# RCERT Days

We are the youth....! The face of modern era .we don’t only

Live but we enjoy our life our lifestyle can make many other

Persons reluctant to us but we are what we are!!!!

enjoyment should be the part of our life because

when we live our best part of the life means college life what we bring to the outer world is memories because 98% students are from regional college where knowledge is rare....!!!!

4th August 2008 it was 6 o clock of morning my mother woke me up

for a special purpose .... FIRST DAY OF MY ENGINEERING COLLEGE

we had a scooty but dad didn’t allow me to use because i had a

Feministic issue, I was a terrible driver so i took my bicycle

and rushed towards college.

C.E.C. (chandrapur engineering college) that was my college

about 7-8km away from my home but instead of going to college directly, i went to vicky's home who was allotted same college by AICTE with ganesh both were my friends from school days but we were oblivious of the fact that we had chosen same branch(I.T.) in same college. i was already late so we immediately led our steps towards the college route. we all were from middle class families and from all of us only i had one moped and triple seat was not allowed so we chose bus with affordable fares for transportation. It was 45 minutes journey from Vicky’s home to college During journey instead of excitement i was little bit nervous, i always dreamt to be a engineering college alumni, a real technocrat, engineering was my passion i don’t know exact reason behind this, sometimes i give all credit to my maternal cousins who got tremendous success by pursuing engineering career and all praising words my mother used to repeat to describe them but when I remember those days I want to enunciate one thing here, most of the students don’t opt for engineering because of their personal technical interest, many of them do it because they are amazed by astonishing success of their acquaintances and stature from society .

At 7.45a.m. Bus reached to the college and as soon as we came out of the bus we got first impressive sight of college campus. Whole college was shining in the sunshine. College campus was guarded by a giant black Iron Gate which gave a royal look to R.C.E.R.T. name of the college was written at the top of the gate which was gleaming with every ray of sun. There were separate parking slots for boys and girls surrounded by beautiful flowers and giant trees.

The main part means administration building was in the middle of college campus. It was 3 storeyed building!!!

Separate buildings were provided to each department with big playground backside of administration building. Snacks and beverages issues were satisfied by two canteens located opposite to each other, Baka canteen used to provide obnoxious products like cigarettes,gutkha to male students while other one was dedicated to serve female students and their friend zoned boys.

From the previous impression I was expecting artistic classrooms for fresher batch then I was disappointed as I found myself in godown like place which relation with the aestheticism must be paradoxical. Pretty girls were rare species in our class most of the girls were fair complexioned while being a man I didn’t glance at the guys but I would like to say there was nothing amazing about my first engineering class because I had lost my both friends as they were allotted section C and I was thrown in section A. as I was raised in Chandrapur and it was my hometown that’s why I could find 2-3 familiar faces with whom I could share my desk. He was Nikhil who shared my desk we knew each other from 12thclass days he was my batch mate in PET classes. We greeted each other and suddenly whole class stood up to greet our teacher Mrs. awade she was physics teacher having age nearly 50-55 years means there was nothing spectacular about her. She took a chalk and scratched it on the blackboard the word was saying INTRODUCTION. one by one every student enlightened her with his/her own details Nikhil also stood up and chanted his name followed by his educational performance, 86% in 10th standard ,89% in 12th standard and 120 marks out of 200 in PET.

I was amazed as well as impressed by his historical performance. Now it was my time to enlighten her, well honestly I was nervous to speak about my subnormal educational records in front of whole class and few pretty girls but I didn’t have any option so I too chanted my name Harsh Joshi with little bit hesitation and completed my biodata with PET marks. Mrs. awade tried to make us feel uncomfortable by describing how tough job is it to get through engineering, now it was her time to enlighten us about engineering, being a lecturer it was her duty but students were bored due to her slow and old voice, at the end of class I patted myself and said “engineering dude engineering!”.

Initially it was very difficult for me to get conversant with new and tedious schedule because like any other guy of engineering I had joined ED/EM private tuition classes; it used to begin at 6.00 a.m. so I had to leave my home before 5.30 a.m. I had made some friends in tuition but still my best buddies were yet to come.

It was the day before Independence Day and we had a practical sessions running on hence lecturer divided us into groups of three I was included in a group with aman and panku. We were alien to each other

And that was the big reason behind our good mannerism to each other but as time moved gradually we were on the verge of good friends. In the middle of session we exchanged our mobile numbers and promised each other plenty of good text messages.

I had invited all my friends to vastu puja ceremony of my new house it was 2bhk flat in the heart of city. After the conclusion of pooja we enjoyed a great dinner with all our pranks going all around and then the beautiful evening came to an end which had strengthen the bond between us. That night sleep could barely embrace me because of thoughts which were running through my mind. I was thanking to almighty for his wonderful gift in the form of such great friends.

I was already familiar with the nature of Nikhil, Ganesh and Vicky

But at that night I came to know others quite well. Aman was geek like looking guy while his body was not confined in a good shape he was little bulky. He was from wani (a tahsil from yavatmal district) he was very confident, straight forward boy with good etiquettes, somewhat fashionable (still debatable). Normally he was a person who used to hide his emotions just to pretend that he is hardcore guy but at that night he disclosed his real nature he shared all his funny experiences of his hostel life with us whereas Panku was a talkative, funny guy he was from junasurla (a village from chandrapur district), he was a gallant guy but if he forgot to comb his hair his face could resemble with PUG dog in Hutch commercials. He had guts to make friends, it was matter of seconds for him, he had great sense of humor which made him impressive and he had great command over Marathi while I could find leadership qualities in him.

*I couldn’t attend my college for 4 days as I was busy in transferring valuable things of my old house to new house. I rejoined my college in the next week, I found every guy of my class in terror that filled my heart with anxiety, when I asked them about reason they said its time for prof.kureshi’s class. aman squinted eyes at me and said “harsh!, you are a dead man now, you haven’t attended his class since last Monday and he is constantly asking about your whereabouts, he is one of the most strict lecturers of R.C.E.R.T. if I were you I won’t mess up with him” I enquired “why didn’t you tell him any justifiable reason?” my friends were silent and I got my answer. HITLER had entered in the class, he was professor of engineering drawing* his impression was enough for every student to come prepared, being unaware I had forgotten my geometrical box, he took attendance, “HARSH!” he demanded, I stood up and looked at his face still I can remember his sarcastic smile, it was time for investigation.

He asked “where had you been since last week?”

I replied my justifiable reason and begged for mercy.

He shouted at me “have you taken admission to Bsc college?”

(I don’t want to humiliate Bsc guys, I believe in knowledge they are superior to us)

His shouting started my vibrating mode, I was shivering like a naked man in polar region

I apologized for being absent and gave him an engineer’s promise “I WON'T DO IT AGAIN SIR”

Before I regain my original sitting position again, he asked me about my geometrical box.

I casually replied him as I was absent, I wasn’t aware of necessities.

My reply outraged him, he sarcastically asked me ”Mr.Harsh are you here only for enjoyment?”

I was speechless, ashamed, and angry because of my sole molestation in public, especially in front of girls, Professors Teachers continued to play role of villain in my life.

Duration from September to October was not exceptional, we used to attend classes and practical imperatively, to complete our journals we used to borrow scholar’s journal to copy it in group while assignments were a major problem but Nikhil's cordial connection with girls resolved it instantly. We got our sessional exam timetable which was going to commence from 3rd week of October.

Being alumni of R.T.M.N.U. I want to mention one thing here, in the first year we didn’t have semester pattern (they have changed it from 2012), university used to take only one final exam based on whole syllabus in the month of February-march. Most of you would be thinking that engineering from Nagpur university is just like heaven as we have to appear for only 80 marks paper in 3 hours while 20 marks is in the hands of the lecturer and he is entitled to give it to save reputation of college but trust me if you see Nagpur university’s bounce paper you will blame your destiny because each and every question seems to be out of syllabus and sheer 20 marks out of 80 is meritorious.

No one took sessional exam seriously except scholar guys, it was hardest job for us to sit more than one hour in sessional. Lecturers were doing their job to intimidate students by saying the assessment marks will be given to each student based on his own performance in sessional. Sessional exam was completed, and I can proudly say we enthusiastically showed our presence in each paper, just presence by the way!

WINTER VACATION

After the conclusion of examination, we abruptly moved our heads towards enjoyment, discussion at Panku's room was going for the selection of picnic spot. Panku’s room was the nearest place for us from college and he gave us full freedom to use its resources and toilet, consequently we used to spend most time there instead of lecturer’s boring dissertation sometimes his room partner would raise issue about this, but it couldn’t change us while after sometime he realized that he was helpless and we were inevitable.

I entered in room to participate in debate. I enquired “has anyone suggested affordable and appropriate place yet?”

Aman replied” we should go to tadoba”

Vicky argued “no, I have already seen tadoba 3 times, last time I had seen it just a month before”

“so, it’s not a rumour“ aman replied

Vicky asked “what rumour?”

“Villagers of Tadoba is claiming that they have seen alive MOGLI roaming through jungle of Tadoba” aman replied.

Nikhil yelled “how about Ramala lake?”

Ramala lake was the cheapest picnic spot and almost close to aman’s hostel.

So, no one disapproved idea of Nikhil.

We decided to go there in our college uniform but after reaching there we came to know administration of Ramala doesn’t allow students to enter in college uniform, we had no option except going to aman’s hostel to change, at aman’s dorm ganesh righteously took out aman’s 3 shirts for himself, he chose one and gave remaining 2 to me I selected one which was quite suitable to my skeleton and I passed remaining one to Nikhil while panku wore amit’s brand new t-shirt. We allowed Vicky to remain on his uniform as he refused to use his own friendly right.

At ramala we did all those things which is absolute metaphor for nonsensical behaviour , we had breakfast there in obnoxious way , we tried to flirt with girls who came there with their boyfriends, ganesh tried in all possible way to find out couples doing objectionable things but he was disappointed, panku yelled his nonsense *Marathi shyris* to impress some neighboring visitors who used to give ridiculous smile to express their retaliation. We spent maximum time there laughing and mocking each other, only thing I can tell you that our happiness had no limits, that day we touched pinnacle of joyousness. No one cared about the time, we were in our own happy world watching red sun drowning itself in red sparkled water of lake. (and here I forgot to mention that no one returned aman’s clothes thereafter)

Half of December was over, we had joined college after winter vacation and on first day professor of mathematics Mr.yekre shocked us by flaunting bunch of answer papers of sessional exam, except Nikhil no one could do exceptional, scholars who had failed (they used to pretend themselves as omniscient) solaced each other by saying it’s not final exam, I did pass but bit disappointed on my performance but when I saw other’s condition, I considered myself too fortunate. During lunch time we were discussing about the results, Vicky started discussion with world’s most ridiculous question.

Vicky asked “so how did you do in M1?”

Panku replied “I failed!”

Aman said “same here”

I answered “13 out of 30”

Ganesh said “not bad! You passed at least”

I ridiculously replied “can’t you ask this question to Nikhil alone?”

Vicky replied “what happened?”

Aman answered “Topper!!!”

Vicky said “so topper streak continues here, too .. huh Nikhil”

Nikhil nodded and responded “It’s not my fault! It wasn’t my intention to top in math”

Nikhil convinced everyone with samosa party and by promising that he will teach math to us.

*Honestly, Nikhil to whom I will consider him cleverest and most disciplined student of my first-year class, It’s not that I had not seen any scholar student before but he was really exceptional, he used to keep his parents happy because of his extraordinary results as well as he used to change his girlfriend after his new achievement, he used to do all those things a normal student does, I never saw him studying but he never let his attendance to decrease below 98%.*

Till the end of December, we had got our sessional results in hand

My rank was 333rd form 700 students, Panku and Aman managed to place themselves below 300, Vicky shocked us by grabbing 198th rank while Ganesh was just behind me, and as usual Nikhil was the 24th topper of our college. I thought it was time for retrospection because my result was implication of my bad habits and lack of seriousness. Engineering is not just faculty of education I will express it as a mirror metaphorically as it reflects nut and bolts of your behavior in a peculiar way.

My parents were not surprised of my result as they had seen their lad’s hard work to get success, on contrary my brother who was 2 years ahead of me always used to top in his class, I was not feeling inferior but I was really ashamed of my result and I really didn’t want to repeat it so I decided to take Nikhil’s help and I was damn sure of my buddy that he will never say no to me!

Nikhil’s home was just 10-15 minutes away from mine, his family had their home built on 1900-2000sq.ft plot approximately, his both parents were teachers both (I think it was the biggest reason behind his disciplined nature), a younger sister was a high school girl and a bizarre grandpa who used to spend all the day doing strange (sometimes objectionable) things at home but he was one of the greatest buddies of my buddy, all members of his family were adorable and they liked me as well.

I started to spend 2-3 nights from a week at Nikhil’s home ONLY FOR STUDY, initially being a scholar, I thought of him as a patient of insomnia who can keep himself awake whole night for study but I was disappointed because he had no any specific time to go to sleep, after my arrival he used to chat with his girlfriend or crush for 2-3 hours when it used to come to an end he could barely stay awake and I would be on my own trying to grasp something from what I read.

SHEETS DRAMA

Mr.Kureshi increased our load by giving 2 sheet assignments to us with a deadline of 1 week. We all were sitting in canteen planning a strategy for sheets.

Aman asked “does anyone have drafter?”

Panku replied “I do “

I said “then we should draw it together! I mean we will make fewer mistakes together and we can easily share one drafter”

I said it because ‘I knew if anyone gets redraw same going to happen with others as you know distribution of punishment makes you feel proud instead of embarrassment’.

Everyone liked my idea; I don’t know why?

We decided to meet at Panku's room.

Everyone had come prepared at Panku's room, his room partner had absconded to his relative’s home, beautiful evening was coming to an end and moon was showering its calm light on earth.

We were discussing about girls in class…

Aman said “we should start talking to girls in class”

Nikhil replied “I already have”

“I am not talking to you, Nikhil“ Aman said.

Panku asked “but why? I mean we are good together enjoying our college days! We don’t need girl in our group and I want to warn you guys, girl in our group will work as an explosive”

*Panku had his own pessimistic opinion about girls, he was an emotional guy, a diehard fan of Shahrukh khan but sometimes I think his past experience made him “precaution is better than cure” type man but I never asked him about his past.*

I said “what’s wrong with that, girls can be advantageous to us as they are regular in class and most important thing, we can get rid of our vulgarness and can increase the standard of conversation”

Nikhil argued “I don’t think so, have you seen me changed?”

“I am talking about boys Nikhil, boys only….” I answered.

Nikhil tapped my back, seeing other guys laughing.

At last Doomsday had come, professor Kureshi was going to check our assignments, he took attendance and checked sheets simultaneously, I was impressed by his time management skills, Aman went first, as roll numbers were arranged alphabetically so his roll number used to come before us. Everything happened in his Favour

Professor Kureshi was impressed by his diagrams, same happened with Nikhil and Panku, now it was my turn to confront the situation, I showed him my sheets and without any hesitation he gave me 2 big correct signs and wrote something in between, it was REDRAW, I didn’t expect tragic end of my hard work in this way.

