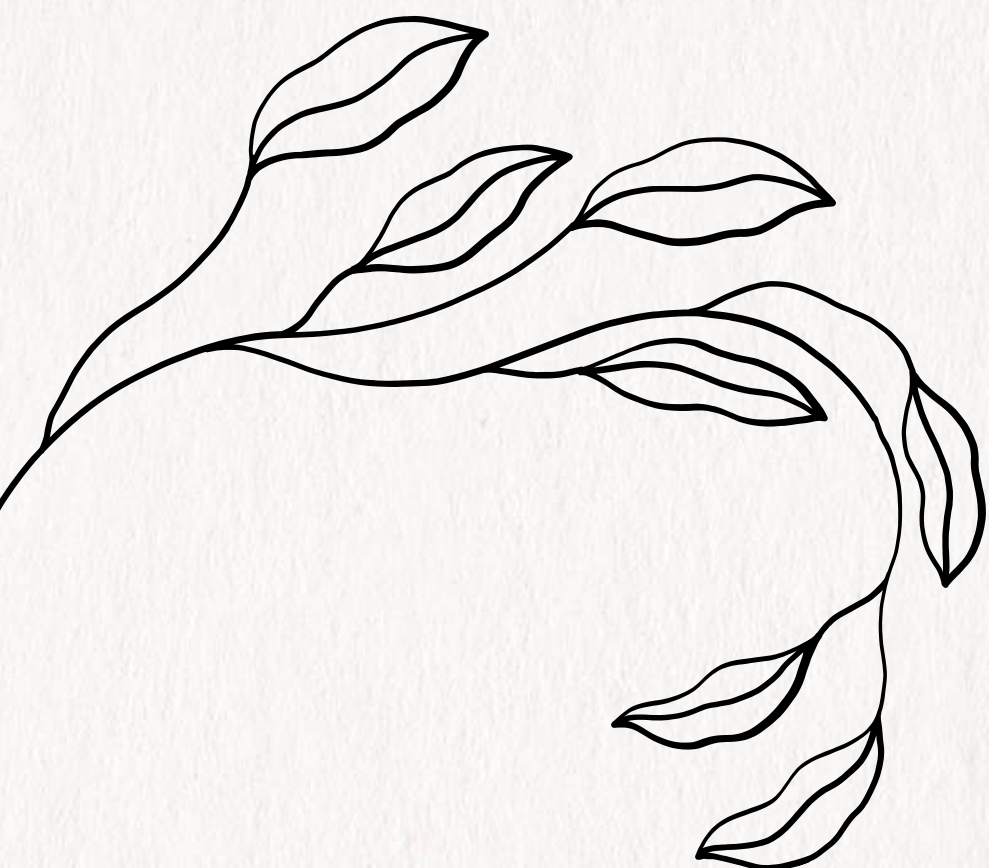


WRITTEN BY YOUR MALJU

The Night We Met

Tied by a thread the world can't see

When Our
Threads First
Touched

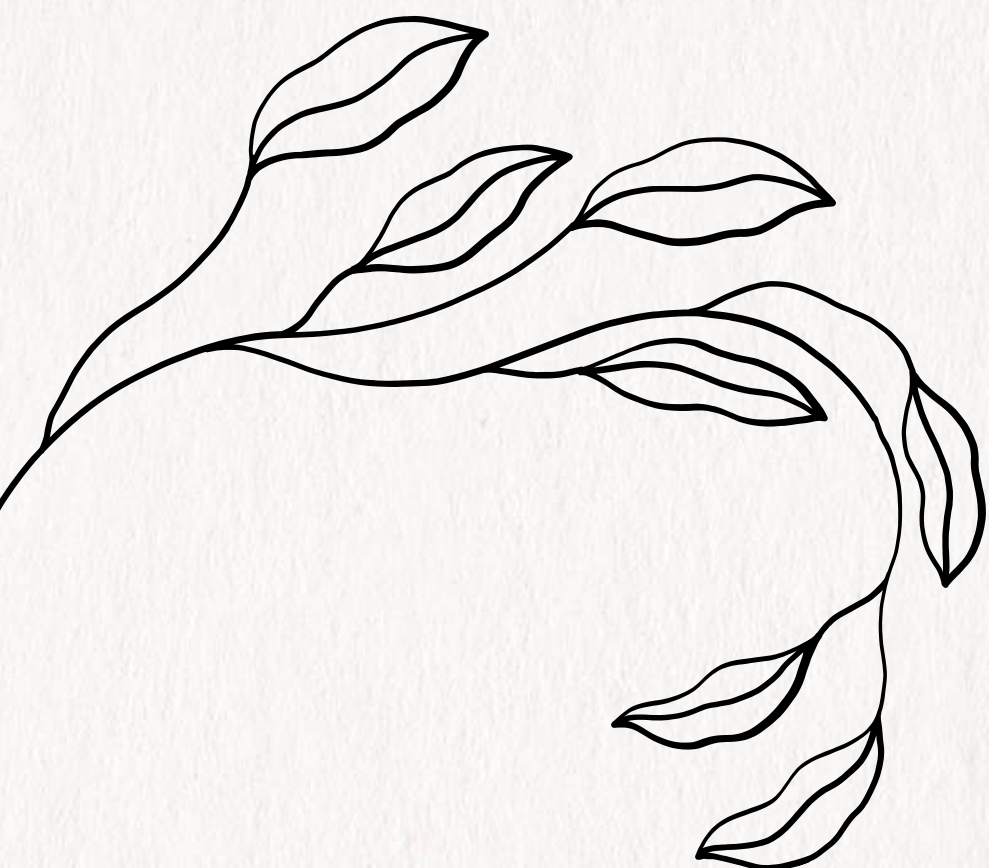


I'm not sure why I'm doing this.
There's no audience I'm trying to impress, no grand plan. Just... you.
You've been taking up so much space in my head lately that something had to spill out.
This isn't a perfect love story. Or maybe it is, in its own flawed way.
It's not about fairy-tale endings or cinematic gestures - it's about the messy, real, unpolished moments that somehow became ours.
It's our story as I lived it, through my eyes, with every blurred detail and half-remembered feeling still intact.
You might remember it differently. Or maybe not at all.
But for me, it's still here - hidden in old chats, in songs I can't skip, in photos I can't delete.
So I'm writing it down. Not to change anything, not to make a case for what we were, but to remember.
A timeline only I know the shape of.
A book that isn't about "us" so much as it's about you - the way you've always looked through my eyes.
Back then, in the chaos of ringing bells and crowded school corridors, I never imagined something like this would grow.
We'd been in the same school since Class 3, all the way to Class 9 - years of sharing the same world without really colliding.
Always in different divisions. Always close enough to see, but never close enough to know.
Until that one year.
Class 9. Commerce.
The year we finally ended up in the same classroom.
Before we ever spoke, I had already noticed you.
I remember leaning over to DJ one day and saying I thought you were cute.
It was harmless, just a quiet admission. But that one comment ended up setting something into motion.

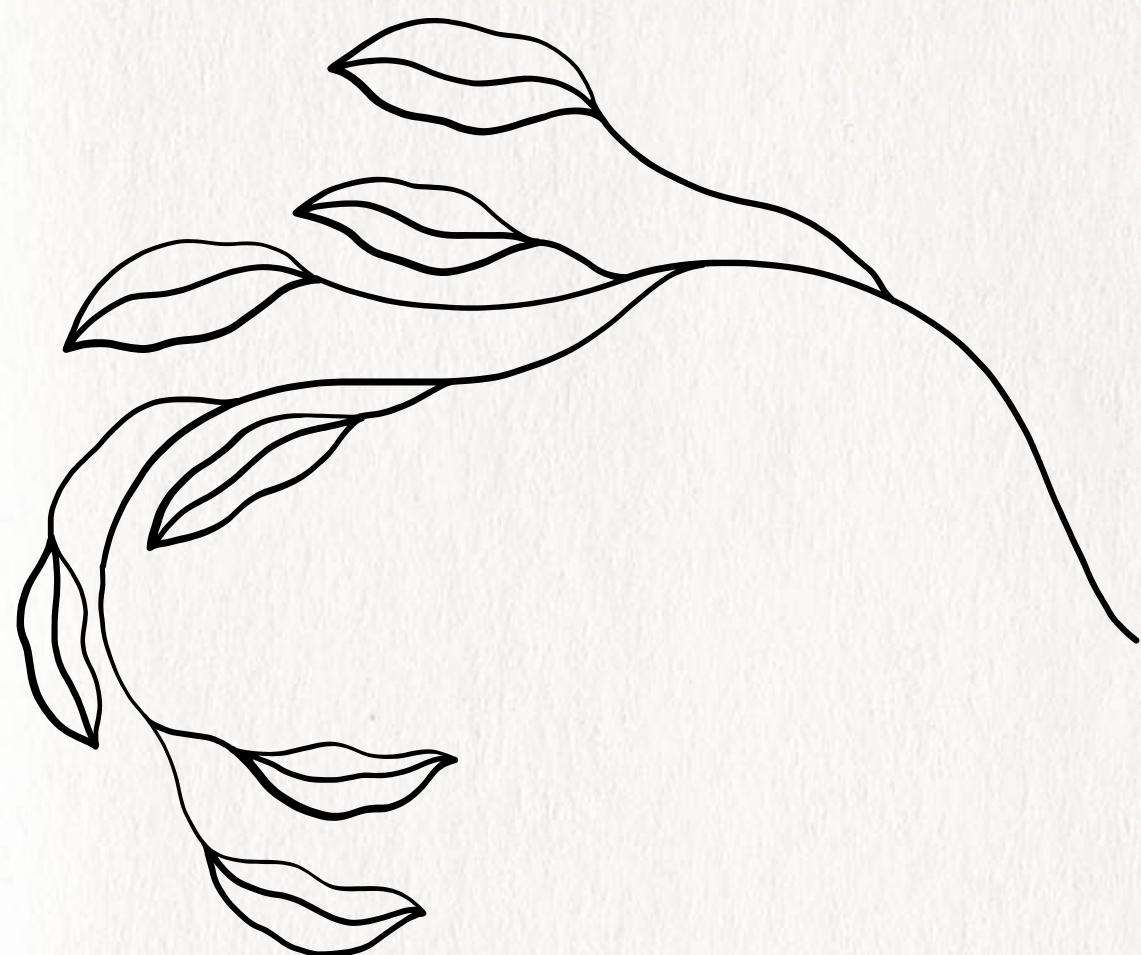


One afternoon after lunch, DJ suddenly grabbed my hand without a word and pulled me through the crowd.
The hallway felt longer than usual, like it was building up to something I didn't even know was coming.
And then I saw you.
You were standing near the indoor backstage area, like you'd been waiting for a scene you didn't even know you were in.
DJ stopped, turned to me with that smirk, and said, "All yours."
He meant it as a joke.
But sometimes I wonder -
what if the universe took him seriously?

The Glance
Across a
Dance Floor



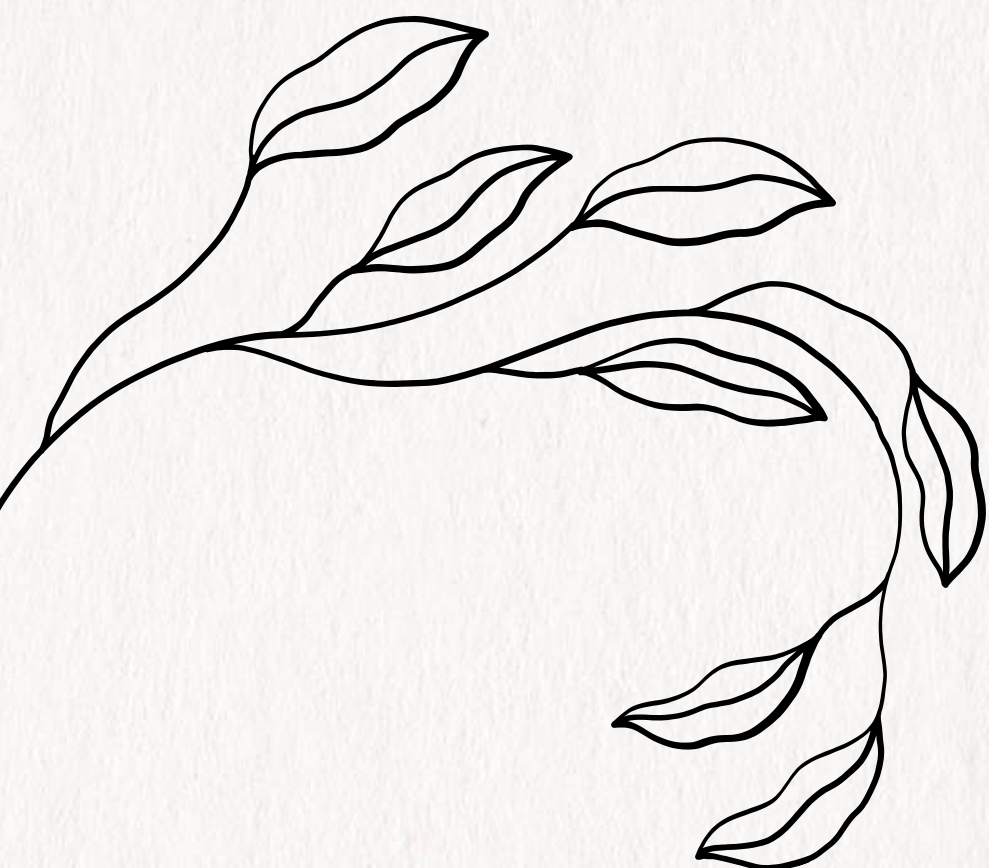
It was loud.
The kind of loud that only school trips manage -
cracked speakers, Bollywood songs, everyone
screaming the lyrics off-beat.
We were packed into a disco bus, bouncing around
with no sense of rhythm.
And in all that noise, all that chaos, I saw you.
You were dancing.
Not performing, not pretending - just moving, smiling,
maybe singing like the world couldn't touch you.
And for a second - one single second - you looked at
me.
We locked eyes through the mess, through the music.
And everything around me paused.
Not like a movie. Not some slow-motion cliché.
But real.
Still.
Sharp.
You saw me.
I saw you.
And I think, without meaning to, we remembered each
other after that.
You didn't know your effect.
You weren't trying to have one.
And that's what made it hit harder.
There was something about your freedom -
The way you took up space without trying,
The way you let yourself enjoy things fully,
The way you weren't worried about how you looked
doing it.
You were just... you.



