

Little Things, Big Heart

It had been months since the family had gone out together. Life had become a quiet mix of routines and responsibilities. Neha sat on the edge of her bed one evening with her old diary in hand, flipping through pages filled with everyday notes, school reminders, and a few faded grocery receipts. The house was calm. Aarav and Misha had fallen asleep in the next room, and the only sound was the ceiling fan above.

Rajat lay beside her, his breathing soft and steady. The stress of running his struggling startup showed on his face, even in sleep. Payments were stuck, clients were few, and the weight of holding everything together rested silently on his shoulders. Neha had seen it all, his long hours, his quiet sighs, and the way he stared at the ceiling late into the night, pretending to be fine.

She flipped to a clean page in her diary and began to write, slowly thinking of what they truly needed. Aarav had grown out of his school shoes. Misha had been borrowing colours from her classmates and could use a new set of sketch pens. Rajat's wallet had become worn and torn at the corners, barely holding together.

Her eyes paused as she thought of something for herself—a cream-colored watch she had often admired on her way to the market. It wasn't fancy, just elegant and soft on the eyes. She smiled for a second, picturing it on her wrist, then looked at the page again. Slowly, without a word, she crossed it out.

She sat still for a moment, looking at the scratched-out words. Then she closed the diary, turned off the light, and lay down beside Rajat, hoping the weekend would bring a little joy.

That Friday evening, Rajat came home looking slightly brighter. A client had finally agreed to place an order, and a small payment had come through. It wasn't a lot, but it was enough to clear the electricity bill and leave something for small needs.

"We should go out this Sunday," he said gently. "Buy a few things. Maybe eat out. The kids will be happy."

Neha nodded, trying not to show the small burst of excitement that filled her. They hadn't done this in so long.

The sun was sharp that morning, casting golden streaks across their small living room. Aarav and Misha rushed to get dressed while Neha tied her yellow saree neatly and packed their cloth shopping bag.

The market was alive with color and noise. Children ran across narrow lanes. Street vendors shouted prices. The smell of hot samosas, ripe mangoes, and incense from a nearby temple mixed in the air.

They moved through the crowd, stopping at stalls. Neha bent down to check the size of Aarav's shoes carefully before buying a sturdy black pair. Misha picked out a set of sketch pens with glitters that made her eyes light up.

They passed a book stall, and Rajat picked up a secondhand business book with a hopeful smile. Neha followed him, watching him closely. At one corner, she stopped when she saw a small display — and there it was again. The cream-colored watch. Its soft strap and silver dial looked just like she remembered.

The shopkeeper smiled. "Discount today, madam. Good quality."

She touched the glass gently, then looked away. "Not today," she said politely. "Maybe next time."

Further ahead, she noticed a simple brown wallet. "Yours is falling apart," she told Rajat, holding it out. "Let's take this."

He looked unsure for a moment but then nodded. "If you say so."

By evening, they found a small restaurant with four wooden tables and a smiling waiter. The walls had pictures of Indian dishes, and soft music played in the background. The children, full of energy, looked thrilled just to sit and order their own food.

They ordered dal, paneer, hot rotis, and even a small dessert. As they waited, Neha began to go through the shopping bag out of habit. She checked the shoes, the pens, the book, but then frowned.

"The wallet is not here," she said, confused. "I saw the man packing it."

Rajat stayed quiet for a moment, then reached into his own bag. Without a word, he placed a small, flat box in front of her.

"What's this?" she asked.

"Open it," he said, eyes calm.

She slowly unwrapped the paper, and her breath caught. There, sitting neatly inside, was the cream-colored watch.

She looked up at him, surprised. "You bought this?"

"I returned the wallet," Rajat said, his voice gentle. "I saw the way you looked at this. You always think of all of us, but you never let yourself have anything. I wanted you to have this."

Her eyes shimmered. "You shouldn't have..."

"I should," he said. "I wanted to."

She couldn't speak for a few moments. She just held his hand, the smile on her face saying everything her words couldn't.