At canteen friends tried to comfort me with their words of sympathy.

Nikhil said “don’t worry Harsh! It’s a part of engineering life, we may get same in future”

(Still, I couldn’t understand why he said like that)

Aman said while sipping his tea “Exactly! You have plenty of time to redraw it “

Ganesh took my sheets and re-examined it carefully.

“Do you know one thing Harsh?” He asked

I replied “what?”

“Your sheets are far better than mine, but I didn’t get redraw” he enunciated.

*Ganesh was extremely powerful person to change the mode of situation through his words, if there would have been any educational faculty of sarcasm, he must have done doctorate in that.*

I kept quiet because I didn’t want to discuss that topic again.

January was coming to an end, cold breezes were refreshing flowers, besides glittering dewdrops on flowers were making them attractive, chirping of birds were rejuvenating trees, tender sunrays of dawn were helping earth to shine, Nature had created heaven on earth. University had already rendered us final examination timetable starting from 2nd week of February, I was little disturbed because of my incomplete sheet assignments, out of 7 sheets I had 4 to redraw while professor asked me to emend remaining, we had stopped attending college, I was sitting at Nikhil’s home and with all of his potential he was trying to teach me Differential equations.

I asked him “can’t I skip this topic?”

Nikhil argued “No! They always ask minimum two questions on this topic, even I will suggest you prepare only this topic thoroughly, you can easily clear math with this one”

I replied “I just don’t want to clear, I want first class at least”

“Then go for Euler’s theorem after this” Nikhil suggested.

Somehow, I had understood the real secret of Differential equation, that’s why I was feeling better, Nikhil had lightened my load, Now I had to pay attention towards incomplete sheets, Nikhil had promised me to help .Our examination time table was divided into three parts, first part was comprised of 2 non-technical subjects like English and social science then we had university practical exam in between, followed by remaining technical subjects, we had enough interval between each subject, it was time to assess yourself in prospective of every subject.

I did not face any problem while solving non-technical papers as I was good at English due to grace of my father and because of my command over English I could write whopper in social science (I believe examiners of social science believe in size of answer paper) but my ordeal was approaching fast, I had to confront professor kureshi to submit my uncompleted sheet assignments on the day of external practical, I was under tremendous tension.

I spent a night before at panku’s room to crosscheck my sheets, his approval comforted me at some extemt, but I could hardly sleep as several negative thoughts were igniting my anxiety.

I awoke to the irritating sound of alarm, panku was shining his teeth, I hastily brushed and we immediately left room for college after taking bath. I found my colleagues were memorizing blue pages of VBD (**V**inod **B**ook **D**epot, VBD was not just a guide to us, it was our life metaphorically I will consider it as a mother who can’t see her child’s failure) while professor kureshi was busy in testing acquaintance of each student about E.D. Now it was my turn to confront him.

I entered his office he asked me to sit, I sat on the chair.

He asked “what happened Mr.Joshi ? None of single sheet of yours is checked.”

I didn’t have appropriate answer, so I kept quiet.

“Is your dad a landlord? What do you think of yourself?” he sardonically asked.

I was mortified but I chose to keep quiet. He asked me couple questions of E.D. to which I failed to give answers of.

I was disappointed as I had spoiled my viva and I was pretty sure about my E.D. backlog.

Ganesh had summoned us to show his new Honda Stunner bike. Nikhil tried it and appreciated it’s pick up. His mother served us tea while we were discussing about my fate.

Ganesh asked “did he check your sheets?”

“Yes, but in resentment, I don’t think he will give me enough marks to clear” I answered.

“Don’t be pessimistic prematurely, you never know what’s going to happen to you” Nikhil scolded me.

Aman had arrived with bad news about panku.

“Panku is bankrupted! ” Aman shouted.

“what happened?” We all shouted in unison.

“EasyBizz business what he was doing was actually a fraud” he answered.

We all were shocked because Panku had invested about Rs 25000 and spent nearly about 6 months doing it, besides he had too much expectations and dreams behind it and all were shattered. We instantly rushed towards his room to console him.

Panku was sleeping in his room, he took long time to open the door, his swollen red eyes were telling us he had cried so much.

“I deceived my father; I have broken his trust” Panku had tears in his eyes.

“Don’t cry, Panku! Everything will be alright” I said.

I couldn’t say anymore at that time, I didn’t have appropriate words to console him.

“Still, you have chance to prove yourself, study exceptionally hard in upcoming papers, your father will definitely forgive you when he will see your result” Optimistic Nikhil said.

“Can we lodge report against EasyBizz?” Panku asked me as my father belonged to judiciary department.

“Yes, we can! But we should not, look Panku I know you are seeking vengeance but I don’t think this is the right time for it because you already have wasted big fortune and half year doing this crap, court will take at least a decade to sort out this and you will have to invest huge amount of money to contest the matter, so please forget it assuming it as a nightmare” I suggested.

That unfortunate event had broken Panku, I was reading Engineering Mechanics, but my mind was obsessed with unpleasant thoughts about Panku. I was angry at him because his father always advised him not to care about his family’s poor financial condition by ignoring education; his father had jeopardized his own health by toiling day and night just to give best education to his children. Panku was the only boy from his village who could learn till graduation and his father was proud of his accomplishments but panku had forgotten one eternal truth “*there are no shortcuts in pursuance of success”.*

Panku had dragged himself in a serious problem again because he was caught red handed by the invigilator while cheating in chemistry practical exam, he was disallowed to continue further as he was asked to leave laboratory. We were appalled at cruel decision of invigilator hence we decided to commence another comfort session for Panku after exam.

“What madness drove you to such foolishness?” Nikhil broke the ice.

“I was unprepared, I had no choice but cheating” Panku confessed.

“I don’t think you will be able to clear chemistry practical” sarcasm of Ganesh had come into play.

“You shouldn’t have done this” I said.

“Stop criticizing me or leave” panku angrily replied.

Panku’s roommate turned his beaming face toward us, I thought shouting of panku was a ray of hope for him as he would have thought we will leave permanently but we were kings of shamelessness, we kept irritating him till he left the room.

After such series of unfortunate events panku introverted his own feelings, he used to abuse his fate in his own solitary confinement, we also drowned ourselves in books like every other engineering student.

It was end of February mother nature had decreased the intensity of the cold, now blankets, sweaters and mufflers became the part of wardrobe, mother V.B.D was giving nerve to every R.T.M.N.U alumni, technical theory papers were approaching, and we were crosschecking dates on calendar with dates on timetable.

“Induction motor is easy and very important topic prepare it well, it may ensure your 26 marks” Nikhil advised me at his home.

“What about star delta topology and power factor” I enquired.

“These topics are big and may take too much time, I will suggest you first secure your position then go for good marks scenario” Nikhil said.

“Are you preparing phase diagram?” I asked Nikhil.

“I am preparing all 5 chapters?”Nikhil replied.

*Nagpur University designed syllabus in such a way that maximum subjects contains 5 chapters, section A part of paper incorporates 4 questions from first 2 chapters and 1 question from 3rd chapter while 1 question from chapter 3 and 4 questions from 4th and 5th chapters would get their place in section B (but this is not mandatory)* *and we are asked to solve any three questions from section A as well as section B part, so most of the students prepare any one chapter from 1st and 2nd and from 4th and 5th  but 3rd chapter gets utmost priority as it becomes part of section A as well as section B.*

Nikhil’s reply surprised me; I asked him in haste “what’s the necessity, they are not going to give you extra marks for extra questions”.

“At this point I can’t justify, our ET lecturer taught us well and his notes are very lucid and short” Nikhil replied.

“Should I go through his notes?” I asked.

“well, honestly I will suggest you to stick with V.B.D., you will have to understand basics first only then you will be able to understand his notes and at this time you cannot afford to invest so much time on one subject when you have 8 more subjects pending” Nikhil advised.

Nikhil was right I wasn’t regular in ET classes; this lameness was its consequence.

Everyone was too immersed into study to catch updates from friend during exam days.

After the completion of exam, we gathered at my apartment’s roof. Crescent moon was shining in the sky with stars, it was a typical summer cloudless calm night, a romantic one.

“At last, we are free!” Aman Shouted.

Panku craned his neck to meet Aman’s eyes, Aman smiled and we started laughing.

“ahem!, as I concerned engineering is 4 year degree course, hence after 3 more years probably we can say this and most important thing result is not declared yet” Vicky said.

Ganesh grinned after seeing someone was following his steps of sarcasm.

“But we don’t get moment to celebrate often” Aman replied.

“Okay, I am throwing a party” Panku said.

Everyone changed their eyes direction towards panku in awe.

“Just you guys give the money” Panku enunciated.

We chose to celebrate our first year emancipation in a high class Chinese restaurant named “SARKAR”, a semi cold hovel naked from all four sides with minions in a common dress code ‘Banyan and Bermuda’ having a towel like piece of cloth around the neck like muffler to swipe out dirt.

“I found Engineering Mechanics very tough, I could barely solve 3 questions” I disturbed silence.

“Really? I was pining for someone who will share tag ‘person with backlogs’ with me and I got one” Ganesh said while swallowing chewed Manchurian.

“Don’t be a nut! Whatever happened is a past we can’t change it plus we have 10 incentive marks so don’t worry” Nikhil said.

Amidst of this conversation Ganesh ate some Manchurians from Nikhil’s plate and said “those were my incentives” and both started fighting to snatch Manchurian from each other’s plates.

Everyone from our group except the native ones had absconded to their home, Nikhil selected his maternal grandmother’s home to spend summer vacation and to exploit high internet speed. I was on Facebook, I was busy in sending friend request to girls with beautiful profile picture and flirting with every possible girl in my chat list, suddenly my chat bar popped up saying “hiiiiiiii”, it was a girl’s message, her name was Ritu Singhania, immediately I checked her profile, she was from same college as mine, suddenly I replied ‘hey Ritu!!!!’.

Ritu: are you from IT department?

Me: yes???

Ritu: do you know when will our college start? I read BIO from your profile, you are from IT department so though I could ask you question.

Me: I don’t know exactly, but generally from second week of June!

Ritu: you are from which section by the way?

Me: A and you?

Ritu: D.

Me: you don’t seem from Chandrapur?

Ritu: yes, I am from Nagpur. I live in college hostel. See you in college.

Ritu went offline, my hard work of being online 24 hours didn’t go in vain, I had got one girl to chat.

Next day I was prepared for long chat with Ritu, I was pining for her name on my chat list but I was disappointed, I signed out after posting Romantic cute picture, back in those days these posts on Facebook seemed to be cool.

Nikhil had invited all of us to spend night at his home as his parents had gone to visit some relative’s marriage, everyone except Panku and Aman had arrived there with different plans.

Ganesh said “let’s make ‘*poha’*!”

I liked his idea, I said “yes, how can I deprive all of you from delicious poha from world’s most talented chef ‘THE GANESH...the cook’ “.

“I am not going to do it alone” Ganesh said in a defiant tone.

“Okay, I would go with Nikhil to have some coke, ganesh will cook and harsh will chop vegetables” Vicky said.

“One minute! Look I am not habitual of household chores, so I think we should exchange our tasks Vicky” I said.

“Chopping vegetables would be the easiest task for Vicky, he is renowned mogli across the globe, he has got big nails too” Ganesh added while restraining his laughing.

“Please tell me the line where I had to laugh, alien (alias for ganesh as he had some alien like features)” Vicky replied.

“Okay then! You go with Nikhil, I would help JAADU (alien)” Vicky added.

Vicky surprised me by approving my offer.

We got our beverages at a bar at midnight, we were so happy just like we had acquired government jobs at bar so worms of enthusiasm inside us stirred up bike’s speed and in next 5 minute we reached Nikhil’s home.

Ganesh and Vicky were ready with delicious poha, they were rating female models on FTV.

“Who had told you to bring pepsi !!!” Vicky shouted.

“Yes! You guys should have asked mogli before leaving, whether he is capable of consuming artificial beverages” Ganesh said hilariously.

“don’t worry we will not force you Vicky” Nikhil said while distributing spoons.

“Okay! But I will take extra poha” Vicky said.

“Agreed!!!!!!!!!” we all said in unison.

We ended our midnight breakfast while convincing Vicky that he had had extra poha without giving him any.

Third semester had started, now I was part of IT department, it’s really hard to call it a department, college didn’t allot department a special building it was kind of backside of Electronics department, you had to enter barefoot in the main hall, being a tall guy, I had to bend a bit, you could always feel like you are going to mine underground but with air conditioning. First day was special, finally I had reunited with Ganesh and Vicky but little sad inside as there were no Panku, Nikhil or Aman to share desk with, you gradually develop bond with someone through time that you are not aware of but it hits you hard when you realize that they won’t be there with you as they used to be. We tried to look civilized, smart but failed terribly and then as usual we started to tease other guys around, one hostel guy retaliated but we didn’t have guts to retaliate back so we kept quiet murmuring “I will see you after class”. So, first day nothing special happened, I had totally forgotten about Ritu with my friends as you all know friendship easily trumps love anytime.

Rainy season is not as beautiful as it seems in Vidarbha region, whole city is covered by mud, potholes, flies follow you everywhere, I was sitting in the classroom trying to avoid most of them, suddenly commotion stopped as Digital Circuit’s lecturer Mota entered in the classroom.

“Don’t you have manners?” She angrily replied to Ganesh when she saw him yawning.

Ganesh could not keep himself awake being idle, but very few knew about it and obviously lecturers didn’t.

Ganesh tried to gather himself and gave her look that he is trying to concentrate on what she was saying.

Fortunately, Mrs.Mota didn’t extend matter much further.

She scratched chalk on blackboard, drew some 1’s and 0’s which we failed to understand, random thoughts clouded my attention as paying it to the class wasn’t that worthy, so I could not understand when DC lecture was over.

“Hey, I am jumbo?” Guy next to our desk turned his neck backwards to introduce himself.

“Is that your real name?” I replied suddenly.

“No but you call me Jumbo, I want everyone to call me Jumbo” he told us in threatening voice.

“Ok, but is this because of your elephant like body?” Ganesh smirkingly asked Jumbo.

Jumbo was 5 ft tall with oversized belly and beefy arms, he looked like fat midget. Ganesh’s reply embarrassed him, but he was left no choice but to participate in laughter.

“Hey, I am Pratik” I guy who accompanied him on his desk introduced himself.

“You look a little older, you are not from 2008 batch, right?” surprised of me asked Pratik.

“No, actually I and Jumbo are from 2006 Batch, we failed couple of times” Pratik replied.

“it’s not like that we don’t know how to pass, but examiners don’t try to understand our answers the way they are meant to be understood”, Jumbo added.

