



You Know... I know

Bengaluru city comes alive at night, when people, after a long day at college or work, gather in large numbers near food stalls.

I used to cycle around my locality every night after dinner. In name of cycling, I would also stop my cycle at Shiv food centre, not for food but for tea.

One night, I was on my daily routine. With the chirping sound of the birds coming from the trees, made me relax after my disappointing and frustrating day at college.

I was speeding up on the cycle lane as generally this lane was mostly empty, my cycle was feeling like a high speed yoker bowled at a batsman by Shoaib Akhtar.

My speed was disrupted by a girl who wore a black hoodie, her earphone plugged in, was walking carelessly on the cycle lane. I had to stop my cycle just like the yorker bowl by Shoaib used to be defended by Rahul Dravid.

“Hey..!” I shouted at her.

The girl swiftly turned back, she had a moderate height, dark eyelashes which suited well on those big beautiful eyes.

She took out her earphone and said “What?”

“This is the cycle lane, don’t you know?” I asked.

“Yeah...” she said and took a pause, then continued, “oh, sorry, I should walk on the footpath”

I did not try to scold her anymore because she did accept her mistake which generally a girl won't do.

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“Maa, when will they arrive?” I asked.

“Papa had a call with them,” she replied.

“What did they say?” I asked again.

“In ten minutes,” she answered.

I wasn't used to wearing formal attire very often—there was no dress code at my office. My tucked-in shirt always managed to come loose and look untidy.

“They've arrived. Ved, come,” my father said.

I loosely adjusted my shirt and walked with my parents to the entrance of the hotel.

“Namaste, Vivek ji,” my father greeted warmly. I bowed down and touched the feet of the girl's parents.

“Come, let's go in,” my father said, gesturing politely to our guests.

I tried not to look at the girl directly. I wasn't sure if she noticed me. All I caught was the colour of her light pink salwar suit, with delicate embroidery around the neckline. She seemed to be of moderate height—maybe because of the heels she was wearing.

After the formal discussion of knowing each other, we were asked to out and talk to each other. When I saw her at the table, she was sitting opposite to me, I was suspicious that I have seen her before.

We both settled down at a food court but with no food.

“You don’t want anything?” I asked.

She looked up straight into my eyes “May be a cycle ride?”

“What?” I was surprised.

“So, you don’t do cycling now?” she asked.

“I was suspicious of you, are you that black hoodie girl?” I asked.

“Hmm, you took a long time to remember.” She laughed.

“You did not see my photograph?” she asked.

“I did but it’s been a long time now” I answered.

“So, you are ready for marriage?” she asked.

I said “One day, I told at home that I will get married by the age of 28.”

“Then?” she asked curiously

I continued “Now, I am 28, so...”

She laughed filled the quite space around us as there were no one sitting on either side of us.

“You are in Bangalore?” I asked.

“Yup... and you?” she asked.

“Yeah, me too.” I reciprocated.

She adjusted her dupatta, “So, what is your decision?”

“Let’s take the decision together.” I suggested.

“Let’s meet a bit more, we are in Bangalore as well then decide.” I further added.

She nodded in agreement and we went out of the food court.

Finally, my tiring day at office got over and I was walking towards the entrance of the tech park, right at the time I thought to call Amrita.

“Hi, are you in office?” I asked.

“Yeah, what happened?” she spoke in a very a tired voice almost choking.

“What happened to you?” I asked.

She exclaimed “Nothing!”

“I am outside your tech park, right now.” I continued after a pause, “come down, I want to meet you.” I suggested.

Amrita came out slowly, her eyes looked tired, and the way she held her bag close to herself showed how drained she felt.

“Hey,” I said softly.

She didn't speak immediately. Her eyes welled up a little, and then she looked away, trying to hide it.

"I just... don't feel like doing anything anymore. Every day feels the same. Meetings, tasks, feedback, repeat," she murmured.

I walked beside her without saying much for a while, letting her breathe.

"You're not alone in this," I finally said. "But maybe you need to pause. Just for a bit. Let yourself breathe outside all this chaos."