I didn't know then how much that moment would stay
with me.
I was just a kid, quietly watching the girl who somehow
made chaos feel quiet.
I didn't know that you loved dancing back then - not
just doing it, but being in it.
That it was your inner child running wild.
You singing loudly was your way of claiming space in
the world.
That you don't do it as much anymore - but god, you
should.
Because if you let yourself,
you'd still be better than most.
I didn't fall for you that day.
It wasn't like that.
But something shifted.
I became aware of you in a way I hadn't been before.
Not like a crush.
More like a quiet imprint - something that would come
back later, stronger.
Looking back now, that moment makes more sense.
Because it wasn't just the start of noticing you.
It was the start of realising that you had always been
someone whose joy lit up a room.
That even in noise, you stood out in silence.
That even in a crowd, your soul had a way of reaching
mine.

3

Two Minutes
From Home



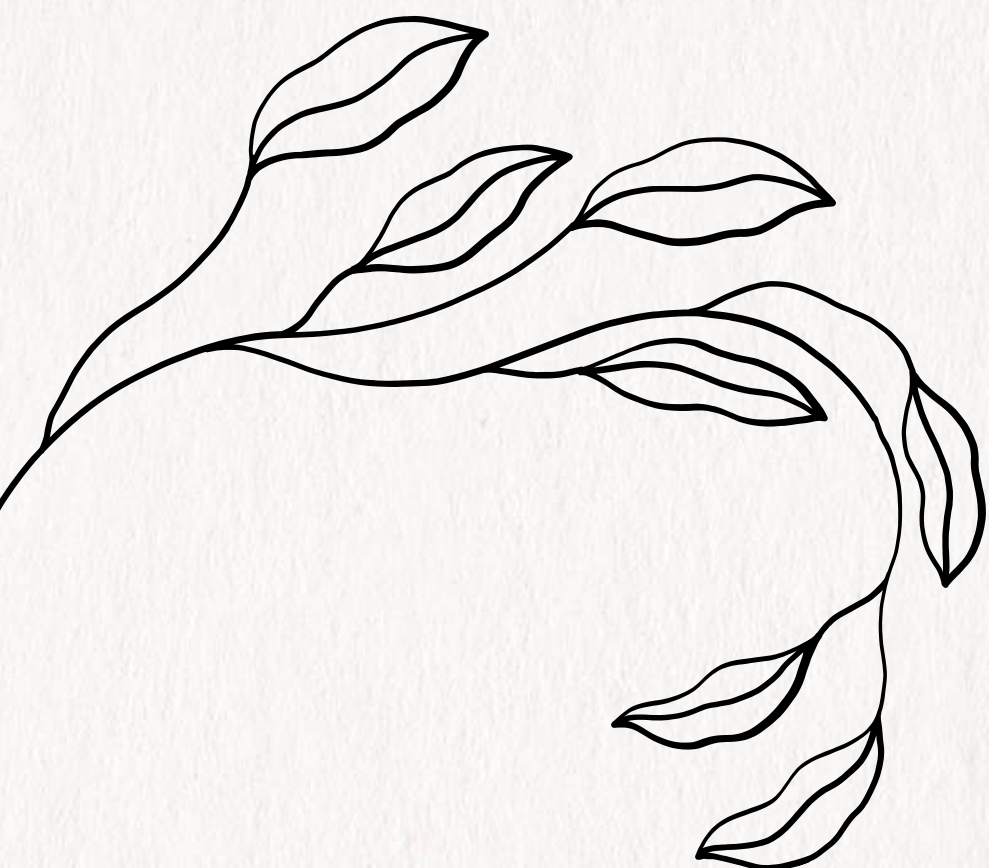
You never stopped talking.
Not once.
Not ever.
Every day after class, we'd walk home - or act like we were - and you would carry the whole conversation like it was a superpower.
I didn't mind.
I didn't even need to speak.
I just liked listening to you exist.
You talked about everything and nothing - things I can't even remember now. Gossip. Homework. Random thoughts that made sense only to you.
But what I remember is how you talked.
The way your eyes lit up mid-sentence.
The way your hands moved as if the story needed space outside your mouth.
The way you laughed at your own thoughts before I even could.
I walked that same road every day, even when it meant passing my own turn.
I didn't know why I was doing it back then.
But now I do.
Sometimes you waited for me.
Not every day.
Just enough to make it feel like I mattered to you.
Like maybe you noticed I was always there.
You had no idea what that did to me.
You still probably don't.
You were always comfortable around me.
Maybe because your soul hadn't learned how to hide yet.
You didn't filter yourself.
You didn't hesitate.
You just... were.
And that was everything.



The world hadn't touched you enough to dim your voice.
You still talked too much and too freely - and I loved every second of it.
You filled space like you were born to.
You made silence unnecessary.
You made the most ordinary walk home feel like the best part of my day.
Back then, I was just a kid with a head full of Bollywood scenes.
A hopeless romantic waiting for background music to kick in.
But it never did.
Because you were the song.
You were already playing.
And I didn't even realise I was listening on loop.

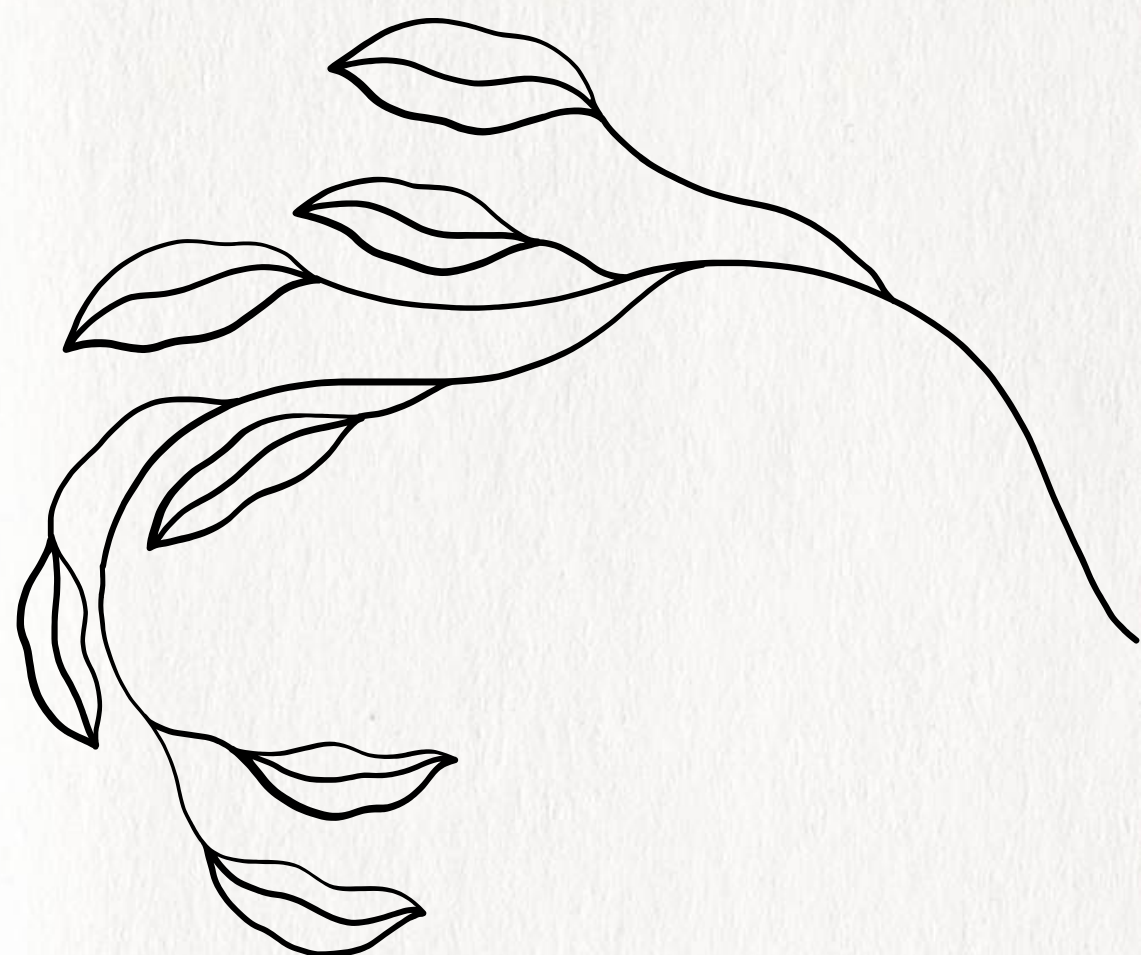
A lot of boys used to talk about you.
Not in the way you deserved.
They called you names I can't even say here.
I hated them for it.
They only said it because they couldn't have you.
Because they couldn't even get close enough to speak to you.
It was their failure, not yours.
Their bitterness, not your truth.
I remember crying over it.
Fighting with them.
Defending you when you weren't even there.
Because you didn't deserve a single word of it.
You were worth more than any of them could understand.
That girl who found joy in simple things.
Who filled the space beside me with colour, without trying.
Who made me walk slower, just so the moment could last.
And if I could go back,
I'd walk even slower.
Just to hear a few more of your stories.
Just to stay next to you a little longer.

Before the
Bell Rang for
the Last Time



I used to wait outside Grevillea after tuition -
not because I had anywhere to go,
but because you were about to walk by.
You, coming back from tennis with your bag slung over
your shoulder, eyes a little tired, hair a little messy.
You had no idea I was standing there for you.
I never made it obvious.
I just stood in the distance, hoping for a glimpse.
And every time I saw you,
my whole day shifted.
That glimpse was enough.

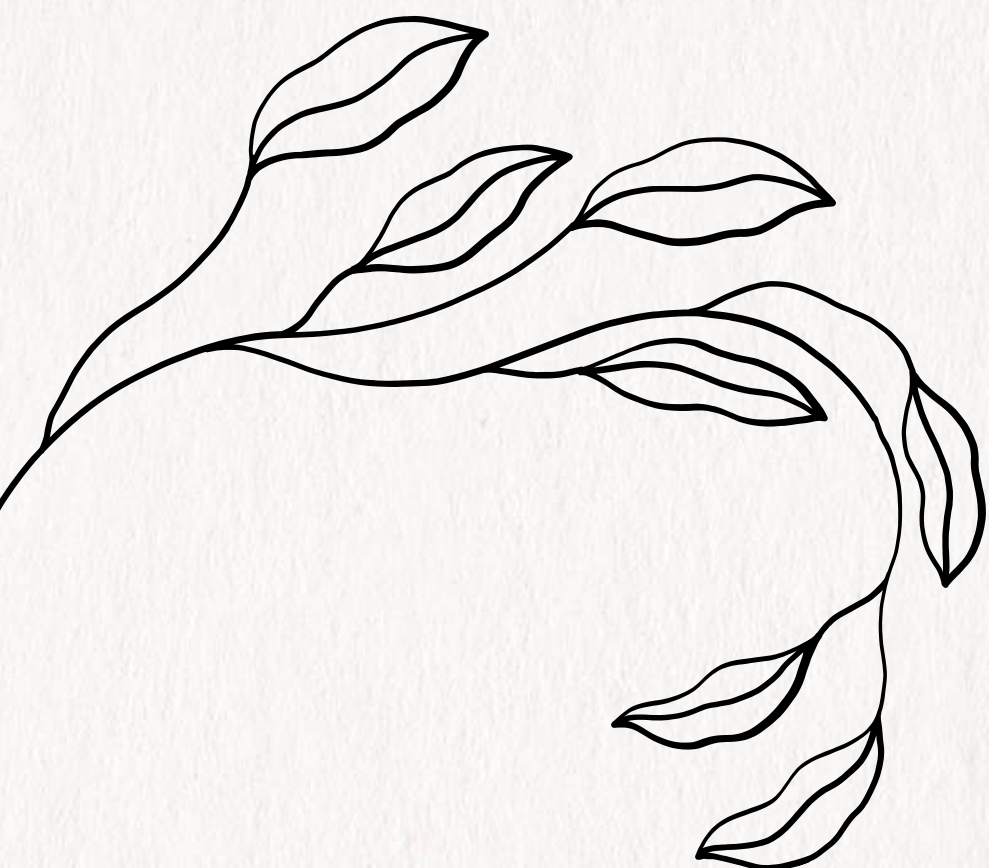
Then came the school fun fair.
We were walking through the crowd together,
just the two of us,
talking about things I can't remember -
because what I do remember is that nothing else felt
real.
The stalls, the noise, the teachers shouting in the
background - it all blurred.
I was in a moment with you.
And then my dad walked past.
He looked at us, gave me a pat on the back, and kept
walking.
I didn't get it then.
But now, I know what that look meant.
It was like he saw something even I hadn't accepted
yet.
Like he already approved of you.
Like he knew.



Then there was Shefali's birthday party.
The usual chaos. Laughter. Food. Typical mall hangout.
Friends shouting across tables.

