The Subjugator

The Siddhi Chronicles

Book – 1

Sample Chapter

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The Subjugator

The Siddhi Chronicles — Book One

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About the Book

What if the myths we inherited were fragments of a history we no longer understand?

Karan thought his biggest challenge was winning the heart of the mysterious Chhaya and keeping the peace with his overprotective best friend, Harshit. But when a sudden burst of emotion makes Karan accidentally freeze the world around him, his ordinary life shatters.

Unbeknownst to him, Karan is the key to a cosmic war that has raged since the reign of Ram and Raavan. Chhaya is more than she appears, and interstellar forces are determined to use Karan's rapidly evolving powers to reshape the galactic order.

Trapped between secret protectors, alien spies, ancient lineages, and a primaeval prophecy, Karan must discover who he really is—and choose the path that will determine the fate of the galaxy.

And he must choose soon, because someone else wants his powers—and is not interested in asking permission.

Genre: Science fantasy

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Sample Chapter

Valentine's Day carries with it a peculiar kind of pressure.

People are made to feel that simply being in love is not enough. Love must be displayed, announced, celebrated, and proven through gifts, grand gestures, and carefully curated moments. It is a tradition that has been sold so successfully that many have forgotten where genuine affection ends and expectation begins.

And for those whose feelings are not yet reciprocated, the day can feel even more dangerous. A passing smile becomes a sign. A kind word becomes a promise. A lingering glance becomes hope. Given enough longing, the mind can remarkably turn all possibilities into certainties.

But it is not only the brain that changes. People in love move differently. They walk as though the ground is helping them along. They find themselves smiling for no reason. Entire conversations happen inside their heads as they revisit old memories or imagine future moments that may never come to pass. They greet strangers warmly, laugh more easily, and carry an energy that seems disconnected from sleep, food, or logic.

Karan was experiencing every one of those symptoms.

The cool evening sea breeze brushed against his face as he stepped into the hotel lobby. His nervousness had been steadily building with every passing minute, yet the wind calmed him. For no rational reason, he chose to interpret it as a sign from the universe that the evening would go well.

At the reception desk, he collected the bouquet he had ordered earlier. The moment the flowers arrived, their color pulled him into a memory.

Pink.

The same shade Chhaya had been wearing on the morning that changed everything.

Around six weeks earlier, Karan had awakened in Chhaya's bed—naked, sweating, terrified, and nursing the worst headache of his life. Panic had consumed him until she walked into the room wearing a pink sweatshirt and matching pyjamas.

Even now, the memory felt unreal.

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He remembered the effortless confidence in her stride, the way her ponytail bounced against her shoulders as she approached him, and the mischievous smile that appeared when she noticed his embarrassment. Most of all, he remembered how she had looked directly into his eyes and casually invaded every coherent thought in his head.

The recollection made him blush.

The hotel receptionist noticed the sudden redness in Karan's cheeks but paid it little attention. He had seen countless people suffering from the same condition that evening.

Still, out of professional courtesy, he flashed a smile at Karan from behind his heavy moustache.

Thanking him, Karan stepped out of the hotel and crossed the road toward the café.

With every step, the insecurities that had haunted him throughout the afternoon began to fade. The jealousy. The confusion. The doubts about Rustom. Even the bizarre incident involving Harshit and Aamir seemed distant.

His thoughts returned to a single person. Chhaya. What he felt for her. And how he intended to tell her. He and Aamir had spent nearly an hour rehearsing possible confessions before he left the room. Unfortunately, nervousness had erased most of them from his memory. The carefully planned speeches and romantic lines had dissolved into a meaningless blur.

Yet he kept walking.

Across the street, leaning against her scooter outside the café, Chhaya waited for him. If her body had functioned like a human's, she would have been sweating. If she possessed a natural heart, it would have been racing.

But she had neither. What she had instead was training. Programming. Discipline.

The mission above everything.

For six weeks, she and Rustom had waited for Karan's consent. Their orders had been to wait only two. Six weeks. Four extra weeks spent searching for loopholes. Delaying procedures and finding reasons to keep Karan alive. Even now, she continued defying the spirit of her instructions. The behavior made no sense. At least not according to her training.

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She had never personally cared for a human before. Over two hundred and fifty Earth years, she had undertaken countless missions on behalf of humanity. But not all of them had been violent. Some had required diplomacy. Others had required deception. She had lied, manipulated, seduced, stolen, and even killed when the larger objective demanded it.

Taking the form of the European dictator's wife and freeing humanity from a great evil was one of her greatest accomplishments, which got her a promotion, too. She was also involved in instigating some sepoys to revolt against a foreign government in the name of religious blasphemy. All of it was just duty for her with no personal stakes, until she met Karan.

None of those people had mattered to her personally. They had been objectives. Variables. Pieces on a board.

Karan was different. And that frightened her. She wanted him to survive. Not because the mission required it. Not because the future depended on it. But because she wanted it.

The realization unsettled her more than any challenge ever did.

So, she justified her actions the only way she knew how. The greater mission was winning the war. Karan did not need to die for that to happen. She repeated the thought so often that she almost believed it. Yet deep inside, she knew the truth. For the first time in centuries, she was willing to compromise a directive not for humanity…but for one human.

