

Life is a fucked up process...!!!

The hero had just started knowing that his step father was behind all the bad things that had happened to his family, it was a blow to him, he confronted his dad, and shared with him the fact that he knows the truth. Yes, I was watching a movie, a movie that had no resemblance to my life, but I guess we all watch things, to come and rescue us from reality, even for a nano-second. I too enjoyed the climax. I mean who doesn't want a happy ending. But it was over now, the laptop was shut down, and mummy went to cook. Papa was out for work, and my sis was with her friend.

For an introvert like me, quarantine isn't so bad, but these times, when you are left all alone, you wander with your thoughts to places where you shouldn't go, or probably don't want to go. For the first time I felt that there was Lock Down. Not because I couldn't go out, but because I was lockdown-ed with myself. Suddenly all that the hero taught started to fade away.

I did what anyone would do at this time. I went to man's best friend – the mobile. I hit on Facebook, 3 new notifications, some people had commented to a post that someone tagged me in. I checked the friend requests, there were some 15 pending requests. But I didn't need to respond to them. I mean who were they? I didn't know them. I had seen some of them at college, but that wasn't enough to accept their request. But why didn't I delete the request? Maybe I was afraid to lose these unknown people. I am pretty bad at handling losses I guess.

Anyway, I moved on to WhatsApp. No new messages there either. There were some, in the groups that I had already muted for a Year. I didn't care. There is a section on WhatsApp, which I did not have the courage to open, 'Muted Status'. I just couldn't.

I locked it and tucked it away. I went for a walk, to clear my mind. But it didn't pan out that way. Its like they say, the more you think of not thinking about monkeys, more they jump into your head. I tried singing, stalking myself in the mirror, and everything that I could have thought at that time. It was all in vain. The questions on happiness, purpose in life and mere existence won't go away that easily.

I was still feeling low. I wanted to talk to someone. So, I put my finger on the sensor of my phone, the screen lit up with all the choices to contact the

people who are aware of my existence. Should I open WhatsApp? But that would mean, I had to wait, for the other person to see and ignore me totally. So, I hit on the contacts button. It was an ocean.

It's amazing how you don't even remember saving many of the numbers. Contacts are saved alphabetically. That is a pretty awesome feature if you ask me. You can save a contact under the name 'Aaaaa', to be sure that they pop up right when you open the contacts. Also save someone as 'Zzzz' and you never see them again. So, now was the hardest part. Choosing whom to bore with my useless thoughts and lethargic personality. There were also other factors in choosing, the proportion of abuses that each would bestow, had to be considered. I guess, when people take into consideration all the factors, they are only left with a bucketful of water from ocean. Those are, I guess the people you make memories with.

So, I followed the contact rules. I went on alphabetically to browse through the options. First came "Aman Class 8". Well of course he wasn't in class 8. But that was his name, when he got registered into my life and my sim card. Phones changed, but the Sim card carried with it, all the stories. We were friends for long. I mean, imagine, since class 8. I called. After four rings, I thought he is busy, but he picked it, as soon as I was going to hit the shiny red button.

"Hi bro!", I said.

"What's up man? You hadn't called for ages. I thought you forgot me!", he said. But he didn't call me either. The rules should apply to him too, but this is how things work.

"So, how is life going on?", I asked.

"There is so much to tell you. I had to come home due to Lock Down, I was pretty annoyed to leave all the friends and masti at college. But you know what, two weeks ago, I saw Ritu on the rooftop! She was so beautiful man!". Ritu was his neighbour since he was 5. They had moved in from Kolkata due to some family issues. Ritu was a good girl. At least the type of girl, any boy would be proud to have as girlfriend. Aman had a crush on her since God knows when. He continued, "So, I waved at her. She waved back man. I wouldn't say that college gave me nothing. It taught me how to talk to her. So, that day on, we are a thing I guess. Things are awesome! She is the most beautiful girl I have ever met." It is funny how boys idolise

their girls. Like they are different from things around them, and when difference starts to fade, their idol becomes boring.

“Oh good. Congrats! Enjoy man! Bye.” I said. I knew he had found his purpose in life. I didn’t want to give reality to him when he was happy. After all, he is my friend.

