**FRIENDS**

**DELHI 2023**

*‘Are you sure that we came to the right place?’ Rohan asked Uday.  
Uday nodded as he searched for a place to sit.*

*‘All the tables are small to fit twelve people.’ Uday said.  
‘Yeah I can see that Uday, we can ask them to club two tables together.’ Rohan replied.*

*Uday snapped his fingers and said, ‘See, we think of smart things when we are together.’  
‘Well I don’t want to take the whole credit, you really help a lot.’ Rohan replied. ‘Now please go and ask them to put two tables together.’*

*Rohan waited at the door as a lady came inside and she waved at Rohan. He looked behind him as a reflex and she came directly to him and asked, ‘You are Rohan right? You didn’t recognize me?’  
He shook his head as she took his hand and shook it.*

*‘I’m Neha; I dated Arjun when we were in college.’ She said.  
‘Well it’s hard to remember Arjun’s girlfriends Neha…you’ve changed a lot, and I couldn’t recognize you.’ Rohan stuttered.*

*Uday came to Rohan to tell something; ‘Hey they didn’t…’ he stopped as he saw Neha.  
‘Well he gets stuck when he sees something beautiful.’ Rohan said.*

*Uday looked at Rohan, ‘Well she dated Arjun for a month when we were in our first year of college.’ Rohan replied.   
‘Oh, the one with the cleavage...’ Uday smiled at Neha. Rohan slapped his forehead and Neha put on an embarrassing smile.*

*They had to request the supervisor to combine two tables together and out of the expected twelve people ten members turned up.*

*‘Who else has to come?’ Akhil asked.   
‘Arjun hasn’t come yet. He’s always late. And there’s…’ Neha replied.*

*‘Arjun is coming? How…how did you invite him?’ Rohan asked.  
‘I…called him. We speak almost every month.’ she replied. ‘Wow, he talks to you? It’s been almost six years since we spoke.’ Rohan replied; his voice seemed a bit low.*

*‘Five years Rohan…it’s been six years.’ A voice came from behind. Rohan turned to look as Arjun pulled a chair next to him and sat at the table. He looked at everyone and gave a smile.*

*‘Those fucking dimples…every time he smiles, I want to kill myself for breaking up with him.’ Neha whispered to the girl next to her. Arjun looked at Rohan who was avoiding eye contact.*

*‘Hi Rohan…hey Uday, how are you guys?’ Arjun asked.  
Rohan gave out a smile and said that he was good. ‘We’re fine Arjun, how are you?’ Uday asked. Arjun replied that he was good.*

*‘Well this is a really great idea Neha…’ Usha spoke. ‘I mean a reunion at brunch, thanks a lot.’  
‘Oh it’s not just brunch guys, we are gonna hang out for the whole day. Kavya and I planned an itinerary for the whole day. And I hope you guys wouldn’t have a problem with it.’ Neha replied.*

*‘First of all we’ll have brunch here and after that we’ll go for some window shopping like we used to do when we were in college.’ Kavya said.   
‘And speaking of college…’ Neha interrupted. ‘We are going to our college too. You know, we can live those moments again.’*

*‘So what’s up with everyone these days? Akhil asked.’  
‘I’m getting married soon and my fiancé’s is damn rich. So I’m probably settled in my life.’ Kavya spoke and giggled. Everyone started talking about their professions and life.*

*‘I’m working as a manager at COBOL Engineering.’ Rohan replied. Uday looked at him angrily.   
‘What happened?’ Rohan asked. ‘Well now my job doesn’t look cool to anyone.’ Uday replied.*

*‘Well what do you do Uday?’ someone asked.   
‘I…I work as an assistant manager at COBOL Engineering.’ He replied.*

*‘What about you Arjun? Last time I heard, you were a multi-billionaire.’ Kiran asked.   
‘I was a multi-billionaire’s son dude.’ Arjun replied.*

*‘So what are you doing these days?’ Uday asked.   
‘I’m a pilot…a fighter pilot.’ He replied. Everyone stared at him in surprise and awe.*

*‘Just kidding guys, but that sounded cool right?’ he spoke. ‘I’m just throwing off my dad’s money in some philanthropic works. I got an organization that is working in educating the poor kids in the country.’*

*‘Still the same old bastard.’ Rohan said and everyone laughed.   
‘I miss those days when we were together.’ Uday said. Rohan and Arjun looked at each other and gave some reluctant smiles.*

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**DELHI 2015**

Arjun came out of his room and saw that a girl was sitting in the living room, reading newspaper. She looked at him and smiled. He smiled back at her reluctantly.