“Yeah, stupid and imbecile examiners” Ganesh tried to reply to Jumbo sarcastically.

For entire recess, Jumbo tried to convince us that there is nothing in this world that he can’t do or know about.

“hey, how’s your day?” I asked Panku who had just joined us in the canteen.

“I know nobody, nobody is there to laugh on my jokes or shayaris, entire day was terrible?” frustrated Panku described his pathetic day.

“There must be guys from your native place or of your religion” Vicky enquired Panku.

Panku had a belief that people with same religion should stay together, no matter how much they suck but they should be together.

I don’t know whether Vicky triggered any idea in him, but after that he made several friends who shared same religion and they left one by one after each fight.

Now as we were junior most in the department, Jumbo and Pratik warned us that seniors may come anytime and start ragging, Jumbo told us not to worry as we were with him and he knew most of the seniors, so they would spare us. One day I skipped the college and on the same day, seniors ragged the class, made Vicky and Ganesh to pose in inappropriate manners, however they were confused as instead of embarrassment both were enjoying and was doing lot more than what was just asked.

I asked Jumbo “How seniors could dare to rag Vicky and Ganesh, when you were around?”

“These things take time Harsh, I will talk to them” he replied.

“Talk or beg, please specify” Pratik taunted being aware of Jumbo’s true nature.

It was another day in third semester, MEA teacher introduced himself, he was one of his kind, ne never touched the real syllabus instead he would discuss stuff regarding CR elections, feedback of students, anything if it’s not even remotely related to syllabus, it was when he asked us to prepare list of nominees for CR election, after college we three gathered on my apartment’s terrace for serious discussion, it was cloudy night, thermal power station chimneys were busy exhaling smoke in the sky and sky was flashing lightnings intermittently.

“I want to be CR?” Vicky said.

“Ok then, what’s the strategy, we can talk to the hostelites but I don’t think they will be with us if one of them is nominating himself” Ganesh raised a concern.

“And what about girls? Don’t underestimate their votes too” I added.

“I don’t think locals will support hostelites, they can be reasoned easily” Vicky replied.

“it’s not time to assume, we need a connection to reach to them and win their belief, before that you need to present your agenda to them, so they can trust you” I advised Vicky like he was going to contest parliament elections.

“hmm…you are right… but how, I mean how I can reach to all of them and tell them about my agenda” Vicky asked with question mark on his face.

“don’t worry about that… nominee list will be finalized before recess, so 3rd lecture is of MEA, he is not so bothered about the syllabus, we can just ask if nominees can present their speech to entire class, so that entire class will get to see who all are participating in the elections.” Ganesh suggested in his own quirky style.

Ganesh managed to make the class follow his orders past couple of times, it really surprises me till know what qualities class saw in him to follow his instructions.

“Harsh…. harsh.. come here” Vicky gestured to me to come fast as I reached college a little later than both.

“This is the final list..one hostelite, me and one more guy named yedlawar, he is not hostelite” Vicky described the list he was pointing at.

“honestly, that’s terrible... because he may divide your votes” I replied in worrisome face.

“Let’s, talk to him, if we can manage to convince him to withdraw his nomination, we have chance of fighting” I tried to chart a plan.

“Don’t worry about the girls, I have some contacts and I will make sure you will get maximum of their votes” Pratik who just joined us with Jumbo added.

In the next moment we reached to Yedlawar’s desk, he was busy in gossiping with two of his servants.

“hey..how are you… it’s a long time we didn’t meet” Jumbo tried to gain yedlawar’s attention but failed.

“Hey..we just saw your name in the nominee list” Vicky asked to confirm from him.

“yeah. why?” he asked.

“Vicky is also contesting this election and now there is you, I can say one thing neither of you are going to win as both of you may end up eating each other’s votes” Pratik directly hit the point without hovering around the bushes.

“yeah…I know… that’s the only way my hostelite friend will win” yedlawar alarmed us with his reply.

“What!!! you are doing this for him, this is terrible… come on!!! this is not fair” again Jumbo tried to gain attention, but fate disappointed him again.

Yedlawar denied any chance of his withdrawal from the election, there was nothing left for us except if Vicky withdraw his nomination, then the contest would be between Yedlawar and Hostelite and we knew Yedlawar would give up his nomination if there is no Vicky for hostelite’s unchallenging win, if we managed to reveal Yedlawar’s real political agenda there was still chance for us to attract his most of the voters, so we distributed tasks within the group, Ganesh and I had to talk to the local boys, including polytechnic guys as we had limited exposure to the females of the class and I don’t think even if we have approached them in nerdy style they would have listened to us, Pratik was assigned to reach to the girls, Jumbo promised us to surprise us with his action (still don’t know what was it) and told us not to assign him any task. We tried our best to convince each of them, now it was up to them how they would react to our proposal at the very moment.

It was time for execution, we had already shared our plans to Nikhil, Aman and Panku too. Vicky withdrew his nomination which other nominees took it by surprise, we were scared, we thought somebody from one of their trustees already have revealed our true plan to them, for election Ganesh and I had already sacrificed flirting with the girls fearing it would hit us in a bad way. MEA lecturer stormed into the classroom with nominations list.

“Vicky..why you stepped down from the election?” he enquired.

“Sir…I want to address whole class, I want to share the real reason of stepping down from election” Vicky revealed his intention to the lecturer, who smiled in reply as it was taking entire lecture period time.

“Ok, once the nominees complete their speeches, I will give you extra 20 minutes to open your heart” Lecturer successfully wasted yet another class.

Both nominees completed their speeches, and as rehearsed their minions clapped for them their hearts out.

“yes, now Vicky will come and enlighten us about his PERSONAL REASON” MEA lecturer taunted Vicky.

Vicky got onto the stage, checked his shirting, rolled up his sleeves and started his speech.

“Hi class” we sighed in reply as he didn’t start from my beloved brothers and sisters.

“As you all know, we campaign for elections with agendas and my agenda is clear, perhaps I would say clearer than anyone who is sitting here” we started clapping without knowing what he was going to talk about.

A person named Phoksey joined us by clapping harder, he indirectly signed his support to Vicky.

“A Class Representative is not just a post, it’s a bidirectional responsibility a medium which connects students to their lecturer and vice versa, but when I came to know that some guys are playing filthy politics just to see me defeated in election, it disheartened me but if they are confident that they can bear this responsibility with dedication then I won’t be hurdle anymore but I want this election to be fair and square, no biasedness” Vicky completed his speech which was about to make girls’ eyes teary.

“who are the guys, playing politics here Vicky, be straightforward...nonsense?” Lecturer asked to waste some more time.

“I won’t have to take the names, things will reveal itself” Vicky replied in style, which disappointed lecturer.

Two days had left for the election, we all were praying for some kind of miracle, in these two months we hadn’t touched third semester syllabus, third semester was comprised of some of the major subjects like C Programming, Digital Circuits, EDC subjects which would shape our future but, we weren’t habitual of semester pattern as we never had any before instead we were busy in elections. We were in the parking with Nikhil, that’s when Phoksey ran towards us to tell us the news we wanted to hear in that week.

“Yedlawar withdrew his nomination” He yelled at us.

“Awesome!!! Now go and nominate yourself Vicky” we all shouted in unison.

Vicky hurriedly went to the office and nominated again and told Yedlawar’s true reason for nomination to lecturers, which also surprised them.

Everyone in the group anticipated Vicky’s win over hostelite, we had started counting probable votes in our favor but still we weren’t sure if some could turn or remain absent in the last moment.

Election day had arrived, we decided to sit in two last rows with our loyal supporters, MEA lecturer asked everyone to write the name of nominee on the paper and submit to him, our loyal supporters proved their loyalty by flaunting the paper with Vicky’s name on the it, one by one entire class submitted their votes, three people who we thought our probable votes, were absent which amplified our anxiety, now it was time to count the votes, MEA lecturer quietly did it without anyone’s help, he gave a look to all of us like he is unable to sum these votes, he grabbed a chalk wrote names of nominees on the blackboard and their respective vote counts, Vicky had won election by 14 votes and elected as our new CR, we could not restrict our celebration before lecturer and started clapping, some of us passed comments to troll the other nominee and his supporters. Finally, election drama was over we forced Vicky for winning speech which he delivered in his own style, so nobody could understand it plus promised them of treat which he never fulfilled.

One fine evening, on 26th September 2009 I was watching India vs Pakistan ICC champions trophy match, Pakistan had given score of 303 to india to chase, it was one of the special matches for me because selectors had brought back Rahul Dravid in ODIs and I had huge hopes from him, suddenly my phone rang with Aman flashing on its screen.

“Hey, Aman, where are you” I picked up the phone.

“Hey, Harsh, I just came back to Chandrapur from home, first year winter exam for students with backlogs is scheduled” Aman replied with husky voice.

“Ok, Ganesh didn’t tell me yet”

“please come and help me with Maths-1, it would be great help for me” Aman asked for help, still not sure why he asked me when university topper lived just 2 Kilometers away from him, ok may be 3 Kilometers.

Personally, I am not good teacher because I know I can’t simplify things and describe it so that the people at other end will be capable to understand, for most part of my learning days, I could not learn the secret of learning from other people, may it be teacher, my friends or brother, my way of action was so simple, bring the books and mug every chapter in it, it sure proved to be very successful till first year.

Aman’s new room was about half mile away from my home, usually it used to take about 10-15 minutes for me to reach there by walk.

Aman’s used to live alone in the room, it was neat and clean as apartment was recently built and he moved there few days back, later he shared room with his cousins and brothers, and aesthetics of room fed away eventually.

When I reached there, his bed was flooded with the books and notes, he had collected notes from everyone he knew who had cleared M1 subject.

He tossed me a pillow to rest on his bed, which I accepted gracefully.

“I think you should prepare for partial derivatives and differential calculus” I suggested Aman while checking the pages of VBD carefully.

“My differential equation is not so strong, will you teach me that chapter?” Aman tried to cover his incompetence in M1.

“ok, shall we start then” I asked Aman to which he nodded in reply.

He grabbed his rough book and started to solve frequently asked problems, I tried to describe things which I also had mugged without understanding them, he kept looking at the rough book, barely able to analyze his own solution, scratched pen to head twice, that’s when I realized that instead of helping I was confusing him and I had to try another way.

“What if I solve couple of these questions for you and you try to understand the solution and if you find any difficulty just stop me there, so I can describe it for you” I proposed a new solution to Aman, gazed him with confused face for his approval.

“Ok” Aman replied with thin voice.

I possess a super quality of writing rapidly, I used to write in cursive font but in very unsophisticated way, most of the times I personally was not able to decode it, it helped me a lot during completion of practical records, assignments in the last moment.

When I started solving problems, I forgot about Aman, by the time he finished reading first statement of solution, I had completed the problem already.

He turned the direction of copy, kept murmuring the solution as he was consummating M1, looked at me with smile.

“Now, I am able to understand the partial derivative” Aman clarified while thumping half bent rough book to one of his fists.

I was so happy, after all these years I could successfully transfer my knowledge to my student.

I was confident and happy about all M1 teaching thing, I had shared this story with everyone including Nikhil.

“Which chapters did you teach him by the way?” Nikhil asked.

“Partial derivative and differential equations” I boastfully replied.

“the ones which I taught you” Nikhil tried to steal credit in playful way.

I was in huge demand, I had shared story with such self-boasting, people who heard it were convinced that I am the only one they should turn to if they want to clear their M1 backlog.

Next one was Panku, he called in me person to gain my support to conquer M1 to which I obliged instantly.

Panku had shifted his room to nearby township, adhered to his reputation his room used to be filled with his several friends, all of them would listen to sad music which eulogize protagonist with broken heart and faced betrayal in love.

It was month of October, due to Chandrapur’s proximity to forest, evening in October is fairly chilled, roads are filled with transport trucks ceaselessly contributing to Chandrapur’s air pollution.

Panku came to my home around 10 PM to pick me, we decided to spend some time on bridge above adlabs to view entire city in night.

“Peace…Peace…. This place stops my winding thoughts..Harsh..isn’t it beauty” Panku asked me.

It was indeed a beautiful place, but the calmness was pouring peace to it making it more beautiful, night had lowered the intensity of road traffic, broken light poles made path for darkness, every cold breeze in that dark place would hit your soul and calm your mind.

“Yes, this place is amazing” I replied in affirmation without spicing anything.

“I come here often to lower my anxiety, to gather my thoughts” Panku sighed.

“Anxiety? What is bothering you” I asked Panku.

“My father is not rich man, he is barely managing my education with household expenses, I have already disappointed him with EasyBizz thing and now 3 backlogs, it’s like I broke his trust” he replied with emotional eyes.

“Did he say anything to you recently?” I asked in concern.

“He never says anything that would hurt me or my brother, but I know he is disappointed from inside” Panku cleared my doubt.

“He only asked me to concentrate on my studies, which I couldn’t do so far and it stings me from inside and I know if I clear all my backlogs, it would really make him happy” Panku added.

“so, let’s get back to room and start studying” I replied while getting on bike followed by Panku.

Panku had a habit of documenting everything, he kept logs of his every action or reminders to remind him of things he’s planned.

His room is full of stickers with moral messages, inspirational thoughts, he had only one bed in his room which his brother kept for himself.

Once you enter to Panku’s room, first thing he will ask you, if you are hungry, he, being fan of eating was one of the best cook in the gang.

I devoured my share of chapatis, I was full and feeling sleepy, honestly, I just wanted to sleep, just to give a kick to my adrenaline I started chatting with his brother who was acting stupendously like he was studying hard, during the chat I lost control, went too far and I started abusing him playfully which enraged Panku.

“If you won’t allow me to study, then please go” he requested me to head back to home.

“Be..harsh… will you shut up..let Panku study” Nikhil advised me who had just arrived and witnessed entire drama.

“I will… but I won’t spare his scoundrel brother today” I replied with no harm intention and started laughing which turned Panku red.

“out..just get out of my room… else I will beat you mercilessly” Panku threatened me with anger filled in his eyes.

“I am going now!!! but tell that scoundrel, I will return to spank his buttock!!!” and stormed off the room.

I got back to home and slept without any regret or shame, sleep was about to embrace me at the same time phone started vibrating, it was Panku who was calling, I picked up the phone and whispered slowly to avoid any disturbance to my parent’s sleep, they were already fed up with my late night study, chatting, advised me to sleep as early as possible to wake up early in the morning, but their advice often went in vain.

“What happened?” I whispered

“Sorry, but you should have behaved properly, it wasn’t my intention to hurt you” Panku apologized.

“Don’t worry, I don’t take friends’ words seriously” I tried to wipe his guilt.

“This is very important phase for me Harsh... I can’t waste a single minute now, you know” Panku explained his stand with heavy voice.

“Yeah, I know…don’t worry, we are good” I replied with yawn.

“Ok..then will see you in college tomorrow then”.

“sure… good night” I said and ended the conversation.

