

CHAPTER- I



1992

ARIES: THE BEGINNING

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...HEY WORLD! COME AND SEE!
MY SWEET LIL' BOY AND ME
'LINKED BY STARS AND CONNECTED BY HEARTS ALWAYS
TOGETHER AND NEVER APART;
HEY WORLD! COME AND SEE!
MY SWEET LIL' BOY AND ME...

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Mamma sings this to little Aries every morning when he wakes up, and whenever she puts him down for a nap. This is the song she sings to him at night before he goes off to dreamland. When he lies in his bed, with her looking down on him, smiling her happy smile, her long black hair pouring down her shoulders, he feels safe and loved.

Mamma is looking down on him now, and her hair is hanging down like curtains, but she isn't smiling anymore. Maybe that's because there's a sock in her mouth. One of his favourite striped, yellow bumblebee socks. He looks down at his feet, and finds them wet and red. It's wet and dark on the wooden floor under Mamma, on the little zebra print seats by the bed, and even in the furry carpet, as the dark, wet puddle only gets bigger.

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He can still hear the song, but Mamma isn't singing. She is just hanging upside down from the big fancy lamp in her bedroom. Mamma and Baba love dancing under the lamp. It is made from black glass shaped like a big bunch of roses, with lights in each rosebud. Aries tilts his head back, but cannot see the roses now, because they are covered with ribbons, ribbons which are also wrapped around Mamma, holding her as she hangs upside down, with his sock in her mouth, not singing. Maybe if he just...took...the sock out...

Aries is a tall boy at five years old, and his Mamma's face is on the same level as his as he walks up to her, stepping on the yucky, cold, wet puddle. He slowly pulls the sock out. It's not yellow anymore, but a bright orange. Mamma is still not singing or smiling. Her mouth hangs open, a corner of her tongue peeking out from the corner of her lips. Drool dribbles from her open mouth, sliding down the side of her face, and into her hair. She doesn't move.

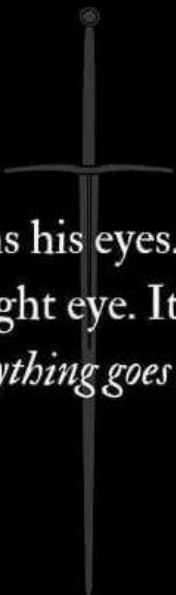
‘LINKED BY STARS AND CONNECTED BY HEARTS
ALWAYS TOGETHER AND NEVER APART’

The song is in his head, not as loud as before. He can hear the drip, drip of red splashing from Mamma-in-the-lamp to the floor. A buzzing fly catches his attention as it lands on Mamma’s face, walking all over it, into her mouth, and then right on her eyeball. Mamma keeps her hands in her lap, and doesn’t shoo it away. Why doesn’t she shoo it away?

Aries thinks of picnics outside, where he would sit on Mama's lap, while Baba peeled fruit for him. If a fly would come near them, she would shoo it away with one hand, rings sparkling on her long fingers. With her other hand, she would hold him close, warm and smelling of cardamom and roses. Aries touches Mamma's face again. It is cold, and strange, and doesn't smell like cardamom and roses. No, it smells like...it smells like when Aunty Hilda, their housekeeper, brings home a parcel from the butcher. He takes a step back, suddenly afraid. His trousers grow wet and warm. Mamma still says nothing. Always together and never apart

Mamma's song is still playing inside his head. Aries squeezes his eyes shut and covers his ears, trying to block out the sound. He is scared, and cold and confused. "Mamma...Mommy...MAAAA" he screams.

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The singing stops. He opens his eyes. He thinks he sees a sparkle
in the corner of her right eye. It looks like a teardrop.
Everything goes black.

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