‘You must be Rohan’s roommate? I’m Swati.’ She stood up and stretched her hand forward. He shook her hand and introduced himself and went back to search for something in the cupboard. Rohan came out and kissed Swati.   
‘Hey Arjun...’ He spoke. ‘What are you searching for?’ Rohan asked him.   
‘Have you seen my watch?’ Arjun asked him.   
‘You need to be specific dude; you have a whole shelf filled with watches.’ Rohan replied.

‘I’m searching for the waterproof one.’ Arjun replied back.   
‘Oh, it’s with me. I borrowed it from you on that day for the party, remember?’ Rohan asked.

‘Oh yeah, can I have it back? You can borrow my other watches if you want.’ Arjun said. Rohan went inside his room and got back the watch.  
Arjun went inside his room with the watch, and after sometime he came out with a travel sling bag.   
‘Rohan, I’m going out. I’ll be back in two days maybe.’ Arjun said.   
‘Is it that bad? Your last trip was just two months ago.’ Rohan replied.

He smiled as he wore his shoes and coat…and left. ‘Hey inform Uday too.’ He shouted as he went outside.  
Rohan waved him goodbye and came and sat in front of Swati with a smile.

‘I think I have some doubts.’ She spoke to him.   
‘Well go on.’ He replied.

‘What actually happened? Where did he go?’ she asked him.   
‘Well that’s Arjun, my childhood buddy. He…went on a trip. He travels a lot whenever he gets depressed; to make himself feel better.’ Rohan replied.

‘He just wore a small bag and didn’t carry any luggage.’ She spoke.   
‘Swati, he’s a traveler, not a tourist.’ Rohan asked her.

‘Who’s Uday?’ she asked.   
‘Uday is another friend of ours. We three grew up together, studied together and now stay together. We are more like brothers.’ He replied.

She nodded slowly. ‘Well anything else?’ he asked her.   
‘Oh yeah, yesterday, you were damn good in bed.’ She replied and winked at him. He came forward and kissed her.

Uday came out of his bedroom and saw them kissing.   
‘Oh I’m sorry. I thought this was our house.’ And he went back and closed his door.

Swati gave a puzzled look. ‘He got drunk pretty bad yesterday and he doesn’t stay in his senses when he gets drunk.’ Rohan replied.

‘Okay I’ll have a bath and come. We can talk for the whole day.’ She said and kissed him on his forehead and went into his room.   
‘This rave party was a huge mistake.’ He murmured to himself. ‘I wish Arjun was here.’

He knocked on Uday’s room door. Uday sleepily opened and Rohan shook him vigorously out of his sleep. ‘Listen carefully Uday, there’s a girl in my room. Can you please help me get rid of her?’ he almost pleaded.

Uday gave a smile and spoke, ‘You brought her home, you tell her to go.’  
‘I do it always, why can’t you do it?’ Rohan asked.

‘Oh yeah, you always ask the girls to leave, which is why you should do it.’ Uday replied.  
‘But Uday, please…do it for me once.’ Rohan almost begged him.

‘All right, rock, paper, scissors for who has to tell the girl to leave.’ Uday said as he put his hands forward to play the game.  
‘You are twenty four Uday, don’t act like an eight year old.’ Rohan said.

‘All right, but this is the last time I’m gonna do this.’ Uday said and he locked Rohan inside his room.

Rohan heard some screams and swearing and after five minutes Uday opened the door and let him out. Uday was panting a lot.

‘Do I have to know what happened?’ Rohan asked. Uday slowly shook his head and said, ‘She would never look at your face again.’  
‘Thanks man.’ Rohan replied.

After two days, Arjun returned home. ‘Hey Arjun, how was the trip? And where did you go?’ Uday asked him.  
Yeah, I feel better now. I went to Arunachal Pradesh.’ Arjun replied.   
‘Oh cool. But why did you go?’ Uday asked.

