

## **Did I meet Rose?**

Unlike Dickens' London or Mehta's Bombay, Gurgaon, where I went to pursue an MBA, is neither the focal point of India's economic development nor the melting pot of India's diverse culture. But like London, it has stark social inequalities, and like Bombay, it is violent in its own way.

After working as a software developer in Oracle for two years, I joined India International School of Management, Gurgaon, in its full-time PG program. The institution was dubbed as the womb of India's new elite and as the arena of fragile egos. Although I went there without thinking much, based on my CAT rank, the place opened gates for me to a very different world. It helped me discover new aspects of my personality. It morphed my shyness into dumbfound introvertedness and my self-belief into overconfidence.

Six months into the course, bored with heart-to-heart conversations with supremely authentic batchmates, one day, I went on a date with a woman five years older than me in Bellagio, a premium roof-top restaurant that had recently opened in Gurgaon. We had matched on Hinge some two months back, and a sweet banter was all we had shared before the meeting. Suddenly, out of nowhere, she asked me for a date.

It was the 7th of February, rose day, about which I was completely unaware of that day. She probably was expecting me to get some flowers for her as most of the men sitting around us had brought for their dates. However, she didn't complain, and I tried to make up for it by being extra sweet. I forgot to ask her why she, out of the blue, asked me out, that too two months after we matched, as her brown eyes drew me in. She was wearing a long-sleeved dress with a high neck open from the sides. While I had the innocence of a young man in my eyes, her face was peach red with vulnerabilities written all over it that one develops with age. Our conversation started with her long description of her recent trip to Bombay. She had brought a keychain for me from Colaba Causeway. While her gesture was flattering, I couldn't concentrate much on her story as my attention was focused on her long hair which flew with the wind and touched the side of her ribs. After some time, noticing that I am distracted, she started twirling them with her fingers.

Three hours passed by in a jiffy. I neither hated that meeting like I hate most of my dates nor did I develop some kind of sexual tension towards her. While coming back, I was thinking whether I had met my Rose, echoing the timeless essence of the Titanic.