

*Watching over Mia*

*Nithya Raghunath*

*I dedicate this book to my parents and my teacher Mrs. Sheela Joseph who always believed in my strengths.*



## Foreword

*No one is born good or evil. It is what the society makes you.*

*I take immense pleasure in thanking some of the people for making me what I am today.*

*First I would like to thank my mother not only for bringing me into this world but also for turning me into such a fine woman. She stood by my side even when I felt the whole world going against me. She was and will be forever my best friend, my true guide, my mentor, my confidante and above all the best mother any one can ever get. Thank you very much mommy!*

*Next I would like to thank my father. Every time we went shopping for any books, he would turn to me and ask me, "when am I going to see one of your books on the shelves?". Papa all the more reason I dedicate this book to you. Thank you very very much for your encouragement!*

*I thank my darling husband for being so patient with me while I read poem after poem and story after story out to him. He is my best critic. And everytime I read out a work to him, he's raise his eyebrows and say, "Wow Nits, that's amazing. I've never known any one to write so beautifully". He is a great inspiration. Thanks a lot Rags.*

*My teacher, Mrs. Sheela Joseph. She taught me in high school. Before my husband it was she who used to read and edit my works. She is the best teacher any one could hope for. Outside the classrooms she was our best friend. I still remember I used to call her at various hours of the day to read out something or to ask her something, and she was always ready to help me with what ever I wanted. Thank you very very much Miss for all your prayers, support and blessings.*

*I'd like to thank all my dearest friend Viki for encouraging me throughout.*

*Last but not the least I'd like to thank God Almighty for bringing all of the above said people into my life and for helping me write this book,*



Hi. I am – Well my name is not very important. All you need to know is that I am a mother, who loved her daughter very much. Perhaps, a lot more than mothers usually love their daughters.

When I was a kid, I was brought up by my step mother. My mother died while she was giving birth to me and my father re married immediately – like he was waiting for half a chance or something. My step mother was a very cruel woman. So cruel that she made Cinderella's step mom look like an angel. She was a total bitch. She had two kids of her own and a huge fortune she had inherited after her husband died. So the kids flaunted all the wealth they had, they had the best of everything. The best education, the best school bags, the best bikes, the best toys, the best clothes and what more. And I – I had all of those too – though not the best. I went to a school in the neighborhood, had an old satchel for a school bag – and toys – the brooms and the mops were my toys. I had to do all the cleaning and mopping and laundry after school hours and before school hours. “Why waste a penny on a worthless maid while we have a sturdy girl in the house?”, my step mom would say. My father was a business man and was seldom in town. And when he was, he only had time to hide in that wretch's bosom and drink away to glory.

Life changed after high school. I was 18 when Aaron fell in love with me, Seriously I do not know what did he see in me. I still don't know. I was a very plain looking girl and invisible to everyone's eyes. I was above average in my studies. I could've done better if only I had the stamina after all the chores at home. Aaron was the neighbor's son. I had never seen him before he proposed to me.

*And I don't know why but I blindly said yes to him. I just wanted to get out of here at any cost and I believed Aaron was my only straw.*

*We were married the following year. Aaron was a software engineer in some big firm and they paid him real big bucks. I wanted to work too, but "You've worked enough. Its time you sit back and enjoy life. However what ever I earn is all yours" he'd always tell me. He loved me like no one had ever loved me. He treated me like his little kid. He changed me into a totally new leaf. And after we were married I never stepped into that hole of my step mother's ever again. I was happy. Very very happy.*

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Two years later my joy knew no bounds when I discovered I was pregnant. I vowed to myself to give my child all the happiness I never had. Aaron started working extra hours while I dreamt about my baby all day. I always dreamt of the first time I'd look at my baby, the first bath I would give it, its first words, its first steps, its first day at school etc. The days seemed to be filled with dreams dreams and more dreams. Aaron employed a full time maid to cater to my needs.

One bright August morning my little daughter came into the world. She was such an angel. She was the split image of Aaron. She had his intelligent eyes, his sharp nose, his chin, his lips...

But my happiness was short lived. The best of a doctor came in and told me that there were lots of complications during the delivery and that I won't be living long. He said I just had a few days with me. He also added with a sad face that he hated breaking this news to me. Yeah right !!

