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Sardaana Kokolova

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**Your light**

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«Издательские решения»

**Kokolova S.**

Your light / S. Kokolova — «Издательские решения»,

It's so important to be seen by your person. When you can come and see that you are accepted with all your "bugs". But before it you went a way of fight with fears and doubts.

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# **Your light**

**Sardaana Kokolova**

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ISBN 978-5-0069-9101-9

Created with Ridero smart publishing system

Your light

## **Introduction**

Where does any story begin?

Before something new happens, the previous story must end. And if it doesn't, it will continue, and nothing new will ever happen. Knowing what happened means finding something new, but it also means setting the record straight in the future. And after a long period of grieving and accepting the end of something incredibly important, it's time to be ready for the new.

There's no other way.

## Chapter 1

- Hey, can't you hear me? Dan, I'm talking to you.
- What? Sorry, I was wearing headphones.
- I say, are you with us? We're going to the cafe.
- No, go without me. I want to be here alone.
- Are you okay?
- Yes, everything is fine.
- Okay, I will be in touch.

Dan — a young man, he looked about 27 years old. He looked younger than his years. He was dressed like all the office workers. He was average height, fit, neatly shag. Good genetics allowed him to maintain a clear perspective and a calm demeanor. His natural integrity was evident in his approach to work and to people. Anyone could describe him as an honest individual. He was diligent in his paperwork, meticulous in his tasks, and never late. He was always well-groomed and refrained from making unpleasant remarks. However, his true strength lay in his ability to remain composed in the face of time-constrained situations. At a time when everything seemed to be falling apart, the group leader turned to him as a last resort, and he provided a solution. He saved the team on numerous occasions. He was rarely wrong.

It was the evening after completing a difficult and long project. Dan was sitting on the roof of the two-story building of the company where he worked. And watched the sunset. It was his habit to observe the world around him at a time of change. It helped to find a balance and return to the moment. To realize where you are and what is really happening. If there was a chance to witness the transformation of the world, he tried not to miss it and would stop for a moment. The sun on the horizon turned everything golden. Just a few more minutes and you can continue your race.

It's not every day that you get to capture this moment in your memory. It requires a combination of factors. Firstly, the weather conditions must be favorable. It's not every day that the clouds allow the sunlight to reach its full spectrum. It's not every day that everything is painted in gold. Sometimes, there are too many clouds. Sometimes, there are too few clouds. Secondly, the temperature and humidity levels play a significant role. They also affect the visibility. Thirdly, the position on the surface, or more specifically, the viewpoint, plays a crucial role. It allows you to capture as much of the landscape as possible. Fourth, the landscape itself. If you're in a city block of skyscrapers, it might be difficult to see the sun setting. However, in some cases, these places can be a true wonder.

He knew that. And today, the place, the time, and the mood were perfect.

The last few days had been crazy. It felt like one long day that lasted two weeks, with only short breaks for food and sleep. It wasn't that he didn't love his work. But these long projects were exhausting. After completing them, he needed time to himself.

From above, the city looked like a toy. Down below, there were so many worries. People were rushing about their business and didn't notice how the sun was creating gold from everything around it at sunset.

He didn't want to listen to music. Sometimes, just isolating himself from the outside world was so much relief. It was a physical feeling of awe. It was like having big, soft pillows in your ears and the noisy world disappearing. Silence. After all the chaos of nervous managers and customers, it was so good to be in a sound vacuum.

He listened to the silence and watched the shadows grow long. Everything gray, green, and shiny turned into a matte, soft yellow, then a soft orange, and finally a deep red. Gradually, the silhouettes became softer and more blurred, no longer looking so sharply defined. Gold permeated every corner, even the darkest ones. It was a rare moment when everything seemed gentle and safe.

In a moment, the night would cover everything.

The streetlights came on.

«Hi,» someone said to him. He turned around, but there was no one there. It must have been a dream. Maybe he was tired. He hadn't slept much in the past few days, and he might have been hallucinating. He looked around again. There was no one there. He needed to slow down. It was like he was always running late. But now he was feeling good. He could finally stop and take his time. The pressure of the project had been exhausting.

He looked at his watch.

«That's it. The golden hour is over. Now I can think about food. I need to celebrate the completion of the project.