“Hahahahahahahaha… what did you do..last night..hahahaha” Vicky and ganesh greeted me with laughter in college.

“How do you know? did Nikhil tell you” I asked.

“No Panku..what had happened to you..were you drunk or high” Ganesh asked me.

“Nothing, you know..I have hidden monster inside me… that monster got conducive environment to pop out last night” I replied with smile.

“I bet, Panku must have thought of sending his brother back to Junasurla” Vicky started laughing hard.

“well, where is he..did you guys see him around” I enquired about Panku.

“yeah he is, he just met us in canteen and narrated entire story, his classroom is adjacent to ours, I will shout his name to call him from desk once the class is over” Ganesh replied while checking his phone.

“Lazy alien, leave it” Vicky replied, and we headed to classroom.

Vicky had come to know some of students from the class had complained about EDC lecturer to HOD, but he didn’t have much details about it, eventually the same incident alarmed MEA lecturer, soon he started to touch some part of syllabus and after couple of more sessions he declared class test. We didn’t have any idea about what MEA is all about, its ironical of Indian education system that the subjects which should to be taught in live and working environment like internships are being taught in four closed walls, by lecturers without having any practical knowledge.

Lecturer listed out questions on blackboard, to us all of them seemed to be out of syllabus, one by one I copied them on answer sheet to avoid neck exercise.

“What is the full form of MEA?” Ganesh asked.

“Managerial economics and accountancy and that’s the last thing I know about MEA” Vicky’s sarcasm played in.

Jumbo begged and asked for aid to all the students within his range.

“Harsh, just show me the first line, I will write myself the rest of the content” he turned his head to me and asked for cooperation.

“I usually start my answer from second line” Dumbfounded of me by the questions replied to Jumbo.

He then turned to Ganesh, in reply Ganesh asked him MEA’s full form to confirm, Jumbo never asked anything to Ganesh after that.

Test started, I tried to write the answer as fast as I can in cursive, I remember, in low voice I just whispered to the group to fill the answer sheet with real life examples.

Lecturer collected answer papers, I don’t know if it was because of my advice, but everyone in the group had thicker answer sheet than rest.

“it’s the first time I was filling answer sheet till the end” Jumbo confessed.

“with wrong answers” Pratik replied while restraining his laugh.

“I bet you Jumbo, your answers will be read before entire class” Pratik fired Jumbo’s anxiety.

Meanwhile I had totally forgotten about Ritu, to revive my lost love I decided to speak with her, but I had no reason, then I thought to discuss the same topic with group, after listening to my problem everyone was looking at me with concerned look like I was going to commit suicide.

“you are right, before girlfriend a girl should be a good friend” Pratik charmed us with Bollywood dialog.

“I know the right way, go and ask for her EDC copy, she writes everything there in lecture like journalist” Ganesh suggested.

“okay, that looks less perverse” I nodded in affirmative.

“wait a minute, I am not done yet, once you get her copy, write I love you Ritu wrapped with heart on the last page and ask her to check it when you’ll give it back” Ganesh finished his advice with beamed face.

I don’t know why but I found Ganesh’s way of approaching girls worth trying, a guy is always biased against face to face proposal.

“Don’t, do such stupidity” Pratik rejected Ganesh’s advice.

“I think Ganesh is right. Why to waste so much time when you can get answer in a day without much hassle” Vicky seconded Ganesh.

I decided to go with Majority, it was during last days of 3rd semester, Maths-3 lecture was over Ritu was about to leave classroom, it was then I clenched my fist and without thinking any further I shouted her name, in the excitement I couldn’t realize I had shouted so loud that I had stunned her and everyone in the class.

“Hey Ritu.. remember me?” I asked her.

“yeah Harsh.. hi” she replied back in light voice as she sensed entire class was watching her.

“Can I get your EDC copy, I skipped couple of classes recently, just want to fill empty pages” I revealed my so untrue intention.

“Take this…I have covered most of the part, still not everything is here” she handed over the copy which she hastily pulled out from her bag to me.

“I will make sure you get this back as soon as possible” I promised her with heavy voice which she overheard me while fleeing away.

It was the first time I had borrowed girl’s book since my adolescent age, I was so surprised to see the notes in it because they were written in very neat and peculiar way, important sections were marked in red, titles were covered in designed boxes, it took me a while to get back to my real intention, but I also gave a serious thought of copying the notes.

I opened copy’s last page, grabbed a special pen with glittering ink to write my feelings but due to lack of guts I held it back, thoughts of rejection from her brimmed inside my mind, heart said just write I would love to know you, mind said what if she offended by this, after ferocious clash between heart and mind, I decided to go through midway, I wrote I would love to befriend you with a pencil, then decide to observe her behavior to my response if the response it positive I won’t erase it away else gone with the wind.

I tried to reach to her several times in those 2-3 days, that’s when I realized one thing, if you seriously want to approach a girl then you should try with her best friend first, mostly, in the matter of relationships, girls’ choices are often pushed by how their best friends’ stereotype guy, if their friends approve you then you have better chance to win girl’s heart.

Ritu had suddenly started to wear goggles and I was so happy cause I thought she worn those in response to my new goggles, I decided to ask her the same question.

“Hey Ritu…why did you start to wear goggles?” I asked her rapidly when she was running to her hostel.

“No no… I wear this specs all the time” she replied with a smile and suddenly her best friend pinched her, and she started running fast.

And that was it, the shortest sole romantic conversation of my single life came to an end because of her friend which forced me to erase my feelings from her copy.

MEA lecturer flaunted bunch of answer papers to distribute after a week of exam, he cleaned the dust off pile and desk both, placed bunch of papers on desk properly, rubbed hands to each other to wipe off the dirt on them, with a serious face he started addressing to the class.

“I am disappointed” he started while closely monitoring the bunch.

“In me” Ganesh completed the sentence, I tried hard to restrain my laugh, but lecturer noticed it.

“Harsh come here, come forth” he ordered me.

Ganesh quickly stood up, cleared my way to get off the desk, I noticed he was super excited for my upcoming grand interrogation session.

“What’s the right word, tell me MARGINAL OR MANAGERIAL” Lecturer asked me with sadistic look.

“Both seem right to me” I replied in hesitation.

“In the context of MEA” his tone emphasized on last word.

“do one thing for me, take this chalk and write the correct word on the blackboard and let the whole class decide if it is right or wrong” he added and threw chalk to me.

I gazed at front row students for help, in return they looked at me with clueless face, I had no other option but to take leap of faith.

I guessed if the subject name has managerial in its title, then it has to be managerial, without any second thought I scratched the chalk on blackboard, wrote something in cursive which had resemblance to both Managerial and Marginal.

Confused of him took a while to decide what to do next, he pointed out a girl in front row and asked her to decode my word.

“Marginal” she replied in low voice and it was the correct one.

“Ok!!! Ok!!! Go back to your desk and instead of showing teeth to me, show some interest in the subject” he gave strong advice to me.

“Vicky…CR…. the chosen one, standup” he demanded Vicky.

It was my turn to enjoy the show now.

“Here is your CR’s answer to the question, ‘Describe direct marketing with examples?’” Lecturer shouted out loud Vicky’s answer.

“Advertisement is the form of direct marketing… because we all know how detergent company tries to lure its customers with the song… washing powder nirma detergent tikiya nirma..doodh si safedi nirma si aayi..chamkile kapdaa bhi khil khil jayee…sabki pasand nirmaaaa….washing powder nirma…detergent tikiya nirmaa.. nirmaaaaaaaaaa” Lecturer concluded answer in rhythm.

“I would like to speak with your father Vicky, give me his number” Lecturer politely asked Vicky his father’s contact details.

We thought matter went so far and about to become serious, that’s when Vicky reached to the lecturer and shared his father’s number with maximum coolness and asked him to call his father between 1 PM to 3PM during recess. Later we came to know his father buried the matter in same call.

Third semester examination was coming closer, I had started searching for the long lost VBDs in the home, only VBDs had the superpowers to boost knowledge enough to clear the exam in the last moments, Ganesh, Panku and Aman appeared for M1 backlog exam, I was quite excited to hear how it went especially with Aman.

“Hi… This is harsh” I greeted Aman on the call.

“Hey...” Aman replied with enthusiasm.

“How was the paper… were there repeated problems from the previous one?” I enquired.

“Nothing much, but overall, it was good, I solved about 4 and half questions” Aman raised my eyebrows with his reply.

“That’s great. Its more than enough to clear…even considering the worst case” I replied while calculating marks in mind.

“Hope so.. battle is still not won yet.. got four more subjects to clear” Aman gave indication to hang up the phone.

“hmm.. but you got to admit that M1 is most critical subject than all.. the probability of bouncing question paper is always high” I tried to beg for credit.

“No.. I don’t think so… I think chemistry is toughest of all… you know Heman, right?” Amit asked.

“Yeah sure, the one who fought with Omkar for 2 rupees over the issue of Petrol filling because I and Panku provoked him to do so in the parking” I replied with grin on face.

“Yeah same guy, you know, I taught him the basics of chemistry, that bastard got 58 and I got 8 marks” I could sense humor in his voice.

“that’s terrible... you should then start preparing for chemistry then” I advised Aman to hang up.

“sure..bye..” Aman hung up.

I immediately called Panku to know about his paper.

“Panku..how did the paper go?” I enquired.

“I don’t know..I could barely solve 3 questions.. I am not even sure of them” Panku replied with worrisome voice.

“Still, you can clear it.. you have good sessional marks” I tried to lessen his worry.

“You never know” Pessimistic Panku replied.

“and what about chemistry practical paper?” I asked.

“I went there in the morning. The lab assistant there told me, it was scheduled yesterday and I missed it” Panku reverted back.

“What? And you had no idea about it, didn’t they publish the notice on notice board” I was surprised of his carelessness.

“I asked them about the notice, they told me, they had released the notice on notice board, but someone stole it from there” Panku clarified.

“And they didn’t have enough papers to publish notice again” I asked Panku in anger.

“Why don’t you complain about this to principal, he may arrange something for you” I suggested.

“No, I already have spoken with one of the lab assistants, they assured me of rescheduling exam “Panku answered.

“All good then”.

“Yes, will talk to you later” Panku ended the conversation.

I called Ganesh later, he picked up the phone in half-asleep state, requested me to not to disturb him in studies and hung up.

Sessional examination timetable had been announced by the department, suddenly very few students started to appear in the class, I was with Ganesh and Vicky at Pratik’s room, discussing about the sins we had committed in semester.

“Mota, is not happy with us, she thinks we act over smart in the class” Vicky kept his point while munching delicious chips Pratik had brought from home.

“Neither Sonpari the EDC lecturer, she is blaming us of enticing entire class against her, I guess someone from Polytechnic guys played dirty game” I contributed in the discussion.

“They may have revealed the fact to HOD that it was Ganesh who led entire class to bunk the session for cricket game few times” Ganesh started laughing in place of worrying.

“You don’t seem to be worried Pratik?” Vicky casually asked Pratik.

“First, I should be worrying about first year back subjects, even if I manage to clear this semester but still fail in a single subject from first year, I won’t be allowed to promote to next year” Pratik calmly answered Vicky.

Our problem was nothing as compared to Pratik’s, but we shamelessly continued the discussion, one of Pratik’s roommates also started to take interest in discussion when he heard words like complaint, election, politics.

“We need to reform our images in the eyes of lecturers, we still have time, university examination is one month away and if we behave like front row guys, we can impress lecturers” Vicky hinted the solution.

“Why not just perform good in sessional exam instead?” Being a deep sleeper, I was very much against attending the classes regularly.

“That’s not possible now, it’s really strange but when I touch any book to read, I fall asleep and again I will throw away my degree before I behave like those boot-licking front row nerds” Ganesh jumped back into the discussion suddenly.

“Is there any other way than this” Pratik who was also adored sleeping found it difficult to wake up in the morning to attend class.

“didn’t Suhas call you yesterday to inform you about National Level C coding championship being held in SRKNEC?” I asked Vicky.

“Yes, what about it?” Vicky asked me with curiosity.

“What if we participate in that championship representing CEC, I am not expecting that we would be the winner, still a participation certificate in a reputed championship from reputed college can change things around” I revealed my intention.

My statement widened silence in the room, everyone including Pratik’s roommate went in a deep thought.

“Makes sense, but how many of us can enroll?” Pratik asked Vicky.

“Two groups can represent a college, with maximum two people in one group” Vicky stated the conditions.

“What about Jumbo then? One of us will have to sacrifice plus we will have to make sure that we are the first ones to enroll there from our college” Ganesh’s reply made Vicky to call Suhas immediately.

Suhas and Jaywant were the ones amongst our best friends in high school, in a year they had managed to build connections with SRKNEC’s University representative, Suhas promised Vicky that he would ask championship management committee whether students from CEC had enrolled already, if not then he would enroll all of us at the same time which he did.

Pratik called Jumbo to ask about his plans on the date of departure to know that Jumbo had basketball match to finish that day.

It was decided then, four of us excluding Jumbo were going to represent CEC in National Level C Coding championship.

SRKNEC is one of the most reputed colleges in Nagpur university, it indeed harbored best engineering minds of those days, I was quite excited about visiting it first time in the engineering, I was about to experience an entirely different but better educational culture, a better technical perspective. Nagpur is 3 and half hour’s journey by Bus from Chandrapur, we reached at Jaywant’s apartment in the evening, it was HK apartment shared by Jaywant, Suhas and third unknown roommate, championship’s timing was unusual from 12 AM till 6 AM, we chatted with Suhas and Jaywant till an hour before midnight then we all left to college.

Best thing about SRKNEC is, it’s built on a slope and the worst thing, it’s built on slope, perspective depends on direction you are heading. We couldn’t explore much in the dark. Gardens, roads and buildings were maintained properly.

The championship was organized in the IT department, when I reached there to find that there were students had come from all over the India, some of them were from prestigious ones like IIT, VNIT, that daunting technical discussions between those discouraged us and we knew at the same moment we had no chance of winning that championship, some super serious participants had already started revising Yashwant Kanitkar’s LET US C.

Suhas went and confirmed whether our names were present in final list, Jayawant was constantly praising the cream students of SRKNEC, the ingenious ones while they were passing by, after a while a volunteer did an announcement to ask to gather in the hall of the department.

“We welcome you all participants, we know it’s unusual time for championship like this, but don’t worry we will make sure you all will be awake till the end of this tournament by constantly pouring coffee in your mug” The leader of volunteers greeted all of us cheerfully.

“Ok, but where are the mugs” Ganesh pinched me, I asked him to shut up and concentrate on announcement in reply.

“There are total three sections of this championship, first one the beginner level, second one the intermediate level and the last one the expert level, each level will be of 2 hours followed by 15 minutes of break” The leader added.

“Hey, Harsh ask him. If we can visit washroom only during break or whenever we want” Ganesh pinched me again, again I chose to neglect, but tiny thought in me reverberated totally fair question.