I was so lost; I didn't know what to do. What had I done to deserve such a life? I couldn't even spend a few decent years with my daughter. Aaron had gone to fetch some medicines. I took a scribble pad from near my bed and wrote a letter to Aaron telling him how much I loved him and that I was very sad to be leaving him. I asked him to take care of little Mia – that is what I wanted to name her, with all the love in this world. I asked him to please let Mia know about me. Next I also wrote a little letter to Mia telling her how much I wanted to be with her and about all the dreams I had for her. I told her that no matter what I will always be by her side. All that she had to do was close her eyes and look into her heart. I couldn't finish the letter. The next thing I knew was I was choking and then I felt



*like someone was putting a vacuum cleaner through my heart and sucking me out. I came out of my body feeling clean like never before. I felt so light and nice.*

*Wasn't I supposed to go into some light or some tunnel or something like I had read in some books? I didn't . I stayed on wondering what next. I looked around thinking I might have missed the tunnel or the light or some white stairs. Nothing ! So I just hung on beside my body and waited to see what would happen.*

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*Aaron gave me a very beautiful funeral. I never knew I looked so pretty. I looked like I was asleep. After the guests had gone I followed Aaron into Mia's nursery. She lay there in the crib like a little angel. Aaron knelt beside her and cried like a baby. I so wanted to hold him, hug him and tell him that I was right there but I knew that I couldn't. So I didn't even try. I just stood there and wept. How much he loved me!*

*I was there beside Mia all the time. Aaron took to working from home most of the time so that he could keep a careful watch over her. She grew by leaps and bounds. I always felt that little Mia could see me. Whenever I was beside her she would look at me and point her finger at me or smile at me. That was enough to send my heart skipping away gaily. But alas – I just couldn't touch her or hold her close to me. Aaron never understood what was she pointing out to but he always admired her.*

*I watched everything of Mia – it was like my dreams unfolding before my very eyes. Her first steps – she fell over and let out a wail that could send pigeons flying all over. I so wanted to lift her and hold her close to me – but I couldn't even touch her. My hands would pass through her like in thin air. But Aaron was always there for her. Mia started speaking and her first words were – 'mamma'. Well it sounded more like "mma". I cried out of joy. She started going to school when she was four. What a joy it was to see her go off proudly. She didn't cry like other kids did. She was a very matured kid right from the first day. And boy – how she bossed over the other kids. It was a great joy to me to sit beside her in class and watch her.*

*Once the class bully ate her cookies. She questioned about it and he asked her to go take a walk. You should've seen her lips curl and then she started crying. Oh I felt*

*so sad for her, but at the same time I couldn't help notice how cute she looked when she did that.*

*Mia was growing up to be every bit like Aaron. But her hair was like mine – deep auburn.*

*Now with Mia going to school, Aaron could concentrate on his work better. But he ensured that he spent quality time with her and helped her with her lessons and took her to the park or to the swimming pool. He played with her and read to her and tucked her into bed. Oh it was so nice to see them both. I missed being a part of their lives.*

*After Mia was asleep Aaron would go to my picture that was in Mia's room and look at me with so much of love and sadness.*

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*On Mia's sixth birthday Aaron gave her the letter that I had written to her, she read it and put it into her desk and said nothing. She quietly went off to play.*

*Couple of weeks later, on a Sunday morning Mia was sitting in her room with her coloring books. She was totally into it. I was standing by the window and looking out at some kids playing on the street. Aaron came in. "Hey miao", he called her. MIAO?? Jeez what was my kid? Some furball?*

*"Hey dada, look I am drawing a toadstool", she said proudly showing her drawing. "Hey that is nice. But Mia I haven't seen your homework in ages. Can you show dada your books princess?"*

*Mia promptly handed over her books to Aaron and went back to her coloring. I was peering over her shoulder to see how her coloring was coming. Tat was some toadstool she had drawn. Aaron looked up from the books and said "hey Miao, this aint your handwriting. Who's been doing your homework for you?"*

*"Dadda that is my new handwriting. I was trying to write like mommy" she replied without raising her head from her coloring. I nearly wept from joy. Aaron didn't speak a word. He went beside her and lifted her onto his lap. "Do we miss mommy princess?", he asked. She looked at him blank for a while. "yeah dad, I do wish she were with me. You know what. I think she is with me dad. I can kind of feel her presence all around me", she said. I fell off the chair I was sitting. Could she really feel me? Why had she never reciprocated then?*

*"Feel her presence? What does that mean?", Aaron asked her amused. "That means I am right here Aaron", I screamed out – into deaf ears of course. "Well dad, I don't know. Most nights after I've fallen asleep I kind of feel someone stroking my forehead or kissing me at times. At first I was afraid, but once I opened my eyes*

*and saw a momma peering down at me with tears in her eyes. I didn't want to hurt her or scare her, so I just closed my eyes and slept off again"*

