.

“Use jaane do,” Mira ne kaha.

Rayan ruk gaya. Bag mein us ka khaana, izaafi kapre aur kuch aisa saamaan tha jo teenon ke kaam aata tha. Woh kaafi der paani dekhta raha. Compass ab bhi us ki jeb mein mehfooz tha. Lekin us waqt yeh baat bhi use zyada tasalli nahin de rahi thi.

Sami ne apne bag par haath rakha. “Mera bag to hamaare paas hai.”

Rayan ne use dekha. Abhi un ke paas safar jaari rakhne ke liye saamaan tha, magar ab woh mazeed saamaan khone ka nuqsaan bardaasht nahin kar sakte the.

“Main saamaan ki kami poori kar doonga,” us ne kaha.

Mira ne jawaab diya, “Pehle dekhte hain hamaare paas kya bacha hai. Yaheen se shuru karte hain.”

Rayan ne sar hilaaya aur un ke paas baith gaya.

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Unhon ne jitna socha tha, us se zyada der aaraam kiya. Phir bacha hua khaana, paani aur zaroori saamaan nikaal kar dobara tarteeb se rakh diya. Ab har cheez pehle se zyada aham lag rahi thi, kyunke saamaan kam ho gaya tha.

Sami ne apne bag ko achhi tarah dekha. Jahan patti shaakh mein phansi thi, wahan kapra ghis gaya tha, magar silaai nahin tooti thi. Bag dobara pehenne se pehle us ne latakti patti ko andar kar diya taake woh phir kisi cheez mein na phanse.



Mira bacha hua saamaan dobara baant rahi thi. Usi dauraan Sami aik aisi chattaan ke neeche chala gaya jo aage ko nikli hui thi. Wahan baarish aur hawa se kuch bachaao ho sakta tha.

“Yahan kuch hai,” us ne kaha.

Rayan ne sar uthaaya. Sami ne baith kar khushk patton ki teh hataai. Neeche zameen kaali thi aur raakh pari thi. Mira us ke paas aai. Us ne thori si raakh ungliyon ke darmiyaan masli.

“Kisi ne yahan aag jalaai thi.”

Rayan ne idhar-udhar dekha. “Bahut pehle?”

“Nahin, zyada pehle nahin.”

Raakh ke paas do pattharon ke darmiyaan Sami ko rassi ka chhota sa tukra mila. Yeh aaj kal istemaal hone wali rassi thi. Baahar pare rehne se kuch kharaab ho gai thi, magar sarak jitni puraani nahin lagti thi.



Rayan ko phir wahi bechaini mehsoos hui jo joote ka nishaan dekhte waqt hui thi. Kati hui shaakh kisi aik musaafir ki chhori hui nishaani ho sakti thi. Joote ke nishaan se maloom nahin hota tha ke woh shakhs aage kahan gaya. Magar ab yahan aag ke aasaar bhi the, rassi bhi, aur aisi jagah bhi jahan kisi ne soch-samajh kar panaah li thi. Koi yahan ruka tha.

Shaayad wahi shakhs jis ka nishaan unhein pehle mila tha. Shaayad koi aur. Abhi yeh jaanne ka koi tareeqa nahin tha. Magar itni nishaaniyan milne ke baad yeh samajhna mushkil tha ke in pahaaron mein koi nahin aata.

Rayan ne darakhton ke andar dekha. Shehar se nikalne ke baad pehli baar us ne khud se poochha ke kya is khaamoshi ka matlab waaqai yeh hai ke woh akele hain? Ya koi aur bhi yahan hai, jo khaamosh rehna jaanta hai?

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Dopehar ki roshni sunehri hone lagi thi jab unhein nishaan wala patthar mila.

Sab se pehle Mira ne dekha. Woh pahaari ki dhalwaan se zara baahar nikla tha aur taqreeban poora kaai se dhaka tha. Us ki jagah aur banaawat dekh kar lagta tha ke use kisi ne wahan rakha hai.

Teenon ne mil kar patthar ke saamne se ghaas aur paude hataaye. Patthar mein seedhi lakeerein kaat kar aik anokha nishaan banaaya gaya tha. Rayan ne aisa nishaan pehle nahin dekha tha. Kuch lakeerein aik doosre ko kaat rahi thin. Un se banne wali shaklein aik khaas tarteeb mein thin.

Mira ne nishaan ko chhue baghair us ki taraf ishaara kiya. “Kya yeh patthar raaste ki pehchaan ke liye lagaaya gaya hoga?”