“You will not be assessed on the basis of output only, the code with best practices with the minimum lines will be given preference over others, you can now sit on the chairs with your names” Leader concluded the announcement.

It was surprising for me, the championship was entirely organized as well as managed by students with proper planning, I could not find any faculty member checking or monitoring the event, such confidence shown by college on students was worth appreciating.

Being mediocre in C coding, actually ignorant would be perfect word to describe my C coding language knowledge, I and Pratik were accompanied by the two best coders I knew, Vicky and Ganesh in our respective groups, Ganesh was done with the books as they could not kick him anymore for studies so he found peace in coding, Vicky was most convincible animal in the planet, anything said to him with emotions he won’t forget it, someone from the seniors in the first year told him to concentrate on coding to grab high valued salary, he actually followed it. After engineering unemployed Vicky searched that Senior all around to make him aware of his past sin.

I sat with Ganesh, Vicky and Pratik were beside to us, we were asked to unzip the file which was locked by the password, volunteer waited till 12 and revealed the password to us. Beginner level coding questions wasn’t easy not just that, but the questions were also twisted which also contributed in reverse manner. Ganesh was trying to understand the questions, I wish I could help him but had no other option than watching him understanding.

We could barely solve 4 to 5 questions with worst coding practices ever, scene was same with Vicky and Pratik’s group, it was futile to reach to examiners and show them level of our incompetence, so while all other students were busy in displaying their remarkable performances to invigilators we were busy in playing solitaire at the end of first session.

“chances of survival are dwindling in single digit, we should check with management committee if we can leave in the middle of championship, at least we can have 4-5 hours of sleep” Pratik, now had a clear vision, how the rest of the night was going to be, we all started to give serious thought to his suggestion.

“I am with Pratik, Suhas may take care of our certificates” I seconded Pratik without any hesitation and turned to Ganesh to know his view.

“We paid a huge amount of 250 rupees to enroll, the only way I am leaving this hall is either with full rebate or drinking same amount of coffee, I am sure rebate is not possible, so let’s drink hell lot of coffee” Ganesh opted to stay till morning.

“Yeah, me too, if we can’t solve the problems today it’s okay, we can do it later, but I think we should try” Vicky replied.

Pratik and I had no choice but to stay with them, recess was over, coders around us had rolled up their sleeves for the next round, Ganesh had already opened MS Paint and started to sketch Michael Jackson’s cartoon, I had few tweaks to suggest making sketch funnier.

Leader revealed password for the intermediate level Zip file and with crossed fingers we opened it, now this time, we prepared a plan that two groups will fight with two different problems which availed us with more time to spend on individual problems.

“Write a C program to read contents from Memory Registers” Ganesh read out the problem.

“What are memory registers?” I instantly asked Ganesh as most of the words seemed alien to me.

“This” Ganesh gestured to MS Paint application on display monitor and resumed sketching indicating he had accepted the fate.

I gazed at Vicky and Pratik, both were busy in analyzing the rough work on the paper.

“Which one you are solving” I asked with admiration in my eyes.

“We are playing word square game, want to join?” Vicky asked politely.

The warriors in the team had given up the fight, I bent down on desk covered my face in palms, I was literally pining for the morning which would end this fiasco.

“Get up, both of you” grinning invigilator tapped me and Ganesh.

“Show me what you have done till now” that’s what I heard in half sleep state.

“And why didn’t you order coffee to keep you awake” Invigilator’s free coffee offer rubbed salt on Ganesh’s wounds.

Ganesh who hadn’t completely woken up till then, mistakenly clicked on paint icon instead of turbo C which flashed Michael Jackson on display monitor.

“Hey Sunil, come here quickly” invigilator screamed, with his minions Sunil took grand entry.

“look here, this is what these guys were doing all this time” Invigilator gestured monitor to Sunil.

Sunil seemed one of the best performers in academics and leader of nerdy guys in SRKNEC, he adjusted his specs.

“This could cost you your participation certificate, are there any programs you have attempted yet” he gave us chance to save our compromised pride.

Ganesh abruptly opened Beginner level folder, clicked on EXEs

“No!!!No!!!No!!! stop it, show us the code, not output, there’s nothing fancy about output of c language, it’s all about code” Sunil finally got chance to shine.

Ganesh reluctantly opened Turbo C with plain face, he turned screen of monitor towards Sunil expecting Sunil would show us exit gate. I tried to avoid eye contact with them.

“this is 3rd question from Beginner level right? Write program to build billing software for shoe seller using structure” Sunil crosschecked with us.

Sunil started reading code line by line, the name of program was “ChamrKhata” because of which he was restraining his grin, he was desperately trying to look like he meant business but wasn’t supported by his busy minions ensuring that they do not miss girls’ attention during assessment.

“Are you guys done? Or do you want to stay here till the rest of championship?” Pretentious Sunil completed assessment.

Sunil virtuous reply with lenient eyes after assessing our program which brought him complete dismay, lifted our asses off our seats and by the time, we could introspect about our magnificent failure we were already asleep in Suhas’s room.

“Dude!!! Please try to get our participation certificates, that’s the only cloth to cover when our lecturers will verbally disrobe us before entire class after knowing how badly we failed” Pratik’s begging voice woke me up, he was trying to unravel clueless Suhas our bad situation in college. It was 9 AM, we had bus to catch, I gazed at Vicky and Ganesh, who slept perpendicular to each other, kicked them to make them conscious but effort went in vain.

I had terrible night back home, my mind had brimmed with all negative thoughts, third semester was on brink of completion, still I was oblivious to basics of programming language, lack of intent to learn or study did its job perfectly to topple any logical idea to overcome the problem, it’s not like that I like to shift the blame but the level of mediocrity in the teaching was the first wrong step to evaporate miniscule enthusiasm left in me which could have piqued my curiosity to know or learn those subjects better, most of us believe that only a person with good knowledge can be a good teacher which I slightly disagree to, I believe teaching is an art which surely is presentable when it meets with certain amount of knowledge, however the most important ingredients in that art are sense of humor and pinch of modesty, I found most of the lecturers use their ego as shield lest they would be questioned, that’s the big mistake to commit, ego trumps creativity, if teacher is not creative how he/she would inspire students to be creative, creativity and imagination go hand in hand, you have to have both. A good teacher will not write just illustrations on blackboard as proof of concept rather a good teacher will arouse curiosity in students’ minds, force them to ponder over the topic and water their creativity. I could write all of these because I met some teachers post engineering who had all the aspects I mentioned.

Crowd near notice board hinted third semester examination schedule was disclosed by university but we weren’t in hurry to check it out as we were not recovered from shock yet.

“Out of 6 subjects we need to clear at least 4 subjects” Ganesh calculated.

“So, are you confident you will clear all subjects in fourth semester and avoid year down?” I raised concern over Ganesh’s over enthusiastic statement.

“No, first of all, I am going to fight for my basic necessities, food and shelter, my family will oust me if I fail in more than 4 subjects” Ganesh replied with worrisome face.

Now everyone was hopelessly gazing ground including best of us.

“Hey everyone!!” Jumbo who had just arrived greeted.

“You guys know about examination dates, right” Jumbo carelessly informed group.

“Jumbo, why don’t you stop vomiting fear, we know but we are deliberately avoiding it so that we could breathe” Pratik slammed Jumbo.

“There is no reason to be scared, this is just another exam, I already have covered my 20 marks, I just spoke with one of my senior friends who assured me that he will talk to lecturer who was actually his batch mate few years back” Jumbo was begging for respect through his eyes.

“Why all big failures are your buddies Jumbo including me” Pratik squeamishly replied.

“All failures are my buddies, because they teach you more than achievers, I have done all kinds of things in life, and I learnt them all from failures” Jumbo defended his stand.

“Except one thing, which you could not do Jumbo” Pratik raised his eyebrows.

“Which one?” Jumbo demanded answer.

“You still yet to receive all clear result” Pratik suddenly had a point.

“Failures taught you how to fail only, but you could not realize it yet, just retrospect and you will get your answers, those all kinds of things of yours are actually failures” Pratik outlet his frustration on Jumbo.

“Let’s check out exam dates” Vicky threw some sense to us.

Exam dates were spanned out across entire month of October and half of November, we had not prepared as we should have been for sessional examination and now, we were clueless of any plan for preparation.

For the first time in third semester, I did open any book so far, unfortunately this time I was alone, I did not have Nikhil to advise me and I could not ask him for suggestions too, him being from Electronics Department which had different subjects altogether. I was studying C Programming from VBD, all missed lecturers, labs, sincerity and mediocre teaching were showing its effect as I was hardly able to understand basics of C. Dad had brought me new laptop after continuous begging which I solely used for games and social networking sites throughout the semester, when I opened it to install Turbo C but I had no idea how to do that so I rushed to Vicky’s house.

“Now, its futile to install C Harsh, now instead you should try to cover theory” Vicky advised me in solacing voice with both his hands-on Keyboard.

“Also, don’t study from VBD, try Let US C from Kanitkar, at least you will get the basics correct” Vicky gestured to show me book.

“I know, all I am asking for 25 marks Vicky and that’s it, I know I will never be able to score big also I really blew my chances to score good sessional marks this time” I replied in low voice.

“Here are the topics I am writing down for you, prepare them, they are most likely to be asked” Vicky gave me hope and plan to prepare.

I skimmed through most of the topics Vicky advised me to read, I cursed myself for the decision of choosing IT stream one and half years ago, I knew programming language C is the foundation of programming languages and if I hadn’t understood it right, it would mean I won’t be able to understand other advanced programming languages and those thoughts still mess me in my sleeps as nightmares.

“How are you Harsh? Already started revision or preparing for extra questions” Ganesh called me to ask my whereabouts.

“yeah, stop telling me about your preparations, are you picking me up tomorrow, else I can bring my scooty” I asked to ensure Ganesh would be ready on time.

“You reach my home before 2 in afternoon, bring Vicky with you so you reach his home before 1 in afternoon” Typical Ganesh reminded me of my responsibilities so he could take a good nap.

As guessed Vicky was revising all the important questions when I arrived to pick him up, I hated him for doing that, especially before me when I had no Idea what Digital Circuits subject was all about.

“Be ready in 5 minutes else I am leaving” I tried fake intimidation with befitting facial expression.

Vicky threw book to me and advised me to read it to which I happily agreed.

We were immersed in revising so deeply that we had lost track of time but luckily and surprisingly too, Ganesh appeared on time.

It was 2.10 PM and just 20 minutes short before the exam, Vicky somehow managed to change himself to look like human.

“Here, you will drive today” I passed key to Vicky.

“I will help to kick start, but I won’t drive, anyway you guys always belittle me as a rider” Vicky put his foot on kick and pushed it.

“If I drive today, I am going to fail, and I am not giving any explanation or reason why” I turned down all possibilities of me driving.

Ganesh who had already smelled something fishy joined two of us already put his hands in pocket.

I knew Ganesh would give up if I explain the worst consequence if our fight continues too long.

“It’s already past 2.15, if we don’t leave now, we would be late and You know Kureshi, god forbid if he is your invigilator, he may make things difficult for you” I warned both.

I was looking at Ganesh, who was thinking seriously and as expected he gave up.

“Okay, I will drive but you both must revise loudly, so that I also could hear” Ganesh had put his conditions before us.

“Agreed” I quickly replied.

“But if we both started to revise loudly wouldn’t it be hard for you to listen?” Vicky was about to sabotage my plan with his over honesty.

“I am not going to drive you scoundrels! I am catching bus instead” furious Ganesh gestured to leave.

“Okay stop, I will drive half the distance and then you take it” I offered him better deal.

We barely reached college in time, rushed to find classrooms where our seats were allotted.

“Hi Nikhil, how did it go, you must be expecting above 70, don’t you?” I, waiting for Vicky and Ganesh in parking bumped into Nikhil.

“of course, my granny will be checking my answers, so why not 80 out of 80 and where are rest of the jokers?” Nikhil replied.

“What happened, you seem annoyed? Is it related to today’s exam” I enquired?

“No, it’s about my bike partner, he is manifestation of irritation and he annoys me on tiny things, I can’t tolerate him anymore” his clenched fists were telling how angry he was.

“What exactly happened, tell me?” curious of me did not want him to leave without telling me reason behind his anger.

“Today, when I went to his home to pick him up, I thought I would clean dirt off my bike, so I grabbed his bike’s rag and used it and then when he saw I was using his bike’s rag, he became furious on me, asked me how can I use it without his permission” Nikhil added while restraining his laugh.

“I had no words to respond Harsh, I mean what explanation you can give to such fool?” Nikhil smiled.

“There must be a reason behind his dismay” I wanted to go deeper into discussion.

“Yeah, he told me that rag was like talisman for his bike and now I owe him brand new one to replace it” It’s not that I never heard weirdness but this one topped all amongst them.

“Look I am not surprised, last year he came up with 40 rupees to throw party to 10 of us” I seconded Nikhil as we both burst into laughter.

“How was it then, did you attempt all 6 questions?” Vicky asked who had just joined us with Ganesh.

“Yeah, I have but not sure if they are correct, how about you?” I replied.

“okay! right now that would be right answer, it’s better for us to leave then. I am famished” Vicky begged through his eyes for our approval while packing his bag properly, Ganesh also nodded in approval.

“Let’s have Manchurians or Samosas at Mama’s, they are too delicious” I offered them a deal which they could not refuse.

Vicky, Ganesh, me along with Nikhil and his partner arrived at Mamas samosa outlet, delicious odor of hot and fresh Samosas was making us impatient, one of his minions wrapped few fresh samosas in paper and delivered to us along with the plate of chilly chutney which was specialty of Mama’s shop. Ganesh would lick paper plate to ensure he won’t waste last drop of it.

Now it was payment time, as usual Ganesh quietly rescued himself and stood by the bike waiting for us, Vicky quickly took his wallet out of his back pocket and paid for three of us and we went back to start bike as it was no less hard than firing up a rocket. Suddenly, we heard argument between Nikhil and his partner and then it was loud enough for all of us to hear.

“Last time I paid for your extra plate of Momos, now it’s your time” Raged Nikhil’s partner wanted Nikhil to pay for Samosas.

“Honestly, I haven’t brought my wallet today, but I am going to pay you back as soon as we reach my home” Nikhil tried to put some sense into him.

“Yeah, like you paid me back for those extra liters of petrol you used to fill in your bike” suddenly argument was turning into fight.

I tried to signal Ganesh to pay their fares, but Ganesh was deliberately looking at other direction.

“Harsh? Please pay our bill” Nikhil demanded my help which I had to oblige.

Next day I came to know Nikhil indeed bought his partner new undergarment and threw some rupee coins on his face.

Rest of examination was no surprise I already had surrendered final result to god, mother VBD had enabled me to color few blank pages of answer sheet blue, but at the same time I was clueless whether my answers were making any sense or they were making me appear dumber.