‘I was having pressure at work and I broke up with a girl. So I just went for a change of mind.’ Arjun replied.

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*Neha got a text and she spoke, ‘Well Sanjana will join us in a couple of hours. She might directly come to our college.’*

*Arjun and Uday looked at Rohan at the same moment. Rohan was looking at Neha with his mouth open. ‘Oh, I thought it wouldn’t be awkward.’ Neha replied.*

*‘Get over it man, you guys dated eight years ago.’ Arjun said.  
‘Seven years Arjun.’ Rohan corrected him. ‘Seriously? That is more important now?’ he replied.*

*Everyone tried to say something to support him. ‘Guys, I’m fine. It wouldn’t be awkward at all. It’s not that I’m still in love with her.’ Rohan spoke.  
‘Yes you are.’ Uday smirked.*

*They all spoke about the times they spent together.  
‘Life those days was cool. We almost partied every night.’ Rohan said.*

*‘No big deal for me, I still party every night.’ Arjun replied with a smile.   
‘We were talking about normal people.’ Rohan replied back.*

*‘Man the parties where we picked up chicks and hook up with them were the most awesome.’ Uday said.  
Everyone looked at him sternly. ‘Always the wrong timing Uday.’ Rohan said.*

*Though it seemed a bit awkward and stupid, but Arjun and Rohan felt that what he said was true.*

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**DELHI 2015**

‘Listen Arjun, I met a girl today at the pub. She’s so cute and even agreed to go on a date with me.’ Rohan sounded excited.   
‘Are you sure that it was a girl?’ Uday quipped in between.

‘Come on Uday, he scored a girl on his own. We need to appreciate him.’ Arjun spoke.   
Uday opened his mouth to say something again.

Rohan gave him a serious look and he fell silent.   
‘Okay listen, you need to…’ Arjun was about to tell something but Rohan interrupted him.   
‘I don’t want your help this time. I like her a lot and I don’t want her to be a fling in my life, she deserves something better.’ He said.

‘Well then you are going to be single for a long time.’ Uday replied.

‘Shut up Uday, he’s going to win the girl on his own and Rohan, just one advice from my side. To make her fall in love, you got to make her laugh.’ Arjun said.

‘What’s her name?’ Uday asked as Rohan was going into his room.  
‘Sanjana...’ Rohan replied.

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*‘Hey Akhil, you seem so dull. Aren’t you happy about this reunion?’ someone asked him.   
‘Hey it’s nothing. I still have a splitting headache from my travel last night. I’m not a good travel lover.’ He replied.*

*‘Well nobody loves travelling as much as Arjun.’ Neha replied. ‘In fact, when we were dating, we used to go on long drives most of the times.’*

*‘What was your most favorite trip?’ Akhil asked him.   
‘My Goa trip was the most memorable; I wish I could go there once again.’ Arjun replied.*

*‘You went to Goa only once in your life?’ Rohan asked him, and Arjun slowly nodded.  
‘But Uday and I were with you at that time.’ He said and Arjun nodded again.*

*Rohan stared at him for a while. Everyone continued talking about their personal travel experiences.*

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**DELHI 2017**

‘I’m not in a mood to do anything Uday.’ Rohan said sleepily as he sat on a bean bag.   
‘You never have the mood to do anything.’ Uday replied. ‘I guess Arjun will play with me.’

After Arjun came, Uday asked him, ‘Hey Arjun, shall we play a game in your play station?’  
‘I don’t know man; I’m not in a mood to do anything.’ Arjun replied.

‘Yeah screw you both.’ Uday murmured and sat alone on the floor.   
‘What happened to you now?’ Rohan asked him.

‘Well I was a bit depressed and thought of cheering up myself by getting distracted. I see that you guys are much more depressed than I am.’ He replied.

‘Sanjana broke up with me. Isn’t it a big deal?’ Rohan asked him.   
‘You just dated her for a month.’ Uday almost shouted.

‘You are depressed for that girl? She’s not the one for you Rohan; I knew that you would break up soon.’ Arjun spoke.   
‘Fine, forget about me, nobody’s correct for me. I would probably end up being single…why are you depressed Uday?’

