

A Dream Deferred

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Long forgotten memories resurface when two individuals, poles apart yet strikingly similar to each other, happen to meet.

An Unexpected Request

Chapter 1 of 5

Long forgotten memories resurface when two individuals, poles apart yet strikingly similar to each other, happen to meet.

Disclaimer: All the Harry Potter characters belong to JKR. Only their fate rests in my hands at the moment! The four magical herbs to be mentioned in due course belong to Valmiki, the great poet who composed the Ramayana.

Parvati shook her head in dismay. '*Bahin*, it's," she paused to clear her throat, "it's impossible!"

Padma smiled affectionately at her twin. "No, *Bahin*, he doesn't need medications. I am sure of that, not just as a mediwitch but as a Muggle psychiatrist too. The wizarding world has ignored the importance of psychotherapy for too long. That's precisely what he requires. And who could be a better relationship expert than you, our former love guru at Hogwarts?"

"For Merlin's sake, I cannot possibly handle a certain Professor Snape!"

"Calm down, Miss Hyper. Of course you can. He is just a thoroughly misunderstood individual." Padma took a long sip from her cup of coffee before turning around and whispering, "Like you."

Parvati was left speechless by her twin's words.

Padma couldn't suppress her laughter.

"So I had guessed it right, after all. *Bahin*, it's no use pretending otherwise. You do have a pathetic crush on him."

"STOP IT!" Parvati shrieked.

"Admit it, right here, right now."

"Sounds funny, right? Do you have any idea how difficult it's going to make things for me? I mean, a session with the one you cannot have! Merlin, I'm going to die! He will find out even without using Legilimency. My goodness... I have never been in a situation as pathetic as this."

"Have faith in yourself. Try to deal with him as calmly and as professionally as you would deal with any other client. You are, after all, a great clinical psychologist... I trust you, Parvati. Okay, then. See you next Monday. I'll escort Professor McGonagall and Professor Snape to your clinic from St Mungo's. Goodbye, take care."

With a quick hug, Padma walked out of the crowded coffee shop.

"It's no use pretending otherwise. You do have a pathetic crush on him."

Padma's words kept ringing in her ears.

Twins have a wonderful way of understanding each other, Parvati had to admit.

Few people understood her, even in her Hogwarts days. She was perpetually tagged either as the glam diva or as Her Majesty, the Gossip Queen. No one, not even her best friend Lavender, understood the real Parvati Patil.

Just like no one understood the real Severus Snape.

A/N: 'Bahin' is the Marathi word for sister. I am trying to put special emphasis on the Indian (and more specifically Maharashtrian) descent of the Patil twins, as 'Patil' is a Maharashtrian surname.

Thanks to nagandsev, the wonderful admin here, for her Midas touch!

The Task... and the Hurdles

Chapter 2 of 5

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"*Aai*, it's urgent. I need to talk. These visions... they are driving me mad!"

"I'm all ears. But finish eating your *Pav bhaji* first," commanded Narayani Patil sternly, stepping out of her kitchen. "Your visions will only worsen with your irregular eating habits."

Parvati didn't even attempt to argue with her mother. Clients and patients could be persuaded and convinced. Not mothers.

Narayani had been a rather strict parent, unlike her husband Vitthal, a former Slytherin student at Hogwarts. Yes, you read that right, but Auror Vitthal Patil was no Death Eater; he hated You-Know-Who. Despite being a witch AND a Pureblood, Narayani preferred to do things the Muggle way because she believed that using magic for daily chores was a wastage of magical energy. Magic, in her opinion, was a precious gift, not to be flaunted unnecessarily. She had ensured that the Patil twins were in no way distinguishable from the Muggle girls in the locality (much to the irritation of Vitthal Patil, who would secretly take the girls for Quidditch practice or an occasional visit to other wizarding families) until the Hogwarts letters arrived and the big feud started.

"Enough, Narayani. Our daughters need to realize that they are special...that they are different. I have told them all about my Hogwarts days..."