But the part that stayed?
The part that still plays in my head?
The rain.
It came down hard after the party - no umbrellas, no
shelter.
Just us, standing in the parking lot, looking at the sky
like idiots.
And then you said it - or maybe I did -
"fuck it."
We jumped on my scooty and rode off into the storm.
But before that,
I took off my jacket and wrapped it around you.
You looked at me.
And something flickered in the air between us.
I don't know what it was -
maybe nothing.
But to me,
it felt like a scene someone had written for us.
I dropped you home.
We were both drenched.
You handed me my jacket back like it was just another
evening.
But for me, it wasn't.
You probably forgot about it the next day.
But I didn't.
That ride looped in my mind like a song that wouldn't
stop playing.
Not because of the rain.
Not because of the jacket.
But because of you.
Because something in me shifted quietly that night.

Between
Passion and
Goodbye



School ended,
but you were still there.
We still spoke.
Still found ways to orbit each other.
You, me, Eshika, and Abhishek had planned a hangout
that never happened.
Life was moving us in different directions,
but I kept the small routines that held you close.
Football had become my thing.
Every evening I was at the school ground, chasing the
ball until the sun set.
And after practice, I'd come to see you.

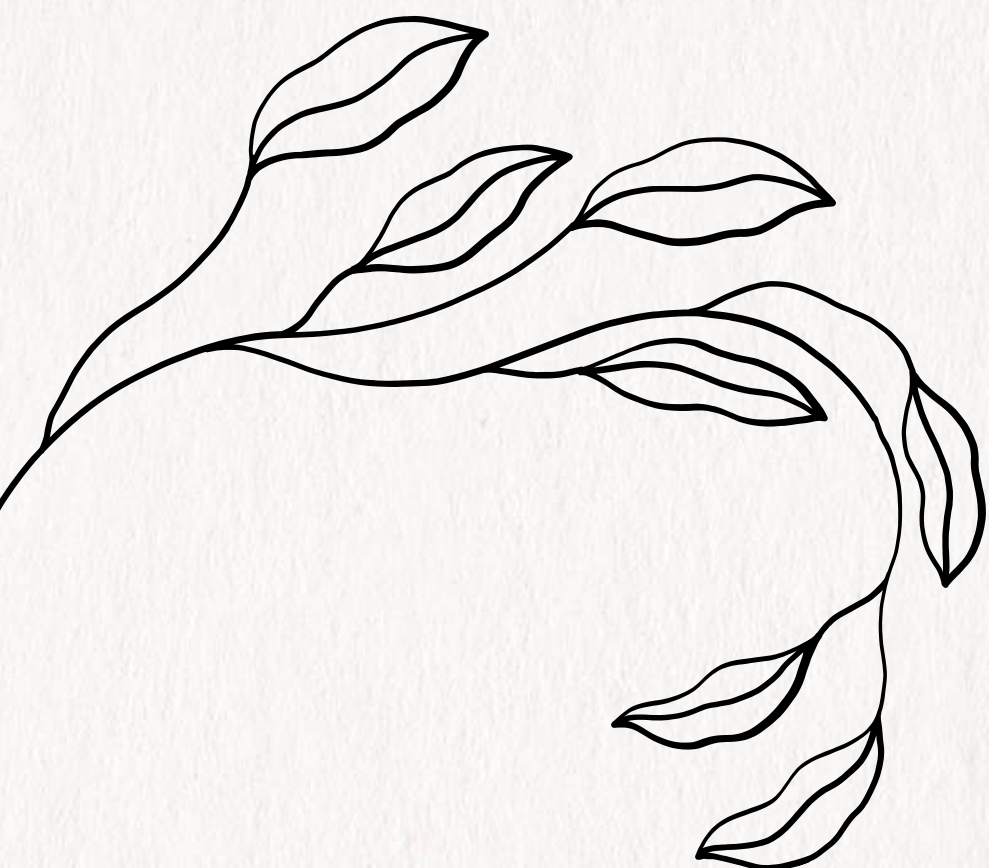
Then there was that day.
D-404, Grevillea.
Your room.
No warning.
You kissed me.
On the lips.
I froze.
My body betrayed me, and I turned away, pretending
to watch Joy.
You caught on, of course you did.
You laughed it off like it was nothing.
But for me,
it was something I would keep with me forever.
Our first kiss.

When you moved to Cosmos Z-101,
my routine stayed the same.
Football.
Then you.
Bicycle rides through the evening air to your place.
We'd paint.
Talk about everything and nothing.
Take random pictures that never caught how it felt to
be in the same room as you.
Sometimes your mom would take our photos.



Then came college.
You chose Ness Wadia.
My dad wanted me somewhere else,
but I chose Cusrow Wadia - close enough to you.
I didn't care about the course.
I only cared about catching glimpses of you.
You've always been a talker -
a certified yapper.
But with me, it felt different.
It felt like trust.
Like you weren't holding anything back.
I loved that about you.
That you could be yourself without worrying about
being judged.
That you never had to perform.
Football kept me alive,
but I started hating the way the education system
worked.
I barely went to class.
I went to college for you.
And then, even those moments became rare.
I was still that hopeless romantic,
the one who believed your words when you said
we were more than friends -
something beyond labels.
I clung to that.
Maybe too tightly.
Then the collapse.
The head of my department told me to leave or repeat
the year.
My parents were disappointed.
Football stopped.
Everything I built my days around fell apart.
And then,
you were gone.
No explanation.
No goodbye.
I didn't understand it then.
I was just a boy,
following what he loved,
and losing all of it -
including you.

Aftermath & Attitude

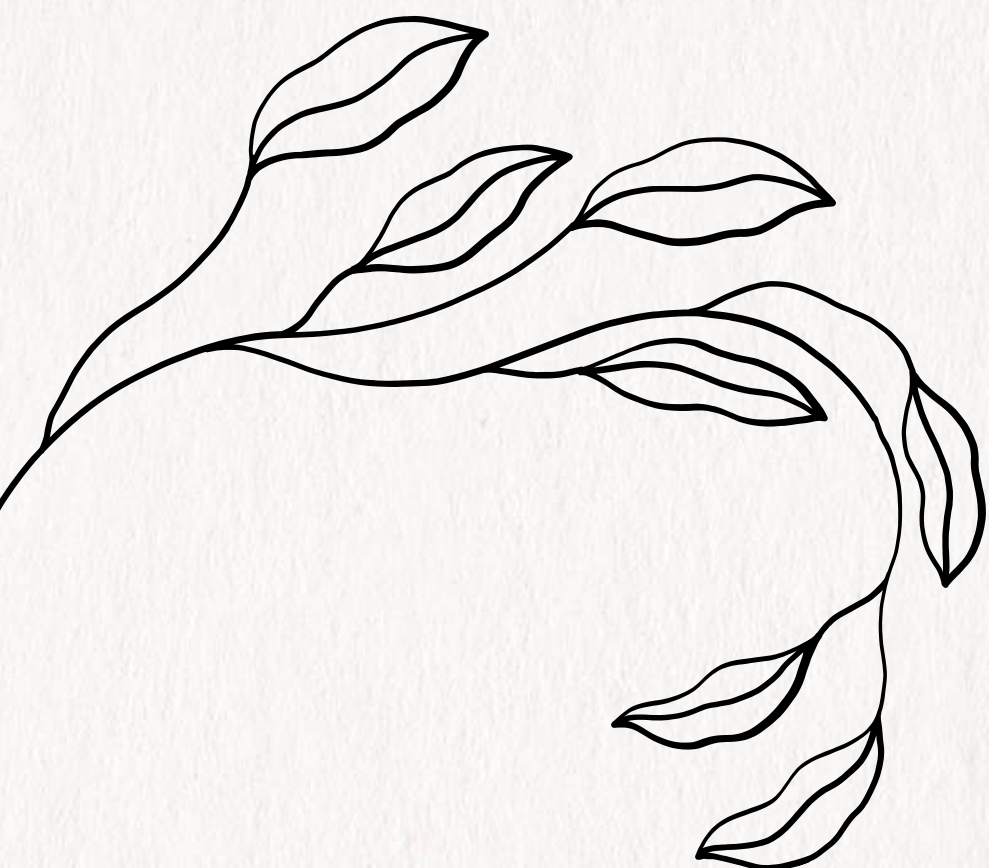


My life took a sharp turn after that.
I was sixteen - young, confused, angry at the world,
angry at myself.
I had lost too much, too fast.
You.
My college.
My rhythm.
My freedom.
My passion.
I didn't have the words for it then.
Maybe it was depression.
Maybe derealisation.
All I knew was that life felt unreal.
Like I was watching it through frosted glass,
hearing my own voice through water.
So I left.
Signed up for a solo trek in the Himalayas.
No familiar faces. No safety nets.
Just strangers, mountains, and silence.
I didn't tell many people.
It wasn't for them.
It was for me.
Sixteen years old, climbing cliffs at sixteen thousand
feet,
wondering what the hell I was doing with my life.
No phone. No internet. No distractions.
I spent most of it alone,
and I liked it that way.
I wasn't there to make friends.
I was there to breathe again.
When I reached the peak,
everything went quiet.
The air thin, my chest heavy,
my heart light.
White stretching into blue,
and then into nothing.

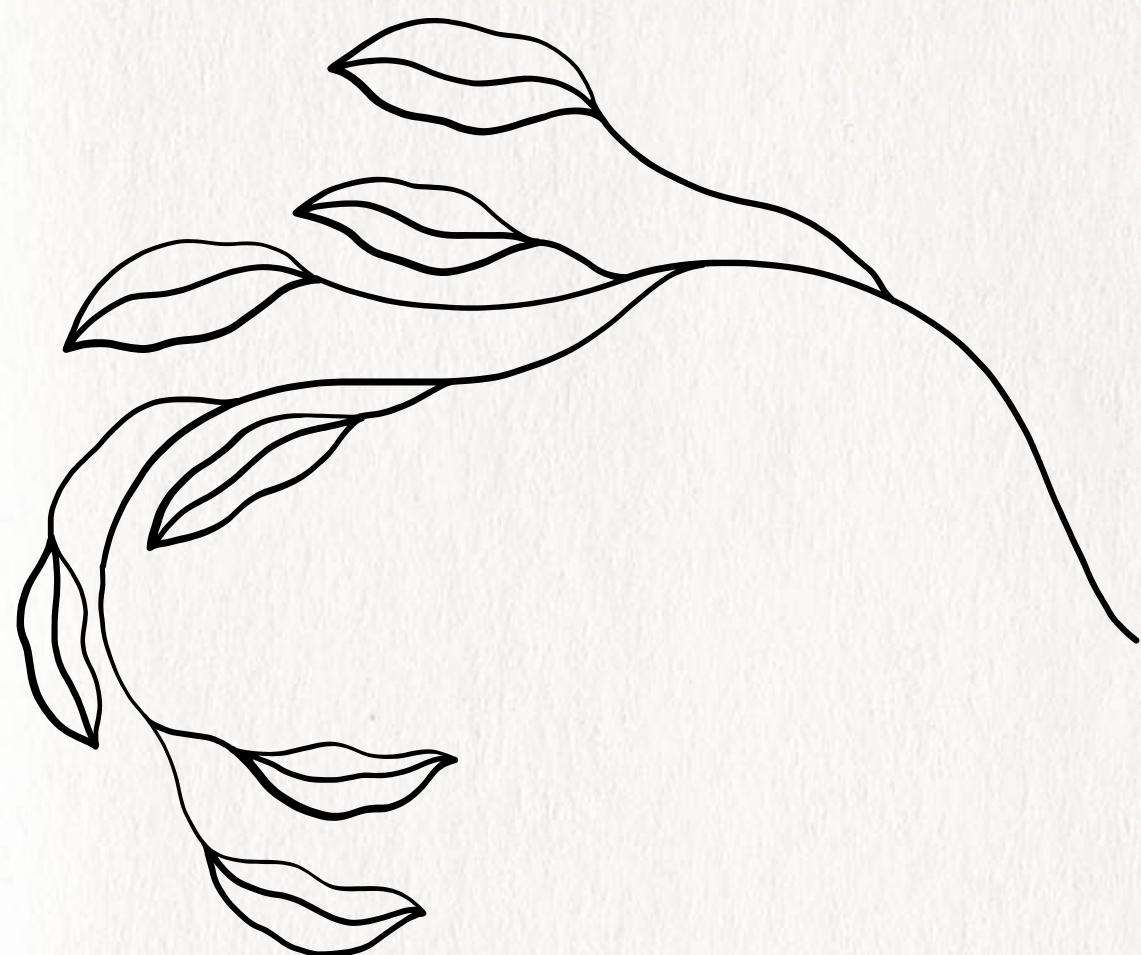


And for the first time in months,
I felt free.
Truly free.
But even there -
even at sixteen thousand feet -
I thought of you.
Not the absence. Not the why.
Just you.
I imagined you standing beside me,
hair wild in the wind,
eyes soaking in the mountains.
You would've loved it there.
You would've felt free.
And I wanted that for you
Maybe more than I wanted it for myself.
When I came back,
I wasn't healed,
but something in me had shifted.
I decided to start over.
Lose a year.
Take 11th and 12th again.
Maybe make my parents happy.
Maybe rebuild.
But life had more to throw at me.
Fights.
Shouting.
Breakdowns.
I gave up on what I loved,
and settled into survival mode.
Two whole years of keeping my head down.
Silent. Withdrawn.
Too tired to let anyone in.
I hated what I was studying.
I hated that I was doing it only to keep the peace.
But I made it through.
Somehow.
And still,
when the dust settled,
I didn't know what I wanted.
Only what I didn't.
So I kept walking forward,
one step at a time.