Chicken. No. A piece of meat. This gorgeous, large piece of premium beef. The link to the cafe's address has been floating around in my notes for a while. If I hurry, I might still find a seat».

He stood up, stretched his legs, and headed for the exit from the rooftop.

On the way to the cafe, he remembered the monk's words: «Speak more convincingly. Don't be silent. Speak and don't let yourself shout.»

Dan visited the monk every month, and only on that occasion he was so talkative. The rest of the time, the monk listened to him with his eyes closed.

This time, Dan was surprised by the monk's long speech. He listened with bated breath, as if trying to memorize every word:

«Speak so that you can be heard from all sides. So that you can be listened to. Don't raise your voice. That will only turn everyone against you. Attract attention with your intonation and the essence of your conversation. You need to know when to speak and when to wait. Be silent and let others speak. Learn to pause in your speech. Speak in short sentences. Get to the point. Don't drag it out. Speak in a way that allows your voice to continue resonating in the silence. If you decide to say something, then say it without stopping. And let your speech grow and pursue. Until it reaches its goal. You need to speak convincingly. And if you realize that you can't or it's not the right moment. Then don't even start. We are given speech so that your words don't fly like dust in the wind. Although dust in the wind also has a purpose. Let your words always find the right application,» the monk said and closed his eyes, showing that the conversation was over.

They met by chance. It was such a cold November evening that even the birds were freezing in mid-flight. He saw an old man crossing the street. He was very slow, but the cars were in a hurry. Everyone wanted to get through the intersection as quickly as possible. It seemed that everyone was less patient that evening. This particular stretch of road was also known for its high pedestrian fatality rate.

Dan saw a car approaching and the driver clearly in a hurry to make it through the flashing yellow light. To pass all the intersections without stopping. By evening, the asphalt had become slippery and he couldn't maneuver without colliding. And the old man was so slow. Dan pushed him out of the way. He barely managed to escape from the car's coming.

Then he ran up to the old man. Helped him up and made sure he was all right. They started talking. It turned out that he was a monk and had just gotten tangled in his robes on the road. He thanked Dan and invited him to come to their temple for tea. He wanted to repay the debt for saving his life. Paying back must be done immediately and in full. Dan agreed and after that he became a frequent guest of the monk.

Over time, the meetings took on the character of confession. Dan spoke. The monk was silent and only occasionally answered something in two or three sentences. Without moralizing.

One day, he was particularly agitated and kept saying: «It's useless. It doesn't work. They don't hear or understand me again. They don't consider me. They can't hear me. I am nothing!» He paused to catch his breath and looked at the monk.

He was sitting with his eyes closed. Then he said softly, «You can't hear the wind without the leaves.» Speak when necessary. Don't waste words. If you say something, be prepared to answer it.

Since that day, Dan stopped trying to convince anyone, arguing or getting involved in discussions. He always waited for his turn. And if there was an opportunity his opinion was always on point.

But sometimes he wanted to talk to someone about nothing. To talk non-stop about everything, about every little thing. Yes, even about the sunset. At such moments, a poet, an artist, a very sentimental person with a gentle soul lived in him. But he could not talk to anyone about it. There was no such person around.

No one knew the details about him. And in general, there were no questions about his past. It seemed that everything was clear about him. He was like on the palm — said his colleagues.

However, there was one moment that showed him from a different side. It was during a corporate party in the middle of winter. The leader decided that the group needed team building. And the team had fun for three hours in a bowling center. But it wasn't just a party with food and drinks. The leader didn't change his style, and of course, there were contests. Stupid contests: who was faster and more agile. And this contest didn't signify anything unusual. It was called «the straitjacket.» The player was dressed in a straitjacket with their hands tied, so couldn't gesture, and the second player wore headphones with music, so couldn't hear anything from the outside. One player had to explain a word to the second player using only facial expressions. Their movements were restricted. It was interesting to watch the facial expressions and silly guesses. It was fun until someone suggested Dan play. He refused, and the more he resisted, the more interesting it became to make him do it. Realizing that it was pointless, he agreed.

He was dressed in a straitjacket. His partner was someone from a neighboring department. The host showed him a word on a piece of paper that he had to explain through facial expressions.

«Misanthropy.»