She looked at me, a faint smile trying to push past her exhaustion. "You think a pause will fix this?"

"Maybe not fix. But it might remind you what truly matters to you." I suggested.

I didn't call her at midnight. I knew she'd expect it. Maybe even be upset. But I had something else planned.

That morning, I waited outside her apartment with a bouquet of yellow and white lilies and a small box of chocolates. When she came out, still groggy and mildly grumpy, I handed them over without a word.

"You forgot my birthday?" she said, raising an eyebrow.

I smiled. "I didn't forget. I just didn't want to add to your midnight pile of half-hearted wishes. I've seen how low you feel every morning heading to work... I thought maybe this could brighten it a bit."

She paused, looking at the flowers, then at me. Her eyes softened.

“You’re strange,” she said. “But... thank you. This really did light me up.”

We sat across from each other at a small café tucked away from the noise. Amrita stirred her coffee slowly before speaking.

“You know... I never really wanted this corporate life. I wanted to write. I used to write stories all through college.”

“So why didn’t you?” I asked.

“Fear, maybe. Stability. Expectations.”

I leaned forward. “You’re still writing, aren’t you?”

She hesitated. “Yes, but only for myself.”

I was preparing to leave for my hometown to give my CAT exam. I’d be working from home for a month. Before leaving, I dropped by Amrita’s place one last time.

She greeted me at the door with her usual tired but comforting smile.

“Tea?” she asked, heading straight to the kitchen.

“Always,” I replied, settling down on the sofa.

While she was boiling water, I walked around her room casually. My eyes stopped at a corner of the bookshelf where a few notebooks were messily stacked. I pulled them out, and underneath, I found a thick bunch of papers tied together with a ribbon.

Curious, I untied it. The pages were full of stories—some handwritten, some typed. Titles scribbled in corners, dialogues flowing like real conversations, vivid descriptions of people and places. There were fragments, completed chapters, poems too.

“Amrita...” I called out.

She peeked in from the kitchen. “Hmm?”

“What’s all this?” I asked, holding up the bundle.

Her face froze for a second. “Nothing. Just... old stuff.”

I flipped through a few more pages. “This is not just ‘stuff.’ You wrote all this?”

She nodded, then shrugged lightly. “Yeah... just things I wrote when I had time. Never really shared them.”

“You’ve written a whole world here,” I said, genuinely amazed.

She gave a soft smile. “It’s silly, I know. Just a hobby I never took seriously.”

“It’s not silly, Amrita,” I said, gently. “Why didn’t you tell me about this?”

She walked in with two cups of tea, placed one in front of me, and sat down. “I don’t know. I guess I never thought anyone would be interested. It felt like my own little escape from everything.”

I looked at the pages again, still in awe. “Can I take one? To read on the train?”

She hesitated for a moment, then nodded. “Okay... but only if you promise to be honest.”

I smiled. “I’ll be more than that.”

She rolled her eyes playfully. “Oh god, that sounds serious.”

“It is,” I said, holding up the manuscript. “This could be your real work, you know?”

She didn’t say anything, but her smile stayed a little longer this time.

As we finished our tea, I casually slipped one of the manuscripts into my bag—the one titled *When the Clouds Wait*. I didn’t tell her which one I was taking. I figured I’d surprise her later with what I thought.

The train whistled and pulled out of the station slowly. I settled into my seat near the window, the manuscript on my lap, a soft breeze coming in through the grilled window. I hadn’t planned on reading it immediately—but curiosity got the better of me.

Page after page, I was pulled into her world. Her writing wasn’t just good—it was honest. There was a tenderness in her words, like she had poured the parts of herself she kept hidden from the world into those stories. Her characters weren’t perfect. They were flawed, lost, real. And in them, I could see parts of her she never voiced aloud.

One line stayed with me:

“Sometimes, it’s not about running away. It’s about finally letting yourself stand still.”

I closed the manuscript, placed it on my lap, and leaned my head against the window. The world outside passed by in a blur, but inside me, everything had come into sharp focus.