It was month of November, dawns were started to feel cooler, the most important thing was third semester examination was finally over and we had breather of 1 month of Diwali leaves before fourth semester to begin and there is no more heavenly than sleeping worriless like a new born child under warm blanket. Mom was busy in preparing Diwali snacks, and as per tradition sons are the first ones to taste it along with delicious tea, whoa….! everything back then was perfect.

“Let’s go somewhere, like we went to Ramala last year” Panku proposed an idea as we all went to his room.

“You still have my T-Shirt, the one you snatched last year from me for Ramala Trip” Amit frivolously asked Panku with hopeful eyes.

“I have been washing it since last one year, so technically I own it now” Panku strictly clarified.

“And..! this is how you open 18 plus sites without getting noticed” Ganesh hit Enter button as Panku’s younger brother was curiously checking monitor.

“Oye…. stay away from him, I won’t allow any of you in my room if you don’t behave” Panku threatened us and we replied him with laughter.

“Harsh, let’s go and play cricket on my machine, I just figured out its multi-player configuration” Vicky gestured to leave.

“Or we can join our laptops with LAN cord and play Counter Strike” I wanted to play CS with all my friends to show my gaming skills.

“Harsh, what are you doing this evening, are you free?” Nikhil craned his neck to check my reply.

“Nothing, why?” I asked Nikhil in response.

“Okay, I am thinking of buying computer, I am going to one of my dad’s acquaintance’s shop, would you come with us? You are kind of expert in computers” Nikhil praised me for my approval.

“I am not an expert, just happen to be owner of few disastrous computers, I may not know which one to buy but I surely know which one to exclude from list” I nodded in approval.

Nikhil’s father was a teacher and he had lot of friends who used to throw him undemanding advices about all the issues, problems in his life, I was about to get an opportunity to meet one of them.

I reached his home between 6 to 7 PM with Vicky as usual we started shouting his name along with his grandfather’s name to look cool and witty which was not the case.

I and Vicky on scooty were following Nikhil along with his father on his stunner, Nikhil was driving like traffic police was observing him drive, suddenly his father gestured him to stop, we stopped scooty behind them.

Nikhil’s father went inside bike garage shop and returned with guy with greasy shirt and trouser, the way both were talking to each other it was obvious Garage guy was Nikhil’s father’s friend.

“Hey, where is your friend’s computer shop, near Binba gate?” Nikhils father rubbed his hands against each other to wipe any grease on them.

“No, the shop is on Nagpur Highway, listen don’t just purchase anything shopkeeper force you to, ask until he comes out with best product” Garage guy turned his head towards Nikhil to ensure Nikhil listens him carefully.

“Yes, yes… I have already made list of desirable configuration, I will try to get best deal, also I have brought my friends with me, Harsh knows computers very well, he will help” Nikhil confidently replied to show his readiness.

“Show me the list, I want to make sure you have not made any mistakes there” Garage guy demanded list from Nikhil.

We were shocked to see the how confidently Garage guy was going through list if it was related to bikes.

“That’s the common mistake you youngsters make these days, you have written 512 GB of HardDisk and 4 GB of RAM when it should be vice versa” Garage guy was trying to point out the mistake on the list for Nikhil to Notice.

“Indeed, how can you be so dumb, 1 and half year in engineering have completed, still he does not have any idea about Computers” Vicky reprimanded Nikhil while restraining his laugh.

“And, please don’t forget 2 years before engineering, he scored 199 in HTML programming” I along with Vicky did not want to miss an opportunity to humiliate Nikhil who had put Helmet on his head to hide laugh.

Nikhil’s father was convinced Nikhil had made mistake, so he asked Garage guy.

“When you are going to close shop, can you come with us after that”.

“Sorry, sir. I have bike to deliver today, it will be hard for me to leave shop, but as Nikhil said his friends seems real knowledgeable and yous can count on them” Garage guy looked at us with appreciation in his eyes.

“Show us computer of 512 GB of Ram and 4 GB of Hard Disk” Vicky with authority in his voice asked Shopkeeper to bring impossible.

“We don’t have them yet; you will have to wait” Shopkeeper smirked.

“How long? We have decided to buy it today, can you please tell us where you purchase them from, we can directly ask that vendor” Nikhil’s father asked Shopkeeper.

“As soon as engineers will invent such machine, I will inform you sir” Shopkeeper sarcastically replied.

Nikhil saw both of us smiling in the back, he decided to kill the fun.

“There are no such machines Dad, your friend doesn’t know a thing about computer” Nikhil revealed the truth his father did not want to hear.

“What are you saying, your friends also seconded him, didn’t they?” Nikhil’s father raised doubt.

“They are just making fun of you, Dad” Nikhil’s defying voice replaced funny look on our faces with Guilt.

“Do they really know anything about computers or are they here to pay bills?” Nikhil’s father started smiling, but guilt was all over our face.

“You two now, tell us which one to buy, it better be good else you know that I know your home addresses to send repairment bills” Nikhil’s father smiling face relieved us a bit.

Core 2 Duo was the fastest processor we knew back in 2009, which has speed of 2.6 GHz, suddenly shopkeeper told us about new AMD processor which had speed of 3 GHz and was quite impressive to select along with Circle Cabinet, Creative 2.1 Sound System, Zebronics mouse and keyboard.

Later a month, Nikhil had complained of computer hanging which was causing due to processor overheating.

I was cleaning my room as Diwali was approaching, Mom had charted out entire cleaning program, first I had to classify useful and non-useful books from the pile in the closet as all moms have faith in their sons, we might throw all books including useful ones and then ask for their help in searching when we require them to study, second was to reorganize CD album with CDs thrown all around closet, today’s generation with high speed internet will never know the value of CD album case, back in our time we had to book an appointment with owner to borrow it, third was to separate old unfit clothes for Mom so she can donate them to Maid for her son or may be husband considering my height, fourth and last was to clean room.

“Hey Harsh, your phone is ringing and its Panku” Mom demanded me.

“Hey Panku, what’s up are you back from Junasurla?” I sat down on Sofa for long chat.

“Well, the thing is I am just informed, first year KT result is just declared, I cannot come to Chandrapur right now, but would you go to college to fetch my result? I would have asked Kawla but he went to Gadchiroli yesterday”

“Ok..sure, I will go with Vicky but by the way, do you know anything about your result, whether you have passed or still have few subject back” I don’t know why I lower my tone in the end.

“As of now, nothing, but let’s hope for the best” Panku with heavy voice replied.

“oh, okay what about Aman and Ganesh, do you know about their result?” I enquired.

“No, I don’t know about them too, please let me know if you come to know about their results, my gut feeling says Aman would have cleared all subjects, the way he used to describe all answers briefly with so much confidence, I think he will make it, moreover you have taught him well” Panku disconnected call after exchanging pleasantries.

I grabbed scooty keys hastily and rushed to Vicky’s home shattering Mom’s cleaning plan.

“I am calling Aman, he is not picking up, is he currently at Wani or at some relative’s home” Vicky who I had just picked up was trying to call Aman.

“He must be avoiding us, else there is no way he would miss our call when he is away, knowing we can’t ask him for any favor or money” Vicky made valid point.

“He is avoiding us because he may not have cleared back subjects and he doesn’t want to tell his parents or relatives about his failure during Diwali season, do all his Maternal uncles live with his parents, how many of them does he have in total?” I wanted to change the subject to divert Vicky from questioning my teaching.

“Stop counting his maternal uncles and please refrain from doing nerdy things on my scooty” I warned Vicky when I saw him calculating.

We collected results of Panku and Ganesh, both had cleared their back subjects.

“Let’s call Panku and tell him his Maths-1 is still back to see his reaction” I proposed an evil idea to Vicky, Vicky himself was one of the Devil worshippers along with Ganesh, saying no to devilry was against his tradition.

“Hey Panku, we got your result, well you cleared all subjects except Maths - 1” I had turned on mobile speaker.

“I knew, I will blow it again, as I have before several times, my father have so much expectations and I am breaking them one by one, do you know Harsh, what other chores my father do to earn extra money for my education ?” I thought he would wait for my response which he did not care for.

“He repairs cycle, he tailors’ blouses. he makes sure that I get all the things needed for my studies” suddenly Vicky and I had lot of questions, but we chose to keep mum.

“It’s okay, Panku, we were just making fun of you, you cleared all the subjects, we have your result with us” I just exposed our little fiasco.

“I am warning you, never ever kid me on my academics, keep my result with you and I will retrieve it once I am in chandrapur” Panku slammed mobile.

We went to Ganesh hoping to get treat as we were arriving with his all clear result his family and neighbors were dreaming for since last few months.

“I never expected I would pass M-1, I thought all my answers were wrong, now I can sell all M-1 books, notes finally, it feels good to know there are no backlogs now” Delighted Ganesh feasting on snacks was crosschecking result minutely.

“Any news on Aman? We are trying hard to reach him, but he is not receiving” I asked Ganesh.

“No, may be Nikhil would have some, let’s go to his place, his grandfather may be at home” Ganesh knew we were more interested in his Grandfather than him.

“He got 2 marks in M-1, what did you teach him, and he asked me not to tell anyone” Nikhil rushed out of his den to reveal secret when he should not.

We all started to laugh together which lasted for few minutes.

“Why are you laughing, you should be ashamed instead” Nikhil reminded me that I was Aman’s tutor while controlling his laugh.

“And you should not laugh on someone’s misery” I retorted while catching my breath.

“Learnt from the best” We all started laughing loud again after Nikhil’s reply.

“No, seriously, what efforts did you take to restrict his score to single digit, explain to me” Nikhil’s question made Vicky and Ganesh curious.

“We all learn from mistakes and I am still learning, I thought he may share my way of learning” I defended myself.

“Let me explain your way of learning, you solve maths for your own understanding that’s legit way, but solving maths for others without explaining assuming learner would learn, why don’t you participate in World’s best teachers’ race” Vicky started laughing again.

“Accept that you can’t teach, you mug math problems too, the big question here, why did he choose you over Nikhil, Nikhil is university topper for God’s sake?” Ganesh raised his voice to prove his point.

“Maybe, mugging could have saved your re-examination fee Ganesh and yes I also think Nikhil could have helped him more than me but trust me my sole intention was to help him” Ganesh hung neck in despair.

Aman still has doubt about everything I say since.

Fourth semester had begun, it was cold month of December, all seasons get extreme in Chandrapur, extra layer of sweaters had put on by everyone roaming outside, my apartment was near to the convent, whole month I used to be awakened by sweet Christmas Carole in the morning, still can’t believe how enthusiastic, energetic I used to feel back then, I was enjoying each and every bit of my engineering life.

“Is Pratik back from Gadchiroli yet?” Ganesh asked during Communication Electronics lecture.

“No, he texted me yesterday, he booked bus ticket for next week” Vicky who sat behind us leaned front to whisper in our ears.

“You stand up, what are you discussing in the middle of lecture” Lecturer who also was HoD of the department jabbered.

Vicky still did not have any clue what he said so he comfortably sat on the desk and kept looking at board innocently.

“I am asking you to standup, second last bench?” this time HoD pointed finger at Vicky’s desk.

“He speaks exactly like Vicky, if they talk in dark there is no chance, I can guess correctly who is speaking” Ganesh mumbled to me.

Ganesh had a point, HoD speaking style resembled Vicky’s.

“Yes, sir” Vicky answered.

“What were you discussing, class wants to know” HoD demanded Vicky.

“Sir, there was a doubt I wanted to clear” Vicky’s replied forced us to cover our smile.

“What doubt and why you were discussing with them when I am in the class to help” HoD completed entire sentence in 2 seconds.

“Sir, I was curious whether GPRS which amplifies frequency up till 1900 GHz, doesn’t have any hazardous effect on human body” Vicky completed his question and lost HoD by 2 seconds, I guess.

“It’s like, they are born in fast forward mode” Ganesh and I was having hard time to restrain our laugh.

“oh, perfectly valid doubt, I liked your comprehensive perspective about technology, a good engineer always considers pros and cons of the innovation, good keep it up” Vicky had managed to make remarkable first impression which helped all three of us in our senior years.

Fourth semester was on the verge of completion before you even know it, fourth semester had most important subjects which laid the basics of advanced programming languages like Object oriented concepts, software engineering, lecturers tried to simplify them to their potential but went futile, I doubt any of the students in class would have got clue of those topics’ existence in the first place, I don’t blame teachers I blame the authorities who came up with greatest idea of enlisting subject OOPS concept before C++, how would you learn about something you don’t know where and how does it apply.

“Polytechnic guys are getting cozy with girls! Check out their picnic pics” Ganesh proudly started scrolling Facebook app on his Samsung mobile.

“When did this picnic happen? Why weren’t we asked?” It was really amusing to see new group forming in the class.

“Do we really care, may be you guys care but I don’t” Vicky shoved away mobile and sunk his neck to check his own Karbonn.

“This is what I like about you Vicky, if you know you don’t stand a chance before girls, you don’t waste time trying” Ganesh tapped Vicky’s back, Vicky replied with a chuckle.

“Yes, you are on the verge of being Panku, you want to be heartbroken without being in relationship, so that you can cry secretly on Altaf’s songs” I kept my arm around Vicky’s shoulder.

“Perhaps, it’s better to be a Panku than being a Jumbo with girl’s fake number” Pratik who had recently joined us cracked joke.

“Just heard, there is chance of 3rd semester exam result declaration in next week” ‘exam result’ word from Pratik’s mouth raced everyone’s heart beats in group suddenly.

“So now if you fail in some subjects in 3rd semester, university will schedule re-examination around 4th semester exam and then you will have to prepare for both semesters” Vicky had a valid point.

“In worst case if you end up with more than 4 backs after 4th semester and 3rd semester re-exam, you lose a year” Pratik’s statement fanned out my anxiety.

“Electronics Devices and Circuits still give me nightmares, I don’t want to even check out books, notes or VBD again” I confessed my hate for subject.

Vicky had developed crush on CTECH senior girl, he started to follow her everywhere, I know, now when we all look back, it feels cheesy and bit harassing but back then and still boys managed to woo girls by just following their mopeds for just couple of months, Vicky was listening to love songs uninterrupted, even he set those as his caller tunes.

“Let’s go for a ride, I will drive” Vicky ordered me to shift to back seat of scooty.

“Sure, driver will start scooty” I moved back and without grumping he started scooty which was quite suspicious.

“What happened? what’s so urgent, is everything all right” I sensed some serious problem.

“Yes, yes everything is fine and dandy, now keep quiet and let me drive” Vicky dumped his bum on seat.

We stopped at the unknown place after taking numerous turns, I was not sure if I was in Chandrapur.

“Can you see that green wall?” Vicky asked me.

“That one?” I raised my hand to point.

“No, no, no… don’t do that, people will get suspicious” Vicky restricted me.

“Why? What’s on your mind and why are you showing me that house” now my suspicion was getting stronger.

