

BALU MATTA

#### Introduction

Hi, I'm Riyal Shetty crossed the easiest part of my 25 years. As of now, being carefree with not many responsibilities on me; one and only love of my parents.

My mom who is an all-rounder in raising me, right from caressing me to bashing me in case if I don't listen to her. I was not a much decent guy in my schooling days so I was put to boarding school where I was quite decent as expected but not the same after I left boarding school. Everything in my life from high schooling to degree had been done in boarding schools and hostels. It was the first time after 9 and a half years that I got a chance to stay in my home after I had temporary work shift to Bengaluru in Jan 2015. As of 2018, I'm a team lead at one of the bad software companies headquartered in Florida. I'm a person with a little absent-mindedness and I keep blabbering with my inner me. I'm keen on hurting myself; accepting the choices of other people around me and travels a lot as that give me time to discover myself. I have a plethora of friends but only few whom I feel so.

Well, what do you think that excited me the most?

Girls? No had enough of being in relationships.

Partying? Not exactly

Travel? Oh yeah. I Love it!

Hold your horses, there is something else...

How about a girl who has similar interests in traveling, been to almost every place where you have been?

Hmmmmm, sounds interesting!! Want to know more??

#### Scene at Florida

It was my second day there and I'm already shit worried how to be there for the next three months being on the same team.

I don't have problem seeing her all time but she should not be disturbed. Time is already 10:20. Had a quick bath and logged into the office.

"Morning ass", Arpitha greeted me as soon as I entered the bay, but looking at her laptop screen.

"Morning idiot. We shall have no room for your nonsense till we finish off our work."

"Guys listen up we got three months, exactly 60 working days.

So, we are going to finish off all our tasks by 45 days and post that we will be verifying everything we have done", I said.

Usually, we follow agile method having consecutive build and releases to testing teams so that they will test the modules as and when we give releases. But in our case, it wasn't the same.

As we had to do the integration from the scratch, we had a lot of work to do.

"People, anyone of you gone through use cases?" I questioned and everyone threw a blank look.

I can see Arpitha playing some youtube video, Aadya and Saanvi checking out some travel website and Richard; he barely works as his girlfriend sits next to him and they keep checking out each other.

After a short meeting with director Samuel

"Let's grab a coffee.?" Arpitha said smiling towards me.

Cafe, such a nice place though and weirdness is being with Aadya,

I don't know how she feels. I want to ask her whether she is fine working with me or not.

We went back to work. The time was already 12:30. Close to lunch hour.

I pinged Aadya on skype.

Me: Hi Aadya, I wanted to ask something.

Aadya: Yes go ahead

Me: Is it okay with you? me being on your team?

She: if no, would you go back or would you tell Sam to replace me?

Me: I will go back to India.

She: Good answer but not required Riyal. We are the team now

She replied with a winking smiley

I Thanked her.

Though she said she is okay, I was still uncomfortable, thinking my presence would make her feel the same. So I shifted myself to second shift working from 2 pm to 11 pm as Aadya, Saanvi, Arpitha everyone used to leave at 6 pm.

I use to come at 2 pm attend a meeting and communicate with Arpitha about the tasks, also asking out Aadya and Sanvi on their progress and if they needed some help. Richard is the guy who doesn't need much help from anyone. He will get his work at the right time with the best deliverable. So I really was having a pleasant time.

Meanwhile, we got to know that Richard is officially getting married to his girlfriend and we demanded a party.

Richard: Fellas, Resto bar at 6 pm?

Aadya: Cool Sanvi: I'm in

Arpitha: "give me two minutes." She called up Guru and informed him, "baby, today I will be late, going for Richard's dinner party and Riyal will drop me back home."

I was like wtf.

Richard: Alright then.

Riyal is taken for granted as he never says no to booze.

We all left at 6 pm reached there after about 30 minutes.

It went on with casual talk, enjoying Italian music. It was all good and I drank two pitchers of beer and started to trip.

I won't be myself when I'm tripped. I kept making fun of every damn person out there except for Aadya and without realizing Sanvi is close to Aadya, I pissed her for something and now she had to take a turn on me.

Riyal, why don't you tell why you don't talk much with Aadya? Afraid isn't it, schoolboy? How sad! Saying so she started laughing hard but Aadya got a little weird and everyone could see it.

Sanvi: Tell darling, have you met her before?

Me: Nothing like that. Who said I don't talk to her.

I do, What Aadya isn't it?

I turned my face towards her and she nodded her head faking the scene and everybody knew there was something wrong.