*I couldn't believe it, she could feel me at times. She'd seen me do that after she's slept. Oh sweet Jesus!! I am blessed.*

*"And dad there was this one time when the maid has scolded me for messing the table. I was sitting in my room and feeling very sad, and through my tears I looked at momma's picture. You know the picture seemed to be smiling at me as if to say its alright". Aaron's eyes were filled with tears. He set her down and went to his room. I wasn't sure what was I to do, stay back with Mia or go and see what Aaron was upto.*

*I went to his room – tat was once our room. He took out our album and looked at me and said , "Why don't I see you? I mis you so much". I desperately wanted to hug him.*

*Later tat evening Mia was watching television. Aaron came from outside with a parcel in his hand which he handed over to Mia. "Sweetheart, everytime you want to talk to momma, write down your feelings in this diary. If momma is around she'd definitely read it". "What if I want answers?", she asked. "Well ask momma to meet you in your dreams" he said playfully and went out again.*

*Mia seemed to ponder over this. She opened her diary and wrote the first few words,*

*"Hi momma. How have you been? I am doing great.*

*Momma I was wondering if you could please meet me in my dreams, there are so many things I want to talk to you about.*

*Love,*

*Mia"*

*I was so amused by her little letter.*

*That night when Mia was asleep I went beside her and softly called out to her. She didn't seem to hear me. I stroked her hair – I couldn't feel a thing. I wonder how could she feel it. Then she turned around and opened her eyes and looked at me. "Momma?" she said*

*"Oh princess, I am so so happy today ", I exclaimed. She didn't seem to hear me. She looked around her and sat up in her bed. "Mia, its me, momma. Can't you see me angel?", I asked. She didn't seem to hear me or see me. Then she said "momma I know you are here. Why aren't you showing yourself? Why are u disappointing me?"*

*I wanted to let her know that I am here, but how could i? Then I had an idea. I breathed onto the mirror and wrote "Hi Mia. Its momma"*

*She leaped out of her bed and ran to the mirror. She ran her fingers through my writing. And then she ran down calling out to Aaron. Aaron came to her room, but the mist was gone by then. Aaron was sure Mia was dreaming but he didn't want to disappoint her. So he just told her "told you !" and went back to sleep.*

*Sleep seemed to evade Mia. She was so thrilled. She sat in front of the mirror and said "Momma I wanna see you".*

*I was lost. I didn't know how could I make myself visible. I was still rusty with my powers. Well I didn't even know I had any powers. So I wrote on the mirror again, "I am right in front of you"*

*Mia looked hard. She was looking straight at me. But she couldn't see me. I then asked her to get some sleep since she had to go to school the next day and promised to show myself to her. "Mia this is a secret that even daddy shouldn't know. Our little secret alright?". I wrote again, I didn't know why but I didn't want Aaron to know this yet. What if he tried to discourage Mia?*



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The next day I didn't go to school with Mia like I usually did. I went to the cemetery where I was buried and sat beside my tomb. It was a beautiful tombstone Aaron had erected for me and on it was carved, **"SHE FINALLY RESTS IN PEACE"**. "Pooh!", I thought. I was feeling sad deep within. I kind of felt desperate to be with my family in flesh and blood. I was missing out on so much. I cried and shouted to god "Why did you even show me what happiness was when u had to take it away from me at such short notice? What have I done to deserve such a cursed life. Why am I still around? What are you trying to do to me?". Just then I felt a tap on my shoulder. I was so shocked. I hadn't felt a thing in six years and here was someone touching me. I turned around and saw a kind old man standing beside me. He looked pretty – antique. But he was a handsome old chap. "now now", he said wiping my tears. "what would make a pretty young woman such as yourself cry on such a beautiful day?", he asked me. I told him everything. He told me that all of us had powers of our own once we died. There are some people who go into the light soon as they die, but they are just a handful of them – people who had no desires in their lives or people who lived a complete life. People who had lots more to do in life but died without finishing off what they wanted to couldn't go into the light until they were contented and definite that they wanted to.