Who was responsible for organizing these contests? What idiot thought it was interesting? Music was playing in the background. It was a complete disaster. The crowd, excited from previous attempts, was eager for more fun. It was difficult to focus on the task. How can this be explained by facial expressions?

He felt that he was having trouble breathing. His chest was tight and it was getting worse. The music and the noise of the crowd were adding to the effect. He felt dizzy. Dan didn't understand what was happening. All he wanted was to be let go and for the music to stop. The others were waiting for him to make funny faces and explain himself. His panicked expressions were comical, and the more he struggled with his fear, the more they laughed.

At some point, he screamed and fell off the chair onto the floor. He screamed as if he had been stabbed. There were no words. He just screamed in frustration and fear. Everyone stopped laughing. The host ran over and tried to calm him down. But Dan continued to writhe and scream. Someone from the crowd ran over and started to untie his shirt. But the more Dan writhed, the tighter the straps became. At some point, the crowd also began to panic. The sight of Dan screaming in a straitjacket, writhing on the floor, frightened everyone. And trying to calm him down didn't help. He didn't hear anyone.

Suddenly, someone poured a bucket of water on him.

It was Sofia, the assistant production manager. She was a nice and efficient girl. She later said that the idea of using a bucket of water came to her when she remembered her grandfather. On his farm, the neighbor's dogs often got into fights with his sheep. The only way to calm them down was to pour water on them. She found a bucket in the cleaning staff's storeroom. She didn't hesitate.

Dan was lying on the floor, motionless, while the others tried to untie him as quickly as possible. He was placed on a couch in the hall. He refused to accept any help or have anyone stay with him. All he asked for was his backpack.

The first thing he did was put on his headphones. Then he started drying himself with a towel. Sofia approached him cautiously:

— How are you? Are you okay? I'm sorry I poured a bucket of water on you.

— It's okay. It's not the first time.

— I just thought you needed help. You were struggling. And it always worked with the dogs.

— The dogs?

— The neighbor's dogs on my grandfather's farm often bark at poor sheep. They just keep circling and circling. They don't listen to anyone. And when you throw water over them, they immediately calm down and run away.

— And why doesn't grandpa talk to the owner of the dogs so that they don't do this anymore?

— The owner is the same as his dogs. He doesn't want to listen to anyone. Grandpa also contacted the Town Council and tried to talk to the owner. Nothing helps.

— So you decided that I'm like those dogs and only water will stop me?

— Sorry.

— You did the right thing. This has happened to me before. But it was a long time ago. I thought I'd gotten over it. But apparently not yet.

— Anyway, I'm sorry, it was awkward.

— Awkward is an understatement. I was screaming like a madman. You had to run after the bucket for a long time.

— But...

— I'm joking, thank you for your help. I couldn't have done it on my own. Now I need to forget about it somehow. I can't believe I was writhing on the floor like a madman, and then I got wet. But anyway, thank you for being so quick-witted. Is your name Sofia, right?

— Yes.

— My name is Dan.

— I know.

She smiled shyly. It was a good thing that he didn't pay attention to the last sentence. It was as if she was following him, knowing his name.

Dan wiped his face and hair with a towel and decided to go outside. He needed to breathe fresh air and clear his mind. He slowly stood up, nodded to Sofia as a farewell, and made his way to the exit.

After this incident, the office was still buzzing for a week, and people often mentioned him in the smoking areas. Someone avoided Dan when they met in the hallway, someone smiled and whispered behind his back. But after a while, everyone stopped paying attention to him and Dan became the same guy again.

However, one of his colleagues became more attentive. He often asked: how are you? Is everything okay...

At first he didn't answer. Then he got tired of this disturbing concern and asked him directly: «Are you afraid that I'll start writhing in hysterics again?»

He told him about his grandmother, who had somehow managed to live to a ripe old age despite her epilepsy. But he had often witnessed her seizures as she raised him alone. Dan thanked him, but still asked him not to ask about his condition so often. It was quite annoying. And he had no plans to repeat. It was just a combination of circumstances that made him lose control.

They agreed that he would only worry about his condition if there was a real danger. Otherwise, he would try not to be so persistent. Yes, he turned out to be a kind guy. His name was Sam.

## Chapter 2

It could have been a normal Monday. But somehow in the morning in the office everyone was excited and as if waiting for the command. The leader of the teams was fussing and, although doing his usual business, as if waiting for the command to rush into battle. And the expectation was justified.

