

**WATER
BOARDING**

**Sample
Chapters**

**B R A G A D E E S H
P R A S A N N A**



"Blessed are the forgetful, for they get the better; Even of their blunders" Friedrich Nietzsche

Chapter 1

Ved: September 2015

I was being wheeled on a stretcher when I gained consciousness. In what felt like a dream, all I could see was the lights overhead whizzing past, making me dizzy. There were nervous shouts and concerned voices. I wondered where I was. Shouldn't I be at home, eating lunch? I tried to look around and realised that I could only see through my left eye. I squeezed my brain to recognise the place. I had been there before. My right hand was immobile. The pain was nothing like I had ever experienced. I realised it was my head that was hurting.

I was in a hospital. Slowly, and blessedly, I lost consciousness.

I woke up to a man screaming who was just being wheeled in. A man in terrible pain. The ward was air-conditioned and well lit. People moved swiftly to the yelping person, and helped him calm down. I looked down to find my father sleeping on the floor. The duty doctors had occupied a table in the middle of the unit and were studying reports. I was unable to sit up for long as a heaviness pushed me down. Out of nowhere, a nurse came to me and checked if I needed water. It was too much trouble to answer her. She brought a glass of water to my lips. The water tasted as if it had been soaking in rusted iron.

When I woke up again, I was in a quiet and less crowded ward. My first impulse was to get out of the bed but I knew it was wise to stay put. I looked down. I had met with the accident wearing my favourite shirt. I couldn't remember if I was with my friends or family when I'd bought it. Or was I alone? It was weird. I always remember things. Whenever I wanted to remember something, I would bite my fingernails and pull some flesh out. The searing pain would remind me the moments I wanted to recall. But now, I just couldn't remember. It was a shirt that had red and white checks with

blue lines running parallel to the boxes. I could see that my blood had formed a dark brown patch near the pocket. Forgetting all the pain for a moment, I felt bad for my shirt. I mouthed a sorry to it. Ouch! My jaw hurt too.

“Ved?” My father called me. I tried to look at him.

“Sorry.” I said. I had no clue why was I apologising to him. It only seemed right at the time. I hated to see my father like that, worried. He is the most level-headed person I have ever met. I tried to remember what I’d told him on that fateful day before I’d left home. I couldn’t remember.

“We are going home this afternoon.” He said. I tried to put my thumbs up to lighten the situation. I realised my hand was wrapped up in plaster and I couldn’t lift it. I looked up at my Appa. He already had his thumb up signalling he understood what I had tried to do. That was why I loved him. I didn’t need to tell him anything. He understood me without words.

“There is a fracture in your wrist. We thought of operating it in the government hospital. But there is a token system. It will take at least eight days for you to get operated. We couldn’t wait that long.” My Appa said.

I nodded.

“The visiting doctor has given the address of his private nursing home. He said he can operate on you tomorrow.”

“The operation may be expensive. How much did you spend?” I knew we were not ready for such an emergency. I searched for Amma. But I knew she wouldn’t have come to the hospital. She was too delicate to see me like that.

“Just enough to keep you alive.” My father didn’t look at me when he said that. I assumed they had spent a lot. “And your colleagues are waiting. Are you okay to see them now, or should I ask them to come again sometime?”

“I will see them now. I think I had enough sleep. Is Amma fasting today?”

“Today is Saturday, Ved, not Thursday.” My father replied as he walked away from me. I had slept for three days. To put it factually, I had been unconscious for three days.

Lying on the bed and answering people was awkward. I had neither imagined myself to be in this position nor had readied myself for it. Apparently, my colleagues had visited me earlier and they had seen blood running down my face. Few people had fainted seeing me like that. They had confirmed with my Appa that I was clean before they came to see me.

“How are you, Ved?”

“What happened to you, Ved?”

“How did this happen?”

“I have always asked you to be careful.”

They just didn't let me talk. Even when I tried. I tried to smile. I tried to open my mouth. I tried all I could, but I could neither see their faces nor did my smile form as intended. I pretended to be tired and closed my eyes. I heard them leave and my father came in.

I couldn't recognise any of my colleagues.

Chapter 2

Sara: Diary Entry #1

03-10-2015

Dear Diary,

I did not believe in the saying *Reality is stranger than fiction* until today. But what do I know? His memory loss seems real. I had a hard time accepting that he has really lost his memory; well, at least a chunk of it. If he had remembered our conversations from before the accident, I am sure he wouldn't have talked to me. It was always easy for him to stop talking to people. Or, in his words, let go. I was terrified if he would add me to the list of people with whom he is indifferent. I feel, his indifference is worse than his hatred.