And as for the powers, he said all of us had the power to make ourselves visible. In fact we are visible to any human. But it is the human's eyes and brains that chooses what to see and what not to see. He said I was visible to Mia all the time, and to Aaron as well. It was just that their brains told them clearly that I did not exist in this world, and why would you see something that does not exist? However the times that Mia could see me was when she was half asleep – that is she was

*sleepin yet she was awake. So now I had to ensure that Mia thoroughly believes that I am around.*

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Couple of nights later I waited till Mia was asleep. Then I went beside her and gently stroked her hair. I called out into her ear again. She gently opened her eyes. "momma", she said again. "Mia darling, momma is here", I said. She jumped up. She was looking straight at me – into my eyes. "oh momma I kept waiting for you, but you never came", she said. I couldn't believe my eyes or my ears. My daughter could see me, could hear me. "Mia, can you hear me darling?", I asked. "yes momma, I can see you too" she replied. It was a miracle. "But baby you couldn't see momma earlier. How did you today?", I asked. "Momma, I went to the church after school yesterday and pleaded to god to please let me see you. And that is how", she replied. I was itching to hug her, but I simply couldn't. I wrapped my arms around her, "Gee momma you feel so cold", she said. That night was the happiest night for me ever. "Mia remember, we are not to speak a word of this to anyone. Not to dada, not to anna (the maid) or to any of your friends. Promise?", I told her. She promised me. We spent an hour talking to each other and then I coaxed her not to stay up any longer. She slept after I promised to meet her again the next day.

Next morning she ran to her diary and wrote six words, "Thank you momma. I love you"

We spent a few happy days this way. Every night after Aaron put her to bed and turned off the lights Mia and I would spend about an hour talking to each other. then she'd fall asleep. It was so nice to see her sleep that ways.

During the day, when Mia went to school I went back to the cemetery to see the old man. I asked him one day why was he still around. He said that he was waiting for his wife to join him. He didn't want to leave her back alone and go to heaven. "can she see you?", I asked. "No, the sly old woman doesn't believe in

spirits or in after life. Just let her die and then I'll show her what after life is", he said shaking his fist. "you must love her very much", I said looking at him with so much of respect. "Oh yes. I love her very much. I know she is lonely down there, but she is very egoistic and fiercely independent. Wouldn't show her feelings out one bit. Thinks she can handle everything on her own. Silly old woman.", he said. "how then did you know that she was lonely?", I asked. "Little girl, if you don't know your love like the back of your palm, you haven't loved truly", he said. I felt a fatherly affection towards him. He was a very nice gentleman. I then asked him why couldn't Mia see me in the mornings and why only at nights? "Why do you dream in your sleep and not in awakening?", he asked me. "Well you dream of what you have been thinking deeply when you are awake and the thought comes to you as a dream. You may not even be thinking of it consciously. There must be something in your subconscious mind that wants a voice, and so it comes out in the form of a dream", he said answering his question himself. "Mia desires for you. she longs for you deeply, which is why she can see you only after she is asleep. Try talking to her when she is in her full senses, she can't see you", he said. I was wondering how did he know so much. It seemed like he was reading my mind. He smiled at me gently and said "I was a psychiatrist before I died. I am Dr. Joseph Benjamin"

I walked towards the house wondering where had I heard that name before. And then I suddenly remembered. He was in the papers a few years ago – even before I was married. And then the poor old man died in a plane crash on his way back from Boston after a seminar on his research of after life. Probably now he could write his paper better I thought and chuckled to myself.

That night I was telling Mia about the kind old doctor and she laughed at my idea of him having to write his paper again now that he knew better about after life. She must have laughed a bit too loud, for I heard Aaron come up. She quickly snuggled into bed and pretended to be asleep. He then turned out the lights and went down. What the both of us didn't know was that he was standing behind the door just to ensure Mia was sound asleep. She sat up again and called out to

*me and asked me to tell her more about the doctor. Aaron came in again and caught her sitting up and talking. She didn't know what to say. "Oh dada I must have been dreaming", she said and lay down. This time Aaron ensured he was in the room until she slept well.*

*Next morning Mia wrote in her diary, "Momma I am really sorry we couldn't finish our talk last night. Dad simply wouldn't go away. I'll see you again tonight. Love you momma."*

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*After Mia went to school, Aaron came up to her room and read her diary. "Aaron you can't. its private", I screamed out. But Aaron couldn't hear me. He looked puzzled at Mia's entries in the diary. He didn't know what to make of them. Because they were all related to the talks we had had the previous nights. It was all about how she loved the stories I told her or about having to remind her the next time about something that had happened in school and the such.*

*That weekend Aaron took Mia over to his parents'. They were wonderful people too. They loved Mia very much. Aaron had told them that he wanted to talk to them about something serious. So his mother gave Mia a picnic basket and sent her off to the garden while she could talk to her son. He told her about what he had seen and read in the diary.*

*"Oh pumpkin, its nothing to worry about", she crooned. "Mia misses her mother very much and probably is even fretting for her and so perhaps she is just dreaming, or hallucinating"*

*"What am I supposed to do ma? I give her all the time I can so that she doesn't feel lonely. I help her with her homework myself. I take care of her so well. Am I missing something here?", he asked frowning.*

