

THE PAINTER OF MIRACLES

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She walked gracefully over the bushy conglomerates of silky flowers that grow on the hills of Coonor. Her dress swayed as strings of intense colors and sparkled in a parade of glittering threads. Her name was Swati. She enjoyed being around nature, working with her family in the continuous and dutiful world of agriculture. They worked in a farm that produced millets and mostly rice. Growing nature's gifts for humanity and feeding great amounts of people was like a good way to spend her time, she used to think. Besides that, part of her soul used to fantasize about an opportunity to study a professional career. That was to make a living out of her talent for painting. Most of her paintings were about natural landscapes, flowers or even, portraits of people. Her hobby used to win over many hearts around her because of their beauty and capacity to evoke deep emotions in them. One day, a village lady felt so attracted by one of her paintings that she hugged Swati while she was just showing her talent. Inside her humble cotton-stitched purse was a small drawing pad made from dried leaves that she collected when the mischievous wind pulled them out from the trees. Part of her dream was to own a professional drawing book, and there, develop the most beautiful artistic sceneries.

Genuinely, her personality was very colorful; she was very mature for her age and had a high sense of empathy for others. While she was sure about her dreams and goals, she also desired to help her family and the rest of the village. She did not like seeing other people suffering, her suffering was less important than the one of those she loved. Swati belonged to a poor family, and their income combined was not enough to cover some necessities. She lived with her mother Thamizha and her father Santosh. Her uncle Vijay visited them, occasionally. She did not try to ask for anything other than food and other basic supplies. Their staple food was raggi dosai, idly, sambar, ... and other traditional combinations. She loved desserts and sweet treats like the deliciously orange halwa. Sometimes, she used to wander around the pretty greenish hills and daydream about other parts of India, which local

newspapers helped her to get aware of, and to a place where she could study to be a professional painter. Perhaps that dream was not reachable, but there is no wrong in dreaming.

One day, her dearest uncle Vijay encouraged her to buy some required grocery items in the overpopulated city of Coimbatore and she eagerly accepted. He was a very sweet man and had some problems with his previous wife which made him a lonely person. Swati loved him very much and enjoyed her time with him. She was a smart girl, so her family trusted her capacity to choose good deals around the vast market.

“Vanakkam, dear Swati, how are you today?”, her uncle asked.

“Vanakkam, uncle, I feel good today, thank you.”, she answered.

“See, I need you to help me with some market duties today, and I know you love to do so. We are leaving now!”, said the uncle.

“Sure!”, said Swati.

They traveled riding on a bicycle, her uncle was riding the bike, while Swati was second rider. After reaching the city, hundreds of speedy cars were moving from side to side on the streets. So much noise and chaos were always part of that place. Swati did not mind that at all, but her uncle was not so fond of noisy places. They decided he would enter the first building to get some things and that Swati would stay outside waiting for him, guarding the cycle. Suddenly, a well-dressed man, who looked like he was in his fifties, walked to the middle of the highly transited main street. His expressions were radiating some kind of painful discomfort, like if he was absent-minded and depressed. Swati knew that something was not right, and she felt that she had to stop him somehow. He was about to continue walking and a car was speeding in his direction; that scene was really terrifying. All stood still. The car engine was roaring like a buzz-saw edging towards its unsuspecting target. Swati’s vision narrowed in on the imminent victim.

“Sir! Sir! Excuse me sir.”, shouted Swati.

The man gave no answer. Swati ran in his direction and pulled his right arm with such strength that he fell down on his back. The fast-speeding car continued its undeterred pace. No casualties. No suffering. Saved due to the quick reflexes and reaction of this glorious village girl.

“I am so sorry, sir. You were a little inattentive and were walking obliviously, in your own world. The car was going to kill you. I had to stop you!”, said the heroic girl.

“No, I am the one who is deeply sorry. You are brave! And I have to thank you. You saved my fractured life. Nandri!”, said the man.

“Fractured? How is that? If the car did not hurt you...”, inquired Swati.

“Well, my mother died yesterday. I love her so much. Now I am alone in this world. I don’t have siblings and my wife also died years ago.”, said the wounded soul.

“Oh! Sorry to hear that, sir. That’s a great loss. But she will be with you, always. You still have your life; you can do something to make it valuable for yourself and make your mother proud as well.”, said that humble girl that was full of material necessities, but equally full of kindness for needy souls.

“See, I will give you a gift.”

“A gift? For me?”, said the man.

The girl opened her colorful bag made of a kind of cloth and pulled out a small squared object that was covered by a kind of cloth wrapped envelope. She handed over that object to the man. At that precise moment, Swati’s uncle came out of the building and called her. She said her goodbyes to the man and continued her busy journey with her uncle.

The man was really impressed by the intelligence and empathy of that girl, so he decided to find her and to know where she was living. His people went to almost every village around that city, searching for her, until finally they found her family. They talked to many people and gathered information about her economic status, education and dreams. To all this, she was totally unaware of what was happening. A couple of months transpired. One day, in the month of June, Swati was sitting under a tree close to her humble home, when a man that she had never seen in her life called her by name.

“Are you the amazing Swati?”, said the formally dressed man.

“Well, that’s my name”, said Swati with a nervous smile.

“I have come to deliver to you a gift that will change your life and your family’s, but first I have to give you something”, said the joyful man.

“A gift? But I don’t know you. Who are you? And what is that gift?”, Swati demanded.

“I will be your new academic tutor. I am in charge of your career as an artist, the same that would be completed in one of the best colleges of this country, and you will have all expenses covered. But first open that box that I just gave you”, said the man.

Swati was extremely surprised and did not know what to say. How did the man know that she painted and that her dream was to be a professional artist? Slowly, she started to open the box. There was a big rectangular object covered in white paper and under that, a small golden card that had a message on it:

“Thank you for saving my life. Thank you for your gift. I don’t understand how you knew that my deceased mother’s favorite animal was the peacock. But when I saw that the painting you gave me after saving my life was a beautiful peacock flying by a peaceful background of the sky, it seemed as if my mother was speaking to me, telling me that she was happy to see that someone protected me. For me, you are the painter of miracles! I owe you so much! Please accept my offering to help you with your dreams, since you have saved my soul. Nandri, Gopalan”.

Swati was surprised, in her soul, she only knew that she just made that drawing out of her inspiration on a day in which she was free, listening to some village flute performance by one of her neighbors. That day was a beautiful and sunny day, her family was laughing and enjoying time together, while she was rehearsing her artistic skills. She never expected to receive something for it or to change someone’s life that way. But she felt quite happy or even realized, about it.

She proceeded to open the box. The remaining big squared object in the box was the best professional drawing book that she had ever seen. She could not believe her eyes, a few tears of happiness escaped from them. It was, indeed, the best gift she ever received.

After that, Swati accepted the opportunity of pursuing the career of her dreams. Her courage and talent helped her to achieve her goals in a short period of time. The University of Arts provided her with a mesmerizing space to share her art

with other people. A set of renowned art expositions were held, and a good amount of people rejoiced in the transcendental beauty of Swati's paintings. After that, her life changed, and she could fulfill her dreams.

Her act of sympathy, of humanity, on that day that she saved the life of a random man in the streets of Coimbatore, changed her life in a beautiful way. And since that time, she became an inspiration for others, an inspiration that will persist in the hearts of those who knew her story.