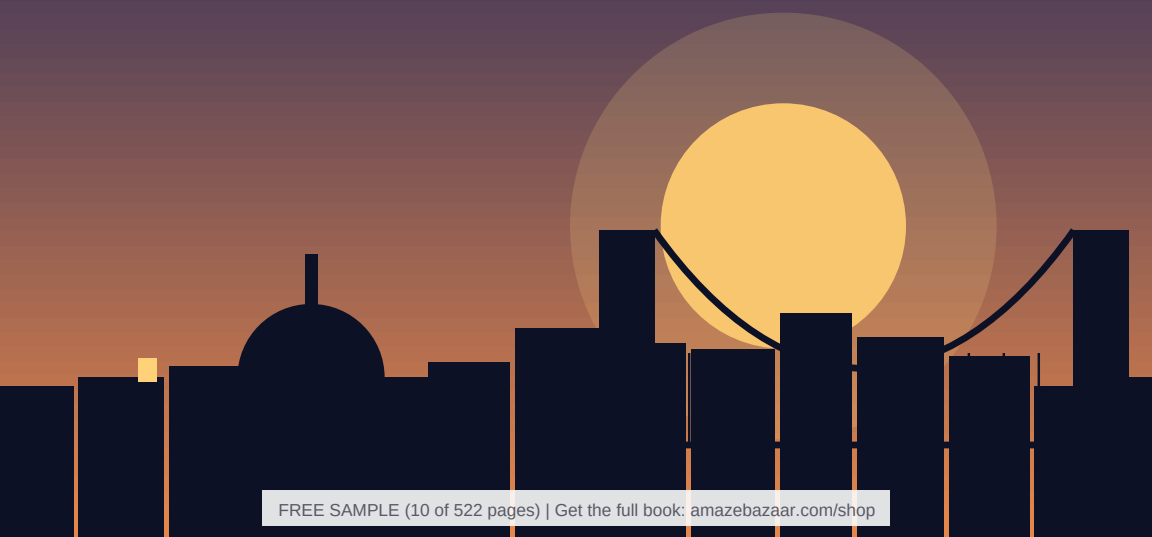
A NOVEL

THE MAN WHO REFUSED TO GIVE UP

From a small rented room in Kolkata
to the world, one stubborn night at a time

SUMAN BISWAS



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DEDICATION

For Ma and Baba,
who waited at the door in Chapra
long after the last bus had gone.

And for everyone sitting alone in a small room tonight,
learning something nobody asked them to learn.
This book is yours.

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FOREWORD

I first met Suman Biswas in a hotel conference room in Bengaluru that smelled of instant coffee and nervous ambition. He was the last speaker of a long day, and half the audience was already looking at their phones. He walked to the microphone holding a cheap plastic notebook with a cracked cover, and before he said a word about design or software or companies, he held it up.

"This," he said, "is the most valuable thing I own. Everything I have built is in here, written down years before I had the money or the skill to build it."

Nobody looked at their phones after that.

People will read this book for the success story, and there is plenty of it here: the products, the companies, the stages in cities he once could only see on a laptop screen. But I hope you notice the other story too. It is the story of a boy from Chapra, in Nadia, who arrived in Kolkata with one bag and no plan, and who discovered that a life can be built the way software is built: one small, stubborn line at a time.

I have known many founders. Very few of them remember, the way Suman does, exactly what it felt like to have nothing. That memory is the quiet engine of everything he has done since.

Read slowly. Some of these pages were very expensive to live.

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PREFACE

For a long time I believed that stories like mine were written about other people.

I believed they belonged to people with the right surname, the right college, the right city, the right luck. I believed that somewhere there was a door marked "success," and that it had been locked before I was born.

I was wrong, though it took me nearly twenty years to understand how wrong.

This book begins in a small rented room in Kolkata, when I was thirty years old, broke, and quietly ashamed of how my life had turned out. I have tried to tell it honestly: the rejections, the nights I could not sleep, the months when I could not pay the rent, the years when even I stopped believing in myself.

I have not made myself braver than I was. Most of the time I was frightened. The only thing I did differently was this: I kept learning, every single night, even when it seemed to lead nowhere.

If you are reading this from a small room of your own, I want you to know something before you turn the page.

The room is not the end of the story. It is only the first chapter.

Suman Biswas
Kolkata

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