*"No Aaron, you are doing a wonderful job. But every little child needs a mother's warmth", she said. "Yes Betty, she needs me", I said. But Betty couldn't hear me either. "Son, your father and I have been speaking a lot about you and Mia. We are concerned about the two of you. Why don't you get Mia a good mother? She deserves it Aaron".*

*"No Aaron, don't listen to her", I said in utter shock. Give my daughter a step mother.. I wouldn't hear of it. "No ma", he said. "that's a good boy Aaron" I thought. "Mom I can't do this to Mia's mother. She'd be heartbroken if she knew".*

*“Poor, Aaron. You very well know she is no more. Its time to move on. I can’t bear to see you lead such a lonely life. And now Mia is fretting too. Isn’t that good enough reason?”* it was his father this time. They persuaded him all the more and then he said he’d give it a thought.

*The next week he went to Mia’s school and met her teachers and enquired about Mia’s progress. He was satisfied by what they told him, but still that incident bothered him deeply.*

*One evening when Mia had just finished her homework, Aaron sat her down and asked her if she’d like a nice new mommy. My princess that she was, she flatly refused. Aaron didn’t go on to persuade her. But I knew there was something cooking in that mind of his. That night when Aaron was asleep I went into our room and breathed onto the mirror and wrote, “Aaron please don’t do this to Mia. Please don’t give her a step mother. You know what I’ve been through. I don’t want her to go through that hell as well”.*

*Aaron opened his eyes at that moment and started when he looked at the mirror. He went close to the mirror and read it, he identified the handwriting that was mine. But he couldn’t bring himself to believe that I was possibly around. He didn’t want to believe it. So he just went back to bed and slept. The next morning he woke up to see if the message was still there, it wasn’t. He told himself that he might have been dreaming. But I wouldn’t let him go off that ways. When he got into the shower I again wrote on the mirror, “Aaron its me. Yes I am around. Please don’t ruin my daughter’s life”. Aaron nearly fell out of shock, “No, this can’t be true, you can’t possibly be around. You are dead”, he muttered. I wrote again, “yes I am dead, but I haven’t left you”. Aaron broke down when he saw that. He wept and wept. I couldn’t even hold him close to me. “I miss you so much”, he sobbed. Then he stood up and washed his face and said to himself that he was*

*possibly hallucinating. How irritating that was. Now I had to convince him that I was around. Just had to!!*

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*That weekend Aaron's parents came over to his house. They asked him about his decision to remarry. He said he didn't want to. All the more since Mia didn't want it. "Oh what does Mia know about what's good for her. She'll realize it isn't so bad once the right woman comes along", his mother said. I could kill her right away. Why were they so determined to ruin my perfectly happy family? Finally they kept pushing him till he finally gave in. I was in such a fury.*

*That night when Aaron was asleep, I pulled the covers off him. I was surprised at myself for being able to do that. Aaron bolted and sat up on his bed. "Who's there?" he demanded. "Mia, is that you?", he called out in the darkness. "No Aaron its me", I said. Aaron heard me crystal clear. He didn't know how to react. He was shocked, happy, sad, scared and everything at the same time. "Don't be scared Aaron. I've always been around. And it was me that you saw Mia talking to the other night", I said. "Oh... why why... why did you have to leave us?" he asked and cried. I've never seen a man cry like him. "There hasn't been a single day that I haven't missed you", he said. I wanted to hug him so much. "Show me yourself", he said. "Look sharp Aaron, I am right in front of you", I said. He looked thru his tears and there I was. "Oh you look like an angel", he whispered and tried to touch my hair, but his hand just got hold of thin air. I smiled.*

*And then I pleaded to him not to remarry. "It's for Mia", he said. "Exactly Aaron, it's for Mia that I don't want you to remarry", I said. "Look baby, Mia needs a mother. Deny it all you want, but I can't see my daughter being so lonely and talking to herself. Well you & I know she's talking to you, but if someone else sees it, they're bound to think my daughter is nuts. So please baby, just please let me decide what's best for her. It's not like I want another woman in my life. I can never love anyone the way I love you but I just need to do what's best for Mia and you worry not, for I will never ever jeopardize my daughter's happiness for*

*anything in this world”, he reasoned out. “But... Aaron”, I protested. He just turned his back to me and went back to sleep. I was so furious. But I knew what he said was true. He loved Mia very much and had to do the best for her.*