"Oh, yes, of course! So that they follow your footsteps... you egoistic Pureblood Western wizard!"

Blah blah blah...

"Do you think *Aai* is a Muggle?" Parvati would wonder.

"I don't really think so. Haven't you heard what she keeps yelling whenever *Baba* tries to make her understand? '*You egoistic Pureblood Western wizard*.' Mind that. '*Western wizard*'. Which suggests that she might be a witch, but not a 'Western' one," Padma reasoned.

The two sisters had learnt about their mother's magical talent much, much later. Not before she had volunteered to participate in the Battle of Hogwarts.

"I wish I had some more *Sandhani* left," she had sighed.

"Now what's that?" Parvati had never heard anything of this sort, though the name sounded surprisingly Indian.

"It's a magical herb that can heal bony injuries. Somewhat like your Skele-Gro Potion," explained Narayani.

"We had heard of Alternative Medicine, but now we have Alternative Magic too! Wow! *Aai*, you know of herbs we have never heard of. You will be a great asset to the army," gushed Padma.

Vitthal gave a knowing smile. "Your *Aai* was a topper at Mayavati, after all. It's the largest and the most ancient school of magic in India."

Parvati's jaw dropped open. "*Aai*, you never told us! You brought us up almost like Muggles!"

"Because *Mayavi* people need to learn not to take magic for granted."

Later on, Parvati was thankful about her upbringing, though. The terrible war had left her traumatized, and she had firmly decided to cut off all her connections with the wizarding world. She desperately needed a fresh life, a life that was not a constant reminder of Lavender's gruesome death. That was precisely why she had taken up a course in Clinical Psychology in a Muggle college, where nobody had the least clue about her magical abilities. She was now a successful clinical psychologist in Muggle London and even wrote for the Agony Aunt section in a leading Muggle magazine.

Her twin, on the other hand, proved herself to be quite a multi-tasker, using the Time-Turner to simultaneously attend the Healers' course AND Muggle medical school. It was her way of coping with the post-war stress—immersing herself in studies so that she had absolutely no time to think of anything else. At present she was undergoing specialization in Psychiatry.

Both the twins were empathetic listeners and keen observers, but were hopeless when it came to Legilimency and Occlumency skills (perhaps their emotional nature proved to be the biggest obstacle in mastering these skills). This had never created a difficulty in their careers, though, as they catered mostly to the needs of Muggle patients.

Until now.

Their much intriguing Potions Professor, as it turned out, was alive and was suffering from severe depression. He had been discovered in a half-dead condition from Hogsmeade where he lay in a near-comatose state after consuming an overdose of Firewhisky. After intensive care at St Mungo's, he was clinically stable, and his suicidal tendencies had decreased. However, he still maintained that he should have died. *He needs psychotherapy*, Padma convinced her seniors. Interestingly, Padma had found no trace of the Dark Mark on his body ever since he had been admitted to the hospital, and that puzzled her. *The only substance that can remove the Dark Mark is the Suvarnakarani. How on earth did he come across that? You learn about that herb only at Mayavati!*

Nevertheless, she had discussed him with Parvati in great detail, who, after much coaxing, had agreed to take up the case.

It had been a difficult decision for Parvati. Unbeknownst to anyone (except Padma, of course, who read her like an open book), she had a serious, unrequited crush on Severus. She had been reasonably good in Potions, which meant she had never gotten a detention with him; but she hadn't been as good as Padma (which might have earned her an occasional curt nod). She had never talked about her crush, because her upbringing taught her that such feelings towards a teacher were scandalous. She had tried her best to mask her feelings by actively participating in every anti-Snape discussion in the Gryffindor common room (Snape-bashing was a fashionable thing to do). She had hoped that it was just a stupid teenage crush which would go away as soon as he was out of her sight.

It hadn't.

Just like Severus was yet to get over his one and only infatuation. Lily Evans.

