



Mission Possible

- Veena Patwardhan.

The seductive caress of the satin sheets made him wish he could snuggle in bed all day. But work beckoned. Moreover, he had to keep his sales staff on their toes. If the tomcat stayed away, the mice would play. So, breakfast done, he hit the road in his Mercedes, hungry for another day of brisk business. As usual, the sight of the gleaming glass façade of his showroom made him glow with pride. He strode through the air-conditioned interiors, his gaze lingering on the hordes of animated shoppers. If sales figures continued to surge he would soon be moving out of his four-bedroom flat into a penthouse at Marine Drive . Or maybe, Malabar Hill.

He felt a tap on his shoulder, but imperiously, he ignored it. Marine Drive or Malabar Hill? The tap became a nudge, then a jab. The sheet was wrenched off him and his eyes flew open to confront his indignant wife. The creak of rotting timber as he tried to sit up and the stench of the gurgling gutter outside yanked him back to the real world. His world.

His gaze panned the interiors of his hovel. The exposed brick walls (next year he would plaster and then paint them green – the colour of life), the patchwork of assorted tiles on the floor (last year's handiwork), the soon-to-be-replaced black-and-white TV, the trunk which doubled as a seat (his wife having ingeniously recycled an old bed sheet as a cover), the picture of a garden in full bloom (actually the top half of an old calendar) pasted on one wall... I can do better than this, he told himself. And nothing would stop him. He would not be pinned down like a kite stuck in a tree. He would break free and soar as high as his wits and courage would take him.

Later, he shoved his mobile (his latest acquisition) into his pocket, and, lugging his bundle of ready-mades, trudged 5 Kms to his spot on the busy road near the railway station. Halfway through laying his wares on the footpath, he was interrupted by a pair of boots halting too close to him for comfort. Looking up, he saw it was his unwelcome daily visitor. As usual, he stoically offered his tormentor a ten rupee note. Hassles like this didn't bother him. He regarded them as mere bumps along the way in his quest for a better life.

Each time the glass door of the swanky showroom behind him swung open, a blast of cool air fanned his sweaty back. One day I'll own a shop like that, he promised himself. He recalled the movie he had seen recently. From a poor villager, the hero had hit the big time as a business tycoon. Like that guy, you too have a dream and determination, his spunky streak chipped in. You too could become the hero of a success story. He couldn't agree more. After all, this was India . A happening place where anything was possible.

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