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*Six months later Aaron was married to his colleague, Samantha. I was feeling extremely depressed the day they went for their honeymoon. I couldn't imagine Aaron of all the people doing this to me. My husband, my love was somebody else's now. I was sitting in the cemetery wondering why I was still here. I wanted to go off – just didn't want to be around anymore, but there was something holding me back here.*

*I was sitting on my tombstone. Just then Mr. Joseph appeared. He seemed to be in a bright mood. I smiled at him. He came and sat beside me. He noticed I was very sad. He asked me what was bothering me. I told him that Aaron got married. I also told him that I didn't want to hang around anymore and asked him how could I get out of here. He said that one cannot get out of this world feeling discontent. So I wondered, what will make me contented? Well I was contented all these days until Aaron remarried. Why didn't I go then? After life seemed more complicated than my real life!*

*I asked him why was he so cheerful. He smiled and pointed in the direction of the gate where a small funeral party was arriving. Before they reached us, a very beautiful lady swept across to us. I immediately guessed it was his wife. "Atlast!", he said and kissed her. They looked so happy. Mr. Joseph introduced us. But again he was a little perplexed. Their light didn't appear. He asked Mrs. Benjamin if she had anything else to do. "Oh yes", she replied with an air of importance around her. "I want to ensure the lawyers do a good job of my will." Mr. Benjamin was at his wits end.*

*Two days later I saw them vanish into the light hand in hand. Though I felt happy for them I also felt quiet sad. I felt lonely.*



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*That night I went over to Aaron's parents' where Mia was staying until Aaron and Samantha returned from their honeymoon. After Mia fell asleep I went up to her. She was fast asleep and I didn't have the heart to wake her. So I just sat at the foot of her bed and looked at her. A couple of minutes later she opened her eyes and saw me. "oh momma. I missed you so much", she said and began crying. It hurt me like hell to see the apple of my eyes crying this way."Now now Mia. What happened?" I asked. "What happened? I don't want Samantha to be my momma – that is what happened", she said in between sobs. "Mia, don't worry. Samantha will make a lovely mommy. I promise. Besides if she tries any funny tricks on you, momma is always there for you". She wasn't all that convinced but she at least stopped crying.*

*A week later Aaron and Samantha returned from their honeymoon. I hung around the house all the time. I flinched when I saw her using my kitchen and my bedroom – well my house on the whole. It was no longer my house – everything in there was hers, including Aaron.*

*She was pretty ok with Mia. She made her lunch and dropped her off to school and picked her up, helped her with her homework when Aaron was too busy, took her to the park, took her for her swimming classes, attended all the Parent-Teacher meets at school and did pretty much everything that I would've done. I was beginning to think that perhaps Aaron had made a good choice after all. Mia too seemed visibly happy.*

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*A year later Samantha gave birth to a little boy. Her whole attention was diverted to her son. She didn't ignore Mia but Mia was no more the princess. Mia was matured enough in the beginning to understand that the baby required all of Samantha's time and attention, but she couldn't deny the feeling that she was lonely. She was after all just eight years old. She too was still a baby. She was all the more dejected when she noticed Aaron too giving most of his time to the new baby who they called Ronald. Aaron and Samantha were no longer helping out Mia with her homework or taking her to the park or for swimming.*

*One Sunday evening Mia wanted to get her stuff ready for school the next day. She went to her wardrobe and realized that her clothes weren't pressed. So she went to Aaron and asked him to please help her press her clothes. Aaron was playing with the baby. So he asked her to ask Samantha. Mia went to the kitchen where Samantha was making the baby's food. She promised to help Mia soon after she finished feeding little Ronald. Mia was sweet enough to wait. But until after dinner no one helped her. She asked Aaron again. Aaron said he was too sleepy to do it. He asked her to go to Samantha again. Samantha snapped at Aaron saying her hands were already full. Then she turned to Mia saying, "Mia you are a big girl now. You ought to be doing you stuff yourself". Mia didn't speak a word but just walked off. I was stunned. How could she expect a little girl to press her clothes all by herself?*

*As expected Mia didn't know how to go about it. Once she burnt her little finger. I was already losing my cool. She washed her finger and came back and before I could stop her, she touched the iron with her wet hands. And horror of horrors, she had an electric shock. It was horrifying to see my poor baby being jolted. I screamed out to Aaron, but he couldn't hear me. I went down to his room where he was already falling asleep. I pulled the sheets off him. He woke up with a start and*

looked around. Of course the idiot couldn't see me or hear me. So I wrote on the mirror, "Aaron, Mia is dying. Please go to her immediately". Aaron looked around foolishly not knowing what to do. I lost my temper and hurled the bed side lamp at him. He knew in an instant that it was me. "Mia is dying of an electric shock" I screamed. He seemed to have heard me. He ran up to her room and grabbed her by a blanket and rushed her to the hospital. The doctor told Aaron that if he were a minute late he would've lost Mia. For an instance I thought perhaps that would've been better. Mia and I could've been happier together.