Chhaya could not stop wondering why she felt this way. Was it because of Karan's powers?

Ever since the New Year's party—when she drugged him and Rustom had implanted the device in his head—Karan's mind had been an open channel to her. His power of subjugation allowed him to project thoughts into other minds and, with enough focus, influence people to act according to his wishes. The implant was designed to amplify those abilities and use them to share even the faintest whispers of his consciousness with Chhaya. But was the device affecting her too?

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That was impossible. At least, it should have been. Orakis were supposed to be highly resistant to Karan's abilities. And yet, Chhaya could not ignore what she felt whenever Karan thought about her.

She felt adored. Cherished. Desired. She knew how desperately he wanted her to love him, without knowing who she truly was. Sometimes she found herself wondering whether what she felt in return was love. Other times she questioned whether those feelings were genuinely her own or merely echoes of Karan's desires reverberating through her mind. The uncertainty disturbed her.

Karan spotted her the moment he crossed the road. During the golden hour. With the setting sun painting the world in shades of amber, Chhaya seemed to possess a glow of her own. At least, that was how Karan saw her. His feet slowed. His heartbeat stumbled. And for a few seconds, the world narrowed to a single person.

She had chosen yellow for the evening. A sleeveless yellow top complemented a flowing white skirt that fell below her knees, its hem embroidered with delicate yellow flowers and climbing vines. The ocean breeze toyed with the fabric, making it sway gently around her legs. She looked beautiful. Effortlessly so. Yet beneath that calm exterior, Karan sensed nervousness.

The discovery filled him with cautious hope. *Maybe I'm not the only one who's terrified of this meeting.*

Remembering the strategy he and Aamir had painstakingly crafted, he forced himself to appear casual and walked toward her. When he reached the café entrance, he stopped beside her. She was so absorbed in her thoughts that she did not notice him. Karan did not mind. In fact, he welcomed the delay. He stood quietly and allowed himself a few extra moments to calm the storm inside his chest.

His mind drifted back to the night everything began. The New Year's party. The crowded club. The moment he first saw her. Even now, the memory felt unreal.

Among hundreds of people desperately trying to attract attention, Chhaya somehow stood apart. She possessed an effortless elegance that made everyone else seem as though they were trying too hard. While others chased admiration, she appeared eager to escape it.

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When Karan first noticed her, she was being pestered by a man who seemed incapable of understanding that she wanted nothing to do with him. He remembered feeling helplessly captivated. She looked impossibly beautiful.

Too beautiful. So beautiful, in fact, that approaching her seemed absurd. But despite his fears, he could not look away from the troubled expression on her face. Her features appeared almost sculpted, as though some gifted artisan had spent years perfecting them. Her beauty intimidated him. Terrified him, even.

Karan remained frozen in place, afraid that a single wrong move would make her dislike him before she even knew he existed. So he did the only thing he could do. He spoke to her through his thoughts.

Please, look at me. Look at me and I'll tell you how beautiful you are. Let's talk. Let's get to know each other. I don't know why, but I feel this could become something special. Just give me a chance.

The world had disappeared around him. Without any effort, his mind focused all its attention on her. *Please.*

And then something impossible happened.

Chhaya suddenly straightened. Her eyes widened as if she had received a revelation. She began searching frantically through the crowd until her gaze locked onto his.

The moment Karan realized she was looking at him, panic seized control of his body. This was exactly what he wanted. And suddenly, he had no idea what to do.

His muscles locked. His throat dried. His mind emptied. All he managed was a nervous smile.

Hi, he thought awkwardly.

For Chhaya, the memory was entirely different. She had spent months searching for Karan. Thousands of years of genealogical records had eventually led her to his family line, but finding the man himself had proven far more difficult. Social media had finally given her the breakthrough she needed. Even then, there had been no guarantees. Karan could have skipped the party. She could have missed him. And that night had been her deadline.

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She had arrived hours early and endured an endless parade of unwanted conversations, invitations, drinks, and advances while waiting for someone she had never met. As midnight approached, hope began slipping away. Her shoulders sagged. Her confidence faltered.

She had already started considering contingency plans when, fifteen minutes before the deadline, she felt a voice. Not through her ears. Inside her head.

Please. The word struck her like lightning.

Nothing in her training had prepared Chhaya for hearing someone else's thoughts directly. The voice was powerful and commanding, yet laced with enough nervousness and vulnerability to make it unmistakably human. It was clear even in the loud music in the club, as if someone spoke from inside her head.

This has to be him. Hope surged through her. *Thank the Great Mother!*

She rose immediately and began searching the crowd. When she found him, he looked nothing like the savior she had imagined. He was not exceptionally tall. Not physically imposing. Not particularly intimidating.

Just a medium-built young man with hair that reached his collar, standing in a white shirt, black blazer, and jeans who looked as though he wanted the floor to swallow him whole.

Still, she kept watching. Waiting. Hoping for confirmation.

Then she noticed the nervous tension gathering around his jaw. She saw his shoulders rise awkwardly and watched a sheepish smile spread across his face.