“Ho sakta hai,” Sami ne kaha.

Rayan compass nikaal chuka tha. Us ne dhakkan khola. Sui nahin hili, magar daraar wale sheeshe ke neeche se halki si tik sunaai di. Woh foran ruk gaya.

“Mira.”

Mira muri. Compass ke andar, dial ke neeche daaen taraf aik chhota sa hissa khula tha, jahan se andar ke purze nazar aate the. Rayan ne wahan aik lamhe ke liye harkat dekhi, phir woh ruk gai.

Sirf aik halki si aawaaz aai thi. Us ke baad khaamoshi ho gai.

Rayan ne compass ko hilne nahin diya. Ab us ki nazar peetal ke kinaare par bane ghise hue nishaanon par gai. Woh unhein pehle bhi dekh chuka tha. Magar patthar ke nishaan ke saath dekhne par use un mein kuch baatein milti-julti mehsoos huin.

“Dekho, yeh lakeerein kis tarah mil rahi hain.”

Mira qareeb aa gai. Nishaan aik jaise nahin the, magar chand lakeerein milte-julte andaaz mein aik doosre se jur rahi thin. Rayan kabhi patthar dekhta, kabhi compass ka kinaara. Woh sirf itna yaqeen se keh sakta tha ke dono ki kuch baatein aik jaisi hain. Is chhoti si baat ne bhi us ka dhyaan baazuon ke dard se hata diya.

Compass ki akeli sui kaanpi, zara si muri, phir dobara ruk gai. Rayan ne Mira ko dekha.

“Jis ne sarak banaai thi, woh compass ke baare mein jaanta tha?”

Mira ne dono nishaan ghaur se dekhe. “Ya jis ne compass banaaya tha, woh is sarak ke baare mein jaanta tha.”

Sami ne seene par baazu baandh liye. “Yeh sun kar to aur bhi kam tasalli hui.”

Mira ne apna kaaghaz nikaala. Rayan ne poochha, “Kya kar rahi ho?”

“Yeh nishaan naqal kar rahi hoon.”

“Tumhein nahin lagta ke dono ka taalluq saabit ho gaya hai?”

“Mujhe lagta hai ke kaafi milte-julte hain. Is liye in ke baare mein mazeed jaanna chahiye.”

“Kya yeh aik hi baat nahin?”

“Nahin.”

Mira ne pehle patthar ka nishaan banaaya. Phir us ke saath compass ke kinaare ki woh lakeerein naqal kin jo saaf dikhai de rahi thin. Rayan ne compass seedha rakha. Kuch der baad thakan se us ka haath kaanpne laga to Sami ne us ki kohni ko sahaara de diya. Is baar us ne koi mazaaq nahin kiya.



Kaaghaz par dono nishaan saath bane to saaf dikhai dene laga ke kaun si lakeerein milti-julti hain aur kaun si alag hain. Mira ne un ke aas paas jagah chhor di taake baad mein mazeed baatein likh sake.

Us ne kaha, “Ho sakta hai in ka aapas mein taalluq ho. Magar abhi humein maloom nahin ke woh taalluq kya hai.”

Mira ki ehtiyaat se Rayan kuch bechain ho raha tha. Woh chahta tha ke kam az kam aik baat to saaf ho jaaye. Magar nadi par jo hua, us ke baad use Mira ki baat samajh aa rahi thi. Sirf kisi baat ki umeed rakhne se woh sach nahin ho jaati. Sawaal se judi koi cheez milne ka matlab yeh nahin ke jawaab bhi mil gaya hai.

Compass aham zaroor tha, magar woh abhi nahin jaante the ke woh kaise kaam karta hai. Is liye us par aankhein band kar ke bharosa nahin kiya ja sakta tha.

Rayan ne use band kiya aur teenon dobara ooper ki taraf chal pare.

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Sooraj dhalne laga tha jab Mira phir ruk gai. Pehle Rayan ne samjha ke woh thak gai hai. Phir Mira ka chehra dekh kar use laga ke baat kuch aur hai. “Kya hua?” us ne poochha.

Mira ne saamne ki dhalwaan dekhi, phir AR-317 ka kaaghaz, phir dobara dhalwaan. “Yahi jagah hai.”

Sami ne idhar-udhar dekha. “Kaun si jagah?”

“Faasla record se milta hai,” Mira ne aage barhte hue kaha. “Oonchai bhi durust hai. Peechhe ki pahaari bhi wahi hai, aur nadi paar karne ki jagah bhi.”

