

SOULS
DRAFT 1

Written by
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Address
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OVER THE BLACK -

SFX: Voice of a young woman -

AMRUTA (V.O.)
Sadness will last forever!

FADE IN:

INT. AMRUTA'S HOUSE, DELHI - PRESENT DAY

A painting on the wall - Van Gogh stands amidst the wheat fields and BANG! He shoots himself.

AMRUTA (V.O.)
Those were his last words.

CAMERA PANS DOWN FROM THE PAINTING and discovers a lifeless hand loosely clutching a glass of whisky. The fingers are colour-cladded.

Camera travels further to reveal a body in a middle of messy room - Paints, brushes, half done paintings, cigarette buds etc.

AMRUTA (V.O.)
What would be my last words?

That's AMRUTA (25, short hair, sharp features and attractive). Eyes still open and glossy with thoughts floating in it.

AMRUTA (V.O.)
You've guessed it - I'm basically dead. But I can still think..that's new..You don't turn into a corpse immediately. There is time to adjust!

Different colors begin reflecting in the eyes. Deep within the reflecting colors appear some indistinct figures, scenes, flashes.

AMRUTA (V.O.)
That's why people say your life flashes in front of you right before the death. You're seeking your last words - trying to make sense of your life for the one last time.

CAMERA BEGINS TO go deeper into the eyes and from colors we plunge into dark, entering into -

INT. BIRTH CANAL - SOMETIME

It's all dark in there with a beating of an irregular heart.

SFX: Crunching, faint echoes, sloshing waters, suction, a faint scream from outside.

AMRUTA (V.O.)
I didn't exactly start that smooth.

A PIN OF LIGHT as we go rushing toward it -

AMRUTA (V.O.)
But there is always light at the
end of a dark tunnel.

And then we're stuck.

AMRUTA (V.O.)
It's just I could never fucking
reach it.

INT. HOSPITAL - DAY

DOCTOR
Baby is stuck!

A LOUD SCREAM. Hands struggle to pull out the baby.

The doctors panic. Her mother lies on the bed, we don't see her clearly. Her heart monitor beeping alarmingly.

NURSE
We're losing her.

The room is under chaos - we can feel every bit of fear in veins.

Then..the baby is finally out. A feeling of relief floats in the room.

DOCTOR
It's a girl!

AMRUTA (V.O.)
Even in such grave situation I
didn't cry!

Again everything moves at wickedest speed - scissors chop the umbilical cord, back is rubbed, needle is thrust in her mother's hand, monitor continues to beep, heavy breathing, rushing feet, sweaty heads.

Everyone tries to make the baby cry. The growing SOUND of a rumbling, the LIGHT above baby Amruta grows bigger, whiter, brighter. She opens her mouth to cry and we -

CUT TO:

INT. SPECIAL ROOM - DAY

A silent room with incubators. A nurse walks in and sticks a sticker on one of them. It reads - Name: Unknown. Date of Birth: 29th July 2000.

AMRUTA (V.O.)

I was born on the the Van Gogh
died.

Inside there is baby Amruta - wide awake, looking at the nurse.

AMRUTA (V.O.)

And just like him, I was lonely
since the day I was born. Was I
going to be alone? Like forever?

Just then, a hand is thrust inside the incubator and touches her cheeks gently. The fingers are clad in cerulean blue.

AMRUTA (V.O.)

I clearly remember this blue. The
first colour I remember.

Amruta holds the finger tight.

CHANDA (O.S.)

Couldn't you wash your hands
properly?

And we see Amruta's parents. Her mother CHANDA, 27, is on a wheelchair. She looks well-put-together even after a difficult birth. And her father, VIKRAM, 30, - soaking wet, disheveled, messy curly hair but still charming.

VIKRAM

I did but the colour won't go away.

CHANDA

Then get away from her. She is
weak.

Vikram pulls out his hand. Amruta tries to hold on but the hand slips away.