Sanvi: okay, I don't want to hurt you guys.

Richard! bloody damn he didn't stop at this.

"I want to know I want to know to Tell me what's it" he said

Aadya was freaked. "Guys stop it. We had met before and he was trying to hit on me but I didn't give a damn. And now we have met again." Saying so she just threw an aggressive look on me.

I got pissed at this and said "What? I was trying to hit on you? Did I say so Aadya?" Riyal," you were. I got to know everything later", she replied.

Oh yeah? Then I will have to make a correction to your statement. I had a kind of intimacy which doesn't amount to a relationship. Hope you're aware of those terminologies.

Richard: Guys, Relax It's not a time to fight. Chill.

I was totally freaked by her attitude but I didn't want to create a scenes since I will be seeing her for quite some time in the office.

I just said, "Aadya sorry".

Aadya: Sorry too. I shouldn't have overreacted for Sanvi's nonsense.

She turned towards Sanvi and threw her a look indicating she was an asshole for taking up things like that.

We finished party and before I left with Arpitha, "Sorry man, I shouldn't have taken over that topic", Sanvi said

It's okay. I'm sorry too for playing a joke on you. Good night. I said She gave a warm hug.

So who's Aadya here? Why am I freaked out and when did I meet her?
The girl I met back in India in the year 2014 and had a bad consequence over some misunderstanding.
She had similar travel interests as said and I was liking her a lot then.
But what happened after the pub incident?

## A scene on the way to Atlanta

I lighted up cigarette handing one to Richard where the rest were having coffee.

I and Aadya had to leave for Atlanta for her birthday. She was caught with cold and fever from last two days. She had come to office today after two day's leave. It was Thursday and the night when we had to leave.

Sanvi: Aadya all set for the trip? Which trip? She said, "Atlanta?, No. We are not going."

I was alerted for that and said, Why aren't we going?

Look at you idiot. Horribly sneezing once in every five minutes and smoking over that giving reasons that you've not smoked for a week.

Are you worried about me or your health since you were the one who had a fever? I asked.

Obviously yours, Riyal. Throw that cigarette first. She grinned at me

Aady, you don't have to worry then, I will take care of myself and we are leaving tonight.

No, I'm not coming.

You're. Else I'm going alone.

She is pissed and showed me the middle finger.

We left back to work.

I was sitting next to her and she was seriously working for no reason. We were almost done with integrating two applications and she is busy hitting her keys on the keyboard. I went close to her.

"Aady?" She didn't look or reply anything.

I re uttered "Aadya."

Still the same. No fucks were given.

I rested my head and said

"I badly want to go. I don't want to ruin the plan. Please we shall go?"

She turned towards me

"Riyal, you're tired I told you not to sleep next to me when I was not good. See, now you're having a cold and you really look tired. And what if something happens to you?"

"Don't worry. Nothing's going to happen when you're with me."

"Shut up. I'm being serious."

"Aady we will go, please?!" I said with a pleasing face

She looked at me for five seconds and said

"But you're not driving".

"Then?"

"I will do."

"Okay" I said just to convince her for the trip.

We left for Atlanta and she drove all night though I offered to ride for sometime.

She is a damn good driver and she drove with just one pit stop for 10 hours.

perfect partner! seriously buddies, you can't drive like her.

Yes, I don't drive good after sunset. I do, but not so good when in outskirts since light of opposite car glares me a level more than what it would to others.

I was watching to another side of the window and she hit me hard on my shoulders and said "Ass, I made it".

"Lol, I would have done it as well." I replied with a grin.

"Yeah yeah, I know" she said sarcastically and got out to stretch her body to loosen up.

As she stretched I was looking at her cute face where tiny strands of hair were moving in accordance to the breeze. "Aady, I love you" I screamed so loud but putting up all windows so that she would not hear it clearly.

She came and tapped on the window pane. I opened

"What did you say? I couldn't hear," she asked

"Nothing I just yawned screamingly."

She laughed and said come out. It was too cold, 6 in the morning. She held my hand and leaned.

I immediately loosened her and said "Aady", I touched her forehead and neck. She is having a fever again.

"Shit Aadya, you're having a fever,

I told you that I will be driving." I was pissed, I turned aside.

She came stood in front of me and said

"Hey, I'm fine. Probably a mild fever. I will take tablets and I should be fine."

Balls! mild fever? I felt so hot touching your hands.

I was almost into her by then..

"Aady, why do you do this?" I said, freaking out.

"I will take care. Okay, you drive from now on till we go back. Okay?" Saying so she sat inside the car.

