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THE PHOENIX FROM ASHES OF BEING UNWANTED

"Good morning ma'am. Today I'm here to interview or to talk with you for some time." the interviewer said with a bright smile. "How do you feel ma'am on this auspicious day?" "Really great, I feel very happy and I'm very glad to be with you." Neenu replied. "So ma'am your experiences brought you here, so can you please share it with us?" the interviewer asked with a twinkle in his eyes. "Sure, my life is my teacher. There were always new problems, new knowledge and new people. But for my family I was the unwanted"

Neenu was born to a middle class family. Her parents had long waited for her to be her nine years elder sister's companion. But the day she was born didn't make her father happy. The only reason was that she couldn't be like her father wanted her to be, she was handicapped. Neenu was born only with two hands. She had no legs. Moreover she lost her mother on the same day she was born. So right from the begining Neenu was a piece of unluckiness for her family.

Neenu was sent to a disability centre because her father hated her face. He sent her fees and money for her needs. At school, when hostellers went home for vacations, Neenu had to stay back at the hostel. Neenu cried at her beds^{and}, dreamt of her father and sister. She really missed her family. When others had phone calls from home, Neenu watched them with grief. She longed for a phone call or a visit.

Though she was different from others, Neenu was a bright student. She completed her primary and high school education with great achievements. It was after her twelfth exams that everything changed. The centre was only for disabled students upto their twelfth class. The warden rang up to Neenu's father, "Sir, Neenu has completed her exams, so now you can take her back and send her for higher studies." "But her results are not yet published. So let her stay there till the results come." "Fine. Let it be so. Sir would you like to talk to Neenu?" The rays of hope and happiness spread on Neenu's face. She picked up the phone and said, "Hello. Hello!" But she only heard "Ting, Ting, Ting . . ." The call was dropped. Neenu turned her wheelchair when the warden said "Your dad will pick you after your results are published." The shadow of dismay was moved from her face and a flash of happiness spread on her face as she muttered "Thank You God."

At last the day arrived, the results were published. Neenu felt very nervous. For the

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first time Neenu felt great uneasiness sitting on the wheelchair. The warden had her eyes stuck on the computer. Everyone waited eagerly. The sister's eyes grew small, her forehead wrinkled and suddenly she yelled, "Bravo. Neenu has passed with A+ in all subjects. Congrats Neenu." Neenu was startled. Her soul jumped up from the wheelchair with joy. All she could do was laugh as loud as she could. Everyone was happy and congratulated her. Suddenly all was interrupted with a call. It was Neenu's father. He was coming for her.

Neenu's father arrived. Neenu was brought downstairs on her wheelchair. She bid a bye to everyone. Tears rolled down her cheek as she was made comfortable on the chair. The car started and they were moving. Neenu cleared her throat and said, "Pa Papa, I have secured A+ in all subjects, so can you please send me for Civil Service coaching? Please I want to study further." "Shut up!" her father yelled. "Do you think they are there to teach people like you. Can't just die for God's sake?" Neenu was shocked at her father's reply. She didn't know what to do. She was afraid. Tears poured out her eyes.

Finally they reached home. The whole family had assembled. Everyone had a bad, cruel and cunning face. Neenu felt like she had moved from heaven to a giant den. Amidst the cruel eyes she found a calm, kind and loving eyes running towards her.



It was her sister. Neenu had the first glance of her 'never-seen' sister. Her sister, Rita came and comforted her on the wheelchair. For the first time in life Neenu wished she could stand and hug her sister. Her sister took her to the room changed her up and talked to her.

Meanwhile downstairs there was a great assembly going on about the next step in Neenu's life. Everyone advised her father to send her to an orphanage. But then a voice rose up. It was Rita. She spoke up, "Neenu wishes to write the Civil Service exams. There is a coaching centre near to my office. So I will take care of her. I booked for a house there. We are moving on." "Rita, what rubbish are you speaking. Do you think it's that easy. So keep quiet. We elders will take decisions. We know what to do." Her father screamed out. Rita replied, "I'm sorry father. I'm not going to change my decisions. I'll take her even if I have to leave the family." After great pressure from Rita and discussions her father agreed.

Three years Neenu was with her sister. For her Rita was like a mother. They were together and so life was going happy and smooth. Neenu passed in the tests and she was selected for the interview at Delhi. Her sister took her to Delhi. She attended her interview very well. Her sister had become her strength. Rita's support boosted Neenu. Neenu felt like she was perceiving her goals with ease. These had

become the happiest days in her life. Rita had passed the interview. She then wrote the last exam.

The results were yet to be published. On the day the result was to be published, Rita woke up Neenu early and she was dressed up. Rita said,

"Today we are going for a journey to the place where you have to be when your result is published." Neenu was in dilemma. They got into the car. Neenu fell asleep. She was woken up by Rita. She opened her eyes and saw the house. The house, which first looked like a den to her. Rita got her down from the car. They entered the house. Neenu was shocked to see her father in grey hair. He was about to talk when Rita interrupted "Papa, I don't know why you hate her. Maybe because she is not like me physically. But today, do you know, she is greater than me. She has passed her exams with 2nd rank in the first attempt. She is an IAS officer." Neenu and her father looked at Rita with a startle. Tears rolled down the father's cheek. Rita continued, "Papa, she is your gem. There is still time left. Accept her. She is our mother's loving gift." Her father knelt on his knees. He embraced Neena. Neena burst out into tears. She had first time experienced the loving care and humble love of a father.

Tears rolled down the interviewer's cheek as he said, "Ma'am you are really a supernova who overcame your disease or disability not only to be an IAS officer but also to regain what you lost. Thankyou ma'am for being with us. Thankyou viewers." Neenu bowed her head in gratitude as she moved back with her father and Rita.