

## **SURVIVOR SUNDER**

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In spite of haemophilia, a rare bleeding disorder, Sunder had survived. He developed this disorder while he was twelve. He was the only child to his parents who survived on a poor income in a village nearby Tirupati. The village was nestled at the foot of milling majestic Seven Hills on the western side studded with forest known for its rich flora. Both father and mother were labourers at a construction site, and earned together an average of four thousand rupees a month. This was the income twenty years ago and was not constant, as would fluctuate due to breaks in their continuity. Only if they had worked for thirty days in a month, would they earn four thousand.

They remained unperturbed in spite of their child's unusual disease. The reason was they were half-educated, but had a strong desire to see their only son got educated. The boy too was confident and courageous. Whenever he played games on the school playground or in the neighbourhood he bled. His boyhood was marked by numerous bleeding episodes and constant bleeding in his joints that caused him worry in the beginning but gradually melted in the tropical climate of the village.

It was a struggle, a battle with blood but the boy was as determined as his parents. Like any other school boy, he too had an indestructible desire to study well and go for higher studies. As the years rolled by, Sunder had successfully completed his schooling and plus two education and moved to a college at Tirupati to pursue his interests in computers. His hands would bleed, it was spontaneous. His intestinal would bleed, especially during examinations due to stress of reading. Doctors rarely diagnosed, but prescribed medicines that did not cure the disease but only provided temporary relief for Sunder.

This disruptive disorder continued right through Sunder's college days. He spent numerous days in hospital at the loss of attendance. But he never allowed it to affect his performance. Instead of getting himself buckled under its influence he became mentally stronger. He went on to complete his Master degree in Computers in S.V.University at Tirupati.

Out with a Master degree, he met with a fresh set of challenges when he took up an assignment in Wipro at Bangalore. At first he was happy, his desire as well as his parents' had been fulfilled. The salary was befittingly high and compatible with his qualification as well as his sharpness with which he had met the exorbitant medical bills. Top notch medical facilities and the best doctors had almost made his life normal. But the bleeding could never have been stopped. Besides his health took a turn for the worse as he had to sit through for hours before computers. He became practically disabled. Every hour he would get up and move around. Despite all this, he cultivated the virtues such as being outspoken, courageous, confident and quick witted that gave him strength to withstand the disabilities.

He reached thirty and needed a partner to stand by his side. It too became a potential worry for his parents who had turned a little old. But who would come and marry him with this

complaint? The parents tried all sources but ended with disappointment as no girl came forward to marry Sunder on learning the incorrigible complaint. It was excruciating for the parents though Sunder brushed it aside as he asserted his confidence that he was prepared to live through. Life continued to be a daily challenge for him. His bleeding became a regular feature and he would neither stand nor sit long. His health almost became as brittle as glass.

By thirty five, Sunder had lost his two parents one after another leaving him alone in this world. Wretchedness haunted him like ghost. Nevertheless his quick-wittedness was his cheer, it saved him every day as he maintained good humorous relations with his colleagues.

A day arrived in his life and it broke off his loneliness. A woman entered into his life, knowing pretty well that he was diseased despite being warned by her friends that it would be a shattered married life. She was Kalpana, an activist in her own way, involved in tackling petty disputes in the city. It was an accidental meeting at a social gathering hosted by the company that bloomed into first friendship and later fructified into love.

Having entered the wedlock, against the wishes of her parents and one brother and sister the couple had settled to lead a reasonably contented married life. But things went awry. The couple had not been blessed with a child and this became a potential cause for straining of their relationship. The doctors on approach said, “You cannot have a child. As you bleed excessively the sperms have lost their fertility power. You may have ejaculation but not fit for procreation.” It was a shocking revelation for Sunder and a potential ground for his wife to break the relationship.

“As you are not medically fit for procreation what use is there in our married life?” She vomited out the hidden feeling and it was like a bolt from the blue for Sunder.

“Hence”, she continued “we live apart.”

“You mean you want to have a separate life.” Sunder uttered what she had meant in her words.

“Yes, that is the solution.” She said shamelessly.

“But that is not the solution.” Sunder countered vehemently. “We must live and face the life.” As he said he bled in his right hand.

“I can’t bear this. There is no point in living together in this state.”

“So you are determined.”

“Yes, let us happily part.”

“Where will you go?”

“I will make my own living as I did before I joined you.”

“Society will spit on you.”

“It bothers me least. I am a woman, aged and matured. I need not give credence to what others say on my life. My life is mine. It is mine. No one has right to cut it to make shape to suit other’s psyche.”

“You seem to be bold and treading the difficult path.”

“It is immaterial.”

“All right God bless you.”