‘I…I had to eat a plain sandwich for lunch.’ he replied and the other two gave a puzzled expression in return. ‘Well I planned to eat a chicken sandwich but I couldn’t.’ Uday said making a sad face.

‘We all are being sad for stupid reasons.’ Rohan said as he sat on the couch. ‘What about you Arjun? You were depressed too. Was that because you couldn’t buy those expensive brown boots that you were talking about last week?’ he asked.

‘No…I ordered them online, I’ll probably get them in a couple of days.’ Arjun replied.   
‘Then what happened?’ Uday asked him.

‘It’s nothing. My…my parents are getting divorced.’ Arjun replied and sat down.  
Rohan and Uday sat next to him and tried to console him but Arjun stayed calm for five minutes.

Then Uday spoke, ‘Hey why don’t you go for a tour or something. Go and explore some place like Ladakh.’ He said.   
‘That’s a good idea Uday; you need a change of mind Arjun.’ Rohan said.

‘I don’t want to go on another trip again and I definitely don’t want to be alone.’ He replied.   
‘We all can go on a vacation.’ Uday suggested.

‘Yeah, sounds good. What do you say Rohan?’ Arjun asked.   
‘I don’t know man. A trip might affect me financially now.’ Rohan replied. ‘Oh yeah, even I don’t have the enough amount I guess.’ Uday spoke.

‘Then why the hell did you suggest the idea?’ Rohan looked at him and asked. ‘Okay, I got an idea, I’ll pay for your flight tickets, and you guys manage the other small necessities.’ Arjun replied.

‘No way Arjun we can’t let you do this. We don’t want you to waste your money on us.’ Rohan said.   
‘First of all, nobody asked for your opinion. And second thing is…we are going to Goa bitches.’ Arjun replied.

‘Are you sure about this thing? I don’t think this will be a good idea.’ Rohan said.  
Arjun caught hold of both of them and hugged them and said, ‘My dear children, we…are going to Goa.’ Arjun replied.

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**GOA 2017**

The three landed in Goa and checked into their hotel rooms. They all headed out to the beach after a while. Uday ran into the beach with so much excitement as Arjun and Rohan looked.

‘So is everything fine between you and your parents?’ Rohan asked Arjun.  
‘Yeah, I’m just thankful that I’m not a ten year old kid. Or else my parents would be fighting over who should get the custody of the child.’ Arjun replied.

‘What is the reason for the divorce?’ Rohan asked.  
‘Well it seems that my dad liked to put his thing in his secretary rather than keeping it inside his pants.’ Arjun replied.

They returned back to Delhi after two weeks. Uday wasn’t talking to Rohan, and ignored him.   
‘What the hell happened to you?’ Rohan asked him.

‘You fucking stole a girl from me.’ Uday shouted.  
‘What the fuck does that mean?’ Rohan asked him.

‘I was talking to a girl and you had to come in between and offer me vodka.’ Uday replied.   
‘Where exactly did I steal the girl?’ Rohan asked him calmly.

‘I…I was telling her that I was a teetotaler. And you gave me vodka; she understood that I was lying.’ Uday replied. ‘I guess you went and flirted with her later.’

‘You slept with some girl later that night. I was the one who spent the nights in Goa alone.’ Rohan shouted back.

‘What’s all this noise? People are sleeping here.’ Arjun came from his room and scolded them both.

As Uday and Rohan explained him about their fight, Arjun sat on the couch and spoke, ‘Taking you guys to Goa was a mistake.’  
‘What does that mean now?’ Rohan asked him.

‘Well you guys are…’ Arjun was saying something. Rohan interrupted him and spoke; ‘So you are literally bragging that you took us to Goa. Well you should know that you are nothing without your father’s money.’

‘What the hell is he talking about?’ Arjun looked at Uday and said. ‘Is he drinking again?’  
‘I’m talking about the facts here. You just don’t know how to treat people; you think money can buy everything. But you can’t buy people with it.’ Rohan replied.

‘You’ve been taking weed lately?’ Arjun asked suppressing a laugh.  
‘Things are always funny for you Arjun…’ Rohan said as he sat down.

‘And FYI Rohan, you can buy people with money. Everyone has their price.’ Arjun replied.  
‘Oh really? Is that how you tried to buy us?’ Rohan shouted.