However, that wasn't the only thing bothering Parvati. Ever since she had heard about Snape's survival, she had been having these strange visions—an Indian-looking girl tying something around young Snape's wrist and dropping down dead instantly... Nagini making her final move... Voldemort's blood-curdling laugh... A glowing dial appearing around Snape's wrist... What on earth did these visions mean? Seriously, Parvati hated being a Seer.

She needed to talk to *Aai*. She would have all the answers. She always had.

A/N: 'Aai' and 'Baba' are the Marathi terms for mother and father respectively.

'Mayavi' is a Sanskrit word meaning magical.

'Pav bhaji' is a Marathi dish comprising hot buttered bread and a spicy preparation of assorted vegetables.

Mayavati is a beautiful place nestled in the lap of the Himalayas. The institute of magical education is my creation, though.

Thanks to nagandsev, the wonderful admin here, for her Midas touch!

'Dark' Secrets

Chapter 3 of 5

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Severus Snape opened his eyes reluctantly to the warm rays of the morning sun urging him to wake up. He was taken aback to see a rather sorrowful-looking Minerva leaving his bedside.

Honestly, what's the matter with Minerva? Where has all her fieriness disappeared? Hell, she is acting like one big, obsessive aunt ever since some dunderhead chose to dump me here at St Mungo's.

This is completely inappropriate. Totally uncharacteristic of the Minerva McGonagall I have always loved to hate.

Yes, I have lost all desire to live. Big deal.

As if anyone cares whether I live or die. The only two persons who might have cared were Lily Evans and Eileen Prince. They are gone.

Yes, I passed out that night. Big deal.

I am not a bloody Tobias Snape who needs to be taken to a therapist.

His chain of thoughts was broken by a vaguely familiar feminine voice.

"Good morning. How are you today, Professor Snape?"

He raised his head from the pillow and found himself face to face with a former student.

The Ravenclaw Patil.

Gem of a student (not a show-off like that exasperating know-it-all), and more importantly, the twin who did not develop stupid feelings for a man twice her age.

If only her inordinately fashion-and-gossip-centric Gryffindor twin were half as wise.

Wait, what did she say? 'Professor Snape'?

He hated it when people used that selfish brute's surname to address him.

I've had enough.

He finally broke his silence for the first time in four-and-a-half weeks.

"We are past that stage, Dr Padma Patil. Call me Severus, please."

"OK. I'll try, but call me Padma then." She smiled. "Honestly, it's difficult to address former teachers by their first names. It took me six full months to call Minerva by her name. She gave you tough competition for the post of the scariest teacher at Hogwarts!"

He smiled weakly. *Age (in addition to many more factors) has mellowed him quite a bit* thought Padma.

"She is coming tomorrow with us."

"Who, Minerva? Merlin! Where? And why?"

"We are taking you to the psychologist."

"Padma, I am neither an alcoholic nor a psychopath. Allow me to state this for the first and the last time—I AM NOT GOING TO A THERAPIST."

"Listen, Severus, going to a therapist will not fit you into either category. Think of a better excuse... Wait, that's not allowed! Your first and last statement has been recorded and rejected." Padma flashed her trademark post-exam triumphant smile.

Damn that. Padma Patil wasn't a Ravenclaw for no reason.

"I see no reason why you and Minerva need to come with me. If my memory isn't failing me as badly as you claim, there's a thing called Apparating," said Severus in the sarcastic tone usually reserved for the Gryffindors.

"Ah, Severus, nobody is saying anything about your memory. As for Apparating, you are too weak to Apparate yet. Besides, the psychologist's clinic is in a Muggle area, and you certainly don't want to send a dozen Muggles running helter-skelter!"

"But take me out of this irritating place first," demanded Severus impatiently.

"We can't do that. We needed to ensure that your medications were taken under our supervision. That phase is over though. No more medicines for you. But now we need to see to it that you complete your psychotherapy sessions before we can discharge you from here," stated Padma in a matter-of-fact tone. With a patient as non-compliant as Severus Snape, you couldn't afford to take a chance.

