

After breakfast Zarmina stepped out as the old women took to the kitchen... although she offered her help Darika had flat out refused and instructed her to enjoy the moment, a message which she thought sounded slightly ominous but drove from her mind as her feet touched the warm sand.

She strode out on the beach and raised her arms... taking in the aromatic salt air mixed with the faint scent of palm trees as they swayed gently in the sea breeze. Zarmina walked along the waters edge, marveling at the waves as they lapped her feet in sometimes-tepid hesitation and shrieking with delight when they overlapped her strides in a sudden show of strength to her ankles. She didn't even hear the tuk tuk roll up to the road behind the house or its motor idle as her husband stood and paid the driver off. She did however hear him as he strode with purpose towards her on the beach and suddenly gathered her in his arms from the back, she let out a squeal as she laughed tilting her face up

"Havent had enough last night lover?"

Her features darkened when she saw his brows etched with worry as he spoke to her in urgent whisper.

"Zari we need to talk"

She tried to turn around but he tightened his grip around her his back towards the house as he said

" No zari we must pretend like nothing has happened"

"But what has happened Jalal, infact I was just going to tell you when you came back that I am starting to like this idea"

She stiffened as she felt the chill go through his body and felt him shudder as he whispered

"Zari listen to me, I went to town today because I woke up and I just felt weird, Ok we had a wonderful time last night but it made me think and so I wanted to get out of here to.."

"To what Jalal" She asked quizzedly her eyebrows rising in a mixture of the now suddenly odd sensation

"To take a step back zari!!! To step away and think"

She placed a hand on his face now... her neck suddenly bristling with tension as she said in a low voice

"Baby what are you saying, why would you want to step away from us"

He growled as he said "Not us Zari, don't be a fool but this, look around you look at this place"

She turned her head to the left and right seeing not much more than a lovely sandy beach the sun reflecting off the swell and the cliffs in the distance, the sand undisturbed before them, sans footprints completely unexplored.

“umm baby this place is completely fine in fact it looks pretty heavenly to me”

“Yes it does doesn’t it, and so I went into town feeling a bit out of sorts feeling like we have found bliss and guess where I ended”

“Where”

“Well like the damn fool I happen to be I went to the municipal office to check out land rates so we could get something maybe you know build a little bit of something here”

“Ok jalal now you are scaring me again can you stop with your impulses, I agreed to rent and try it out we spoke and its been what a day or so”

“You aren’t getting my point Zari” he almost snarled and that jolted her

“The land municipal office has no bloody track of this place”

She froze for a second his words registering in her mind before they slid away on the warm breeze caressing her hair

“yeah and does that surprise you love? There are many places like this small hamlets which are not noted upon in maps and censuses cmon”

“No zari its not just the place, there is no markings of a cottage, the last census was carried out two years ago this area is referred to as uninhabited”

She at this point turned around and laughed hard at him

“So what they came by to do a census and they didn’t see this cottage, poor darika was probably asleep or something cmon love you are getting a bit creepy now”

“Ok so tell me this zari, look around you again Ive noticed something else as well”

“What now you are gonna tell me you saw a mermaid hahaha”

“No zari..i didn’t see a mermaid, but for a beach this lovely and we have been to others as well have you seen any seagulls?”

Zarina took a step back as if the words had hit her like a splash of icy cold seawater on her face and she had just emerged from some sort of a haze, she glanced around herself suddenly seeing the same water the same beach and them

“What do you see zari?”

She looked at them first in wonder flying around the cliffs like little kites and then her wonder turned into a strange sort of loathing which started at the pit of her stomach and crawled into her throat gripping it making it dry as she followed their flight onto the water their dips and swirls and their voice harsh and strong

“c..c..crows”

“Yes zari a beautifull beach, with no seagulls and lots of crows, a cottage which isn’t supposed to be here and a woman”