Slowly the fight became intense. Arjun got a bit upset and he too said things. They had to calm down as Rohan got a text from Sanjana.

‘Oh my god; she texted me after so many days.’ Rohan said and ran out.

He came late at night, and went to sleep. The next morning, he woke up late and saw that Arjun was not there at home.

He asked Uday, ‘Where’s Arjun?’  
‘I don’t know; he went out early in the morning.’ Uday replied. ‘How was your meeting with Sanjana?’ he asked.

‘She called me over to settle things between us and confirm our breakup.’ Rohan replied.   
‘Don’t tell me that you are returning all her gifts.’ Uday warned.

Rohan look at him angrily and went and locked himself inside his room.

Arjun returned back in the afternoon and went into his room without talking to anyone. Uday signaled Rohan to go and talk to him.   
‘Let him come first.’ Rohan whispered.

Arjun came out of his room along with his luggage. ‘You’re going on a trip?’ Uday asked him.  
Arjun shook his head and replied, ‘I’m moving out.’ And he walked out.

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*‘You guys used to hang out together always. What happened to you people?’ Neha asked.*

*‘Nothing happened…’ Uday said. ‘People drift apart you know.’ Arjun said before Uday could say something stupid.*

*‘Sometimes people are so sensitive that they get very angry on little things. Sometimes small arguments leave huge marks on people’s lives.’ Rohan said sarcastically.  
‘So you are still the best of friends?’ Kavya asked.*

*Rohan stared silently, Arjun looked at Rohan, he was looking at his plate and Uday was looking at Arjun hopefully with an innocent smile.*

*‘We were never friends. We are brothers.’ Arjun said with a smile. Nobody asked anything else as it seemed so genuine.*

*The waiter brought a bottle of wine and started serving everyone. Rohan politely declined.   
‘You don’t drink?’ someone asked him.*

*He shook his head and said, ‘Well I quit drinking seven years ago.’  
‘What is the reason?’ Akhil asked him.*

*He smiled shyly and Uday narrated them the story.*

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**DELHI 2016**

‘Dude you’ve to control your drinking. You’re getting too worse these days.’ All his friends were convincing Rohan.

‘Okay guys, I know that you all care for me. But please let me drink today. I’ll quit from tomorrow. It’s my birthday guys.’ Rohan pleaded.

Nobody agreed and they all succeeded in making him quit drinking.  
‘Alright from now on I’m staying away from alcohol.’ Rohan declared.

‘Hey everyone...’ Arjun came inside after two minutes. He was carrying a bottle of alcohol.   
‘Guess what…this is the oldest whisky available in the city, and each and every drop of it going down our birthday boy’s throat today.’

Rohan was shaking his head and signaling him to take it away, but Arjun wasn’t listening.

‘Come on Rohan, you got to drink this and release the beast inside. You must go crazy and rock the night…’ Arjun was speaking and everyone looked at him uncomfortably.

Uday stood up and whispered something in Arjun’s ears.   
‘Ooh, alright!’ Arjun nodded. ‘Well…I guess I can get a refund for this.’ He slowly walked away towards the door.

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*‘Guys it’s getting late, shall we make a move? We need to go to our college too.’ Neha said looking at her watch.*

*As they all came out, it was raining heavily outside. ‘Oh crap, I guess shopping’s cancelled.’ Uday said.  
‘You don’t have to be sarcastic about it.’ Kavya glared at him.*

*‘No, I’m serious. I wanted to buy something for myself.’ He replied innocently.*

*They all decided that they would directly go to their college and meet up with their other friends. Everyone was waiting for their cars at the valet and a black Lamborghini drove up and stopped in front of them.*

*‘Who’s this rich pig?’ Uday exclaimed as he saw the car.   
‘That would be me.’ Arjun replied as he took the keys from the valet guy. He paid him five hundred bucks to him and spoke, ‘I’ll meet you guys outside the college.’ And he drove away.*

*‘The good news is that, we don’t have to tip the valet guy. Arjun did it for everyone.’ Uday spoke.*

They all went inside the college. Everyone slowly went to meet their friends and some of their old faculty members.   
‘Hey, how about we make out in the library like we used to do back when we were in college?’ Neha caught Arjun’s hand and asked him with a seductive smile.

