**When the Gold “Screwed”**

**By Sai Sricharan**

Sameera adjusted her saree, securing the pleats carefully in front of the mirror. The morning sun filtered through the curtains, casting a warm glow on her face. It was a morning just like every day. Chaos filled outside the door of her bedroom, Meena her 6 year old daughter was laughing and screaming as her brother Atul chased her. A thin smile slipped on to her face. Of course it is Friday and the kids were excited about the picnic trip her husband, Rajiv planned. A fine morning it was, she had already packed lunch for her children and Rajiv told her he will be eating outside as he had a meeting with his clients and Sameera was going to be early for her office for the first time in a while.

She reached for her golden studs, wore one on her left ear, she then picked up the other, as she was screwing the stud onto its place… the almost tiny screw in contrast to her rather large hand and skinny fingers,… slipped… Panic surged through her chest. "Oh no..." she muttered, frantically searching on the floor.

Rajiv, was sipping his coffee in the living room. Their children, Atul and Meena, finally settled down and were finishing their breakfast before heading to school. Sunita rushed into the kitchen, her heart pounding.

"My gold stud… its screw, I’ve lost it… slipped right out of my hand…?" she gasped.

"Did you check the floor?" Rajiv suggested, but Sunita barely heard him. Her mind was already fixated on the old superstition—“Never loose gold on a Friday. You see… Friday is for Goddess Lakshmi, loosing gold on a Friday is a premonition of an inauspicious day.” Words of her mother was ringing in her mind, over and over again.

Rajiv took a glance at the clock, it was just 15 minutes to 8 o’clock, he had more than enough time to reach his office, he quickly emptied the remaining coffee into his mouth and bellowed— “Atul, quick… come look for Amma’s stud screw…”

15 minutes, 30, 45 and finally 1 hour, the kids and the parents, were all now running late. Everyone came up with different theories on where the screw could have gone, little Meena even laid flat on her face, glancing in all directions looking for the screw, and picking up every shiny debris and inspecting it. But the Stud screw was not found.

“Did anyone find it…?” shrieked Sameera, her eyes all watery.

"No, Maa," Atul said, poking his head from under the bed.

That’s when Rajiv realised, they were all late…

Her morning began to unravel quickly. She left home late, missed her usual office bus, and had to take an expensive auto ride instead. When she got down at her office she realized that she had left her wallet at home. Flustered, she had to borrowed money from a colleague, further reinforcing her belief that bad luck was upon her.

Later in the evening, she was beginning to feel alright and left the office early. She always had a spare wallet with sufficient money in her office desk for every time she’d forgot her wallet at home. She took it with her. On her way home, a brightly lit store, newly opened in her locality, caught her eye. She always wanted to visit the store, but because she always had to pick up the kids on her way home, she never dared to stop. But today, Rajiv told her he’d be picking up the kids from school after his meeting, so she can spare few minutes of window shopping.

Looking around, she spotted a bedsheet set with a beautiful floral design. Captivated, she pondered whether to buy it, or come back for it another day. She was sure her emergency money won’t be sufficient for it… But something, a feeling, an impulse told her “take it”. And realising that, the set she was holding, was indeed the last piece in stock, persuaded her further. This purchase emptied her “emergency” wallet…

This means she had to board a public bus to reach home… Sameera never liked travelling by public transport. By the time she reached home, she regretted the purchase, feeling it was unnecessary and had she not bought it, she could have taken a cab or an auto home.

To add to her frustration, there were lots of complains piled up as she sat down to sip her evening tea. Aarav had misplaced his school library book, and Meera spilled juice on the couch.

“…Ma’am is going to be very furious, Maa… I’ve never lost a library book ever before… Now we’ve got to pay… that book was pricey too…” sulked Atul as he dug his face into his palms.

The couch is now dripping wet, Meena doesn’t seem to care, she’d already put her glass away and was busy colouring her favourite princesses in colours that made them look more like paupers, rather than princesses.

Every little inconvenience seemed to confirm her fear—today was an unlucky day. I will go worse.

As evening settled, Sameera sat on bedside, exhausted. Rajiv noticed her pensive mood and asked, "What's wrong? You seem distant today."

"I lost “gold” in the morning, and since then, everything has gone wrong," she sighed.

Rajiv chuckled. "Sunita, maybe things aren't as bad as they seem."

She frowned but stayed silent. As she absentmindedly ran her fingers over the bed, something small and cold brushed against her fingertips… Her missing stud screw! She gasped as she picked it up, staring at it in disbelief, not worried how it had got there…

In that moment, clarity dawned on her.

Missing the bus led her to meet an old friend at the auto stand. Borrowing money made her reconnect with a kind colleague. The bedsheets she regretted buying turned out to be perfect when she realized the old ones were fraying. Aarav found his library book tucked safely in his bag, and the juice spill had led her to deep-clean the couch, something she had been putting off for weeks.

Sunita laughed softly, feeling the weight lift from her shoulders. The events of the day had not been misfortunes—they were merely occurrences that she had perceived negatively. Her belief in bad luck had made her blind to the silver linings.

As she fastened the stud back onto her ear, she whispered to herself, "Superstitions are only as real as we let them be."

~ The End ~