Chanda brings her face closer to the incubator and whispers -

CHANDA (CONT'D)
We're going to be okay!

AMRUTA (V.O.)
I believed them.

SMASH CUT TO:

INT. AMRUTA'S HOUSE, DEHRADUN - DAY

CLOSE ON baby Amruta as cries her lungs out. Suddenly she is being passed from one hand to the other.

CAMERA DOLLIES OUT to reveal a cradle in the middle of the room full of people dressed in finery. A few women are passing baby Amruta around the cradle.

AMRUTA (V.O.)
I never understood why naming a new
born had to be so torturous! But
yeah this is how I got my name -

A small piece of cloth covering a shimmery thermacoal board is ceremoniously removed, revealing the name -

EVERYONE
AMRUTA!

AMRUTA (O.S.)
My father named me after his
favorite painter 'Amruta Sher-gil'.

A QUICK TRAVEL TO Amruta's father standing at the end of the crowd - out of place and out of believe for all that's happening.

AMRUTA (O.S.) (CONT'D)
He never told my grandfather that I
was named after a lesbian,
outspoken, atheist, bold and boss
of a woman who painted nudes and
seduced India's prime minister.

Standing at the other end of the crowd, on the stage, is her maternal grandfather who she calls NANA, 50s, (religious, strict and uptight) muttering final blessings to the baby -

Looking at the two people on the opposite ends of the spectrum -

AMRUTA (V.O.)
I didn't know which way I was
supposed to go.

Just then, her mother and her grandmother, NANI, 50s, thrust
their faces in.

NANI
Our family astrologer said, she's
going to be famous!

CHANDA
I want her to be a doctor. We don't
have a single doctor in the family.

RANDOM WOMAN #1
She'll become an actress.

RANDOM WOMAN #2
She'll have to be fair for that!

CHANDA
Actresses are characterless.

RANDOM WOMAN #2
Make her a lawyer.

RANDOM WOMAN #3
An engineer!

RANDOM WOMAN #2
Once you're married, being a wife
is a full time job!

Women laugh. SLOW ZOOM IN ON AMRUTA's face.

AMRUTA (V.O.)
And I was fucking 30 days old! When
I looked at them closely I
understood that all these women
were good fucking liars. I thought
that's it - that's how I'll roll
now.

CUT TO:

INT. AMRUTA'S HOUSE, DEHRADUN - DAY

Amruta, now 8, sits in chair in the dining table. Vikram and
Chanda sit opposite her looking at her.

CHANDA
Did you draw on the sofa?

QUICK PAN TO THE SOFA - some wild lines with sketch-pens are drawn.

AMRUTA

No!

CHANDA

Honey, I know you did. I'm asking again - did you do it?

Amruta begins crying deafeningly, making her parents stop the discussion.

CUT TO:

INT. AMRUTA'S SCHOOL - DAY

Amruta's TEACHER sits in front of her mother. Amruta stands besides her wearing her school uniform.

TEACHER

She was talking to the sparrows outside the window in the middle of the class and when I went to see there were no sparrows.

AMRUTA

They were there! They flew away.

The teacher keeps giving Chanda a tough look.

CUT TO:

INT. AMRUTA'S HOUSE, DEHRADUN - NIGHT

A YOUNG BOY stands next to Amruta. His mother sits next to Chanda on the sofa.

CHANDA

Amu - he's saying he didn't steal your pencil.

AMRUTA

He's lying.

BOY

(yells at her)
She's lying. Lier lier pants on fire!

Amruta begins crying. The boy's mother feels guilty and consoles Amruta.

BOY'S MOTHER

Don't worry sweetie - I'll get you
a new one.

AMRUTA (V.O.)

This continued for two years
straight and I was getting good at
this - well but the sparrows - they
were really there.

But I decided up my game - like my
Nani.