"At least tell me the name of the bloody therapist!"

"Twenty-four hours to go, and you will find out for yourself. You won't be disappointed."

"*Legilimens*," muttered Severus softly as Padma proceeded to check his vitals. Barely twenty-three seconds later, he knew all he needed to know.

He smirked at what he saw.

So the Gryffindor Patil intends to heal my mind, the mind of a well-trained Legilimens and Occlumens? And that too when she hasn't learnt the Dark Arts from Shinde yet, and continues to harbor that idiotic weakness towards me? Let us see how she manages to extract the slightest information from me. If someone knows how to stay tight-lipped, that's me.

Padma, you and your sister are as hopeless in Occlumency as you used to be. Especially you. At least Parvati can tell when I am intruding her thoughts (that's one of the side effects of being a Seer... Divination is one area where she scores over you and definitely over Sybill)... You can't even understand that!

"Convey my regards to Shinde and Patil," said Severus as Padma prepared to proceed to the next bed.

"Shinde? *Narayani Shinde*? You knew my mother?"

"Yes, met her after Patil returned from India after their wedding. Quite an interesting Dark Witch she was."

This was a rude shock to Padma, but she managed to maintain a neutral expression while she nodded.

I must find out Aai's secrets, decided Padma.

A/N: Thanks to nagandsev, the wonderful admin here, for her Midas touch!

What Exactly Are the Dark Arts?

Chapter 4 of 5

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"Yes, your visions. What exactly do you see?"

"I see this girl... an Indian-looking girl, around sixteen or so... And I see Snape... He's roughly the same age. The girl ties something on his wrist and drops down dead immediately."

Narayani sat erect and closed her eyes, concentrating on Parvati's description. "Do you see anything else?"

"Yes, I see You-Know-Who, and his snake, Nagini. You-Know-Who laughs madly while the snake approaches Snape. It's all blurred after that."

"Is that all?"

"Wait, there's a glowing dial that appears around Snape's wrist after Nagini attacks him."

Narayani did not speak a word. Tears rolled down her cheeks uncontrollably.

Parvati was perplexed. She wasn't used to seeing the emotional side of her mother. In fact Narayani had been the one to convince Vitthal not to take the two girls away from Hogwarts. ("We are *Marathas*, Vitthal! Such cowardice doesn't suit us," she had said loftily.)

"*Aai*, are you OK?" Parvati asked her mother gently.

Vitthal, who had just come back from the Ministry, was shocked at what he saw.

"Narayani! What's the matter?" He was terribly worried to see his wife crying. She hadn't cried even once in all the twenty-seven long years they had been married.

The Patil matriarch wiped off her tears violently. "This is the problem with you Western guys. There's little you learn about mastering your mind. That's the sole reason why I ended up losing an old friend," she said bitterly. "Because her only crime was to fall in love with the wrong person," she added with a hint of sarcasm in her voice.

Parvati didn't know how to react.

"Are you talking of Heer, by any chance?" Vitthal finally broke the awkward silence.

Narayani nodded sadly.

"But how did she die? Dumbledore told us that it was an act of Dark Magic! I am ready to avenge her death, come what may! She was my best friend at Hogwarts." Vitthal looked visibly angry.

Padma was entering through the fireplace at that very instant.

She held her breath, wondering what the conversation was about. But she chose to keep quiet *If Narayani Patil was indeed a Dark Witch, it might be revealed any moment now.*

Narayani's reaction was unprecedented.

"Dark Magic, did you say? Do you remember the definition of Dark Magic?" she challenged.

"The branch of magic dealing with unknown and potentially dangerous forces," answered Vitthal, when the impact of realization hit Padma like a bolt of lightning.

'Unknown'.

The word had lost its significance to the more prominent second part of the definition, 'potentially dangerous'.