Only you know of my feelings towards him. You have changed every year. But since I met Ved all those times ago, the content in you has remained the same. I have complained to you about him. I have shared everything with you he has ever said to me and done with me. If I had talked about this with any of my friends, they would have thought I am insane. But you, I know you won't judge. That is why I can't wait to come back to you every time, no matter however crazy or eventful my days pass by with him.

On that day, when he didn't pick my calls, I was afraid if that would be the end of whatever little we had going on in the name of a relationship. May be I misunderstood his affection for Maya. But I had to tell it to him. He had everything here. He needn't have gone in search of someone new. Chennai had always been a foreign place to him. He'd once told me that he started feeling at home only since he befriended me. He said he felt like he belonged here. It was a magical moment. How naive was I to presume that I would be the only privileged one to whom he would say this to.

For a moment I thought he had missed his mobile phone. If that had been the case, he would have immediately gone and bought a new one. He always said that he doesn't care much about materialistic contrivances, but I know he does. I don't know to whom is he trying to prove, but for him his iPhone was not just a phone. It was a statement to those who doubted him when he started his own company. He always chose fine dining restaurants when he took me or Sinduja out. Sometimes, I would feel a bit awkward and out of place in that setting. But it was his thanking us for all those lunches we bought him when he was struggling, and for the money we loaned him whenever he fell short. If he is at it, he would go to any length to make someone happy. But if he didn't like someone, he would treat them like they had vanished from the face of the earth. He couldn't care less about them; the fact if they are alive or dead, if they have taken a dog's beating or won an Oscar. He simply doesn't invest any time over them. I didn't want to end up like one of those

people. I kept calling over and over only to be informed later that he was lying in a pool of blood. A part of me wants to believe that he would have tried to talk to me even if he had an ounce of energy left in him then.

Chapter 3

Maya: July 2013

It was my uncle who had died that day. I had felt it in my bones. I somehow know when bad things are about to happen. But I wasn't brave enough to tell my mother. She already thought of me as an ill omen. She'd probably hate me more if I were to break the news beforehand. It didn't shock me when the message reached our house. The women had it easy, at least at the funeral house, for their loud cries welcomed us as we got down from the bus. The whole village was at his house. Somebody had arranged for chairs, a shamiana and coffee for people who were arriving to pay their last respects. The men who sat outside were sipping their coffees in silence. I have always wondered of the common sense it takes for someone to do all these things in a death house. More often than not, the women cry for their miseries than for the affection of the person who has passed away. But it didn't matter. There was a deathbed and the women had to cry. When they walked out after the deceased is taken for cremation the tears would vanish automatically, an observation that always made me ponder why pretend in the first place. My mother was already teary-eyed and I knew she would break into a loud cry upon entering the house. That was one thing I can't do in all my life. I can't cry for others.

My mother and I lived in Tirupur, a town in Tamilnadu that is known as the textile and knit hub of India. Over six lakh peoples' life depended on the industry. Women, men and teenagers alike worked in the spin mills day and night. We lived off the ancestral properties my mother held. My grandfather had three girls, my mother being the middle one. The husband of my mother's elder sister was the one who had expired. I'd never liked him anyway. Whenever he visited us, he would have that air of a better person on his face, just because he had a son while the other sisters bore daughters. He never missed a chance to show off how he took care of my mother and I since my father passed away. Only when I reached my teenage did I realise that he was trying to guilt-trip my mother into giving him some of our properties. On a parallel line, the younger sister's husband was a good-for-nothing person who failed to work on even a single day in our farms or elsewhere. In a way, it came as a relief that my uncle had died.

As expected, my mother started wailing as we entered the house. My aunt was in shock. I expected her to be strong but she looked distraught. She had held the family of three sisters together and had taken care of us too. Her son was working in Chennai. The garlands almost buried my uncle's body under. The smell emitting as a result of his decomposing frame and the fresh flowers on top made me want to puke. I had to control myself. My uncle looked heavier than when he was alive. I felt sorry for

my aunt. In that moment, I felt like she wouldn't be the same as she was before. It was a serious loss despite the dead person being full of shit. My aunt turned to me, tears trickling down her cheeks.

"You killed your father even before you were born. Right in your twenty-fifth year, you killed my husband too. I wonder what other downfalls are you about to bring to the family." She said as it was the most understood fact of the world. Her voice bore no emotion. The skin had soaked her trickling tears by now, and her eyes were devoid of a single drop.

Read the rest of the chapters on October 8, 2017. Available in Amazon Kindle only.