When the
Thread Found
Its Way Back

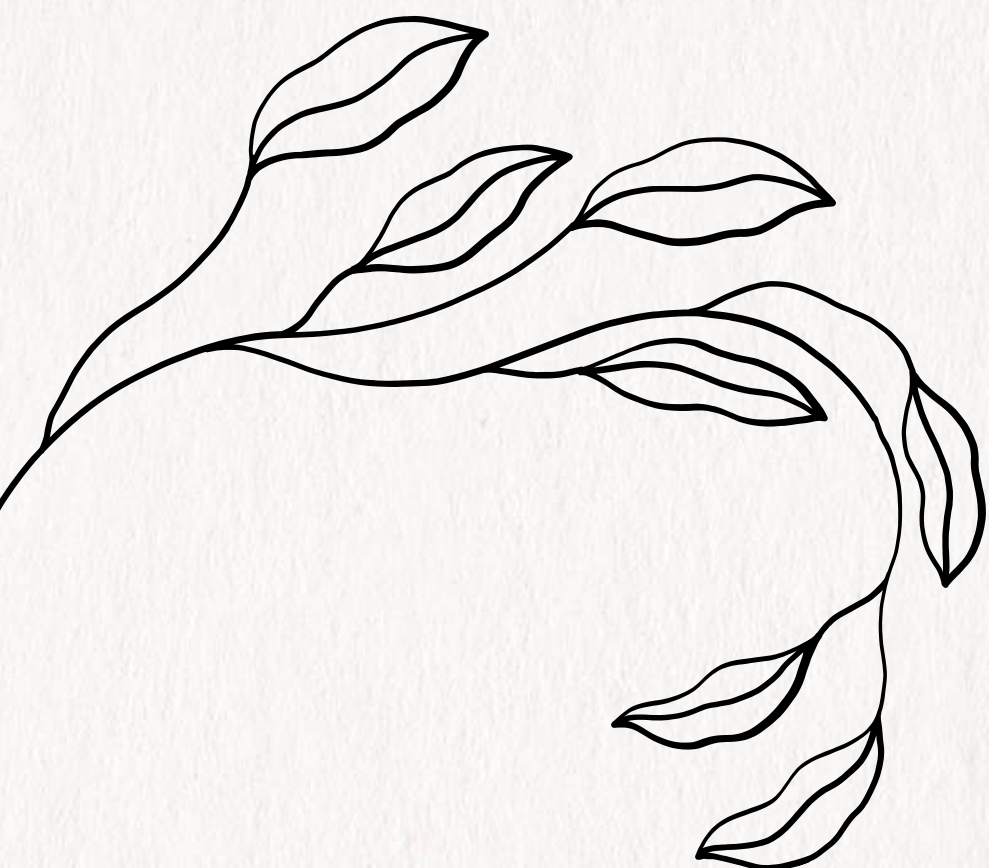


I barely scraped through 12th grade.
Hated every second of it.
I was disconnected from myself,
but it was done.
And then - after what felt like a lifetime -
I heard from you again.
It was 2019, I think.
You said you had moved to Bangalore.
Your voice felt... different.
I didn't press for details.
You said it was because of a personal situation,
and I just took that in quietly.
It didn't matter why.
I was just glad to be speaking to you again.
By then, I had chosen computer science.
Something I was actually interested in,
even if the system still felt broken.
I was rebuilding myself, piece by piece,
from the wreckage I'd left behind.
Then one night,
you told me the truth.
Why you had to leave.
What you were going through back then.
I won't write the details - they're yours -
but hearing them...
it shifted something in me.
The confusion.
The silence.
Your absence.
It all made sense now.
It still wasn't fair.
You left without telling your best friend,
and that silence had hurt more than I knew how to say.

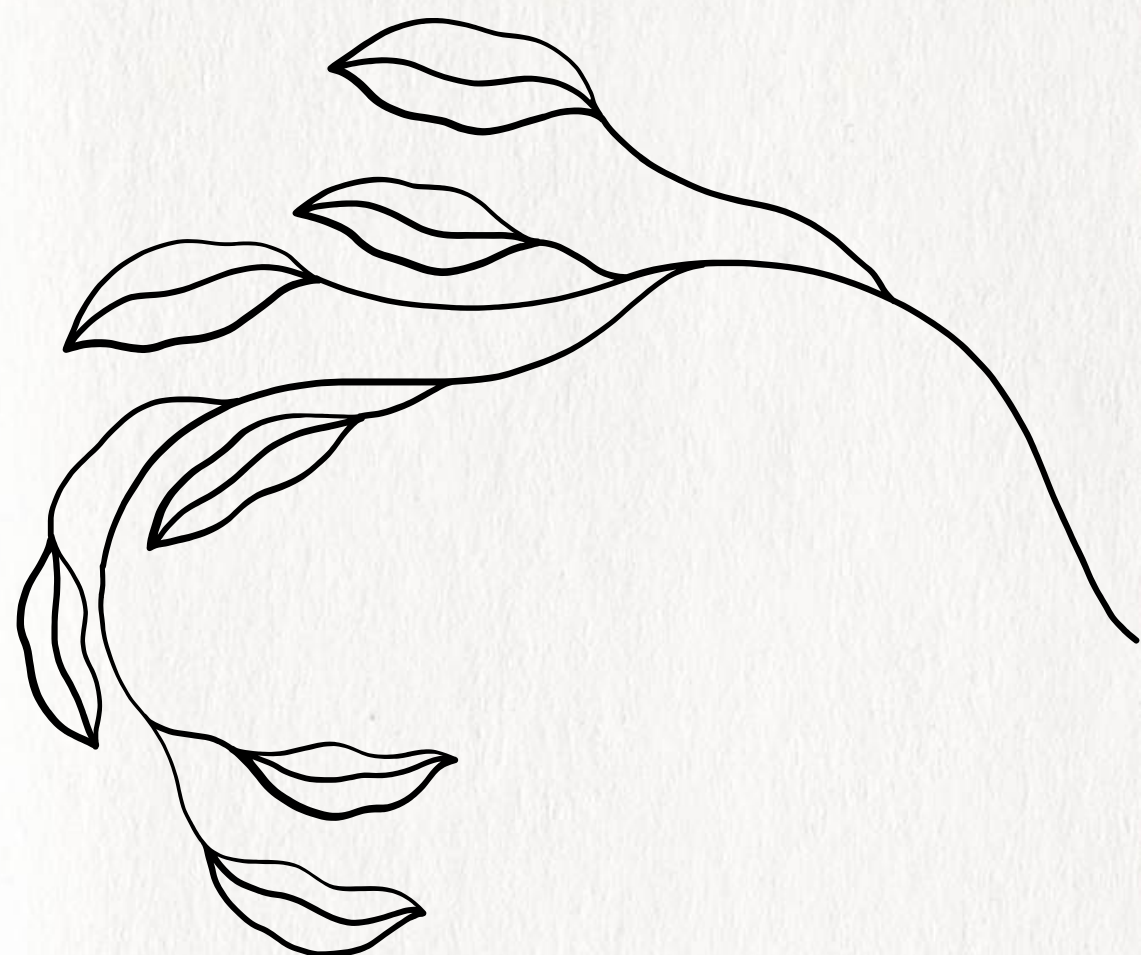


But that night,
after you shared your truth,
I understood.
I felt it.
I told you my side too.
The fall.
The mess.
The ways I lost myself.
You cried.
I cried.
And for a while,
there was no blame.
Just two kids
who had been trying to survive life in their own ways.
The thread had slipped from our hands,
but somehow,
it had found its way back.
Even though I'd moved on in many ways,
a part of me still loved you -
the real you.
The woman I'd always seen behind
all the versions the world forced you to be.
It was still one-sided.
I had accepted that.
But you never dismissed me.
You valued my presence in your life.
And maybe,
that was enough.

The Choice
Within the
Chaos

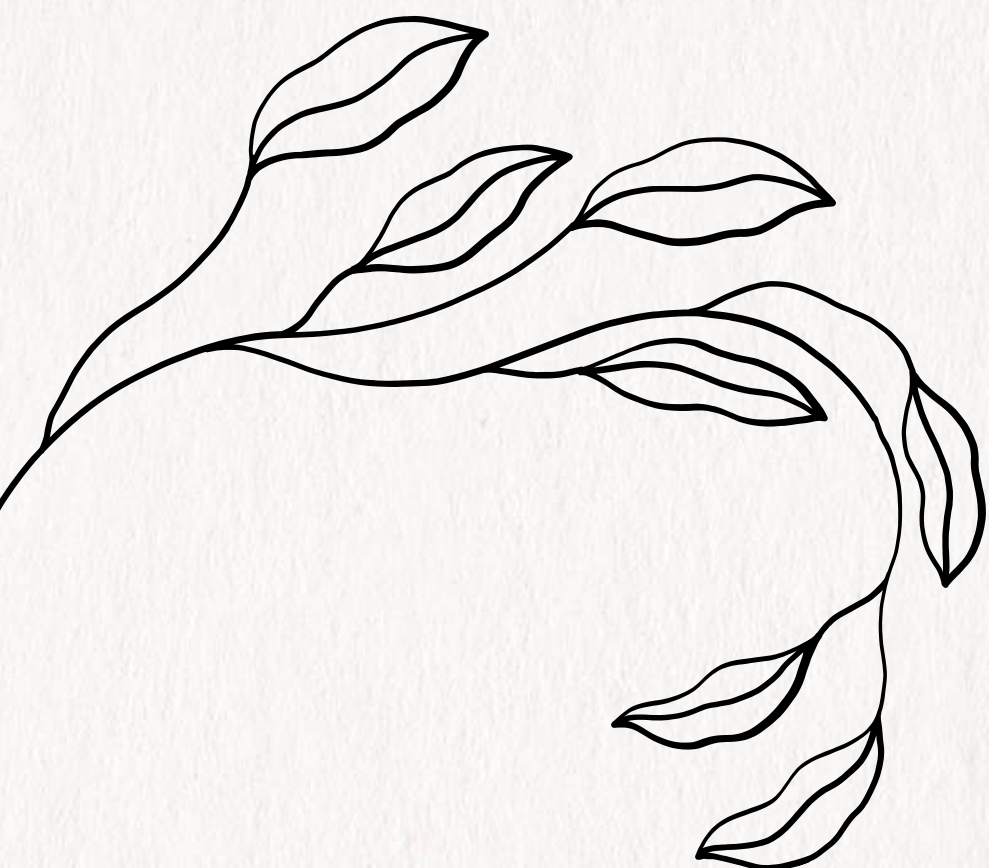


Everything was starting to feel okay again.
Not perfect - just... steady.
I was finding myself, piece by piece.
I didn't go out much.
Even my oldest friends, the ones who had been there
since we were kids -
I barely saw them anymore.
Not because I didn't care,
but because I had changed.
I liked the quiet now.
It gave me space to breathe.
To heal.
Video games started as a distraction,
just something to pass the time.
But soon,
it turned into more.
I met people online,
made friends I'd never seen in person.
And then, without planning for it,
I stepped into a short-term career in competitive
gaming.
We trained hard.
Won tournaments.
Got signed to an esports team.
Before I knew it,
we were one of the top four teams across India and the
Middle East.
I was earning money doing something I loved -
and somehow still keeping up with college.
For the first time in a long time,
life felt exciting again.
Then the world stopped.
COVID.
The streets went empty.
Lockdown brought the silence back.
My parents still didn't fully approve of gaming.
They tried to be supportive,
but I could feel the hesitation in the air.
I kept going anyway.



When the first lockdown ended,
college came back with a vengeance.
Exams.
Projects.
Deadlines stacked like bricks.
I couldn't do both anymore.
If I wanted to finish college and get a job,
I had to let go of gaming.
So I did.
It wasn't easy.
My performance had already started slipping.
The joy was fading.
I chose stability.
I chose the "normal" life.
And then -
the second lockdown.
The world shut down again,
and somehow,
I found myself talking to you.
It was through some random Among Us group chat.
You were seeing someone back then - long-distance.
We talked often,
and I had no expectations.
By then,
I'd moved on completely.
You were still important to me,
but not in the same way.
I told myself, "She's my best friend."
And that felt good.
I loved your humour,
your personality,
the way you could make the air feel lighter even in
lockdown.
I didn't want to change what we had.
It felt real,
safe,
steady.
But sometimes,
when the nights got quiet
and the world outside my window felt far away,
I'd catch myself wondering -
if this was all we'd ever be.

The Night
We Met
Again



I had started spending more time with my childhood friends again.

The ones who had seen every version of me without needing an explanation.

College had its own rhythm now - loud, messy, full of faces that actually felt good to be around.

For the first time in years, I could breathe again.

I was living, not just existing.

Parties, late nights, bad decisions, good memories.

Nothing to run from anymore, nothing to hide.

It wasn't perfect, but it was mine.

Then came that night.

I thought it was just another party.

You thought otherwise.

You had planned it without me knowing - told the people I was going with, set the whole thing up quietly.

Five years had passed since I'd last seen you.

And then I did.

The music, the lights, the noise - all of it faded in an instant.

My eyes went straight to yours.

That smile.

And something on your face that no one else would have noticed,

but I did.

Emotion. Layers of it.

The kind you can only read when you've known someone for half your life.

The hug said everything.

Five years apart, gone in a second.