So 'unknown' forms of magic, more specifically, forms of magic unknown to the Western world were included under this definition too. And that included the traditional Indian magical arts taught at Mayavati.

That was grossly unfair.

But Parvati was only getting more and more perplexed. Who was this mysterious Heer, the mutual friend of her parents? All she could guess was that this girl was a Hogwarts alumnus, and possibly a hapless romantic like herself. But what could be her possible connection with Snape?

A/N: The Marathas are a well-known warrior clan hailing from Maharashtra, India.

Thanks to nagandsev, the wonderful admin here, for her Midas touch!

A New Assignment

Chapter 5 of 5

Long forgotten memories resurface when two individuals, poles apart yet strikingly similar to each other, happen to meet.

"Whoa! So *Aai* is a Dark Witch?" Parvati gaped in wonder, her eyes gleaming in the crackling flames of the fireplace of the twins' bedroom. "So that explains why she was quick to dash to the kitchen the moment you stepped in! She didn't want you to discover any of the Dark Arts stuff, isn't it?"

"Not so fast, *Bahin*. I had initially thought along those lines too. But no, we are wrong," said Padma, sounding almost like a detective.

"And what makes you so sure?" Parvati challenged.

"Her top priority in life is to make sure her daughters don't get thin like reeds," smiled Padma.

"Ah, we need to thank her for our sexy curves," winked Parvati slyly, earning a stern glare and a dramatically hurled pillow from her older-by-a-minute twin. "On a more serious note, coming home is like coming to a food festival!"

"We're deviating from the topic, sis dearest, though I do agree with your last..."

"Hush," interrupted Parvati, suddenly hurling her blanket aside.

"What's up?" whispered Padma, sitting up in a flash.

Parvati quietly pointed towards her parents' bedroom. Snippets of a mysterious conversation started drifting in.

"It's all right, Narayani. It isn't your fault, so stop blaming yourself."

"But it is, Vitthal! I shouldn't have given her the herbs in the first place. At least she wouldn't have ~~die~~*died* then!"

"Come on. Alumni of Mayavati don't use magic unless they have to. I know that. My parents were there too. And your intention was to save, not to kill. Why, just think of the herbs you gave her... Okay, let's first take *Mruta Sanjeevani*... She restores life to the dying. She's basically equivalent to phoenix tears. Vishal!"

"Vitthal, please try to..."

"*Vishalyakarani* is next," continued Vitthal animatedly. "She removes all weapons from an injured body. Then comes *Suvarnakarani*. She restores the normal hue of the skin to any affected body part... apparently removes even the Dark Mark as Padma discovered. And last but not least is *Sandhani*. She heals bony injuries like the Skele-Gro Potion."

"But..."

"There's no 'but' here. You can't blame yourself for giving her those life-saving herbs. Just as I can't blame Snape, Heer herself or the unknowingly made Unbreakable Vow."

"I should have been more careful. At least I should have known something about the vow." Narayani sounded as if she were in tears.

"Take it easy, Narayani. At least we know tonight that Heer didn't die due to Dark Magic."

Pause. Silence. More tears.

Finally Narayani spoke. It was her usual voice—calm and composed.

"She consciously sacrificed her love, and ended up sacrificing her life. All for the sake of a man who doesn't even know all this~~yet~~," she sighed.

"There is still a chance" Vitthal suddenly sounded hopeful. "While we can't bring back Nauheed Cama, the least we can do is to make sure her sacrifice doesn't go in vain."

"What are we going to do? Tell Snape?" Narayani asked sarcastically. "Who is going to bell the cat?"

"Parvati."

A/N: Mrita Sanjeevani might look familiar, but Mruta Sanjeevani? If you are wondering that, by any chance, allow me to clarify... I had to get the perfect Marathi pronunciation!

And yes, Vitthal LOVES the herbs. So a herb is a 'she', not an 'it' for him!

Thanks to nagandsev, the wonderful admin here, for her Midas touch!