“That’s where Savita lives” Vicky’s eyes had filled with love.

“Who Savita? and why are you patrolling her street” I with raised eyebrows started firing questions.

“Harsh. She is the one!!! I can’t get her out of my head, my mind, my heart, I was crossing her today in department’s corridor, I overheard she was singing a song, do you know I am listening to that song on loop since afternoon” Vicky was serious.

“And does she know that you like her” I had calmed down after realizing Vicky was not into any bad stuff.

“May be, maybe not, who cares?” Vicky proudly flaunted his one-sided love.

“You should tell her…there is total 100% chance, she might reject you” I tapped his back.

“Yes, I know, little part of me thinks this is best, you know flirting…roaming around her, capture her smile time to time” Vicky was slowly turning into Pratik.

“its good you know your limits, just ensure don’t get swayed away by this feeling too much..and now we should head back to our Homes” I started scooty this time.

New year came with surprise of trip to Manali sponsored by faculty for 5000 Rs each person, most of IT students were looking forward to it and as usual we all three weren’t but eventually cupid struck, Pratik came to me and asked me to ask Ritu if she was going, I still don’t know why we all used to take Pratik’s advice seriously but after this incident I didn’t ever.

So preparation to inquire Ritu about her trip plans had begun, shirt was pressed, 18-inch bell bottom dusted, handkerchief properly folded unlike usual, backpack well packed with all zips zipped, combed hair infinite times, ah, I thought of myself next south Indian superstar with no physique.

As they say bad omen doesn’t need invitation, I was constantly preached by Pratik and Vicky who had just discovered his newfound love.

“Good, this is the first time you are looking like engineering student, ironed clothes, polished sandals, beard well-trimmed” Vicky admired my preparation.

“Doesn’t he look like Amol Palekar in Golmal, skin tight shirt with big sleeves, bell bottom covering skeleton legs, which girl would dare to deny you now Harsh” Ganesh smirked.

“How should I approach and where, should I speak to her in computer lab or here outside?” my brain picked out one question from hundred and my voice did terrible job to hide my anxiety.

“Outside will be better, it would give you guys certain amount of privacy, and be confident, keep eye contact intact throughout conversation” Pratik advised.

Unfortunately, they didn’t tell me where to wait so I sat on milestone beside hostel road waiting for her with my backpack on my lap, one of my colleagues from class sat beside me, he was going to start conversation, suddenly, I saw Ritu walking towards me, in haste I grabbed my backpack in one hand and shouted her name, she froze at the same instant and when she turned to me to talk, my backpack’s zip unzipped and all the books fell on ground, I had options to manage this gruesome situation, either I could have spoken with her calmly and then undo entire mess or I could have put all the books on ground back in the bag again and then could have started conversation, I chose midway and yes, I chose poor, I started picking up books while talking to her.

“Hey Ritu? I just wanted to know if you are going for the trip” I while desperately searching for books in backpack also trying to keep eye contact alongside asked.

“No, I am not” she in her dreaded and somewhat confused state replied.

“You should tell me, if you change your mind?” my authoritative voice made it bit rude and she ran to class with facepalm.

“Very well done, now you have added full stop to any chance of your future with her, your face will remind her of idiots, I am sure” Vicky grinned cheerfully.

“It really went well, if you had been there for any longer, she would have started to help you lifting books and then you know the Bollywood rule, once you help lifting dropped books you have to fall in love with each other” Ganesh smirked.

“Thats how all love stories start, don’t they?” Pratik breathed heavily before we started heading to classroom.

“Airtel Flute tune…” this was not merely a phone call it was my destiny calling me to change my life forever

“Hey Harsh! Its confirmed 3rd semester exam result has been announced, get ready and rush to my home to pick me up” Vicky dropped the call.

I threw mobile and slept for another hour as I was overconfident of clearing all subjects.

“Harsh, you spoiled child, look at Anita, she told me that 3rd semester final result has been announced, and you are sleeping like sloth, she got up early, went to temple for blessings and is already leaving for college, you should learn from her” Mom’s love literally poured on me in the morning.

Anita was most studious with no success girl I had even seen, she was professionally studious, she would sleep early to be able to wake up early to study, she would read loudly so that everyone would be aware about her hard work, she would talk about study, books and lectures while the most unfortunate thing was, she was my neighbor and was on very good terms with my mother, also to irk me my friends would link her to me, no matter how much hard work I would do for my mother it was still minuscule as compared to hers, however her hard work never reflected back in results and due to which I was able to face my mom, I can’t thank God enough.

As Anita had already made my life harder, this morning was no exception, even to my disapproval my legs dragged me out of bed, I picked up Vicky who was furious on me for reaching so late.

“Things are not looking good, Department has revealed, only 17% students have cleared all the subjects, I guarantee I am not one of them” Phoksey was running around to scare everyone when we reached college.

“Sure, thing Phoksey, if you cleared all subjects that means no student can fail” Ganesh patted his back.

“Get ready to study EDC, C and many more again, with these quality teachers I am afraid if we could clear these subjects and what's the full form of MEA, what’s that subject about?” confused Ganesh had already started Panic talk.

“Hey Panku, how are you, did you receive your result yet” I invited Panku who was desperately trying to avoid us through sidewalk to our little group discussion.

“Yes, got 3 backs including EDC” Panku replied like cry for help.

“Let me go to my room guys, not in a mood to talk” Panku ran towards his bike.

We three went to department to fetch our result where we stumbled into Pratik and Jumbo who stood there with their results in hand, laughing.

“Seems like you 2 had cleared all subjects” I surprisingly enquired.

“Check this out for yourself” both handed me over their results.

They didn’t clear any of their subjects, there were hashes all over the places.

“Whoa! that’s gruesome, not one clear subject? Why you guys were laughing, are you guys not feeling better” Vicky could not hide his curiosity.

“Well, if we could have cleared one subject, that would have been unexpected, we don’t want unexpected, this is what expected, I am going for shopping this evening to celebrate, just saw 50% discount on signature jeans” Pratik replied.

“What about you Jumbo, are you ok” I asked Jumbo.

“I have already seen these failures all over my life, nothing surprising to me” Jumbo replied with proud face.

It was now our turn to be tested, with hesitation we pushed door to enter, Rancho (a self-claimed genius from the staff) had smile on face, we all thought that it must be a positive sign from universe to us, first Ganesh started to find his result he gave part of bunch to me, I found Vicky’s and he had cleared all subjects, I also did find mine, I managed to clear 1 subject out of 6 while Ganesh could clear his 3 subjects.

“I really don’t know how this has happened, there is some problem in checking” I had literally started crying as I had not seen such intense a setback throughout my academic career.

Suddenly my confidence level had dropped down to zero and being bit pessimistic I had lost all hopes of my bright future.

“Can you do anything now? No, right, so simply go home and rest, let your overburdened mind be calm” first time Ganesh spoke inspirational words and It was surprising as he was already dealing with his own failure.

“Yes, Harsh, this is just a result and you will get another chance in couple of months to prove yourself, so don’t punish yourself so much” Vicky added, he lightened my stress.

Fortunately, I did not have any backs from first year, still, fourth semester was on the verge and with these 5 backs, I could sense I was going to be in terrible situation if I don’t do something miraculous to avoid a year's break.

Ganesh personally dropped me home, while he always made faces doing that before he tried to pour some sense into me but I was already drowned in my own thoughts to acknowledge.

“Harsh, tell me at least you’d cleared subjects at least, Anita did clear hers, she was asking about you” My mother had an avalanche of questions to which I had no answers.

“Can I get some water and no I could not clear any of subjects” I replied aguishly and threw my result.

“Oh my god, failed in five subjects, now do you, see? you reap what you sow, playing games, bike trips, bunking classes, what else can happen after that” Mom commenced listing out all bad things I did in third semester, partly she was right.

I could not face Mom for long due to embarrassment, so I stormed out and confined myself in my room.

When my father arrived, my mom started complaining about me, my father kept quiet for a while, he came to me, sat me down, my cheeks was twitching as I anticipated few slaps.

“How are you feeling, did you have your meal in Morning” Father asked, I sensed calm before storm.

“Yes, I did eat few chapatis then slept for an hour” I replied in my humble tone.

“I am glad, that you faced failure in your adolescent days, now your next actions will decide whether you are a loser or winner, retrospect, think over what could have gone wrong and amend the mistakes” to my disbelief my father supported me when I needed his support most after my mother’s first reaction.

“Yes, and we know that you are not a loser, you will rise again victorious” those words from parents were nectar from heaven, they charged me to face next challenges with positivity.

I still remember why I could not sleep on that particular night, my mind was already started to chart out preparation plans, I believed if I could anyhow manage to clear out 7 subjects out of 11 (5 subjects from 3rd semester and 6 subjects from current 4th semester) to avoid year pause then I would get an entire year to clear rest of 4 subjects, suddenly my mind went to retrospection mode, I had read somewhere, *if you repeat same thing again you cannot expect different result* and I honestly did not want to repeat mistakes I did while preparing for 3rd semester examination, I decided to take help of my best buddies to be my critics, its highly unusual for teenagers to be open for critics at the same time it gives you a whole new perspective over your own personality.

“So, what do you think what I did wrong in 3rd semester, I spent my most of the time with you guys, we also studied together, you must have some inputs for me” I asked Vicky and Ganesh at the Mama Samosa’s outlet while returning from college.

“How many samosas can you afford right now, also I only cleared 3 subjects so I am not in idle position to poke you with your vulnerabilities when I am dealing with mine” famished Ganesh cleared ground before conversation.

“I have to bring few samosas home, too, and you don’t have many vulnerabilities Ganesh you have one vulnerability, every time you open book to read, you sleep at the same moment, if you could manage to stay awake with book Infront of you, you may too clear all your subjects” Vicky started first therapy session surprisingly with Ganesh.

“Let's split bill in 2 parts, I will pay 50 percent, you two pay 50 percent, now my turn, what weakness do I have, throw at all, keep no stone unturned” I asked Vicky to open.

“First, coding is to learn not to mug, second EDC is to learn not to mug, third Maths is to solve not to mug, your first approach to every subject is to mug nonetheless subject is theoretical or not” Vicky paused for eating Samosa.

“It helped you till now, perhaps due to some luck, but from now on, try to understand things first and simply refrain from mugging” Vicky resumed his advice.

“Why don’t you study, learn and then teach me, few minutes ago I was enlightened about my sleeping superpowers, but if you could teach me, I won’t have to open book, also you will be revising entire chapter again” Ganesh found win-win situation for both.

I was revealed to one weakness, next day I had similar session with Aman and Nikhil to get to know more.

“You are bad teacher!!!” Aman was about to explain entire episode, suddenly I stopped him.

“How is this linked to my 3rd semester disaster? Also, I meant no harm, you should accept, you came to me for help” I raised my defense.

“Still, I regret to this day for that decision, look I am simply trying to tell you, if you can’t teach, you haven’t learned enough to teach, you overlook the chapters then you convince yourself that you have learned it that’s when overconfidence catch you” Aman had point.

“Please do let me know if this self-critic therapy session helps you, I may want to do same with you all again” Aman added later.

“I will tell you right here Aman, you simply select bad teachers” Nikhil started laughing.

“And for you Harsh, I only have one thing to say, stop bunking classes, I know you believe in self studying but if you attend few lectures at least you won't have to prepare from scratch, these lecturers are teaching since long so they know which topics to prepare and which ones to leave” I always though Nikhil had all figured it out as he was rocking there academically, so I took his suggestions seriously.

I have had enough points to work on, still last I turned to Panku, Panku was an avid reader, so I called him.

“Hey, Panku how's going on, you must be busy in exam preparation” I enquired.

“Preparation is still going on, already asked Pritam for help, you tell me” Panku replied in low tone.

“I was checking with all friends about my messed-up 3rd semester, I just wanted to know if you have observed anything wrong about way, I prepare for exam so I can amend all those mistakes before upcoming exam” I revealed my intention.

“And you thought I am the best person to answer that? All my life I have been nothing but a bad decision maker, a complete failure and you want me to be a mirror of your own mistakes, sorry but I can’t do that” Panku’s answers made me doubtful whether to extend conversation further or leave it.

“Panku, stay put there and everything will be alright” Panku disconnected phone.

As a result of all this, I had stopped studying Infront of TV with music on, started to learn things from basics, stopped taking things for granted or in other words stopped convincing to self that you know all without verifying it and last but not the least started teaching Ganesh even though Aman disapproved the whole idea.

“3 idiots is releasing today, what you guys say, first day first show huh? It has been said that whole film is based on Chetan Bhagat’s five point someone book, but producers are denying it as they are claiming they added and removed few bits and thus film is not an entire copy of book” Excited Amir Khan’s fan Vicky really wanted us to approve his idea.

“Who is Chetan Bhagat and how our miserable lives are going to change by 3 idiots” Ganesh dismissed idea.

“He is an IITian, also an Alumni of IIM A, surprisingly he writes for masses not for classy” IIT and IIM these two words every engineer fantasized about throughout his academic and post academic days were enough to grab out attention.

“Strange, an IITian and IIM guy, now writes book about love and relationships rather than building rockets, creating websites like Facebook so that engineers like us can dream about getting job there” I contributed my opinion.

“Let's go and watch it on coming weekend, Works for you guys ?” I nodded.

“I am not coming with you, I still not healed from Tujh Mein Rab dikhta hain yet, no fighting no action only cute, emotional things from start to end” Ganesh had big problem with romantic movies.

“Just because you grandmother makes action movies that doesn’t mean you should only watch action movies” Pratik mocked Ganesh as he was fan of SRK.

“Yup, it was my grandmother’s idea to put velvet underwear on Superman’s costume as she produced it, just to make your grandmother to wash it” Ganesh pocked Pratik back.

“Hahahahaha!!!” Pratik tapped Ganesh back.

“What a movie !!! If we don’t watch it together again, I am ending friendship right here, most importantly, all three remained single till the end and that’s why their friendship lasted” Vicky didn’t stop praising the movie for a second.

“Rancho had girlfriend by the way and also a topper, a complete paradox, I mean look at Nikhil as long as he is in relationship, he can’t top in class let alone college or university, doesn’t matter how hard he tries, it’s like inexplicable equation” I had my doubts about the movie.

“Is it mandatory to opine about every movie we watch in theatre? The right way to watch movie is to enjoy in theatre and then walk silently to home” Ganesh indicated us to stop.

“I know why you are upset Ganesh, because deep down you know, you can’t be Rancho of gang, and only person who can come close to being a Rancho that would be me while you.. you guys decide between Farhan and Raju amongst yourselves” Vicky started verbal irritation.

“The way you are irritating us, you are a Chatur multiplied by 2, now if you don’t stop, I’ll start running hard till I don’t hear your voice in my ears or in my head” Ganesh warned Vicky.

