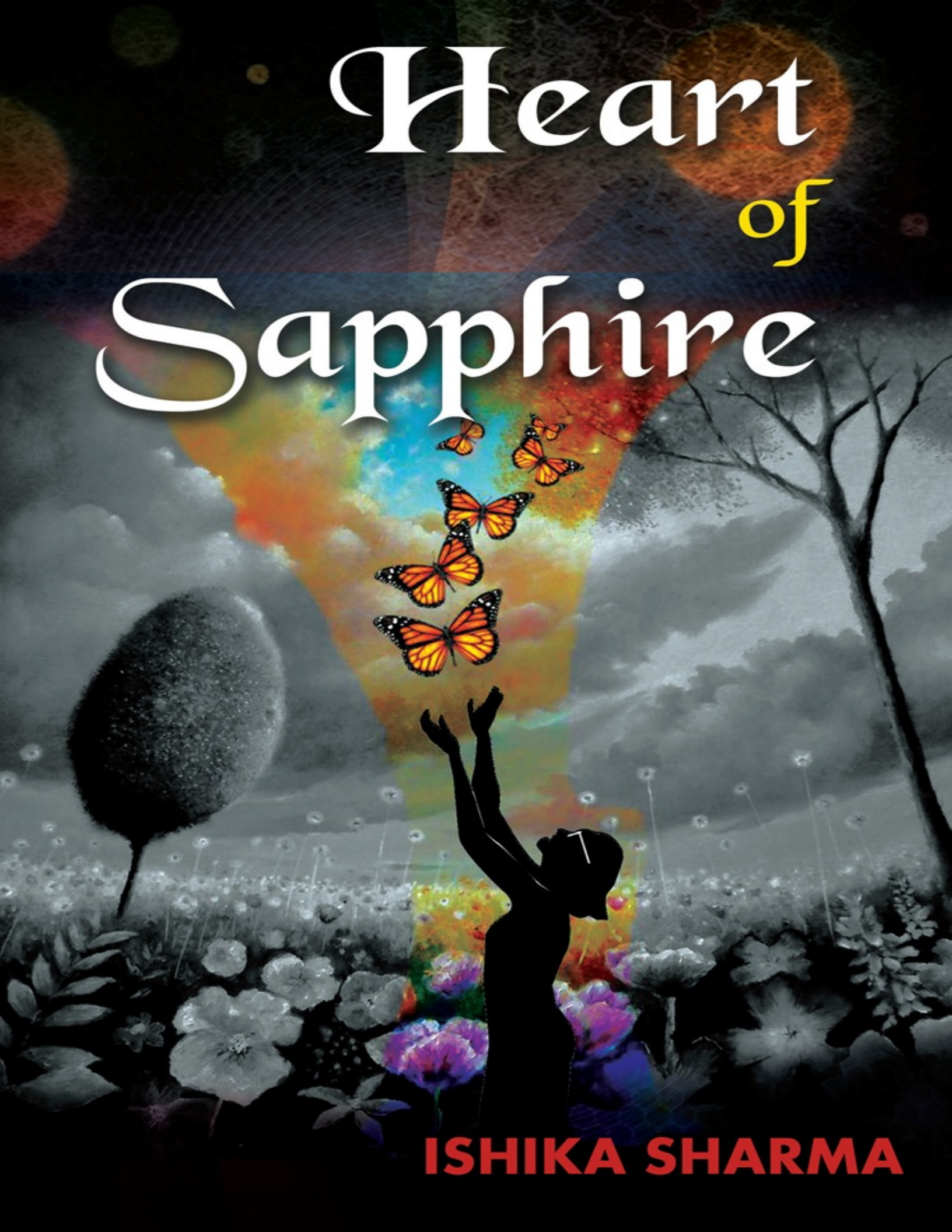


Heart of Sapphire



ISHIKA SHARMA

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Into the Dead

Death is a word that means cessation of all cells in the human body, but for me, the definition of this word is unique. For the world, an after life is just based on mourning, but for me, my whole life is based in on the afterlife. Souls are just meant to be made fun of, but for me, my day starts and ends with the word 'soul'. This is because you are human and I'm a soul. I wasn't born as a soul but was made into one after the accident on 4th May, 2000. This is my story, my story of death.