CUT TO:

INT. AMRUTA'S HOUSE, DEHRADUN - DAY

Nani takes cash from Nana's wallet and hides in her bra
before rushing out and giving the wallet to Nana as he's
leaving for work.

Amruta watches from behind a curtain.

CUT TO:

INT. AMRUTA'S SCHOOL - DAY

The same teacher empties Amruta's school bag in front of the
whole class. Many stolen things fall out.

Amruta, now 10, stands looking at the ground.

CUT TO:

INT. DINING, AMRUTA'S HOUSE, DEHRADUN - NIGHT

Amruta sits shrunk in a chair, confused. The rest of the
family sits around her on their usual dining table.

AMRUTA (V.O.)

I was trying to be just like
them..Was it my fault?

NANA

(To Chanda)

It's all your fault!

AMRUTA (V.O.)

I guess not!

CHANDA
How's it my fault?

NANA
You're never around to look after
her. And you married him.

CHANDA
I've a job.

NANA
Leave it! And leave him.

VIKRAM
Can we ask her why is she doing
this?

NANA
That's a waste of time.

Chanda shifts close to Amruta and leans in -

CHANDA
You're a big girl from a good
family. Girls like us don't lie.

Amruta keeps looking at her mother blankly.

AMRUTA (V.O.)
You basically started it.

FLASH CUT TO:

INT. HOSPITAL - YEAR 2000

Chanda leans into the incubator glass and says -

CHANDA
We're going to be okay!

CUT BACK TO:

INT. DINING, AMRUTA'S HOUSE, DEHRADUN - NIGHT

With a jerk, Amruta is dragged by Nana. She almost dangles by
his hand.

AMRUTA (V.O.)
While the world of mental science
was evolving rapidly and therapy
had become normal, we still trusted
him to solve all the problems -

Amruta is thrust in front of a shrine of Lord Ganesha.

NANA
Confess to him and ask for
forgiveness.

Amruta closes her eyes. Doesn't say anything for a moment.
Nana slaps her light on the head and then reluctantly she
says -

AMRUTA
I'll never tell lies.

NANA
Tell him every lie and ask for
forgiveness. He's not a magician -
god needs to see you're sorry.

Amruta begins muttering, inaudibly.

AMRUTA (O.S.)
I decided to change and be a person
that spoke truth and only truth.

Amruta turns to Nana -

AMRUTA (CONT'D)
Nani steals money from you. Is it
her turn to sit here now?

CUT TO:

INT. AMRUTA'S HOUSE, DEHRADUN - DAY

There are guests over at the house. An OLD UNCLE, hands
Amruta a doll.

AMRUTA
I don't like dolls. They're boring.

The guests are shocked.

CUT TO:

INT. DINING, AMRUTA'S HOUSE - NIGHT

The family is having dinner. Chanda and Nani are standing
around making sure everyone eats well.

NANA
Serve me rice, Amu!

Amruta hesitates.

NANA (CONT'D)

Rice, Amu!

AMRUTA

It's closer to you than to me. You
can take it on your own!

Nana walks over and slaps her hard.

CUT TO:

INT. 5TH GRADE CLASSROOM - DAY

The students are reciting a religious verse. Amruta is
falling asleep. Suddenly a chalk comes flying at her and hits
her head.

TEACHER

What are names of gods in Hindu
trinity?

AMRUTA

Gods are not real. I'm an atheist.

The entire class freezes - spotlighting Amruta. The light
changes to red - a colour of warning. A thunderstorm is heard
like in old Indian daily soaps.

AMRUTA (V.O.)

When I spoke to imaginary friends
as a kid, everyone freaked out and
our entire existence is based
around 330 million imaginary
figures we call gods and no one's
even slightly suspicious!

Suddenly, Amruta is jerkily pulled by a hand. It's her Nana
dragging her out of the school while she's smiling.

AMRUTA

Everyone hated truth more than
lies. So like most Indian kids, I
was just confused. Confused as to
who should I be so they'll like me!