I was irritated for her carelessness I stood at the side of her seat wherein she pulled the window down and said come let's leave. Will go rest for some time in the room.

Now tolerance towards my anger was reached. She is still sitting without wearing a jacket or something that makes her feel warm. I hit the door hard with my legs that it almost had a dent.

She was frightened by that. I went back to the bonnet, took a jacket and cap from her bag and gave it to her. She wore them without a word.

We left driving

We would reach our hotel in 10 minutes. I didn't talk about anything.

She broke the silence saying;

"Don't show your arrogance on things. Ultimately it's you who has to pay for that. I told you that we shall cancel the plan. You wanted to make it happen and now you are mad at me?"

"I do, why wouldn't I? when you're continuously driving despite your sickness. I told you that I will drive for some time."

She made a bad face which indicated she was mad at me.

"Please, end it for now. You don't have to worry about me so much." She said angrily.

"Why shouldn't I worry about you? I will."

"Why? I said no. Don't worry, you don't have any right on me to worry about." She continued to reply in her angry mood

"Fuck you Aady. I do care for you and I fight with you no matter what because I cannot tell you how much you mean to me. I can't bear if something happens to you. Stop being stubborn now."

"Oh yeah? It's only you who should take care of me, right? and I don't have any right to take care of you? You can be sick enough and reach the stage of dying and I should still not give a fuck right? " she said

"Where did the matter of dying come?" I said she stared at me for two seconds and turned aside.

"Aady, Fine hope you understand my concern That's what my arrogance meant."

"No point in being arrogant Riyal, You should understand why I didn't let you drive."

"Okay, I do understand but I felt bad seeing you sick. You recently got better."

She isn't convinced and we had reached the hotel.

She left the car picking luggage. Reached the counter and showed them the online booking pass.

"How many rooms have you booked?" She asked

"Why are you asking explicitly? Just one as always."

"I need to be in a separate room. Sorry book it or else..."

"Okay okay calm down" I said stopping her there.

I knew how angry she gets so I didn't want to convince her.

"Can I have one more room, please? It's that we have come unplanned", I told the receptionist.

"Sir, this is the weekend and we have got all the rooms booked. If you want one we shall look into it for tomorrow But for now we are sorry."

She got pissed again and left to the couch.

Ah, what do I do now?

"Okay alright, I have got driver along and I was sure that you got a dormitory for drivers."

"Yes, sir surely we do have it." said the receptionist looking at the desktop.

"Submit the car number along with room booking pass and we will allot you one."

I submitted all the documents and she handed over the keys to the service boy telling him to pick up the luggage and drop us to the room and told me that my driver can go and take bed 34 at the 8th floor.

I went near Aady, opened the medicine pouch took the antibiotic tablet, gave it to her and told her to join the guy and lied to her that I had got another room on the 6th floor. She left.

I was feeling bad at this but that's fine. I wanted her to get back to a normal mood and she would definitely be more pissed if I had tried to calm her down then and there. She was damn tired and was not feeling well. She slept I guess and no call or messages until evening 6.

"Where are you? I'm tired. I will have dinner and catch you up tomorrow. Don't irritate me by coming and knocking on my door." she dropped a message

Fine. I was happy, in fact. I had to make a few arrangements for midnight celebrations. After supper, I took help of Emilia who was an attendant there to arrange tables for two at the rooftop. Good ample amount of lighting was put there as requested while booking the room.

Small cake on the table along with all the gifts I had taken for her were arranged and everything was done by 11:30. The weather was so chilling so I grabbed a cigarette but couldn't find a lighter.

I walked to a nearby old couple who were enjoying the mood in there.

"Excuse me, sir, Pardon me for interrupting your space.

Can I have the lighter?" I asked

"Sorry man, I too need it actually. Since I couldn't find, I stayed not smoking.

Ah, give me a minute I will go to my room and get it." He said so politely.

"Oh no, sir. That's fine I will get it anyway, my room is here at drivers dormitory I will get it."

I went and bought it. We smoked and were having a good conversation.

"Surprise planning for your wife?" Granny asked.

"No, she is my friend and of course, I secretly love her."

They both laughed and the old man said

"You better ask her out soon. Else you might miss her."

"I will, just am waiting for a good opportunity."

"So where is she?" He asked

"On the second floor."

"Then why are you here in drivers dormitory?" Granny asked surprisingly

"Ah, it's just that she is mad at me for scolding her in the morning and she wanted me to be in a separate room but all the rooms were booked and I could not take a chance to provoke her again. So I'm here, and told her I'm in another room at the sixth floor."