‘Do we have to get into a relation together after that?’ he asked her back.   
‘No but we can definitely get into bed together tonight.’ She replied.

‘So library it is.’ Arjun replied with a smile and they went towards it.

‘Hey Rohan, some of the college kids were smoking weed behind the first block and they offered me some. Do you want to join?’ Uday asked.

‘No, it’s fine Uday. I’ll just have some tea in the canteen.’ Rohan replied and went towards the canteen.

*It was drizzling and most of the students were taking shelter in the college canteen. Rohan was standing and drinking a cup of tea. Suddenly the speaker buzzed and someone was speaking on the college radio.*

*‘Well good evening to all our listeners. We wish you a very happy weekend and we have a friend over here, and she wants to convey something to you all. Well Sanjana…please go on!’*

*Rohan looked towards the speaker as the radio jockey uttered the name. And a cute voice started coming from it.*

*‘She saw him; her heart skipped a beat.  
She met him; her heart leapt out.  
She kissed him; her heart went with him.’*

*Rohan stood motionless as everyone clapped when the radio jockey took over and thanked her.  
Uday came running into the canteen and spoke, ‘Dude is that your ex-girlfriend? I remember this poem.’*

*Rohan slowly turned towards Uday and said, ‘She’s still in love with me Uday.’  
Uday let out a smile and hit Rohan on the head. ‘You shouldn’t have let her go.’ He replied.*

*After five minutes, Sanjana came in to the canteen and saw Rohan. She directly walked up to him and spoke, ‘Did you listen to the radio?’*

*He simply nodded and she continued, ‘I’m sorry Rohan, I apologize for being a bitch and breaking up with you. I shouldn’t have spoken to you like that.’*

*‘Apology accepted, anything else?’ he asked her calmly.  
‘Yes, I love you.’ She replied.*

*‘How can I believe you?’ he asked her. ‘Prove it to me Sanjana.’*

*She looked around and climbed on a table and shouted, ‘Hey guys please listen. I’m Sanjana…and this is Rohan.’ She said pointing towards him. ‘I love him a lot and I just wanted to confess this in front of you all.’ Everyone became silent and stood staring at them.*

*Sanjana kneeled down on the table and said, ‘Rohan I love you.’ Everyone present over there started clapping. ‘You better say yes to my proposal or else people over here will bash you.’ She whispered.*

*He stood there dumbstruck for ten seconds and went and hugged her tightly. Whistles and hoots joined the clapping.*

*‘You know what; we are setting up a really bad example for the kids here.’ Sanjana said. Rohan smiled at her and kissed her.*

*‘Why did stay silent all these years?’ he asked her. They were walking in the garden outside as the rain stopped.   
‘You changed your number and blocked me in Facebook idiot.’ She replied. ‘I felt bad and offended and was angry at you.’*

*‘What made you forget all that now?’ he asked her.   
‘Arjun…’ she replied. And he stood there staring at her. ‘He contacted me last week and asked me if I was still in love with you. Though I denied, he didn’t keep quiet. He told that I was cheating myself and stuff like that. Finally I agreed that I still had feelings for you.’*

*‘Then I agreed to come for the reunion brunch, but he wanted this to be a bit filmy and romantic…and you know the rest.’ She finished.*

*Rohan simply smiled in return and came forward and kissed her. ‘I need to find Arjun.’ He replied and ran towards the college building.*

*Arjun and some other old students were standing and talking about their college days. He pulled him aside and slapped him. Before anyone could realize what was happening, they both hugged each other.*

*‘You’re crying?’ Arjun asked him.  
Rohan looked at him and asked, ‘if you still cared for me, why were you away all these days?’*

*He shrugged and replied, ‘Sometimes things happen for a reason and we get to know when they happen.’*

*‘I didn’t understand anything.’ Rohan replied.  
‘Neither did I.’ Arjun chuckled.*

*They both laughed and Uday joined them in their group hug.*

*‘I told you to make her laugh to make her fall in love with you.’ Arjun spoke. ‘It works dude.’*

*‘Not in my case.’ Rohan replied. ‘You told that to make her fall in love I had to make her laugh. But every time she laughs I’m the one who falls in love.’*

*Sanjana couldn’t resist kissing him.*

THE END