It was 8 o'clock in the morning when my sister broke into my room saying, "Get up Ishika! It's already 8 am; you don't want to be late for the museum, do you?" Removing the blanket off my face, I said, "First of all, I'm awake and could you please stop being bossy, Veronica?" My sister sighed and went away as she knew I wasn't getting up till she was gone.

I'm sorry for not introducing myself; my name is Ishika Sharma and I'm 16 years old. I live with my sister, Veronica Sharma who is 18 years old, and my father. My father is a very strange man as he is the only one in the family who's so much into spirits that he always carries a book on spirits with him. Moving on, today, my family and I were very excited because we were going to the doll museum. I was going there for the first time. My father used to tell me that my mom dearly loved this place, as she was fond of dolls. Whenever he used to tell me about this, his eyes used to fill with tears. My mother and father were very close to each other, and when my mother died, he was heartbroken. My sister and I are the only reasons for him to live in this world.

We arrived at the station very quickly. But when we arrived, we were shocked because the station was empty; there were just the three of us. The station was very dark and gloomy. I could hear the distant sound of the clouds roaring. My dad took his book out again and started to read it. I could see that Veronica could not hold onto her curiosity and she asked dad, "Dad, why are you always reading ghost stories?" There was a pin-drop silence; I thought dad would kill Veronica but instead he had a smile on his face and he softly said, "But there's nobody yet who

has proved that there are no ghosts”. After this one line, there was a war of words between both, my sister and father; it wasn't stopping until Veronica shouted, “No one can ever believe in ghosts, especially me because I have never seen them!”. Her voice echoed in the whole metro station, and then, suddenly, a man patted Veronica's back and said, “When you will see them, it would be too late to believe”. His words were as spooky as he was. He had a weird and an old manner of dressing too. My sister and I were indeed quiet after that incident but my father acted frantically; I could see that his whole body trembled and sweat as he turned to the last page of his book.

I could not understand his behaviour then, but now, I'm familiar with the reason.

The minute he kept his book inside the bag, a brick fell down from the ceiling. We realized that the metro station was collapsing. It was shaking continuously, and the bricks kept falling. I somehow knew that I was alone. I heard a faint cry of my sister near the exit door.

I saw a white light, my eyes were hurting, and I felt my head heavy as I fainted. When I slowly opened my eyes, there were millions of people surrounding me. The doctors asked the crowd to go away and told me the darkest news of my life- my father and sister had died in that building collapse and my head was hit by a rock. It was a miracle that I had survived. Everyone thought it as a miracle, but for me, it was a burden of not having my family with me anymore. In the mid of April, I was finally out of the sorrow of losing my family, but I still felt lonely and out of tune.

I thought everything had moved on, but I was wrong. I could not even guess what was going to happen next.

It was an afternoon and I felt hungry so I went to the kitchen. I started cutting the fruits but by mistake, I cut my finger. With a swift movement, I looked at my finger, but there was no blood. I looked a bit closer and I could see my flesh. I applied some medicines on my wound, but I could not figure out what was happening to me. At night, I prayed and went to sleep, as usual.

But that night wasn't a usual night in my life as it changed my life completely.

“Aah!” I exclaimed when I saw a bright light. “Did I forget to turn the lights off?” I stood up. To my surprise, it wasn't the light but a big white door. That door was like a vacuum; pulling me towards it. As I was going inside, I saw people moving along my sides. I finally reached the end of that door; I saw railway tracks, advertisements and metro station with a signboard reading “Dead Land”. I called out, “But, wait ... wait ... a metro station named ‘Dead Land’”.

“Yes, a metro station named ‘Dead Land’,” came a voice from behind. “Who are you? Where am I? I want to go home!” “One by one, Ishika. I will answer all your questions,” he said calmly. “Hey, how do you know my name?”

He came forward with dozens of people surrounded by him and said, “My name is Zor and I am the God of death”.