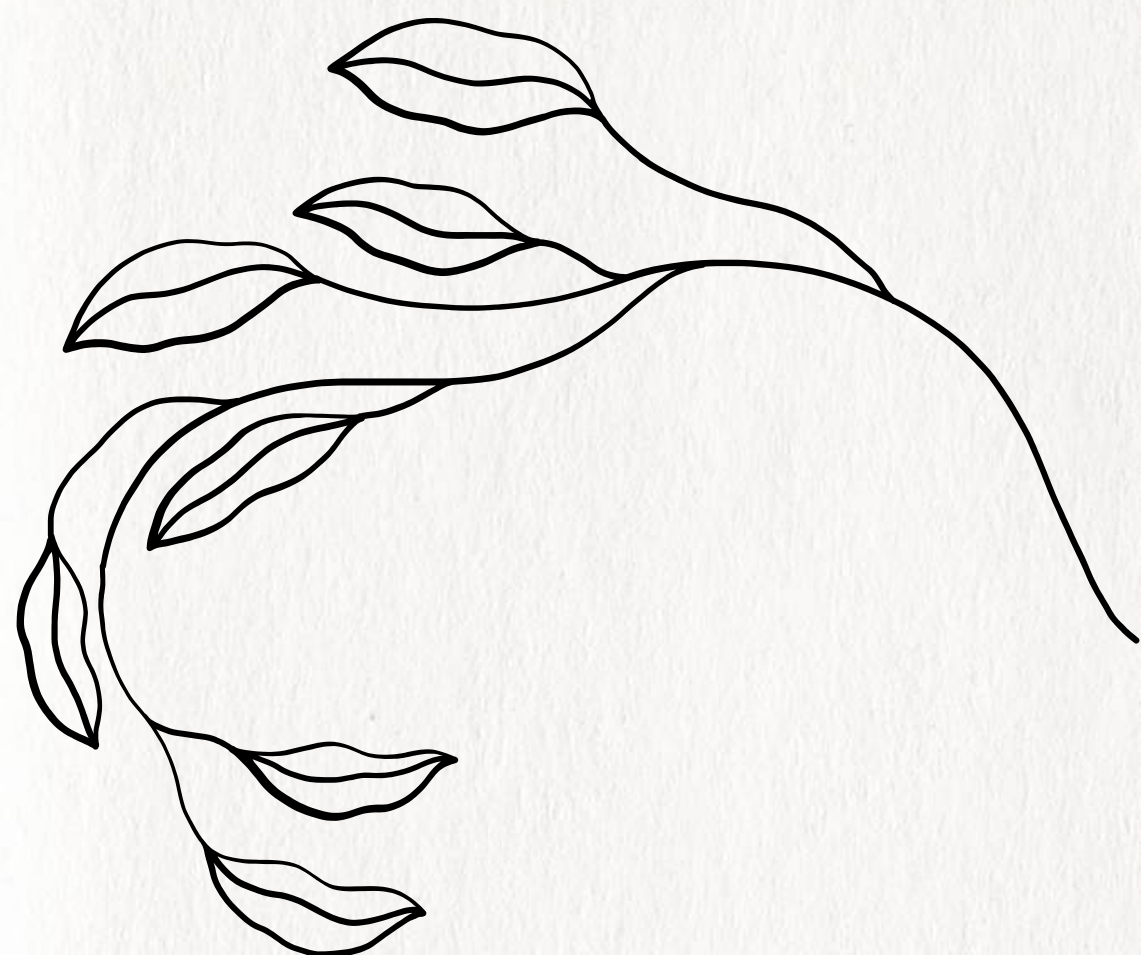
Later that night, in the back of the car, we both cried.

Because we knew exactly how much we had missed us.

Every walk, every laugh, every fight, every quiet moment we'd once had.

We spent two days together after that.

Just two.



You looked different - a grown woman now, nothing like the kid I'd known.

Still beautiful. Still you.

Seeing you again after all that time felt surreal, like someone had taken two timelines and stitched them back together.

Then came the airport.

The songs played - The Night We Met and Jiyen Kyun.

The same ones that once stitched our hearts together.

You handed me your diary,

asked me to write.

I wrote without thinking, without editing. Just... feeling.

That last hug was emotional.

It was two best friends saying goodbye again -

knowing the distance would stretch,

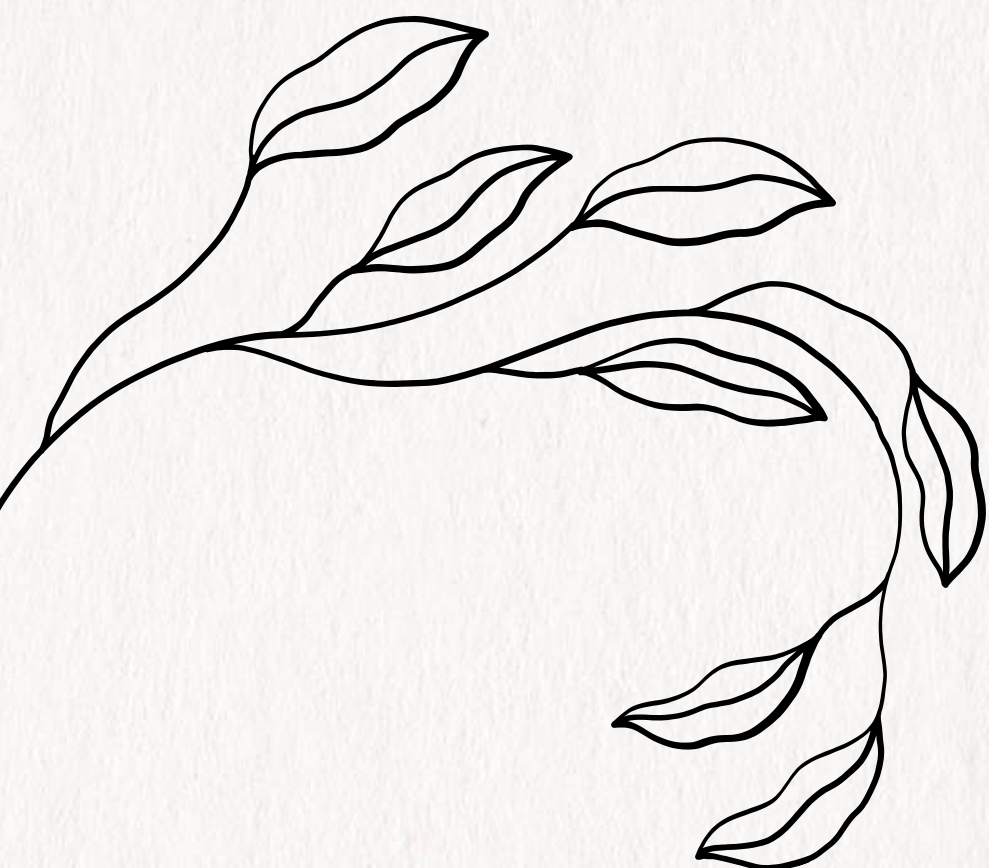
but this time, the thread wouldn't break.

For me, you were my best friend.

Even though somewhere deep down,

a quiet part of me still loved you.

Our
First Trip
Together



Life had settled into something warm and light.
I'd found a version of myself that felt real -
the kind that loved people, parties, studying just
enough,
and even the thrill of bunking classes just because I
could.
College life wasn't perfect,
but it was perfect for me.
You and I didn't talk every day anymore.
We didn't need to.
When we did, it was effortless.
No warm-ups, no filters.
If either of us ever did something ridiculous - even
unthinkable -
the first question was always,
"Okay... but are you okay?"
That was our bond. Rare. Unshakable.
A year passed.
For your birthday, we decided to take a trip to Goa -
just us.
No intentions. No drama.
Just vibes.
We had a low budget,
and on paper, I was broke and a little miserable,
but in truth,
I was stupidly, deeply happy.
We booked a decent hotel,
found small places with great food,
even hit the gym together.
On your birthday night,
you wiped the pool table with every guy who dared
challenge you.
I stood there with my phone,
your personal cheerleader,
catching every shot and every smile.
It felt like 2016 all over again -
when I used to secretly take your candid pictures
before it was even a thing
and hide them in a folder no one would ever see.



Later, in a club,
they played Kabhi Kabhi Aditi for you.
Strangers were sweet -
free shots, birthday wishes, like they'd known you
forever.
We got drunk.
We danced without thinking.
We laughed without stopping.
On the last night,
we stayed on the beach from dusk till dawn -
stargazing, sipping, joined by a couple of your friends.
Somehow, the beach always ends up being our place.
The backdrop to so many of our crossings.

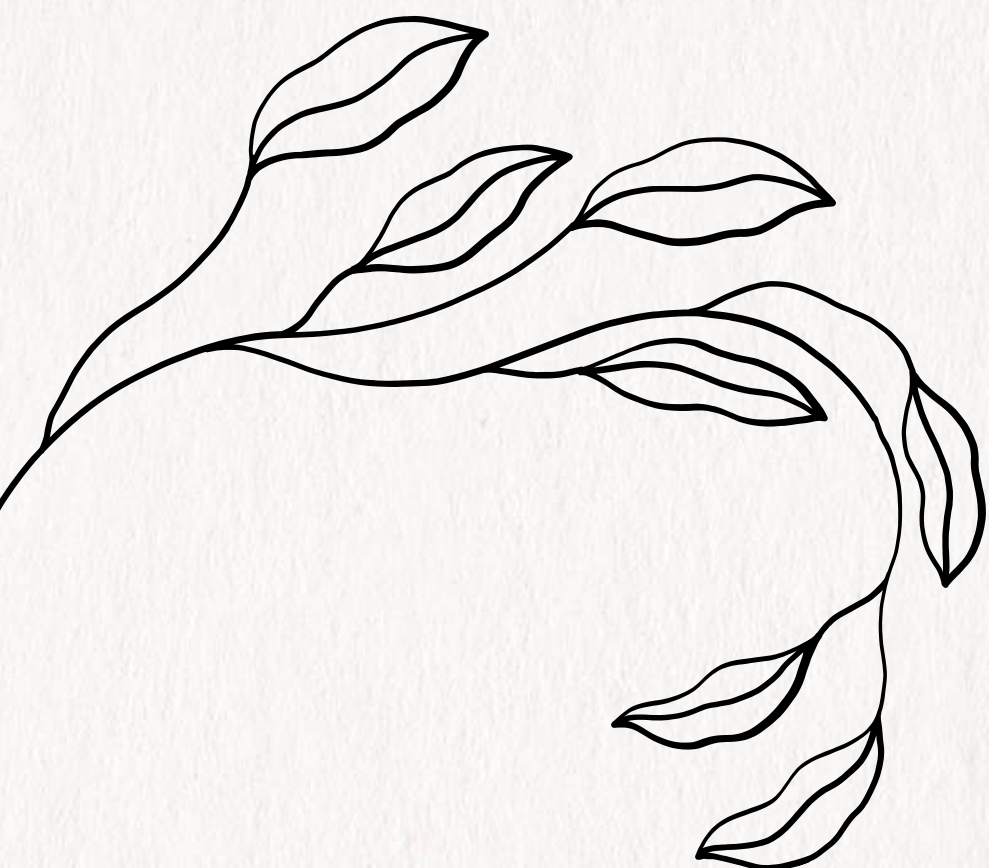
And then, like always, came the goodbye.
But this one wasn't heavy.
No ache. No weight.
Just comfort.
The quiet kind that comes from knowing
we made memories we'd carry forever.
We hugged,
smiled,
and slipped back into our separate lives.

