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CLASS – 10

ENGLISH

Footprints without Feet

CH-2 : The Thief's Story

Part – 2
The Dilemma and Test of Character

ARPITA SHARMA

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OVERVIEW

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1. An Unlikely Friendship
2. The Dilemma and Test of Character



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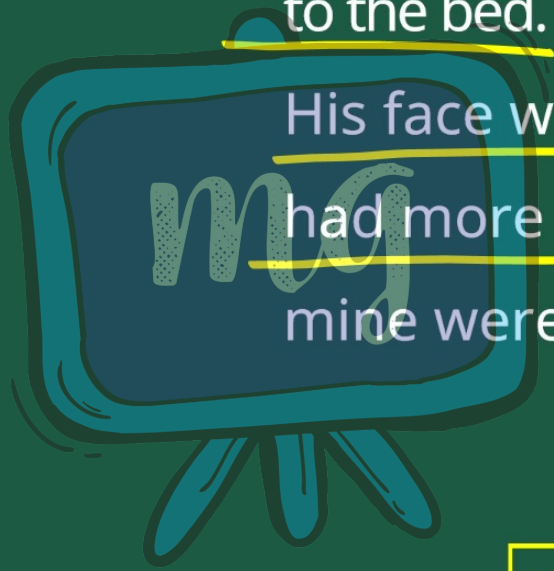
Anil was asleep. A beam of moonlight stepped over the balcony and fell on the bed. I sat up on the floor, considering the situation. If I took the money, I could catch the 10.30 Express to Lucknow.

Beam : चमक

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Slipping out of the blanket, I crept up to the bed. Anil was sleeping peacefully. His face was clear and unlined; even I had more marks on my face, though mine were mostly scars.



Scars : चोट के निशान

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My hand slid under the mattress, searching for the notes. When I found them, I drew them out without a sound. Anil sighed in his sleep and turned on his side, towards me. I was startled and quickly crawled out of the room.

Startled : चौंका हुआ

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When I was on the road, I began to run. I had the notes at my waist, held there by the string of my pyjamas. I slowed down to a walk and counted the notes: 600 rupees in fifties! I could live like an oil-rich Arab for a week or two.

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When I reached the station I did not stop at the ticket office (I had never bought a ticket in my life) but dashed straight to the platform. The Lucknow Express was just moving out. The train had still to pick up speed and I should have been able to jump into one of the carriages,

Dashed	:	तेजी से भागना
Carriages	:	रेलगाडी के डब्बे

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but I hesitated — for some reason I can't explain — and I lost the chance to get away.

When the train had gone, I found myself standing alone on the deserted platform. I had no idea where to spend the night.

Deserted : खाली

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I had no friends, believing that friends were more trouble than help. And I did not want to make anyone curious by staying at one of the small hotels near the station.

The only person I knew really well was the man I had robbed. Anil

Curious : जिज्ञासु

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Leaving the station, I walked slowly through the bazaar.

In my short career as a thief, I had made a study of men's faces when they had lost their goods. The greedy man showed fear; the rich man showed anger; the poor man showed acceptance.

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But I knew that Anil's face, when he discovered the theft, would show only a touch of sadness.

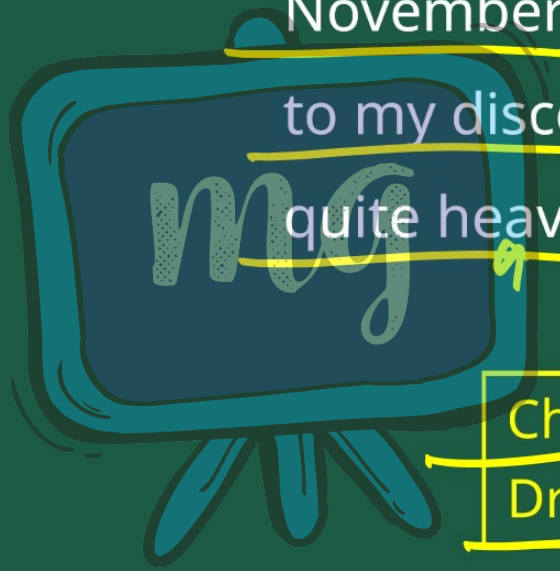
Not for the loss of money, but for the loss of trust.

I found myself in the maidan and sat down on a bench.

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The night was chilly – it was early November – and a light drizzle added to my discomfort. Soon it was raining quite heavily.



Chilly	:	अत्यधिक ठण्ड
Drizzle	:	बूँदाबाँदी

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My shirt and pyjamas stuck to my skin, and a cold wind blew the rain across my face.

I went back to the bazaar and sat down in the shelter of the clock tower. The clock showed midnight. I felt for the notes.