“Nah, Chatur only mugged to get through engineering, didn’t care about underlying meaning, and I could sense there is one person in the group did the same, right Harsh” Vicky’s taunt made Ganesh laugh.

“You make Chatur out of me as hard as you want but the bitter truth, we all know is, the only way to become Rancho of gang is to first, get into relationship with a GIRL and second, be a topper” I didn’t want these two rascals’ gang up on me.

“Agreed, Chatur Ramalingam!!” Ganesh jibed at me and continued, “Vicky, you can be a topper as you are an absolute nerd, while girlfriend thing can be sorted if you keep visiting Savita’s house or may be an easy target, our former Girl’s representative” Ganesh ended debate.

As we envied Nikhil for his multiple relationships throughout his engineering days, we were equally curious to know how he kept his family in oblivion of his relationships that long. After several futile attempts to get truth out of him, we somehow convinced ourselves, as long as you are academically off charts no one cares what you do out of syllabus. But one day his mom caught him kissing a neighbor girl while to avoid further confrontation he bolted to Panku’s room.

“We can’t properly talk to one girl and there is this guy juggling several at a time” Vicky had come to point where he believed his dating life had ended.

“So, Nikhil has not returned to home since last 2 days, do his parents know his whereabouts” I enquired Panku.

“Yes, they know I called them, I am trying to convince him to face them as he must now or later, he won’t be able to come to college without uniform” Panku mentioned.

“What’s the big fuss, it happened to me before, of course, parents will be mad at you first but then things start to cool” Jumbo who had recently joined conversation with Pratik gave his unwanted opinion.

“How many times I told you, not to describe your fantasies or dreams in reality Jumbo” Pratik made everyone laugh.

“After eating food cooked by you Panku for two days straight, if he still is not going to home, then matter seems to be serious” Ganesh added.

“Don’t ask me who was the girl, I have revealed enough already though I shouldn’t have, now go to your classes” Panku grabbed his backpack before leaving for lecture.

“Ask him to use his grandfather as shield, he will understand Nikhil’s problem and need, perhaps inside he would be proud of him” Ganesh screamed at Panku to convey his problem-solving message which later proved to be correct one.

Fourth semester examination schedule had been declared, with already five subjects to clear from third semester I had no clue how to distribute time to prepare for both semesters simultaneously, I was good in theoretical subjects and hence, first I decided to go for it, I knew Vicky and Ganesh had acquired profound command over coding so reserved few subjects like C, Data Structures for them. With limited time in hand, the important thing for me was to avoid a year down, I knew subjects like EDC, M3 would not be easy to clear no matter how much you tire yourself in preparation. I knew I would never be able to grab a coding job with the terrible experience I had with C, my mind could not comprehend the fact, with few keys pressed you can maneuver the computer the way you want, and this thought stuck throughout engineering.

I went to Ganesh’s home with Vicky and begged them to teach me C, Data Structure, OOPS concepts and everything that comes close to coding, their reaction was something perplexing like how I was going to pay them the money for all their hard work.

“Why don’t you start reading Let US C, VBD is destroying our future, I mean, sure we will clear the subjects but what about the knowledge” Vicky still being in 3 Idiots’ Rancho mode spoke with authoritative voice.

“You read it first and then teach both of us, first set example and then preach Vicky” I replied.

“I can write entire linked list code faster than you both” Ganesh who was always busy with something suddenly replied off topic.

“So?” I and Vicky both looked at Ganesh for his reply.

“Why are you both not looking at me for my approval whenever you make any remarks about coding?” Ganesh exasperated.

“You made your father to spend 30k on new laptop so you could learn coding, and now after a year, you have come to us for the same, what actually did you do entire last year with your laptop” Vicky asked me surprisingly.

“What do you mean? How could I finish those two counterparts in counter strike during crucial phase of game with shotgun if I would not have played it at High Difficulty mode” there was slight proud in my voice.

“Let’s not go off topic, will any of you spare some free time for me, please” begging seemed little intense at the end.

“I will teach you arrays, Ganesh should take data structures” Vicky cleared.

“Now it’s up to you, you will have to work hard to get me out of this trouble or next year I won’t be there with you guys in college” now there was complete silence.

So as planned, Vicky and Ganesh started pouring some coding knowledge into me, learning session would start with basic concepts so I could understand but then both would start to fight if there is a conflict in their understanding leaving me empty handed.

With fourth semester, first years’ second re-examination schedule was out also, which meant do or die situations for all who had subject back in first year, to get promoted to third year it was necessary for all students to clear first years’ all subjects, which also meant it was last chance for Panku to avoid a year off and another chance for Aman to redeem his past MISTAKES, I did talk to Panku and gave him best for upcoming exam but it was really tough for me to talk to Aman but still I had to do it.

“Hey Aman, how are you, how are things at home” added last part for personal touch and exchanged pleasantries.

“I just wanted to give you best wishes for exam, this time you will get expected results”.

“Of Course, without your impeccable inputs, I ensured my success more than ever” Aman taunted.

“Yeah, out of all possibilities, I have already ruled out lecturer or teacher option from my appropriate carrier choices, if I could teach myself at least to procure passing marks, I am okay” I seconded Aman.

“You also have to deal with 5 backs from third semester, you are also on thin ice, it seems, and I heard you asked Ganesh and Vicky to teach you” Aman enquired.

“If you could learn from KemuTai then anyone can teach besides me” I ended conversation.

Fourth semester examination had started with third semester back subject's re-examination scheduled next to it, I focused on one thing at a time, my only thought was to clear enough subjects to avoid year down, I still remember my hands shaking while writing down answers on answer sheet, I was crosschecking my answers multiple times to make sure I have not done any silly mistakes, my confidence had worn off due to recent failure, but when I look back at those days, I concede, subconsciously failure makes you better than you already are if you accept it, own it and decide to do something about it with the chances you get to redeem yourself.

When you are on verge of losing a complete year, after completing your paper you come out meet your friends and your friends start discussing the probable answers and none of the answers come close to whatever you had written then you start to get intermittent tiny panic attacks. I wanted to run home directly but then I also was ride to Ganesh and Vicky and then I could only grunt and suffer the brunt.

“Vicky, now we have hand overed the answer sheet, I don’t want any discussion about any of questions until exam is over” I picked Vicky in college parking.

“But I can discuss with others? Right" Vicky raised doubts.

“No, if I am standing and listening to the discussion, yours and mine situation is completely different, if you are wrong, you will be concerned about 7-13 marks only, but for me or Ganesh, we will dirty our underpants, if you still discuss I will ask you to come with Nikhil from tomorrow” Vicky grinned back.

“Hey, Jumbo, how did it go for you, I saw you leaving before pastime” I asked Jumbo.

“It was only one page question paper, I did complete it in one hour” Jumbo quickly replied.

“No, it was two page” Vicky argued.

“Yes, it was two pages, but only one page had questions the other one was just plain white” Jumbo argued back.

“No, both pages had questions, your question paper must be having printing mistake” my reply turned Jumbo’s smiling face into troubled one.

Fourth semester examination was over, in Nagpur university nobody can predict the results till the day of the result, people who are confident of attempting 4 questions gets 2 marks, few who are always whining, get to clear all subjects with distinction, so it is always a matter of little bit of luck, I was in need of luck more than others for both 4th and 3rd semester re-examination, I am an introvert person, really don’t open myself to strangers easily, I knew if I lose Vicky and Ganesh because of year down then rest of engineering would really suck. Real villains of my life at that point of time were EDC and C, I could study day and night, read insurmountable number of notes but the level of knowledge would be the same after, learning the basics was an impossible task, so I chose the way I was best at - “Mugging”, to be honest to this day I barely remember how those days went past, but those days taught me how to fight in contrast situations with the tiniest of hope.

Ganesh had come to pick me up from my home, as he had also managed to secure hash in MEA in third semester, he somehow figured out to cram VBD book on top of his stunner’s petrol tank to revise the chapters during half hour drive to college, he would squeeze the top corners of book inside the handle wires so book would not fall of during sharp turn or jerk.

“Last time you asked me the long form of MEA, is it still the case” I enquired Ganesh.

“Managerial economics and accountancy, last night from 9 to 10, completely memorized it” Ganesh bragged.

“You know the strategy this time, no matter what we know but we have to fill entire answer sheet with few pages of new answer sheet as MEA lecturer suggested” Ganesh ensured if I am on top of the rescue plan.

“Yes, I have associated real life examples with few of the questions already, we just have to translate them to English” I revealed my grand plan.

“Right, everything boils down to supply and demand, if supply is less the demand is high and vice vera, just expand it to 20-30 pages, here’s your answer sheet” Ganesh started laughing.

After exam was over, I was waiting for Ganesh in IT department corridor, that’s when I saw Ritu there, I already had embarrassed myself to the extent I could barely look at her, she started talking to our MEA lecturer, from the words she was mincing I could gather she also had few backs from third semester and like every other girl she was unhappy with her MEA exam answer paper.

“Why are you here, unzip the bag and go there sit on that milestone to talk to Ritu” Ganesh who had appeared from nowhere taunted.

“How many pages did you fill?” I asked Ganesh whilst on our way to the parking.

“Complete one and half sheets” Ganesh roared.

“Same here!!! hahahaha” we highfived.

“The next and biggest challenge is M3, subjects start with M, I don’t like them Harsh” Ganesh menacingly flexed arms.

“So true, but for me there are many more Ganesh…and I am counting on you and Vicky”.

“I would offer my help if I wouldn’t have slept whenever I open book to read” Ganesh beseeched.

For C, I drilled down repeatedly asked theory questions from VBD mugged them along with code to print patterns, with the time I had in hand it was best strategy for EDC I adopted same strategy, Oscillators part was never my cup of tea hence skipped it, rest of muggable things I memorized. I went to Vicky’s home to discuss my strategy to find he and Nikhil were busy copying computer games, it was vacation time for them, elites with no backlogs.

“Look, I almost managed to secure 15 plus in internals for C and EDC, rest 25 I could get through theoretical questions, possibility of learning C language basics and writing code is slim for me, I have no other option but to mug blindly” I advocated my situation.

“You have chosen IT faculty, more probably you will choose programming as career, C is basic language for all advanced languages to come, now if you don’t learn it properly the future syllabus will haunt you” Rancho in Vicky had a point.

“If he does not want you to pursue his career in programming, would you allow him enter third year if he could clear enough subjects, Rancho?” Nikhil playfully ditched Vicky.

“Look, who is speaking of jobs, top guy from electronics department, who would pick the best offer amongst the offers from manufacturing, IT, electronics companies after graduation, you guys have many options unlike us” Last part seemed intense from Vicky.

“Every department has its perks and negatives, ours still yet to reveal” Nikhil sought for byes.

“Let’s go inside and I will explain you, pointers in C” Vicky gestured invitation.

Thankfully C and EDC paper didn’t bounce, answers I had mugged, I wrote them with extra indentations, underlines to claim examiners belief, surprisingly an acquaintance from class helped whole-heartedly and let me copy 14 marks question entirely during EDC exam and to this day I still believe that it was game changer, once EDC is back, it never let go of your back, Panku could clear it after 4th attempt, I overheard few lecturers became lecturer of EDC because they had to study it several times through their attempts. My friends offered me help in other subjects, but none came forward for EDC, that evidence was enough to tell how much this subject scared engineering students. Thanks to Vicky, In C exam, I could answer array related questions in detail, my internal score was 18 and I needed 22 marks, I attempted 6 theory questions of 40 marks in total about C foundations, history, loops and arrays, guessed one pattern code of 13 marks after thinking it through for an hour.

Second year was over eventually with wanted and unwanted twists and turns, few students had rushed to Hyderabad for the Java, C, SQL courses, Vicky along with other academically overenthusiastic students had convinced Sheikh sir (most friendly teacher in Chandrapur) to arrange a java teacher in Chandrapur for lazy ones like us who could not even think of leaving cozy homes. Peer pressure had kicked in, along with programming courses, we also had started reading the concepts in aptitude books like R.S. Aggarwal, P.C. Wren English grammar, question around on-campus interviews had started to reverberate everywhere.

“Looking at our academics, no company would want us to join them” I specifically pointed my eyes towards Ganesh only.

“They would question their own decision before hiring anyone from college if they come across us in premises” Ganesh added.

“We still have entire third and fourth year before jumping on conclusions. We will double concentrate on studies from now on, also only third- and fourth years’ performance will be measured on our degrees, so we are waking up at perfect time” Vicky reprimanded us, entire set up was started to look alike 3 idiots now, where Vicky (Rancho) preaching two of his loser friends.

“This is what we keep telling ourselves, we will do better next year, and then next year turns out to be even worse, except for you Vicky” hopelessness with sleep blinked through Ganesh’s eyes.

“Not this year, my gut feeling says this year is ours, Vicky is right, we need to be super careful with these two years, we won’t skip any lectures even though they are boring like My Name is Khan film” Vicky’s inspiring words had charged me with positive vibes.

“That extra super-careful phase will come when you clear 3rd semester subjects” Ganesh’s reply restored sad reality in discussion.

“I don’t know but from now on I want you both be ready before 10 AM on every weekday, Saturday would be optional, we are making things right which we can control right now, at least, let’s ensure internal 20 marks this semester, so no fighting with lecturers or mocking them during lecture” Vicky decided for gang again with authoritative voice.

“I am in, I don’t like Mrs Pota lecture tiny bit, but as they say heaven’s road passes through hell, if that’s what it takes to come at top then I am game” positive vibes hadn’t left me till then.

Next day, I woke up sharp at 8 AM and to my parents surprise I got ready for college without grumping, went to Vicky’s home to pick him up, we were midway to college when Ganesh called Vicky and invited him to his cousin’s marriage, we ditched college and attended wedding when we all returned from wedding everyone blamed sleep, eventually it was sleep which drained the intensity from intent.

It was around 9 in the morning when my phone rang, one of school friends was from other side, his voice was calm, he calmly mentioned, Vicky has met with an accident this morning, we are in Malhotra hospital right now, reach there quickly, before I could ask for more details, he hung up.

Without wasting a single breath, I reached hospital, Vicky had been admitted to ICU, his mother and sister had tears in their eyes, his mother is one of the strongest women I know and that’s when I realized it must be serious accident, I had no clue how did it happen that’s when I saw Ganesh roaming in clinic’s corridor.

“When did you reach here, I was going to call you” Ganesh responded to my call.

“How did this happen? How is he now, has doctor told anyone, which body parts are injured” I fired my questions at Ganesh.

“He was on his way to home on Gaurya’s (school friend) bike from Gym and Gaurya was driving, he asked Gaurya to let him drive as Gaurya just bought new bike”

“but Vicky does not know how to ride bike” I interrupted.

“Yes, when Vicky was driving suddenly a street cow charged at bike which jolted both of them on ground, fortunately Gaurya didn’t suffer any injury, but a grit went passed through Vicky’s right eye” last words were painful for Ganesh to say.