11x2

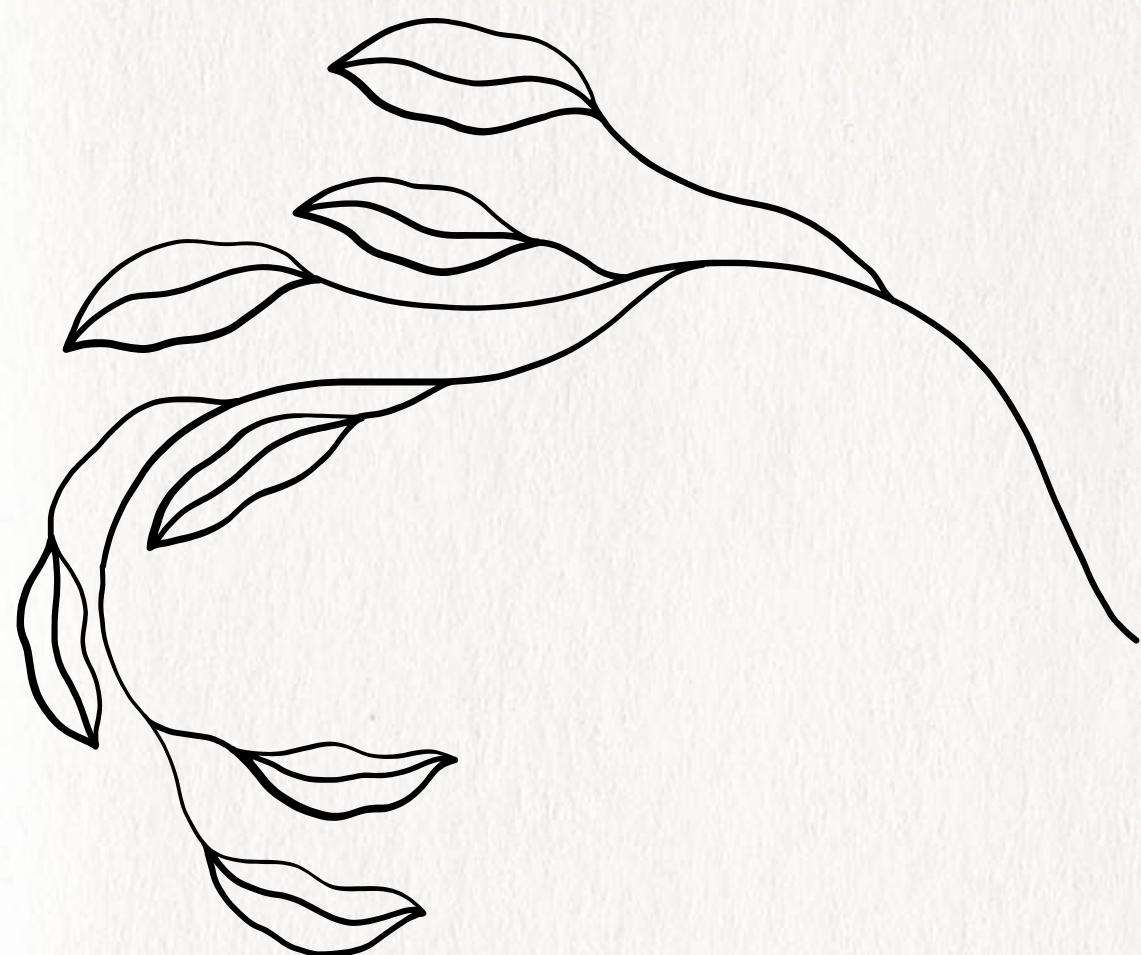
11th February

6:49 PM

2025



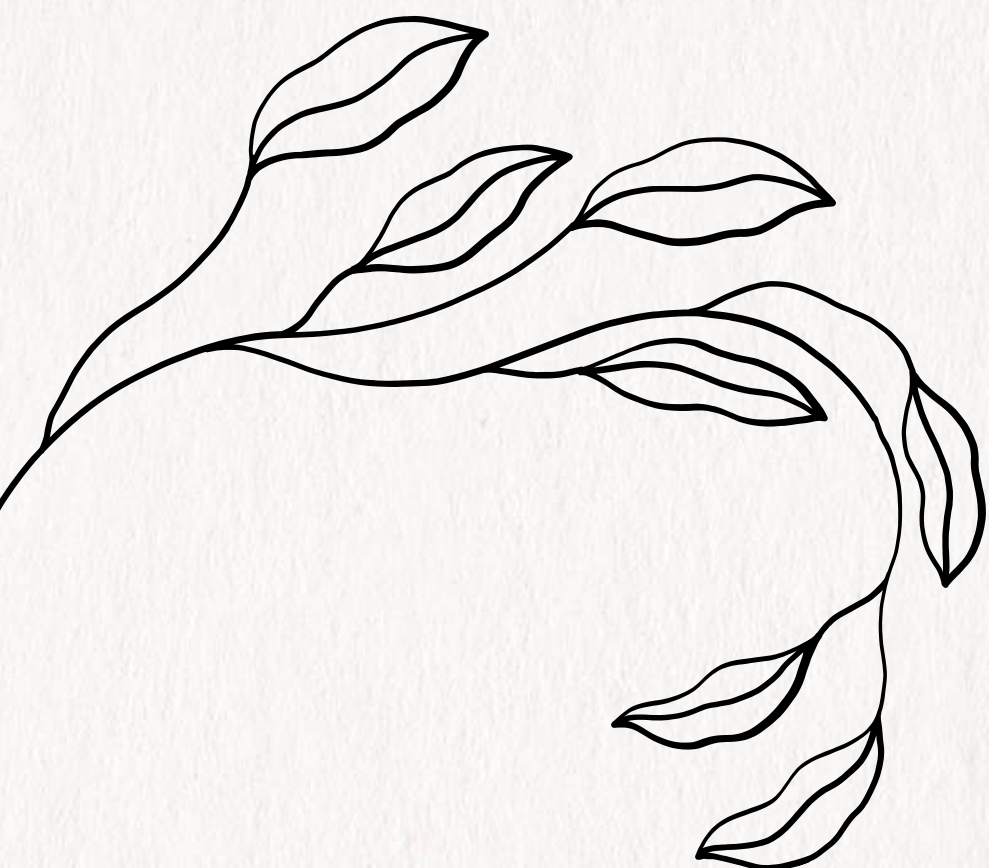
No matter how disconnected we became, whenever we caught up, it was like pressing play on a paused song.
Effortless. Easygoing. Familiar.
Unbreakable.
But then came the silence.
After your birthday in April 2024, we just... stopped talking.
No fights, no dramatic endings - just space.
Life was moving fast for both of us, and somewhere along the way, our paths slipped apart.
I didn't think much of it at first. We'd gone silent before and always found our way back.
Months passed. A year, almost.
I didn't realise until much later that you had blocked me - not just from your phone, but from your world.
Back then, I only knew you weren't around anymore. I figured you were busy, or just... living.
Then one day in January 2025, I saw your story.
Small, ordinary, nothing special - but it stopped me.
It made me wonder where you were, how you'd been, if you were okay.
No one knew you longer than I did.
So I sent you a "hi."
No reply.
A few weeks later, on February 11th, 6:49PM, I tried again.
"Hi x2."
And this time, you replied:
"It's hi x3."
It was nothing. And somehow, it was everything.
A thread I thought had frayed was about to suddenly pulled tight again.



We started talking - really talking.
About your relationship, my work, your business, our life.
About old memories we still laughed at and the new ones we'd never told each other.
It flowed like it had been waiting for us all along.
Soon it was daily.
Not planned, not out of obligation - just natural.
Video calls followed, cameras on, expressions unfiltered.
We weren't showing each other highlight reels, we were just showing up as we were.
You told me your side of the year we didn't speak.
I told you mine - all the versions of myself you'd missed.
At first, I told myself this talking phase was temporary.
But it didn't feel temporary.
It felt solid. Effortless.
You were still my Aditi. I was still your Malju. That never needed explaining.
One night, your birthday came up.
Almost without thinking, I said,
"Let's go to Goa. Like old times."
You laughed. I said I was serious.

And without realising it, we'd planted the seed for something more than a trip.
The first real chapter of whatever this new version of us was becoming.
And now, without either of us realizing it, our souls were about to be woven into something neither of us could have ever predicted.

All Roads Led
to This

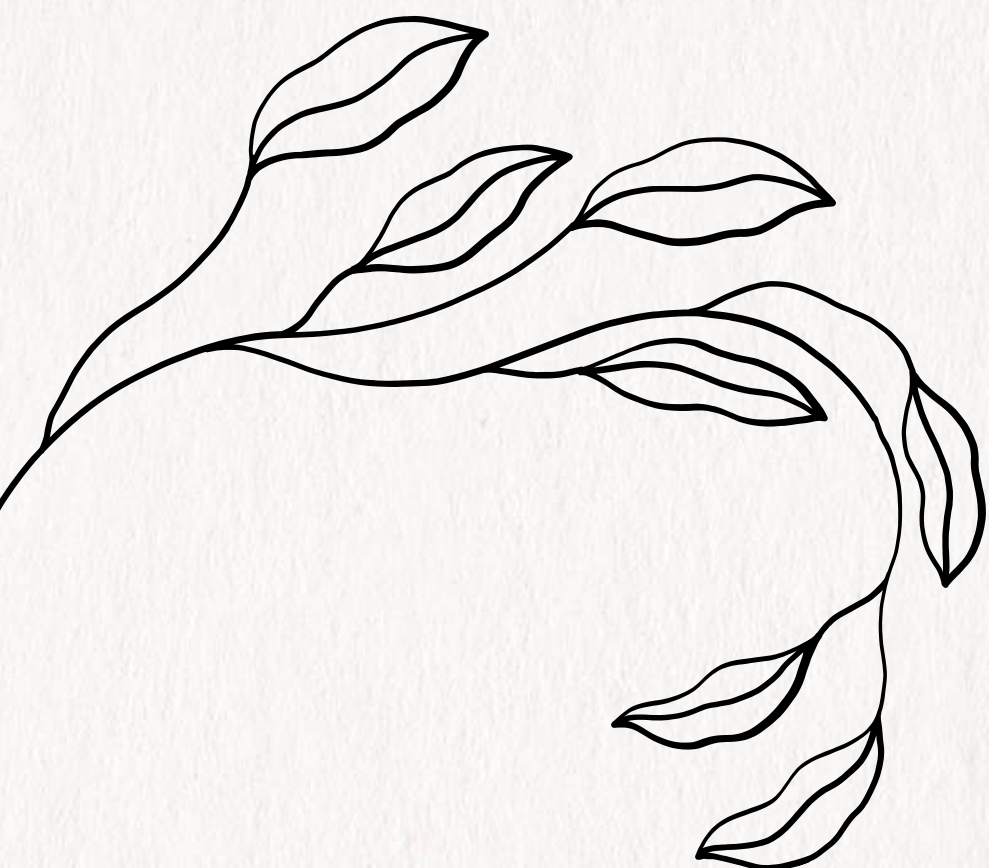


By March, talking to you wasn't just a habit anymore.
It was a rhythm.
A quiet expectation we both carried without ever
saying it out loud.
Morning, night, random hours in between - there
wasn't a single day we didn't speak.
Somewhere in all those calls and messages, something
began to shift.
Not suddenly.
Not with fireworks.
But like a tide that rose so slowly, you only noticed
when it reached your feet.
Within a month, I began feeling something more.
And you did too.
I could hear it in the way your voice softened when you
said my name.
In the pauses that weren't awkward anymore - they
were warm.
But you were still carrying the weight of something
heavy.
A heartbreak that had left your chest raw.
You didn't want what we felt to be born from the ashes
of a rebound.
You wanted it to be pure. Unforced. Honest.
And above all, you didn't want to risk losing the one
thing that had outlasted everything - our friendship.
We made an unspoken pact.
Stay open, but careful.
Let it grow only if it chose to.
No forcing it. No rushing it.
When your birthday came around, Goa became the
plan.
You took the train to Pune first.
I still remember pulling up at 6 a.m. to pick you up.
That morning, something in the air between us had
changed.

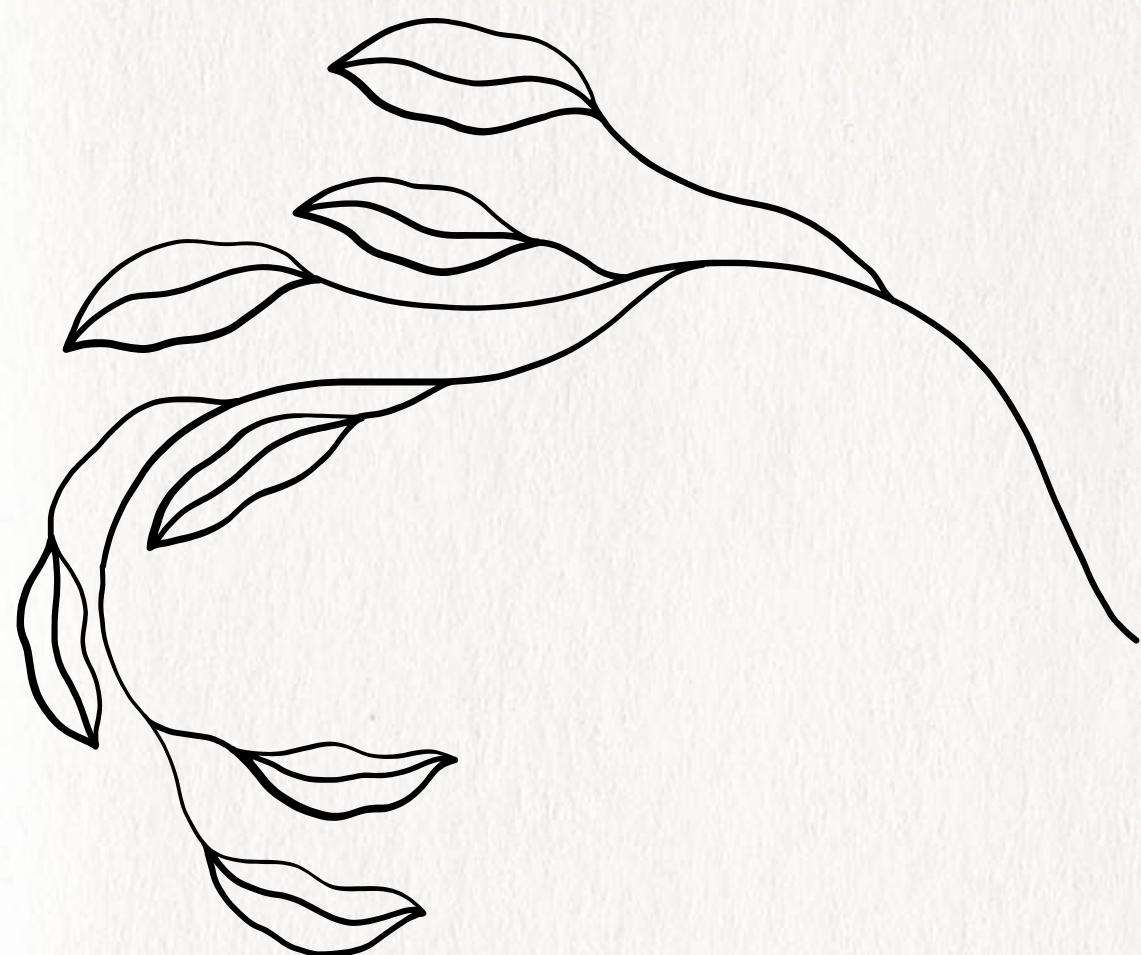


You looked at me, and I swear the world went a little
quieter.
I saw it in your eyes too - that unspoken awareness
neither of us named.

