

# SHADOWS OF DUTY AND DESIRE



Shadows of Duty and Desire

Akshee Nundoo



Arjun stands in his small, modest home, wearing his police uniform with a heavy heart. His father rests on a bed nearby while his mother prepares for another long day of work as a maid, highlighting the immense weight of the world on his young shoulders.



Amidst the bustling crowd of the morning metro, Arjun's gaze is suddenly captured by a girl with a radiant smile and a grace that stands out from everyone else. For a brief moment, the noise of the train fades away as he feels a spark of longing he hasn't allowed himself to feel in years.

# MIDDAY SHIFT



Under the hot sun, Arjun carries out his rigorous duties as a member of the mobile force, his face set in a mask of discipline. He works extra hours and pushes through exhaustion to ensure his family's mounting medical bills and daily expenses are covered.



During another commute, Arjun notices a different girl, Akshee, watching him with shy, admiring eyes from across the train car. She wears a college uniform similar to the girl he saw before, and her presence begins to linger in his daily routine as she watches him from afar.



Akshee finally gathers her courage and confesses her admiration for Arjun, her face flushed with nerves and hope. Arjun listens with a cold, distant expression, deciding to lead her on only because he realizes she is friends with the beautiful girl who first caught his eye.



Akshee brings Arjun small gifts like a single red rose and a carefully folded handkerchief, trying to break through his emotional walls. She cares for him deeply, asking about his father's health and reminding him to eat, acting as a gentle, nurturing light in his stressful life.



As they sit together during a quiet moment, Akshee asks Arjun what brings him happiness and what love means to him, seeking a connection that isn't there. Arjun remains a wall of silence, bottling up his true emotions while Akshee tries to find meaning in his lack of words.



On Akshee's birthday, Arjun waits at the metro station dressed in a dark green shirt and black jeans, his face unusually bright with a small smile. Akshee arrives and is thrilled to see him looking so happy, unaware that his joy is sparked by the hope of seeing her friend.



The moment of introduction arrives as Akshee hesitantly presents her friend, Akshiti, to Arjun at the station. Arjun's focus shifts entirely to Akshiti, his eyes filled with the genuine interest and warmth that Akshee has been desperately seeking for herself.



During a tense lunch, Arjun asks endless questions about Akshiti, ignoring Akshee's visible hurt and her attempts to express her own feelings. Later, in the crowded metro, Akshee reaches out to hold his hand, feeling the painful emotional distance between them even as their fingers brush against each other.