The next day, instead of the usual morning greeting, the leader said that he was waiting for everyone in the meeting room.

Dan came into the hall last. Everyone was sitting at the table and carefully reading something. The leader glared at him and pointed to a vacant seat. He sat down and started reading, like everyone else.

It was a standard non-disclosure agreement for trade secrets and everything that would happen in the company. He signed something like this every quarter or so. But this time, he was surprised by something new. It was a clause about intellectual property and developments in linguistics. Although he had worked with all sorts of things throughout his time at the company.

The Leader broke the silence:

— First of all, take out your phones, tablets, and other devices, including your old pods and players. Yes, Dan, and your headphones too. Put them all in the basket. You can pick them up after the meeting. Katie, please take it out of the room. Thank you.

Dan noticed that the Leader was more serious than ever.

He continued:

— Attention, from now on, we are going to develop a new word in communication and participate in an AI research project to create a new language for people with disabilities. Yes, it's not something innovative. But it's of great importance to the customer, any leaks can lead to significant losses. The level of competition is quite high. Therefore, one of the conditions was to maintain confidentiality. First, please read the non-disclosure agreement, sign it, and let's get started.

Everyone signed, and then a girl emerged from the far corner of the room. The Leader introduced her as Chloe. She was dressed in a formal suit, looked attractive and reserved.

Dan had seen many customer representatives and knew how to interact with them. No way. Only the team leader was communicating with them.

She looked around the room carefully and made eye contact with everyone at the table.

«We've been choosing a team for a long time that could help us with our issue. And to be honest, you're not the best,» — she had a pleasant voice.

Sam chuckled: «Then what are you doing here if you don't think we're the best?» The Leader bulged her eyes and hissed at him.

She didn't seem flustered and responded in the same tone: «That's why we decided that you could be useful to us. You have a fresh perspective. Your team never gives up and knows how to finish what starts. 85% of your projects have been successful. The remaining 15%, in my opinion, no one could have completed. These projects were challenging that no one else was willing to take on. But you didn't give up. To tell you more, one of such projects eventually gained real prospects thanks to your negative reports. Now it is on implementation and shows good results». A sigh of approval passed through the room and everyone whispered. The Leader after these words looked pleased and visibly straightened up, as if he was about to be awarded an order.

Sam did not relent: «And still, what brought you here. The agreement we signed, there is no recording in the room, I am dying of impatience. If I'm right, you're from a well-known linguistic laboratory in the world. And they're currently working on teaching AI the language of the deaf. But you haven't made much progress. You're stuck, aren't you?»

The Leader's face turned red, and he glared at Sam. He clearly wasn't expecting such disrespect.

Dan asked in a whisper where he knew so much about her. Sam grinned and gestured that nothing could be hidden from him.

«You're right, Sam. I'm the lead analyst at LILLY, a linguistic innovation laboratory for AI languages, and we've been working on this project for a long time. I'm flattered that you recognize me. I have a request for you to help us with a very important research project. This will benefit a lot of people. I'm not afraid to say that the results could be revolutionary.»

«Do you mind?» — she looked at the Leader, and he turned off the lights in the room. As soon as the lights went out, a holographic ball appeared above the table. It was a pleasant blue-white light. A buzz of excitement went through the room. It was hard to surprise the team.

Chloe gave the command: «Lima, introduce yourself.» The ball began to change, and a pleasant female voice said: «Hello, my name is LIMa, a linguistic intelligence module version 3.0. I am here to assist you in communication.»

— Lima, tell us about your capabilities, — commanded Chloe.

The light ball above the table continued to say: «Lima version 3.0 is capable of becoming your constant assistant in everyday affairs and facilitating communication for all those with limited non-verbal speech capabilities. My algorithms are designed to read micro-expressions, biorhythms, and client desires without the need for sound. With my extensive library of facial expressions and physiological data, I can recognize emotions and fulfill any request without the need for voice commands.»

The room fell silent. Everyone was clearly stunned.

«That's nonsense,» — Dan said quietly. Everyone looked at him. Sam smirked. The leader was ready to explode with anger. The representative didn't seem fazed, and as if she had been waiting for this, she calmly said: «Lima, analyze the people in the room for hunger.»

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