That was the end of their relationship. Sunder had been left to himself and had never entertained the idea of remarrying. But he continued to be cheerful. He shrugged off his disorder and misery and took them into his stride.

“I have never wanted to act like a person with a disability.” He said joyfully when confronted by one of his colleagues in the office.

Despite this positive frame of mind life continued to be a daily challenge for Sunder. He continued to work in the software company, though he could not sit long and the administration gave him a chance to survive. To cope with the situation, he kept himself actively going for a walk, and hitting the gym regularly.

His parents had been a great support for him while they were alive. They were the real motivation. Kalpana had married him on the pretext of compassion. Now she had left him to have her green pastures. He had been cheated, he thought.

Two years had passed. Kalpana had been left to herself living all alone preoccupied in her social activities, though now and then haunted by her memories. She could not join her parents since she had already incurred their wrath over her marrying Sunder. The parents too had not willed to welcome their daughter in their fold on learning her separation and plight. They knew she was highly self-made seeking and establishing her own identity in the society in her own way.

Though time moves in linear fashion, things in one's life would never. Life is never the same unless one renounces the world in truer sense. This time Kalpana had been trapped by a middle aged. He was Mahesh, already divorced, fairly built, working as a sales promoter for Crompton Company based in Bengaluru, had kept his private life as a closed guarded secret fearing that it might lead to complications in his second marriage. First at a social gathering he had met Kalpana, the acquaintance slowly yielded to frequent meetings that fully led into blooming of love between them and finally culminated in their marriage. It was not however publicly solemnized. It was a registered marriage since both of them were remarrying.

Settled down, they had uneventful life free from troubles especially. A year had passed and soon the conception in her was detected by the gynaecologist in the town. The babe in the womb grew and the day had indeed arrived for Kalpana to deliver a babe. It was a happy augury for her as well as her partner. But much to their disappointment, the male babe was emaciated and underweighed, due to which it did not survive long, after a week the babe breathed last.

There were no complaints against each other. Life for the both went by smoothly without any friction. Again, after a year, Kalpana bore another conception. The auspicious moment had arrived for her to deliver the babe. This time it was a horrendous sight, the babe was morphed. It was as if made, bore thin legs, bloated stomach and a small head.

Mahesh was not allowed into the operation theatre. The very sight of the babe made Kalpana disgusted. Even before the gynaecologist opened her mouth she said, "Could you take away this babe from me?" in her sterilised condition. "I don't want this deformed babe." Her words, though feeble, flew like split beans in the theatre, shuddered the gynaecologist and other assistants.

Speechless for a few moments, the gynaecologist turned rather nonchalant to her words. Unable to receive any response, Kalpana became hysterical in the theatre. "Remove the babe at once. I don't want to see the babe. Take away the babe, please." At which nothing could be done as it would aggravate her condition. It was a caesarean, her movement in the bed would worsen her situation, the gynaecologist realized. The nurses assisting her removed the babe on instruction and kept it in incubation at a distance.

The gynaecologist knew Kalpana's mental condition as she herself had performed the first operation which eventually led to the death of the child due to underweight. The second child too would meet the same fate, she feared because the babe this time too was born deformed.

Mahesh was posted about the development and let in. He was led to the incubation room where he had been shown his own the babe in deformed condition. For him, too, it was a horrible sight. “For any reason, I would not have this babe as my son.” He muttered to himself, inaudible. He did not speak to the gynaecologist. Neither to his wife, he quietly walked out of the theatre and left as if unconcerned.

A week after, Kalpana was discharged from the nursing home. But she reached home without the babe. What had transpired between her and the gynaecologist had been kept as secret. At home Mahesh was troubled of not having a babe in spite of two conceptions by his wife. He felt happy inwardly on the other as he was decided not to have the babe the deformed babe.

Nevertheless, the conversation ensued in a cold manner.

“What have you done with the babe?” Mahesh asked her, maintaining sufficient distance from her.

“I left it there in the incubation room.” Kalpana replied boldly.

“Why?”

“I have no intention of taking the babe with me.”

“Will the babe survive?”

“I doubt.”

“By any chance the babe survives what will you do with the babe? Will you own it?”

“I don’t want the babe, the deformed one.”

The conversation ended abruptly and both of them withdrew from each other, and each one lived and slept separately in the house. A week had passed, the word came from the gynaecologist. It was the peaceful death of the babe. It did not survive because of deformity. It was however a relief for Kalpana as well as Mahesh, as both wished not to have the babe. But even before this news had died down another shocking revelation sprang from the gynaecologist. It was about Kalpana’s future conception, that she would not have any more conceptions as her uterus had been afflicted with cancer.

That was the end of her relationship with her husband Mahesh who had quietly withdrawn from her for ever like the dark clouds from the mountain.