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“No. Not everyone must fight and die.” Her Nanny sounds wistful. “Unniyarcha had a son. But hey! She had enough adventures of her own. In a fight, she was as fearsome as Kali in *raudram* state. Why, once she fought against the fighters of a rival clan who tried to kidnap their women—and she beat them, single-handed!”

Yes! She claps in joy, but quickly stops. “Like Kali? Does it mean she too was always naked, and she had blue skin?”

“Well, no. If she did, she never would have had to fight.”

“What does *raudram* mean?”

“Translated from Sanskrit, it’s anger. That is its plain meaning. But it’s also more than that.” Now Nanny pauses, and the brilliance of memory is dimmed. “One isn’t in control when angry, like chaff blown by emotions. One must have mental power to banish doubt. *Then you fight.*”

And dance!

“*Raudram* is the kind of fury that only makes others afraid, caught in emotions that make them want to run, the kind that makes the mighty shrivel when facing the small—*before you act.*”

“How does it feel?”

But Nanny doesn’t speak at once. “Like *meyya kannakuka*, we say in Malayalam. When the body is all eyes.”

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HE MOVES — A VORTEX SPINNING IN THE SPACE MARKED BY the angles of her limbs, her body turning, bending, snapping back in flight. Her dancing phrases—a vocabulary of triangulated movement, punctuated with sharp turns. She is a fury transformed, the chaos of the external world turned into a controlled kaleidoscope of movement swirling around the center of her focus—their focus. Nathi’s mind is shared with hers; he can’t but stare deep into the maelstrom—the force of consciousness behind the liberated patterns of her will.

He cannot speak. He understands without words.

These patterns have been churning like an endless mantra while she was in the coma—disconnected from external movement, unrestrained by consciousness. This was the kind