Us ne saamne ishaara kiya. “Survey ke mutaabiq sarak yahan se aage jaati hai.”

Rayan dekhta reh gaya. Saamne koi sarak nahin thi. Koi khula raasta bhi nahin tha. Sirf chattaanein, darakht, jarein aur ghane paude the jo poori dhalwaan par phaile hue the. Sami bhi usi taraf dekh raha tha.

“To humein isi jagah pahunchna tha?”

Mira ne aahista se sar hilaaya. “Haan. Naqshe ke mutaabiq sarak yahan se aage chalti hai.”

Rayan dhalwaan ke qareeb gaya. “Yahan se?”

Us ne compass khola. Kuch nahin hua. Use thora sa ghumaaya, tab bhi sui nahin hili. Woh chand qadam baaen gaya, phir daaen. Koi farq nahin para.

Is baar bhi compass ne koi madad nahin ki.

Rayan ne khol ko aik baar thonka. Sami ne us ki taraf dekha to us ne haath neeche kar liya. “Mujhe maloom hai.”

Mira zameen ko ghaur se dekh rahi thi. “Agar record ki paimaaishein durust hain to hum is waqt sarak hi par khare hain.”

Rayan ne apne qadmon ki taraf dekha. Wahan oonchi-neechi mitti, jarein aur patthar the. Koi aisi nishaani nahin thi ke kabhi yahan se gaariyan ya musaafir guzre hon.

“To sarak gai kahan?”

Mira ne jawaab nahin diya. Teenon talaash karne lage. Ghane darakhton ke neeche roshni tezi se kam ho rahi thi. Rayan chattaan ka saamne wala hissa dekh raha tha. Mira dhalwaan ki banaawat par ghaur kar rahi thi. Sami paudon ke darmiyaan aisi cheezein dhoondh raha tha jo aas paas ki zameen se alag lagein. Pehle bhi aisi chhoti nishaaniyon hi se unhein raasta mila tha.

Kai minute guzar gaye. Phir Sami ne aawaaz di, “Yahan aao.”

Woh paudon ke aik ghane hisse ke paas khara tha. Rayan aur Mira us ke qareeb gaye.

“Kya mila?”

“Abhi pata nahin,” Sami ne kaha. “Lekin yeh paude baaqi paudon se kuch alag hain.”

Rayan ne dekha. Use to woh aam se paude lag rahe the. Mira qareeb jhuki aur phir use baat samajh aa gai.

“Yeh baad mein uge hain. Baaqi paude in se zyada puraane hain.”

Aas paas ke paude ghane the aur un ki jarein dhalwaan mein gehraai tak phaili thin. Magar is hisse mein paude kam the aur naye lagte the. Teenon ehtiyaat se unhein hataane lage. Jaron ke neeche mitti dheeli thi. Kuch mitti hataai to patthar nazar aaya, lekin woh pahaari ki aam chattaan nahin thi. Patthar ka kinaara kisi ne kaat kar seedha kiya tha.

Rayan ghutnon ke bal baith gaya aur haath se mazeed mitti hataane laga. Aik seedha kinaara nazar aaya, phir doosra. Mira bhi us ke paas baith gai.

“Yeh deewaar hai,” us ne kaha. “Use mitti ko girne se rokne ke liye banaaya gaya hoga.”

Unhon ne kuch aur jagah saaf ki to puraane pattharon ki bani deewaar saamne aa gai. Sarak yahan khatam nahin hui thi. Woh mitti ke neeche dab gai thi.



Woh nahin jaante the ke mitti khud giri thi, barson mein jama hui thi, ya kisi ne jaan-boojh kar sarak ko dhaanpa tha. Abhi is baat ka koi saboot nahin tha. Magar Rayan purjosh tha. Woh khara hua aur pattharon ki seedh dekhne laga.

Saara din unhon ne adhoori nishaaniyon ko dekh kar raasta dhoondha tha. Kabhi paimaaishein madad deti thin, kabhi patthar, kabhi koi nishaan. Ab un ke saamne deewaar maujood thi. Puraani sarak aage bhi jaati thi. Woh khatam nahin hui thi, bas nazron se chhup gai thi.

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Andhera tezi se barh raha tha. Us waqt mazeed talaash karna mehfooz nahin tha, is liye Mira ne rukne par zor diya. Is baar Rayan ne behas nahin ki.