And once again, she heard the voice.

"Hi."

Karan's voice pulled her back to the present. Chhaya blinked and found him standing beside her, bouquet in hand.

Her eyes settled on the flowers. And her heart softened.

Flowers no longer existed on Orak. Entire ecosystems had vanished long ago. That was one of her and all Orakis' favorite things about Earth. The colors. The fragrances. The fragile beauty of things that bloomed briefly and disappeared.

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But she also understood what those flowers represented. In Karan's hands, they were not merely a gift. They were affection. Hope.

With considerable effort, she pushed her emotions aside, gathered her thoughts, and composed herself before finally looking up at him.

"Ooh! Someone is dressed to impress." Chhaya looked him up and down with an approving smile.

He wore the same black blazer from the New Year's Eve party. This time, however, the shirt was brown, and instead of jeans, he wore neatly khaki trousers. A lone lock of hair hung on his forehead.

"Meeting your girlfriend after this?" she asked. "Valentine's Day Eve is a busy night, after all." She burst into laughter. Karan felt himself falling a little deeper in love.

Chhaya's laugh was probably his favorite thing about her. It was uninhibited and genuine, the kind of laugh that made him feel she trusted him enough to drop all pretence and simply be herself around him. Every time he heard it, a part of his common sense quietly surrendered.

"Kind of," Karan replied through a helpless smile. "Only if she wants to."

Please don't say things like that, Chhaya thought*. You have no idea who I really am.* For a fleeting moment, she wished she possessed Karan's ability to project thoughts into another person's mind.

Instead, she smiled and said, "Who wouldn't want to spend the official night of romance with her boyfriend?

Karan remained blissfully unaware of the chaos hidden behind her mischievous expression.

"I meant I'd only be meeting my girlfriend if she decides she wants to be my girlfriend." He shifted awkwardly. "I haven't actually told her how I feel yet."

The confession made Karan feel bolder. It made Chhaya feel weaker. Her eyes drifted to the bouquet.

"Ah," she said softly. "So that's why the flowers." She forced a smile. "I hope these are for her." Lillies and Orchids. Her favorites.

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Karan suddenly wished he had hidden them better.

“Yes,” he admitted. “They are for the girl of my dreams.” He lifted the bouquet slightly toward her. The gesture was subtle, but noticeable.

A flicker of shock crossed Chhaya’s face. She knew exactly what he was trying to say. And she knew that if she allowed him to continue leading the conversation, they would soon reach a point from which neither of them could return.

Karan noticed her hesitation and immediately began searching for a meaning in it. Is that surprise? Discomfort? Anger?

“I really hope she accepts my feelings,” he continued, trying to maintain his courage. “Otherwise, I’m going to be completely heartbroken.”

The words struck harder than he intended. For a moment, Chhaya could not look at him. She knew there was a very real possibility that before the night ended, heartbreak would be the least of his worries.

“But she will have to wait.” Her voice came out firmer than she intended. Stepping away from the scooter she flipped open the seat compartment and exposed the storage space beneath. Karan immediately understood what she wanted. And hated it. His eyes moved from the flowers to Chhaya and back again. The bouquet had become more than flowers now. It had become courage. Hope. A confession waiting to happen.

“Karan,” Chhaya said gently. The disappointment on his face made her chest ache. “I just need a few minutes of your undivided attention.”

She paused. “After that, you can go back to your date. And I promise I’ll keep your flowers safe for your girlfriend.”

Her smile remained playful. Her voice did not. Something about the sadness hidden beneath the words stopped Karan from arguing.

Reluctantly, he placed the flowers carefully inside the scooter’s storage compartment. As Chhaya lowered the seat, he found himself silently apologizing to the flowers.

It felt absurd. And yet it genuinely felt as though he was abandoning them. The seat clicked shut. The bouquet disappeared.

Facing away from Karan, Chhaya closed her eyes and took a deep breath.

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This was it. Her final chance. Her final attempt to save him from what Rustom intended to do. Whatever happened next would change both their lives forever.

She turned toward him and extended her hand. “Karan,” she said softly.

There was no mischief left in her voice now. No teasing. No games. Only resolve.

“Let’s go for a walk.”

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About the Author

Punit Rastogi is a debut novelist based in Bangalore and a Technology Vice President at a global bank. Trained to recognise patterns, question assumptions, and trace consequences, he brings an analytical sensibility to fiction.

His stories reimagine the real world through science fiction, exploring speculative realities where the ordinary shifts ever so slightly from the known to the unknown. Character-driven and philosophically grounded, his work examines the complexities of morality, duty, and human desire.

Punit aspires to write stories that appeal across generations—layered enough for seasoned readers yet accessible to younger audiences. Outside writing, he enjoys photography, music, DIY projects, and sports. His favourite creative pursuit, however, is inventing bedtime stories for his daughter.

The Subjugator is the first instalment of *The Siddhi Chronicles*, a series that unites diverse mythological traditions within a meticulously constructed speculative universe, where gods and monsters are shaped by power, perspective, and rebellion.

Discover more about the author and The Siddhi Chronicles:

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