Stuck : चिपक जाना

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They were damp from the rain.

Anil's money.

In the morning he would probably have given me two or three rupees to go to the cinema, but now I had it all. I couldn't cook his meals, run to the bazaar or learn to write whole sentences any more.

Damp : गीला होना

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I had forgotten about them in the excitement of the theft.

Whole sentences, I knew, could one day bring me more than a few hundred rupees.

It was a simple matter to steal – and sometimes just as simple to be caught.

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But to be a really big man, a clever and respected man, was something else.

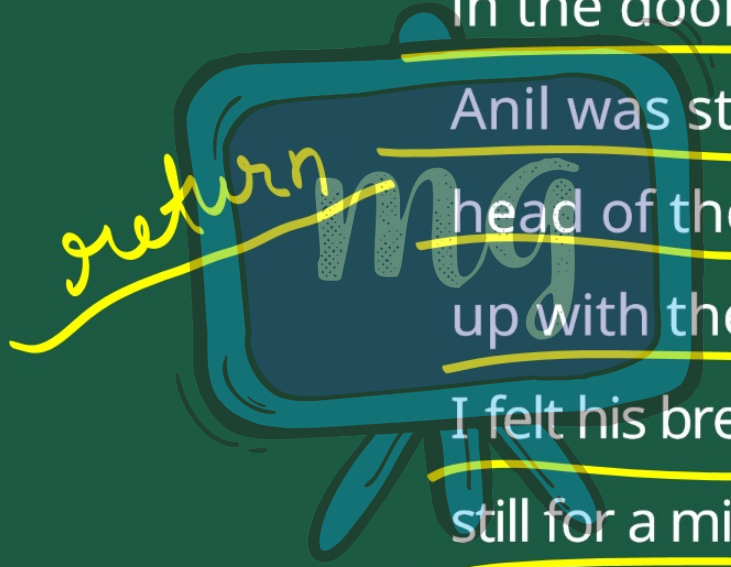
I should go back to Anil, I told myself, if only to learn to read and write.

I hurried back to the room feeling very nervous, for it is much easier to steal something than to return it undetected.

Undetected	:	बिना पता लगे

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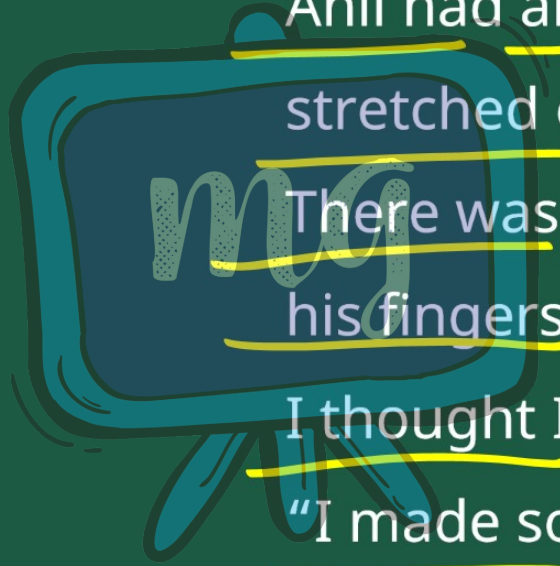


I opened the door quietly, then stood in the doorway, in clouded moonlight. Anil was still asleep. I crept to the head of the bed, and my hand came up with the notes.

I felt his breath on my hand. I remained still for a minute. Then my hand found the edge of the mattress, and slipped under it with the notes.

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I awoke late next morning to find that Anil had already made the tea. He stretched out his hand towards me. There was a fifty-rupee note between his fingers. My heart sank. fear I thought I had been discovered.

"I made some money yesterday," he explained. "Now you'll be paid regularly."

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My spirits rose. But when I took the note, I saw it was still wet from the night's rain.

"Today we'll start writing sentences," he said.

He knew. But neither his lips nor his eyes showed anything. I smiled at Anil in my most appealing way. And the smile came by itself, without any effort.

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LEARNING OUTCOMES

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1. Importance of Human Values
2. Importance of Resisting Temptation

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ASSESSMENT

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1 Why did the narrator hesitate to jump on the train?

A He was afraid of getting caught.

B He couldn't decide where to go.

C He couldn't explain his hesitation.

D None of these

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ASSESSMENT

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2 How did Anil react to the theft?

A He was angry.

B He was sad and disappointed.

C He was indifferent and unaffected.

D He was understanding and forgiving.

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ASSESSMENT

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3 What does the ending of the story suggest about the narrator's future?

A He will continue his life of crime.

B He will become a successful writer.

C He will remain a loyal and grateful friend.

D He will eventually betray Anil again.