Aaron broke down. He sat in her ward and held her little hand and begged her to forgive him for his stupidity. He kept saying, "Mia don't leave me". Later in the night, Mia began slipping into a coma. Aaron was shocked. Aaron ran from pillar to post to try and save Mia. The doctors had to put her in an ICU. Aaron was forced to wait outside. I was standing a little away from him and I saw him talking to his wallet. I crept up closer and saw he had my photo in his wallet. I gasped. And he was talking to me. He was saying, "Please, please don't take Mia away from me. I love her truly. I am sorry for being a little ignorant. But I swear this won't be repeated. I'll guard her with my life. Just please don't take her away. She is all I have to remind me of you!"

All my anger melted in an instance. I sat beside him and put my hand over his shoulder. He shuddered and looked in my direction. He felt me! he could feel me. "Aaron", I whispered. He jumped from his chair. "Aaron its me", I whispered. He fell on his knees and cried hysterically begging for pardon. I tried telling him it was alright and mistakes do happen, but he couldn't hear me again!

Samantha arrived the next morning with the baby. Aaron wouldn't even look at her. "If you had given birth to her you would've been here with her", he said. Samantha was hurt. "But Aaron, how could I come with the baby? I couldn't get him here at night and where will I find a baby sitter at that hour?", she asked with bambi eyes. I wanted to whack her then and there.

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*An hour later the doctors said that Mia was out of danger but they insisted she stay in the hospital for a couple of days under observation. I was so relieved, and so was Aaron. "Thank you!", he whispered in the air. I knew he was saying that to me. Heck! How could he think I was responsible for all this? However, it knocked his senses right back into his head.*

*He walked up to Samantha and sat down beside her. He held her hand and said, "Samantha, my daughter means everything in this world to me. I got married to you because I thought my daughter wanted a mother's warmth. But since the very reason of me having married you has failed, I guess there is no point in me continuing to live with you". Samantha couldn't believe her ears. Nor could I. "Aaron, don't do this. You know I love Mia. Well the baby just needs a little more attention and so I slipped a little in my duties towards Mia. Besides..." he didn't let her finish her sentence. "Yeah Sammy, you slipped in your duties and it almost killed my daughter" he said. Samantha begged and pleaded him not to divorce her. "We'll talk later", he said and went in to see Mia.*

*The doctors assured Aaron that Mia was alright. He rushed to the office to secure a few things and be back soon. In his absence, Samantha went into Mia's room.*

*"Hey", she said. Mia just smiled at her. "How you feeling?" Samantha asked. "Oh I am good", Mia replied. Samantha sat down beside her and stroked her hair. "Baby I am so sorry. I promise this won't happen again. I love you", she said. I was beside myself with anger. How materialistic could she be! Just because Aaron wanted to get rid of her she is playing the holy angel!! How ridiculous!*

*Mia smiled and said nothing.*

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*That night after Mia fell asleep I went to her bedside and looked at her. I saw streaks of tears running down her eyes. She wasn't asleep.*

*"Hey princess", I called out. She opened her eyes. "Mamma, is that you?" she asked. "Yes darling", I said nearly choking. "Oh mamma I was missing you so much", she said. I wanted to hug her so badly. "Baby I was beside you all this while. Mamma could never bear to leave you for a single moment!" I said. She smiled at me. "Momma you aren't angry with daddy or Samantha, are you? Because if you are, please don't be. They are wonderful people momma. They love me a lot!" she said. My little daughter was so matured for her age. I cried. "But baby look what has happened to you." I said. I was scared if I was poisoning her mind against them, I wanted to be careful with my words. I didn't want Mia to hate anyone. I wanted her to grow up into a perfect woman. Mia smiled and assured me she was ok. Then I went on to tell her that daddy was planning to leave Samantha. She was surprised. But she didn't say a word.*

*Next morning when Aaron came in to see her, she hugged him and kissed him. "Hey princess. How have you been?" he asked. "Better dada", she said. He took her home.*

*That evening he got her dinner upstairs and sat there feeding her. "Dada you don't really have to do this. I can eat on my own. I'm a big girl now", she said. I beamed with pride. "You are still a baby to me", he said.*