So, my quest continued. Many names got rejected just because I hadn’t talked to them in a while, and it would be inhuman to suddenly call someone, and ask, “What is your purpose in life?” Anurag , Chandu(It was short for Chandra Shekhar), Deepak, and Fahad could not make it to my list. The ‘G’ section came. There was my Roomie, Ghanshyam Prashant Waindeshkar. Who better than a roomie to share things that he was already burdened with, considering I lived with him. He knew my crap. So, I ringed. He did not pick up. I didn’t care. I had tortured him enough for him to at least ignore my calls once. I did not ring again. I thought he deserved this break from me.

Then I was with ‘R’. Many names there. Among them was one of my best friends. Rohit. Tall Muscular Guy. He loves my talks. I find him weird for this reason. We met in class 11. If only I was not straight, I would literally love the guy. The most charming and clean-hearted guy I ever met. See, we idolise guy friends too. I ringed him.

“How are you bro?”, He asked.

“Not good man. Not good.”, I didn’t lie to him.

“What’s the problem?”. I told him everything that I thought. He listened carefully. But that had happened many times before. What had not happened ever was he keeping quiet. He would generally start laughing, or make a witty comment, but today, it was nothing. For a moment I thought he stopped breathing too.

“What happened Rohit?”, I asked.

“Nothing...”, he said with the least possible emotion one could have.

But I was as stubborn as he was witty. I repeated the question many times, till he answered, “We were playing cricket, the ball got stuck on a tree, I went on to get the ball, my leg slipped, and I fell down. I hit a rock. The doctors say that my right leg is heavily injured, and I may not be able to run ever again.”, his voice had still no emotion. It was as if an invigilator was

giving instructions before exam. I was taken aback. My best friend met with an accident and I didn't care to ask. I just burdened him with my things too. I felt like crap. I would just break into tears with guilt, but I didn't want to cry in front of him.

"Sorry Rohit.. Take Care", I said and hung up. This was the cruellest I could get, I thought.

But I still did not have my answers. So I kept digging. I entered section 'S'. 10 names through, there was a name, which I didn't want to see. "Shailly" the screen shouted. At that moment, I just wanted God to remove the 'S' letter forever, and also all of my memories with her. The name stopped me. My quest was over. This Name has a story attached to it.

I met her 4 years back. On FaceBook, if you believe me. I never thought you can actually meet someone on facebook, and one day they would become an integral part of you. I started talking to her. Starting days are pretty boring, just the likes and dislikes. That helps you to change your habit whenever there was a clash. I talked to her on facebook for 2 years, and no one knew, except for Rohit. He was my roomie.

Things got interesting when I told my friend Suyash about her. She was his relative. What better could it get? The girl you like is your friend's relative! I tried to fix some dates to meet, but all in vain. Then came the JEE. I failed. I was broken, like every other 99% of the students. The story took a leap, I went to repeat. You get that chance when you fail by 1 mark. Things accelerated there. I asked Suyash to ask her If I could sometime talk to her. Of Course on conference through Suyash. Girls don't like giving their contact numbers to two years old facebook friends. We talked heaven and hell. Suyash was just to pay the phone bills. I liked talking to her. Damn, I think I liked her.

The year went fast. When you repeat for JEE, life gets as busy as it can. No time for things other than studies. Not for Suyash. Not for Shailly. These calls happened atmost once a month. I was happy. I had never talked to a girl this long on a phone. Let alone talking face to face. Things went smoothly. The exams were good. I got into IIT. I was really happy. And the happiness doubled when she gave me her number. Now, I could talk to her directly. No Suyash required. Maybe the JEE changed something. May be when you clear something difficult, people start believing you. Whatever it was. I worked for three years. I deserved a bonus with IIT. I got it. I got Shailly.

The first year in college is the hardest I would say. Adjusting to everything. But of course I have not lived second-year. Anyway, she was there. I talked to her about everything. Things that I hadn't talked to anyone ever before. It was good. It was awesome. I had friends in college too. But she was different. I could not share things with my friends. And I did not want to tell my parents. It would worry them. She was there. Always there for me. We matched at many things. Both of us were 7 pointers in college. Both had small bucket of friends. I did not know the real status of our relationship. I would ask her every now and then, and she would say we are friends. I would not agree. We would sometimes argue, I would stop calling her for a few days, then called her and said sorry. She would forgive me. This went on for months.

She had an answer to everything. I had met one more witty person. She solved all my problems elegantly. She, however, never shared her problems, or her secrets. Those were hers and only hers. And anyone trying to steal them would be punished with getting blocked. She was strict, yet soft. Like a Mother. That's me idolising her.