Goa was magic.
Not because of the beaches or the drinks or the chaos.
Because of us.
We thought intimacy might feel foreign after all these
years - maybe even awkward.
But it wasn't.
It was romantic, but gentle.
Our bodies moved like they had always known each
other, like this wasn't the first time, even though it was.
It was soft, unhurried, real.
When we came back to Pune - our city of beginnings -
we stayed in each other's orbit every single day.
And then came the night that changed everything.
I asked you out on a proper date.
For the first time, I bought you flowers.
I'd gone to four boutiques before finding the right
bouquet - one that felt like you.
When I gave them to you, your smile made the rest of
the world dissolve.
You wore a red dress that night, and for a second, I
forgot how to breathe.
We had dinner on a rooftop under the city lights.
The food. The laughter. The silences.
And those stretches of eye contact that said what
words couldn't.



After dinner, you said you wanted to go to Magarpatta
the place where our story began.
We walked the school roads like time had folded in on
itself.
The same streets that once saw us as kids now saw us
as two people catching up with a decade.
Our fingers found each other and didn't let go.
At the gates, we spoke to the old watchman.
Told him we'd been students here ten years ago.
He smiled like he remembered us.
You got emotional.
I knew you were holding back tears.
Before leaving, we stopped at the circular road.
The car was still, but everything inside us was moving.
The hum of the night.
The soft glow from the streetlights.
Your face in the quiet.
We looked at each other - and you broke into tears.
Not the kind you hide.
The kind that comes when the weight of years finally
ends all at once.
I felt my own eyes blur.
The past was there.
The present was there.
The fear. The love. The ache of not knowing when we'd
see each other again.
All of it pressed into that moment.
It wasn't passion.
It wasn't just friendship.
It wasn't confusion.
It was pure affection - raw and unshaped.
I wanted to freeze it.
To keep us there under those streetlights, fingers
tangled, hearts louder than words.



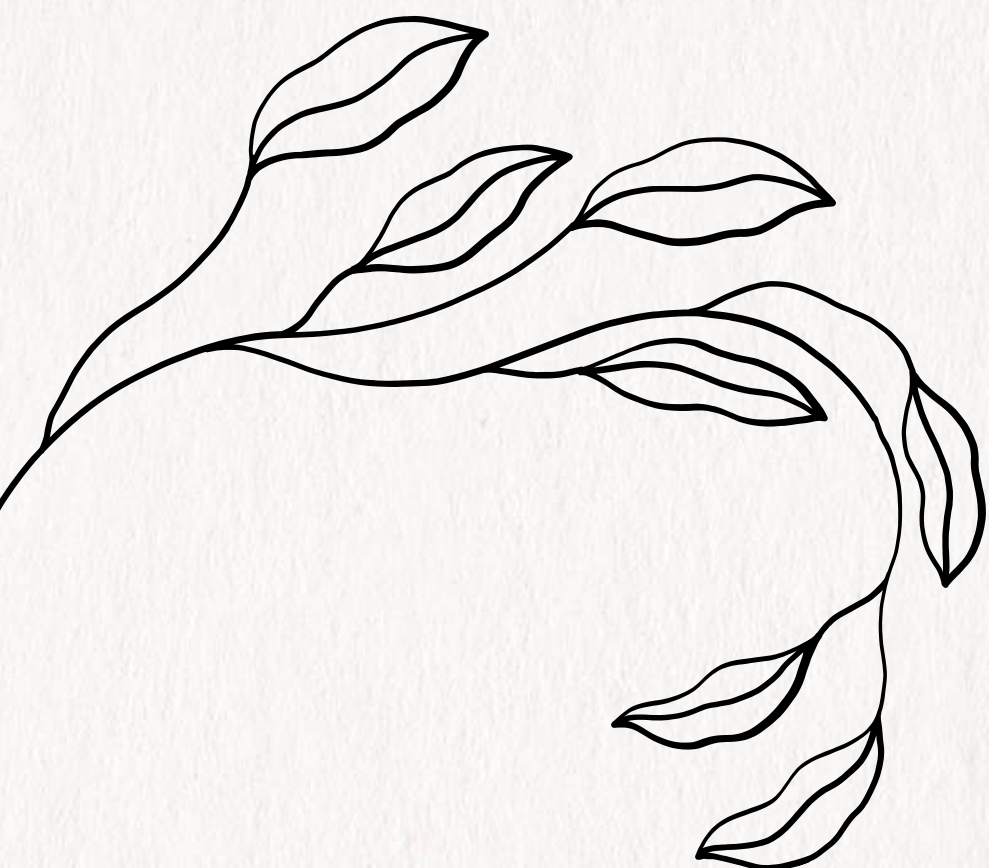
On your last day in Pune, you came home for lunch.
You met my parents.
They liked you - I could tell.
We both wore red.
Unplanned, but perfect.

Later, with your friends around, your hand never left
mine.
You held it like it was something fragile and sacred.
When I drove you to the airport, the same songs from
our last goodbye started playing.
The Night We Met. Jiyen Kyun. Kabhi Kabhi Aditi.
We laughed at the timing.
But it wasn't just music anymore - it was memory
looping back.
We were in the same scene, only this time the feelings
ran deeper.
As the minutes ticked down, neither of us wanted to let
go.
At the terminal, I kissed you goodbye.
And just like that, you were gone again.
Right when we had started loving each other for real.
Driving back home, I cried.
Because for the first time, I didn't just love you - I felt
your love for me too.
And the kid I used to be - the one who dreamed of this
- would have been so happy.
It wasn't just the idea of you anymore.
It was you.
All of you.
That moment at the circle had changed everything.
We didn't say it out loud, but we both knew it.
We had started falling.
Quietly.
Completely.

The Week the

World

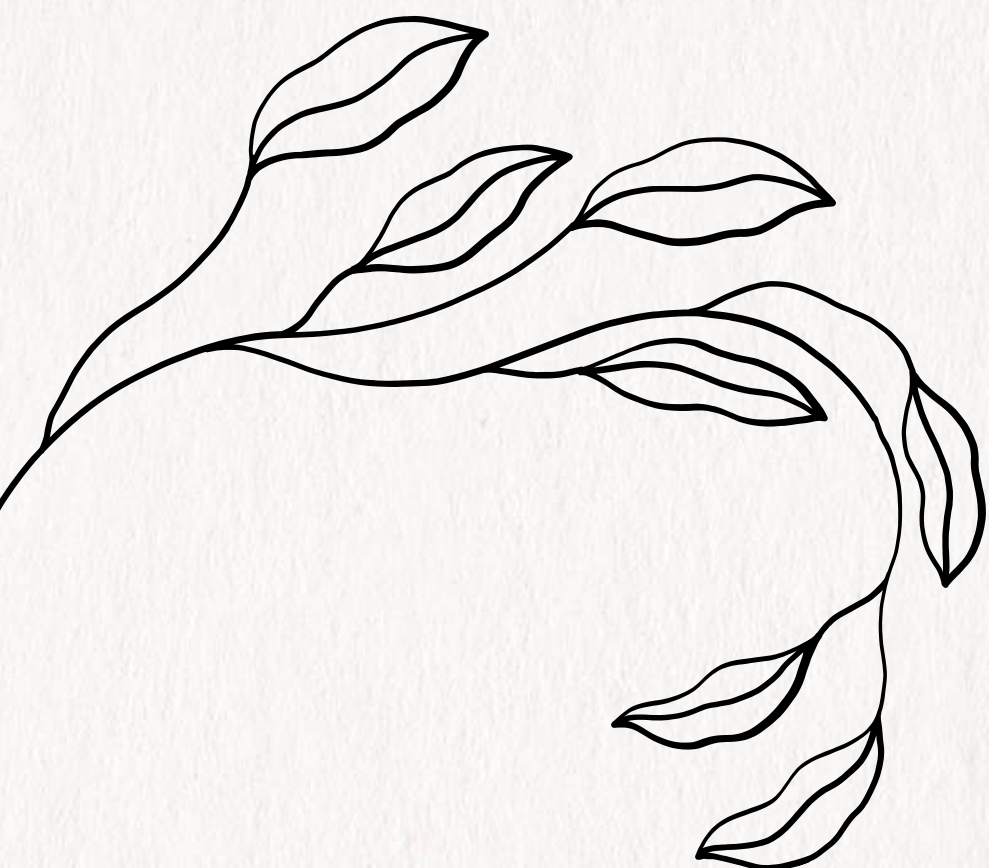
Disappeared



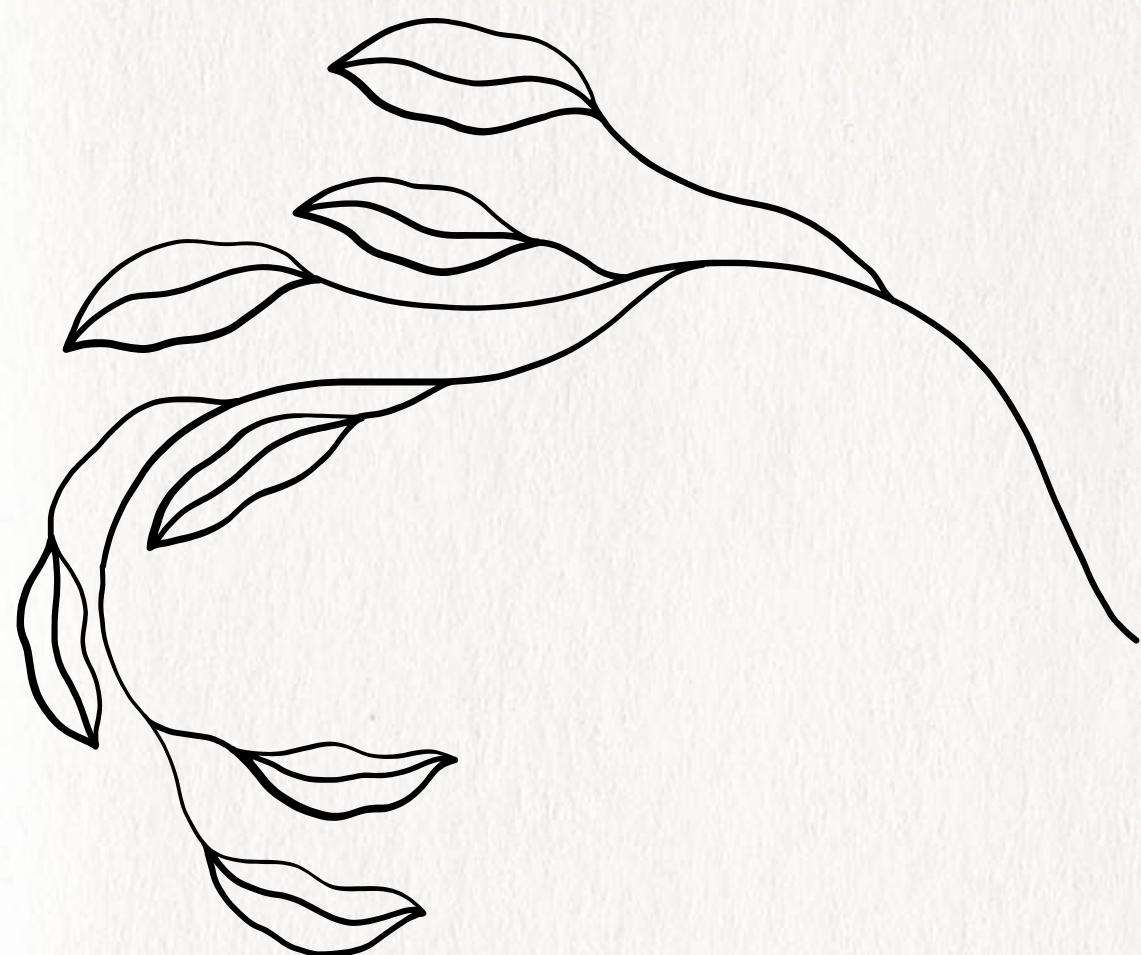
By then, you had become the rhythm of my days.
FaceTiming you wasn't just a habit anymore - it was the
moment I looked forward to the most.
A day without you felt hollow, like time itself had
forgotten how to move.
We shared the most ridiculous things, the weirdest
thoughts, laughed too hard at nothing, and ruined our
sleep schedules without a second thought.
We'd swear we'd fix them.
We never did.
And then came the chance.
A golden opportunity.
I could visit your hometown.
A place I'd never been before.
I didn't think twice. Flights booked. Bags packed. Heart
open.
The idea of seeing you in person again - of existing in
the same air - made everything else fade to the
background.
You were right there.
Standing at the station like you'd stepped straight out
of a film.
So familiar.
So dreamlike.
The first thing we did was head to that spot to smoke.
I don't even remember the conversation.
I remember pulling you closer mid-sentence, and
watching you lose track of what you were saying.
We looked at each other differently that day.
Not like friends. Not like before.
The eye contact was deep, charged, unspoken.
It's still burned into me.
That week was everything.
From the quietest hours to the loudest laughter.
Your family welcomed me like I already belonged.
The city felt warmer just because it was yours.
Life bent in our favour for those seven days, and I
drank in every second.



Then came the first day.
Your dadi was admitted to the hospital.
It wasn't how I pictured our reunion starting, but love
doesn't show up in perfect scenes - it shows up exactly
there.
In waiting rooms.
In quiet support.
In the way I watched you handle it all with grace you
didn't even realize you had.
We sat together in that dimly lit hospital, shoulders
brushing, speaking in low voices.
If someone had watched us from afar, it would've
looked like a scene from a slow, tender movie.
That moment carved itself into me.
It still hasn't left.
The rest of the week unfolded like something only we
could have lived.
Chotu mama's terrace.
The pool.
Your laugh spilling into the air.
Your voice singing softly while I recorded you without
saying a word.
The dates. The flowers. The drinks.
Watching TV.
Playing COD with Aaryan and watching his face light up
when I gave him that arts and craft kit.
That little bag he made me? I still have it.
Every second was saturated with you.
And then there was the intimacy.
The kind where every touch is unhurried, every kiss a
sentence you don't need to speak.
Where your body feels like the place I've been
searching for without even knowing it.
We moved like we'd been here before in another
lifetime.
Nothing foreign, nothing awkward.
Just us.
With you, the world disappeared.
No noise. No chaos. No shadows from the past.
You felt like the safest place I'd ever known.