*"Dada can I ask you something?", she asked him. "Sure angel, anything", he replied stroking her cheek. "Dada are you leaving Samantha?" she asked taking him by surprise. "Well sweetheart don't you think we were happier before she came into our lives?" he asked. "Besides darling, daddy truly misses all those things we used to do together before Samantha and Ronald came into our lives".*

*She didn't know what to say to that. She missed those days too. She fell deep in thought and didn't speak for the rest of the evening.*

*That evening I went to Aaron's room and wrote on the mirror, "Aaron, don't punish Ronald for all this!" what had that poor baby done to deserve all this after all.*

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*The next day after Mia went to school, I flipped through her diary to see if she had written anything. I was surprised to see Samantha's handwriting in it. And it had that day's date. She had written, "Hi, this is Samantha. I happened to overhear Mia talking to you in the hospital the other day. I didn't know what to make of this. I spoke to Aaron about it and he confessed that Mia was indeed able to see you and speak to you. I couldn't believe what I was hearing and freaked out. But then I saw this diary of Mia's and - well I have to admit I am shit scared of ghosts and spirits. And then I happened to see what you had written on our mirror last night! That seemed to have changed Aaron's mind. So, thank you very much.*

*I promise to take care of Mia like my own child. I promise. Ummm... I don't know how to put this across, but this whole thing of my husband and Mia being able to see you and talk to you is kind of freaking me out. So, umm, can you do something to help me out here. There was no other way to tell you all this, if you do exist that is (which I hope not).*

*So long,*

*Samantha".*

*I laughed so much. I could imagine her freaking out. I noticed, for a few days after that, Samantha was walking around the house very cautiously. She couldn't sleep peacefully. She kept looking over her shoulder while she was walking. She hated being alone in the house. I had half a mind to play some tricks on her. I told Mia about it one night. She rolled with laughter.*

*But then I felt sorry for Samantha who had even stopped eating properly due to fear. So that evening when she was getting ready to go out for dinner with Aaron and the kids, I wrote on the mirror, "Samantha, don't be afraid. I won't trouble you until you trouble my daughter". She did freak out a lot but that seemed to have changed her behavior towards Mia.*

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Gradually her love for Mia began to grow. As Mia grew up, their bond grew closer. Mia started discussing everything with her. They went shopping together, did their nails and hair together. Samantha dressed Mia up for her prom and for her first date. She gave her tips and ideas on how to be around guys. She attended her graduation. Mia even told her about her boyfriends. They sat up late on weekends and spoke till dawn. They both gelled like best buddies. Mia and Ronald loved each other very much too. She was the ideal big sister to him.

Eventually I started fading from Mia's thoughts. She could no longer see me or hear me. She slowly even stopped writing her diary. I was happy for her, but I was feeling pretty dejected that my little princess was forgetting me.

Years passed by and Mia was finally getting married. She sat there in her wedding gown looking like a little angel. Samantha was there adjusting her straps and fluffing her veil. How I wished I was the one doing all that. As though she read my thought, Samantha said, "Your mother would've been proud to see you today!" Mia smiled at her. Samantha sat down beside her and a drop of tear rolled down Mia's cheek. Samantha hugged her and cried too. "Oh Samantha. I feel guilty to be telling you this; you've loved me so much. But I miss my mother terribly today", she wept. "Dear dear", Samantha said consoling her. "Now there is no need to feel guilty about anything. You have every right to miss her. And I am sure she is watching over you Mia, like she's been all these years. She'll never leave your side".

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*I was always with Mia even after she got married. She was happy, very happy. Her husband was a fine young man and loved her with all his heart and soul, just the way Aaron used to love me. But not once she thought of me after that. I tried waking her up at nights, but she could no longer feel me. I didn't try too hard either. I didn't want her to look like a fool talking to someone invisible in front of her husband. I was happy to be watching over her and just being around her. It was nice to see what a fine young woman she was. Samantha had done a commendable job in bringing up my little princess.*

*I still couldn't understand why I was hanging around there. Had I missed the light or the tunnel that led me away from this world?*

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*A couple of years later Mia was in the hospital. She had given birth to a little girl. She was such a beautiful little baby. The doctor came in to see her. "What are you going to name her?" she asked. Mia looked up at her husband and smiled and said, "I want to name her Dorothy, after my mother", she said. I gasped. Mia had not really forgotten me. I was always in her thoughts. How did I fail to see that? I cried out of joy. Then I saw it – a bright white light which was pulling me towards it like a magnet. "Goodbye Mia. I love you", I said. She looked up and saw the light and she saw me in it. She had tears in her eyes. She wanted to stop me, but she knew she couldn't. So she just gave me a teary smile and said, "Goodbye momma. I'll miss you"*