Whenever I needed scolding, I would call her and tell my stupid plans, then we both laughed, together. That was 'Shailly'.

Things went on good, until this Lockdown happened. What quarantine gives you, is a lot of free time. I talked to her for hours now. Obviously, considering how packed college life is, little talks then were okay. But now there was no assignment to submit, no deadline to meet, no place to be. And why would someone want anything, if they have got 'Shailly'!

But that did not go as planned. More time to talk, meant more talks. I talk a lot, but eventually I ran out of things to say. It was her turn. To say something witty, but she did not. She never told me how she felt. How would it be to see her crying, would I cry too? I gave her everything I had. But she gave me nothing. If someone ever asks me about her, I will not be able to even portray her personality. I liked talking to her, but I would appreciate, if she talked to me the way I did.

4th May 2020. That was the day, that ruined everything. I was feeling like crap and all, and of my mind was discussing about relationships. I wanted to talk to her. I ringed. For the last time. (I did not know that.)

"How are you?", I asked.

“I don’t want to tell how I am. I am good, for your question.”, she said.

“Why don’t you ever tell me how you feel?”

“I just don’t like sharing things with anyone.”, she said.

“I am special, right? You can tell me. Why don’t you? You know I won’t judge”, I said.

“People can do nothing about my problems. Everyone is just competing. They compete in pain too. I say that I am in pain, the other person says that he is pain too, and his situation is worse than mine. It doesn’t help me. I tell things to my mother, but that too not every time.”, she said, as calmly as she could.

I was startled. I thought she was always happy. I asked, “Do you do that to me too? Do you hide your emotions with me too?”

“Yes. I never told you how I cried, and then you called, and I said things are fine. I don’t tell anybody my feelings.”, she answered.

I was confused, and I did exactly what anyone would do. Bargain. I said, “I would not tell you not to cry. I won’t tell you that things will go well. They won’t. I want to cry with you. I love you. I will listen to everything. I will always be there for you. We will talk on phone, till we sleep. I will sleep with you, 1000 miles apart. I love you Shailly!”. That was me trying to save our friendship. But I had said something, that meant a lot to me. I had proposed her. Who thinks that they will propose someone moments before they are gone. But I did. Yes, I was stupid, she was the witty one. But she didn’t give any reaction to that.

“And what after you? What will happen when you are gone? I can’t stop thinking about that.”, She said.

“You don’t need to. Every relation expires. Maybe, it ends tomorrow, or maybe, we get married and it ends at death. Who knows.”, I was sounding like a prof., “The fact that things end, doesn’t reduce their value, rather it increases it. ”

“You don’t understand.”, She said.

“I can’t take our relation like this. If I can’t win your tears, I don’t deserve you.” I said. I thought giving a little bit of ignorance would have a better effect.

“Hey, it’s not you, it’s me. This is my problem. You shouldn’t be sad.”, This is what girls say, when they are confused. They just take the blame, and try to make your life better, but end up worsening it.

“I think we should not talk anymore. I loved you. And if I don’t get out of this now, it will be harder later. Because I can never make you feel the way you make me feel.”, I said calmly. I was like the doctor, who knows he won’t be able to save the patient, and just stands there to see the death, and note down the death time. I had nothing to say.

“If you want it... Bye..Take care”, she said. What had just happened? Did our friendship just finish? Did I ruin everything?

I tried one last time, “Hey, no. Sorry. I don’t know how to react at difficult times. Don’t go, Please.”, I was on my knees in my mind, “We can sort things out, we will be fine. I will love you the way you are, please.”

The thing with ego is that it comes before or after the incident. We know how to start war, we know how to end it, But we don’t know what to do during war.

“It won’t matter anymore...Bye”, she rested her case.

I was left with nothing to say, it was just, “I loved you Shailly. Bye.”

What had happened to me? My body was shivering. It felt like someone ripped out a piece of my heart. I was empty. Shouldn’t she tell me I am talking stupid? Shouldn’t she scold me? Shouldn’t she stop me? I did not know what to do. And I still don’t know.

The screen went off after 30 seconds of inactivity. 30 seconds for the phone, four years for me. I unlocked the phone, deleted her number and went to walk again. What did I do with one person I liked? I pushed her away. I never got to know if she loved me too. Damn.... I never even saw her in person. How did a voice make me fall in love? Was it love? My mind kept thinking. I don’t know why, but I screamed, “Life is a fucked up process....!!!”

Shailly had once again, given me my answer....

--- Bidhan Arya