**Letter 1:**

**From a poet to his daughter**

My Graduate Girl,

You have already broken the record of your father’s qualification. Congratulations! You are on a plateau now. You can look at all the horizons and beyond them, from here. It needs one more jump to climb onto your own personality. You have to choose the direction. Just two/three years more of education, the academic part is over. Whatever you do now will be of your own interest and choice. But without effort, one doesn’t find even oneself. Make one more effort to find yourself. You are capable of great achievements, that I know.

You have only to decide it and you’ll do it!

Your Ma is leaving on the 29th. She misses you very much. You do love her, I know, but don’t fight with her to express your love. She is a disciplined person and (has) a very generous heart —and (is) a great teaser too!

What should I sign at the end, Dad, Papa or — Gulzar  
July 1994

**Letter 2:**

**From a mother to her son**

**‘I know you are afraid of nothing now’**

Dear Babu,

Every day, my day begins at six with a cup of tea that I make for myself. Whenever you are in town, I go back to stare at your face. You sleep peacefully, with your lips parted and eyes half open. For as long as I can remember, this is how you have slept. That’s the only time I see you absolutely peaceful. When you wake up at 11, frantically asking for your coffee, and rush to get ready for lunch with your “BFFS”, my day begins.

That day, my day began at 5.55 am. For the first time, you woke me up with a cup of tea. I asked, “Are you leaving early today?” “No. I’ll be with you today.”

We cleaned up your room together. You made me lunch. Some vegetables and meat tossed in a pan, brown bread and old port wine from my closet. At 4 pm, you said, “Ma, let’s go out.” I was happy.

Like always, you picked out a sari for me. We went to Flury’s. We ordered a club sandwich and a pie. I saw you fidgeting.

I asked you, “What’s the matter?”

“I want to tell you something. I know you know, though.”  
“What do I know?”  
“You remember that film, Ma?”  
I knew. I remembered. I had denied it.

Two years ago, you wrote and made a film as a part of your cinematography course. It was a rather intense film about a young man and his terminally ill mother. When we watched it, I had cried. I didn’t think of anything else back then. Or did I?

If I didn’t, why did I feel you needed to tell me everything about your life since then? Why do I check all the time to make sure you get all my assets after me? Why do I feel the need of a guardian for you, after me?

I’m not very old. Forty-five is definitely not an age to feel threatened. Then why this craving for your glimpse, every day?  
“Well, I made that film for you. I thought you would understand.”

“Understand what?”  
“That I’m … I’m a … I do not like girls … not in a girlfriend-boyfriend way…”

You need not have said anything else. I couldn’t hear anything else. No more living in denial. In fear. It’s out there. I should feel free.  
The sandwich arrived. Like always, I broke off a piece and put it in your mouth. You had tears in your eyes. We didn’t speak that day.  
The next day, I called your best friend in Bangalore. You didn’t know that, did you? I said, “You knew something more about him than me. But the truth is, I did know. Always.” He said, “Aunty, it’s as simple as the fact that I prefer rice for lunch and he prefers bread.”

I knew you chose your life correctly, your career, your friends, your clothes, your hairstyle, even the kohl you apply on your eyes. I also knew that the one thing that you didn’t choose, but were born as, is also correct. It’s like I get to see you as you are, every day.

Strangely, when you leave for college now, I miss you and fear for you a little less. I know you are afraid of nothing now. “So, you are going to find someone for yourself, right?”

“Well, you can save me all the work and find someone for me.”

Love,  
Ma