

SCIENCE FICTION

The Quantum Breakthrough

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AS the breezy night shades lulled the coastal city of Chennai to sleep, there was one tiny building that was still rumbling alive with heightened activity. The calm of the night was interrupted by sounds of swift micropipette pushes, gentle vibrational sound waves produced by the building's quantum computers, and frenzied footsteps of the building's inhabitants. There was Professor Gayathri swiftly working on her tumour-induced mice models with the help of her grad student Aparna, a smart girl with excellent scientific mettle on par with her mentor. It was a usual sight in the 'Quanto Vibrational Medicine (QVM)' lab building, nestled between an army of trees in the folds of one of the city's leading cancer research institutes. As the day's experiments came to a close, the professor-student duo unassumingly

started analysing the data collected. Persistence and hard work were the hallmarks of the QVM group, something that Dr Gayathri learned from her PhD stint at Stanford University. As she sat to sift through the data, her thoughts started taking her back in time for a short mental break.

She was a young scientist who had declined a lucrative job offer at a large research centre in the USA and had flown back to her roots with an aim to buttress Indian science. Armed with a master's in biotechnology and a PhD in quantum physics, she had wanted to establish an interdisciplinary lab that would harness the potential of quantum power in curing the deadly malady 'cancer'. After multiple rejections of her proposal, she finally found shelter in her current institution, which welcomed her, unlike other places that considered