That old man raised his eyebrows and made an action conveying I'm great.

So what's going on? Yes, I and Aadya got closer during my second trip to Florida again in 2015 Feb. But what happened later?

### At Home, Florida

Waiting for Aadya to drop by the restaurant to meet her friend. I had to attend the success meet of the project.

I finished up the bath and was waiting for her to finish and come so that we could leave together. It was still 8:45 and we would be leaving by 9:15.

And Aadya would not take much time to get ready and unlike other girls, I never have seen her doing makeup or putting other facials. All I had seen is applying body lotion for her legs and hands and yeah sometimes Maybelline lip balm.

Her phone was next to me on the couch and I was checking out local Bangalore news in my TOI app. Her mom called her four times. I muted and told her that her mom is calling and soon after that her phone beeps continuously for seven to eight times.

I looked at the phone and it was her mom again on FB messenger. I did not check.

But, on one glance, I read a word that stuck my attention. "Marriage"

What marriage?

Go read buddy it said.

I took over the phone and lock opened as it had my fingerprint and conversations were like this..a couple of images and video forwards from her mom and after that;

"putta, good morning WhatsApp work agtilla Eno expire agide update anta keltide" (WhatsApp is not working and it's asking to update to a newer version)

"Appa (Dad) is asking about Rakesh I think you liked him, is it?

He said you have met two times and today you're meeting for the third time. So tell me soon if you're okay we will talk to his parents and as discussed will be having an engagement for you guys on 25th coming July. And we are sleeping. Call you in the morning. Bye puttani." (Bye, Dear)

That's it.

Fuck. Rakesh is supposed to be her friend to whom her dad had introduced and when the fuck did she meet him. Twice??

What was I doing then?

Oh god.

I immediately checked Rakesh conversation on WhatsApp.

I shouldn't have done this. It's her private matter but I didn't know why, I did. I got to know from the conversation, they both had been to a movie. I recalled that day.

She wasn't well.

No. wait! She was well but she bluffed me saying she wasn't well.

But I'm still wondering when all this happen while we were together all the time. I barely remember my life there without she being around. I was worried.

Did I get ditched? Yes

Damn. She ditched me. I went to her room to ask her out.

Did I unnecessarily build up feelings over her?

I did not ask her anything and left the apartment. I was freaked. I didn't know what to do. I grabbed the car keys and left to work with my laptop. I'm randomly driving to nowhere with so many thoughts in my mind.

"Relax. Stop the car somewhere and relax."

I parked my car in the lane where I was and pushed back my seat and closed my eyes.

All I could see were the days I had spent with her.

The moment she hugged me first,

the moment I was scolding her while she was about to get hit by a car, moments we spent with my cousins, surprisingly seeing her in Bengaluru Office, Rishikesh trip!!

Fuck so many memories. What's happening? Shall I go ask her?

#### Inner Me

You had told me once if she says she is loving someone else, obviously you would respect her decisions as she has every right to choose her partner. "Maybe you were not perfect for her Riyal!"

"My foot." I said

"Not perfect? What does that mean?

Chill. Understand things rather than being freaked out."

Yeah, what myself said to me was right.

She had every right to choose her partner with whom she would be spending the rest of her life.

By then I had 4 missed calls and a message from her asking where I was, why I did not wait for her to drop and was everything alright.

Another message seeing my blue ticks.

"Ass, what happened? Where are you? I don't think you're alright. Shall I come to the office. I will meet my friend some other day."

I did not want her to skip meeting her fiancé Rakesh and shit I love her the way she is caring for me even now after all this..

I dropped a reply saying

"Aadya I'm good. Samuel had called asking me to come over to finalize a few things before the success meet."

"Okay, reached office?"

"Yeah. Just now."

"Bye, see you soon"

she sent with a heart and a kissing smiley

I did not reply back and in fact, wondered how long we would carry this closeness. Will the same caring remain forever? The way she cared for me during our Atlanta trip? No, it would not.

But why did she not say anything about Rakesh any time before that? he was introduced as groom to her?

Probably that's what she wanted to say tonight during dinner.

Good news for her and bad news for me.

Then I got to know what she meant on the previous night. I had to leave to Office inevitably after getting a message from Sam saying "Be on time buddy".

The same evening I took a flight to London and reached back to India emptying all my stuff in her apartment.

So, what happened next? Did we meet again? Oh yeah, we did Why did we meet?

# STAY TUNED COMING SOON

Signing Off Balu Matta