Unhon ne puraani deewaar ke qareeb aik aisi jagah chuni jahan hawa se kuch bachaao tha. Phir raat guzaarne ki tayyaari shuru kar di. Sami khushk lakriyan aur doosri cheezein jama karne laga. Rayan ne bacha hua saamaan dekha. Roshni bilkul khatam hone se pehle Mira aik baar phir deewaar ke khule hue hisse ko dekhne gai.

Wahan pahunch kar woh ruk gai. “Rayan.”

Rayan ne sar uthaaya. Mira deewaar ke nichle hisse ke paas baithi thi. Woh us ke paas gaya aur Sami bhi saath aa gaya.

“Kya hua?”

Mira ne aik bare patthar ke kinaare ki taraf ishaara kiya. Wahan taaza kharaashein thin. Yeh puraane nishaan nahin the jinhein barson ki baarish aur hawa ne halka kar diya ho. Kharaashein saaf thin, aur un ke andar patthar ka halka rang dikhai de raha tha. Rayan ki dharkan tez ho gai.

“Kya kisi ne yeh patthar hilaaya hai?”

“Ho sakta hai,” Mira ne kaha. “Kinaare haal hi mein ragre hue lagte hain. Neeche halka rang dekho.”

Teenon ne patthar ko qareeb se dekha. Us ke peechhe thori si khaali jagah thi. Woh koi darwaaza ya raasta nahin tha. Bas pahaari deewaar aur us ke peechhe ki mitti ke darmiyaan aik tang, andheri daraar thi.

Lekin us daraar se hawa aa rahi thi. Thandi hawa, jaise andar kaafi gehraai se aa rahi ho. Sami andhere ki taraf dekhne laga.

“Wah, is se to bilkul tasalli ho gai,” us ne kaha. Us ki aawaaz se saaf lag raha tha ke woh khud bhi ghabra raha tha.

Rayan ne compass nikaala. Jaise hi us ne dhakkan khola, andar se aik tez tik sunaai di. Teenon bilkul ruk gaye. Sui apni jagah rahi. Rayan ne daraar ki taraf dekha. Chand second tak kuch nahin hua.



Phir patthar ke peechhe kahin se aik dheemi, bhaari aawaaz aai. Jaise koi bara patthar doosre patthar par aahista-aahista ghisat raha ho. Sami ka chehra badal gaya.

“Baraah-e-karam keh do ke yeh pahaari ki aawaaz thi.”

Kisi ne jawaab nahin diya. Woh khaamosh khare sunte rahe. Phir aawaaz band ho gai. Mira ki nazrein andhere par jami rahin.

Us ne dheere se kaha, “Mujhe nahin maloom aawaaz kis cheez ki thi. Daraar se peechhe raho.”

Rayan ne compass mazbooti se thaam liya. Teenon apni jagah ruk gaye. Saara din woh chahta raha tha ke compass use koi saaf jawaab de. Ab patthar ke peechhe se aawaaz aai thi to use khud samajh nahin aa rahi thi ke woh qareeb jaana bhi chahta hai ya nahin. Woh apne doston ke paas hi raha.

Daraar ke andar kuch nazar nahin aa raha tha. Thandi hawa us ke haath par lag rahi thi. Hawa musalsal aa rahi thi, is liye deewaar ke peechhe kahin khaali jagah zaroor thi. Magar wahan aur kya tha, woh nahin jaanta tha.

“Hum subah ki roshni ka intezaar karenge,” Mira ne kaha.

Rayan ne sar hilaaya aur compass band kar liya, magar use haath mein hi rakha.

Un se bahut ooper, darakhton se dhaki aik pahaari par shaam ki aakhri roshni par rahi thi. Aik lamhe ke liye darakhton ke tanon ke darmiyaan kisi insaan ka saaya nazar aaya. Woh itna door tha ke agar teenon mein se koi ooper dekhta bhi to us ka chehra pehchaan na sakta. Magar un mein se kisi ne ooper nahin dekha.

Neeche Sami baaqi dono ke mazeed qareeb aa gaya. Mira ki nazar usi tang daraar par thi. Rayan haath mein band compass liye khara tha. Peetal ka puraana khol us ki ungliyon mein daba hua tha.



Ooper khara shakhs peechhe hata aur darakhton mein ghaayab ho gaya.

Rayan, Sami aur Mira jaan chuke the ke koi haal hi mein is bhooli hui sarak par safar kar chuka hai. Magar unhein yeh nahin maloom tha ke shehar se baahar un ke pehle din ke aakhir mein koi unhein dekh bhi raha hai.

Baab Do Khatam Hua

Takhleeqi Ta'aruf

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TAKHLEEQI HIDAAYAT

Atiq ur Rehman

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