

THE LIGHT

Sheela was a dark, sultry, mysterious junior resident in the department of Psychiatry. She had always topped the beauty list (a list of girls in descending order of beauty, traditionally prepared by eligible bachelors of the class) and the academics in her MBBS days and had been aware and secure about her achievements. She was reasonably confident that she would conquer this new arena and finish her MD in style. She looked around her; there was no other female resident in the department. No competition in the beauty department, she thought. There were three other 1st year residents, one of them would be posted in the same unit as her.

That person would be Himanshu. He had secured the junior residency after a long and tiresome struggle. After barely scraping through in MBBS, he took three attempts to clear the entrance examination for MD. Not that he was a bad student; he was known to be very hard working. Some people suspected that he was too good looking for his own good and the distractions that such

good looks attracted was the reason for his academic undoing.

Sheela then turned her attention to the accommodation that was on offer. The hostel allotted in residency was different from MBBS days. Male and female residents had a common hostel. The atmosphere was charged with a certain enigmatic charm, especially for the ones who were unmarried. The sensual mysteries that lay behind closed doors was alluring and forbidding at the same time. As luck would have it, Himanshu and Sheela were allotted rooms adjacent to each other.

Sheela could feel Himanshu breathing down her neck in the workplace. He would come prepared for the rounds, ask intelligent questions and give reasonable answers. He was hard working and patient in the clinical duties. He was genuinely focussed now. Only the theoretical seminars gave her some breathing space. It seemed he was dull in that department; dry academics did not appeal to him, he said.

Day and night, Sheela fought hard to keep her lead. The motivation for long hard hours late into the night came from the glow emanating from the window of Himanshu's room. She would see the light glowing when she went to

sleep and when she woke up. Apparently, Himanshu slept after her and woke up before her. It was exasperating.

She had to do something. She was not used to losing. But what could she do? She was studying as hard as she possibly could, but this chap seemed to know no fatigue. What could she do? What could she do?

Day and night, she saw Himanshu gaining ground. She was getting desperate.

One day while the glow was emanating from the enemy camp, lightning struck her. All gloom was dispelled by the brightness of the idea that dawned on her. She recalled a rumour about Himanshu. Only if her courage wouldn't desert her.

Decent was an adjective that had followed her all throughout. She did have her fantasies of being a bad girl, but something had always led her away from temptations. What the heck. She was an adult now and being bad was not such a bad thing. But could she really do it?

If she really wanted to do it, it would have to be planned in detail. What features would need accentuating? What features needed hiding? She had to be distracting enough, but not too overt. What would be the border she would not cross? Would she be able to control herself in throes

of passion? Would she take contraceptives as a preventive measure? She hated the idea of abortion. She believed that conception was life. Wasn't it her sacred duty to preserve life?

After careful thought, she decided on wearing a black dress with a high slit on the thigh, which subtly took the spotlight away from her breasts. She was prepared to take the plunge if passion overtook her, and for the first time in her life, experienced the disgusting side-effects of the "pills".

As an added precaution, she wore her grey overcoat over her dress to avoid unwanted gossip. While in undergraduate days, only boys would sneak in to the girl's hostels with active connivance from their paramours and very occasionally a daring girl would risk a visit to the boy's room, it was no longer a taboo for ladies and gentlemen to visit each other's room during residency. But the gossip mongers would be out in their full strength if anyone saw her going there late in the night.

Somehow the adventure, the thrill, the temptation, the sin was turning her on. She wondered if it would feel the same if it was to be a society sanctioned rendezvous like it is in the West.

Carefully, she tiptoed towards the room. She knocked very lightly, lest someone else hears it. There was no reply. Probably he did not hear it. Should she risk another, louder knock?

Suddenly, as a naïve swimmer musters courage and jumps into the pool, Sheela pushed the door open and barged into Himanshu's room.

Tingling with anticipation, she entered the room. There was a musty odour in the room, clothes were untidily strewn across the chair and the floor was filled with dust and crumpled balls of paper. The walls had flaking paint and an unsuccessful attempt at covering them with pictures of pin-up girls was evident.

Suddenly, all feelings of lust, deceit and competition left her and a feeling of calm swept through. Oblivious of the visitor, oblivious of all the cares of the world, Himanshu was "glowriously" asleep.