I pulled out my phone and typed:

“You need to write. Not just for yourself. But for the world. You have a voice that deserves to be heard.”

I didn’t expect an instant reply. The train rattled on through nameless towns, and I imagined her sitting in her apartment, reading the message, quietly stunned.

An hour later, my phone buzzed.

“I needed someone to say that. I’ve been waiting for a sign. I think this is it.

I’m going to do it. I’m quitting.”

I smiled—half proud, half overwhelmed. Something had shifted—not just in her, but in me too.

That moment didn’t just feel like a turning point in her life. It felt like the beginning of something more honest, more meaningful—for both of us.

We didn't talk every day, but we remained close.

In that one month, our lives quietly shifted gears. I cracked the CAT interview and got into IIM Bangalore—a dream I had nurtured for years. When the results came in, I stared at the screen in disbelief before calling her.

“Amrita?” I said, trying to hold back the excitement in my voice.

“Yeah?”

“I got in. IIM Bangalore.”

There was a brief pause before she screamed, “Oh my God, Ved! I knew it. I just knew it!”

I could hear the genuine joy in her voice. That one moment made everything worth it.

She, too, had found her rhythm. She quit her job, stepped out of the corporate maze, and poured her soul into her writing. A month later, she held in her hands her first published novel—The Girl on the Cycle Lane.

“It's real,” she said on a call one night, her voice trembling slightly. “People are buying it. Reading it. Messaging me.”

“Of course they are,” I replied. “You were meant to do this.”

It felt like we were walking two separate paths, but both in the direction we were always meant to go.

We congratulated each other, sent voice notes late at night, shared memes, playlists, and sudden waves of nostalgia. But there came a day when silence lingered longer, not out of distance, but clarity.

One evening, I called her while sitting in my hostel room, the Bangalore breeze playing with the curtains.

“Amrita,” I began, hesitating for a moment, “do you think we’re holding on... or just waiting for the right time?”

There was a soft rustle on the other end of the call. Then she replied, “Maybe a bit of both. But you’ve got IIM now, and I’ve got this new world I’m just stepping into.”

“I know,” I said, my voice low. “I want to give it my all. No distractions. No split focus.”

She sighed. “Same here. I think this... us... we deserve to come together when we’re both whole. Not in halves.”

There was silence, and then she added quietly, “If we’re meant to meet again, we will. Maybe even on a cycle lane.”

I smiled, a little sad, a little proud.

“Take care of yourself, writer girl,” I said.

“Don’t forget me, IIM guy,” she replied.

That night, we didn’t cry. We didn’t say goodbye. We just... let go.

Not out of indifference.

But out of belief—that if we were meant to cross paths again, we would.

It was an ordinary evening in Bengaluru.

I was back in the city for a short break. After my lectures, I borrowed a cycle and rode aimlessly—half in nostalgia, half in habit. As I passed the familiar stretch near Shiv Food Centre, something made me slow down.

There she was.

Walking along the cycle lane, earphones in, her dupatta fluttering gently in the evening breeze. A soft smile played on her lips, the kind that made time feel irrelevant.

I slowed down and stopped, just a few feet ahead of her.

She saw me.

"You again?" she teased, her voice laced with something warm and familiar.

I smiled back, my hands resting on the cycle handle. "I never found anyone who understood me the way you do."

She took off one earphone and walked closer, this time with no hesitation.

"So... should we stop walking around the idea?" she said, her eyes locked on mine.

"Maybe it's time we just... walk together."

I got off the cycle and stood beside her. The silence around us wasn't awkward—it was full of everything we had once left unsaid.

"You know," I began, "when we decided to part ways last year, I thought we were making the right choice. And maybe we were. But even in all the good things that happened, I missed... this. Us."

She nodded. "Me too. We did the right thing. But maybe now it's time for the right moment."

We didn't need grand declarations. No drama. Just this—two people who had lived enough life apart to realize that what they had wasn't ordinary.

"So," she smiled, "should we finally, do it?"

I looked at her, the girl who once walked into my cycle lane and into my life, and said—

"Let's get married."

And this time, neither of us walked away.