“God of death!” I burst out laughing and said, “I don’t believe in such things. I have never seen them”.

“When you will see them, it would be too late”, he said sternly. I went pale and astonished and said, “How do you know all this?” “If you want to know more, then shut up and listen to me”.

“It all started on 29th February, when your mother died. Your father could not stand this fact and decided to be a spectrologist. He used to call ghosts. That day too he tried to call his dead wife back using his book. He came to know that the other souls were also coming, but they were evil souls. He had started the process successfully but was not able to end it. Putting the book back in his bag didn’t help, that’s why the building collapsed”.

There was a dead silence, I wanted to run but didn’t have that much power to do so. I stood still and asked, “But why was I called here to know about my father?”

“No, Ishika, you were called here to know about an ugly truth. That is, when the building collapsed, you all died. The metro of dead souls just appeared with two souls- your father’s and sister’s. We were all were baffled, as we were supposed to receive three souls. With our powers, we tried to connect to the metro station but the conclusion was even worse, you were the third soul, but as your soul was coming to us it met with a body”. “What rubbish! How can I be dead?” I asked.

“Then how could you see your soul? You are unmistakably living, Ishika. Take this knife and kill yourself”. He said to me as he handed me a knife. I was between the devil and the deep blue sea; if at one side I would run, I would be caught, and if I did not run, I would be killed anyway. But I had to choose one because I wanted to live; I wanted to know about my family history, about my father. I had to risk my life; I had to give it a go. So, I chose the deep blue sea and ran away.

“Catch her!” Zor shouted. I kept running, as I turned back I saw people chasing me and then they all surrounded me. There I saw a big white hole; without thinking, I leaped into it.

I was back at home. I ran into my father’s room. I switched on the lights that appeared to be green in colour; there were Ouija boards all around and a library. I

went and grabbed two to three books from the library; they turned out to be ghost stories. Seeing this, I took out more books; they all were about ghosts. I sat on a nearby table and started reading them. I kept reading until I realized that a name was coming up every time, “Anne Mort”.

On my laptop, I searched that name; it appeared to be a river, not a simple river but a haunted one. I scrolled down and read more; it said that sometimes, a grey lady is seen there. In that, it was mentioned, “To know more read ‘Anne Mort’ by Mr. A.K. Sharma”. A.K. Sharma was my father; I ran towards the library and found that book. In that book, it was said,

“Some years ago, there used to be a man named Zor, and he was a very ambitious man and wanted to rule the world. To gain dominance, he pretended to be a great priest. There was a dry river where he lived. The next day the river had water. Zor fooled the people by saying that God appeared in his dream and told him that He is filling this water and through this water, people could reach Him. A girl named Anne Mort discovered that this river was a portal by which Zor sent dead bodies to a place where he made his army. When she protested, she was made to jump in that river but while jumping, she cursed all the people by saying,

‘Today I and tomorrow may be hundreds! But believe me, after 50 years, my heir shall come and protect this river’”.

After reading it, I couldn’t stop myself and went to River Anne Mort.

The area was forested and dark. Each and every step made a sound. I made my way through a number of bushes and saw the river. I was being pulled towards the river very slowly. I could not stop myself and went inside the river. The next day there was chaos all around. My dead body was taken out of the pond. It was a flash of a pan that I survived once.

Now, I knew the whole truth. Zor was very ambitious, he wanted to make an army of his own and rule the world, and he was the one who made my mother- *Anne Mort*- jump into the river. That river was a portal that connected the Dead Land with the real world. My mom knew about this and when she protested to stop this practice at once, she was made to jump into the river. That is when she gave the curse. Zor felt defeated so he tried to kill me by telling me that my father was the culprit, but my father knew about this when my mother died. That is when he decided to be a spectrologist. He wanted to protect me and my sister from all troubles and that’s why, with the help of the book, he tried to call Zor and my mother to talk over it and dissolve the curse but Zor sent evil souls to kill me and my family. I survived as I was the chosen one, the chosen heir, between my sister

and me. Now I'm there in the place of my mom, protecting the world from Zor and his army. But still, I was one of *them* now ... I was dead.

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