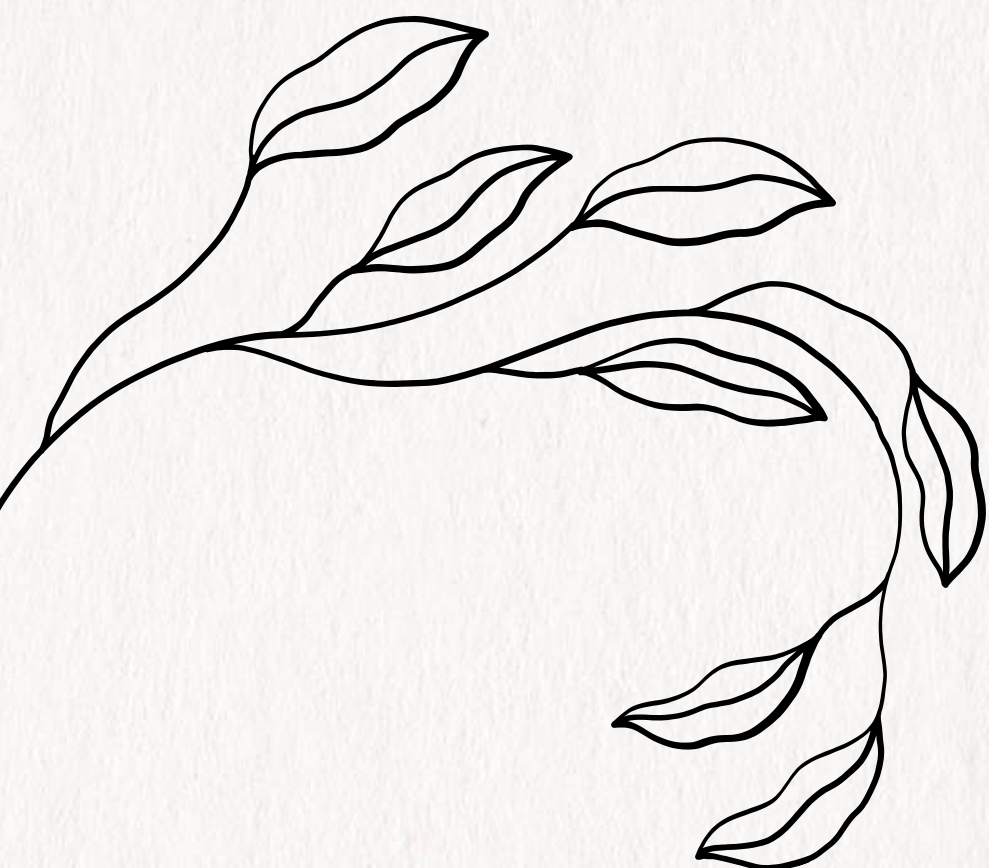
And then, too soon, came the end of the week.
I don't think I've ever hated time more than I did then.
Packing my bag felt like pulling a thread I didn't want to
loosen.
I cried, I couldn't help myself.
You started crying too.
The weight in my chest was heavy - not dramatic, just
real.
Because I didn't know when I'd see you again.
Driving away from your city felt like leaving behind
something rare.
Like putting a book down mid-chapter, knowing you
can't turn the page yet.
The streets blurred outside the window, but you
stayed sharp in my mind.
Every look, every touch, every quiet moment that
belonged only to us.
That week didn't just happen.
It stitched something into us.
Something I know neither of us can ever undo.



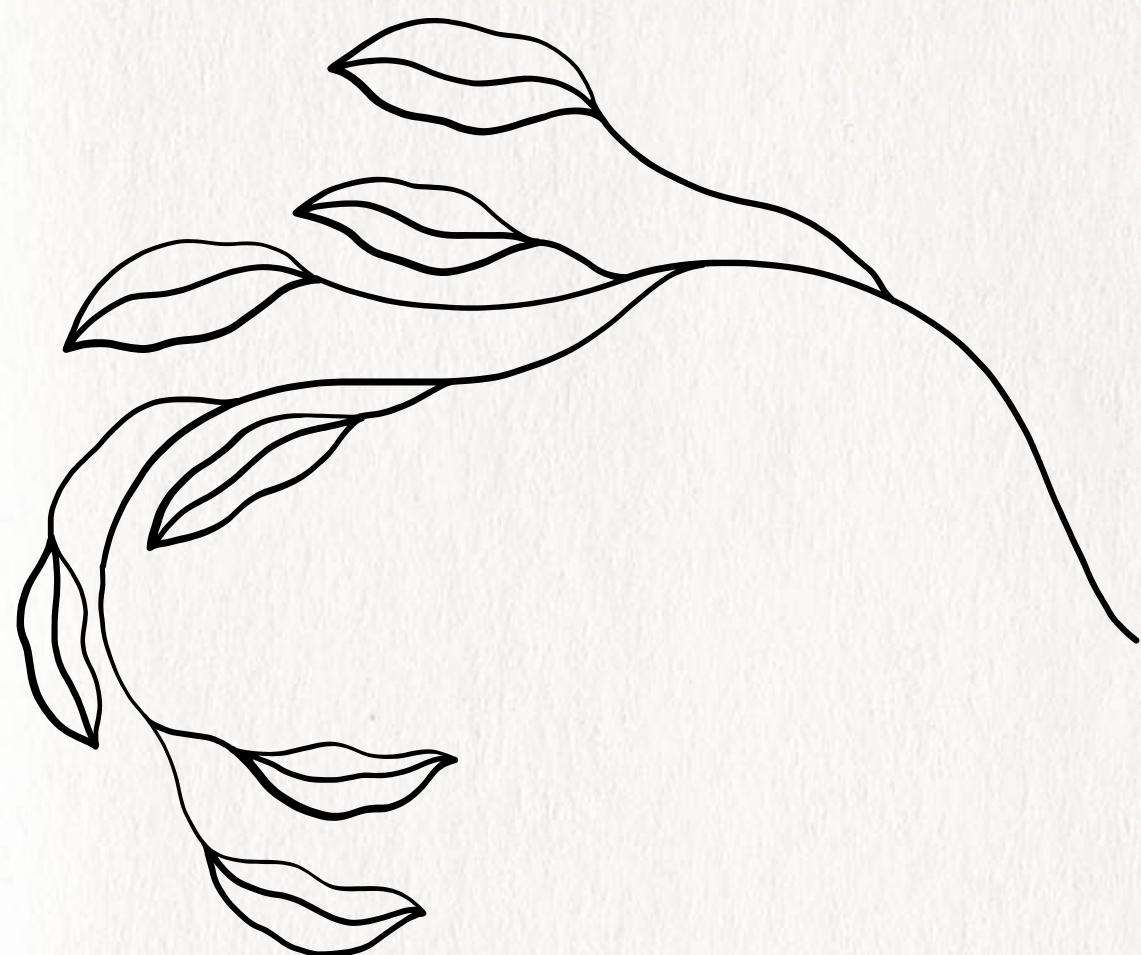
Babe, I will remember every moment I spent with you
there.
Your bed, the warmth of your arms around me before
we fell asleep.
The bathroom smoke breaks we took too often, turning
something ordinary into a ritual only we understood.
That moment in Jehan Numa Retreat where we locked
eyes and didn't look away.
In the bathroom, skin against skin, no words - just the
kind of eye contact that says everything without a
sound.
The drives.
Tea talks with dadi.
Playing with Aaryan.
The way your whole world became mine for a little
while.
Those kisses, those smiles, that laughter at the
dumbest jokes.
Your face when I handed you those flowers.
The way we overshared our lives like there was nothing
to hide.
I fell in love harder with you that week - deeper than I
thought I could.
And when it was time to leave, I wished more than
anything that I could've stayed longer, baby.

14

My Love

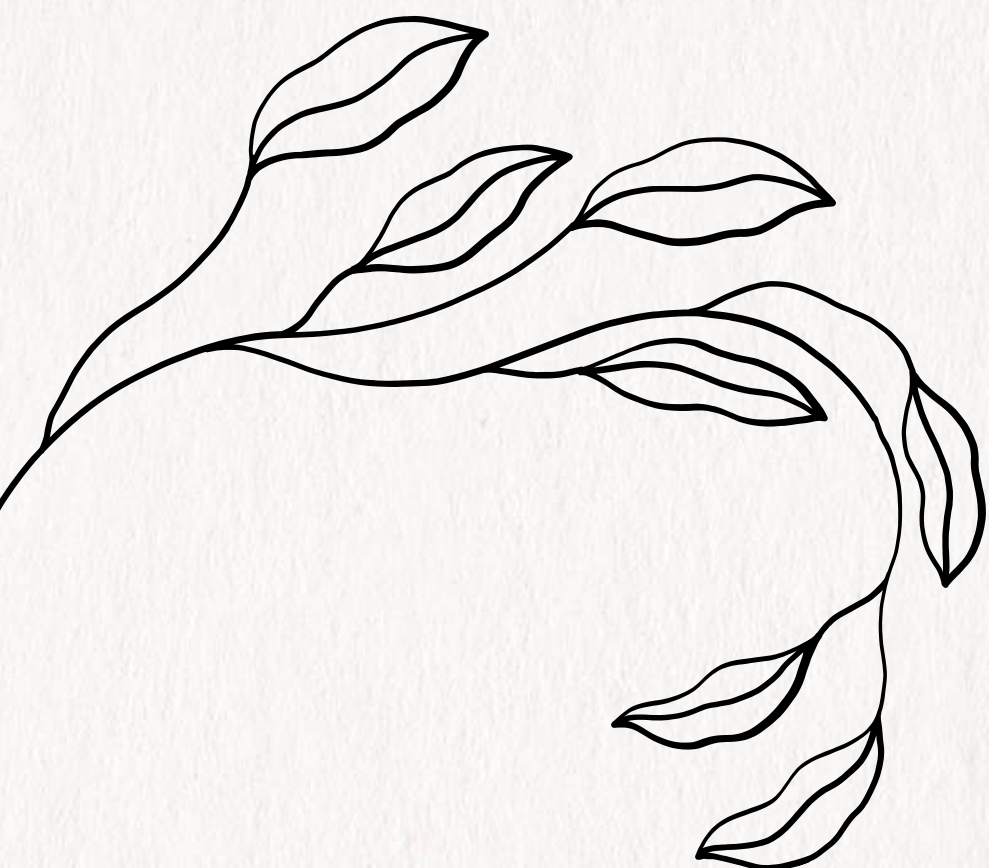


Aditi, as I keep saying - you're an incredible woman. Your eyes, your smile, your face, your mind - I love every part of you. Everyone says nothing is perfect, but I can say with confidence - you are perfect for me. Not just in how you look, but in who you are. Sometimes I feel like we were always meant to find each other, like the world kept rearranging itself to make sure our paths crossed again. You've been through more than anyone I know - things no one should ever have to endure. And yet, you shine with a light that refuses to dim. You are resilient, emotionally intelligent, beautifully self-aware. You navigate emotions with grace. You hold space for others when they can't hold it for themselves. You show up when it matters most. You love with your whole heart, even when it's been tested. I know I've made mistakes. I've hurt you in ways I wish I could take back. Moments where my words, my actions - or my lack of them - made you feel less than you are. You've had to carry enough in your life, and you should never have had to carry pain from me. For that, I'm deeply sorry. I regret every moment I made you feel anything less than cherished. And still... you never gave up on us. You still haven't. Even when you had every reason to detach, you stayed. You loved me through my faults. You gave me patience when I didn't deserve it. Your communication, your emotional maturity, your ability to be honest - they've been my compass. You've guided me toward being a better man, not just for you, but for us. I'm not changing to win you back, or to prove anything - I'm evolving because it's the right thing to do. Because love like ours deserves a healthy home to grow in.



You are unlike anyone I've ever known. Comparing you to anyone else doesn't make sense - you're the original, one-of-a-kind. And you're real. That's what I love most. You don't hide. You don't shrink. You don't try to be perfect. You just are. You can dance like a fool in front of me, say the most random things, and I'll still look at you like you're the most amazing person I've ever known. You're the song I'll never skip. The morning coffee that gets me going. A late-night monsoon - soft but wild. The sunlight that touches your face in the golden hour. A blanket on a cold day. A hand on my back when the world feels too loud. You are home.

More than anything, you've changed me. You've shown me what love really is - not the movie kind, but the real kind. The kind that works through the mess, learns from mistakes, and still chooses each other. You've helped me drop my walls. Taught me how to communicate, to listen, to be present. You've shown me that love is not just a feeling, it's an everyday choice. This book will never be enough to explain what you mean to me - but it's a start. Because you are everything.



And now, as I pause these pages - not an ending, just a deep breath - I want you to know this:

I believe in us.

I believe in what we've built, and in what we're still becoming.

I believe we are meant for each other.

I'm growing. I'm learning. I see a future with you - a full one. A life full of love, honesty, and friendship. A life where it's always you and me, through every high and low.

This doesn't feel fast. This feels right.

Labels won't change what we already have - but this one? It's something little Malju always imagined.

But this time it is not to possess you or idealising you, but to honour what we've built.

So here's what I want:

I promise to get you flowers every chance I get - even if it means checking four different shops to find the exact ones you'd love.

I promise to grow with you, and to keep evolving so we never stop making each other proud.

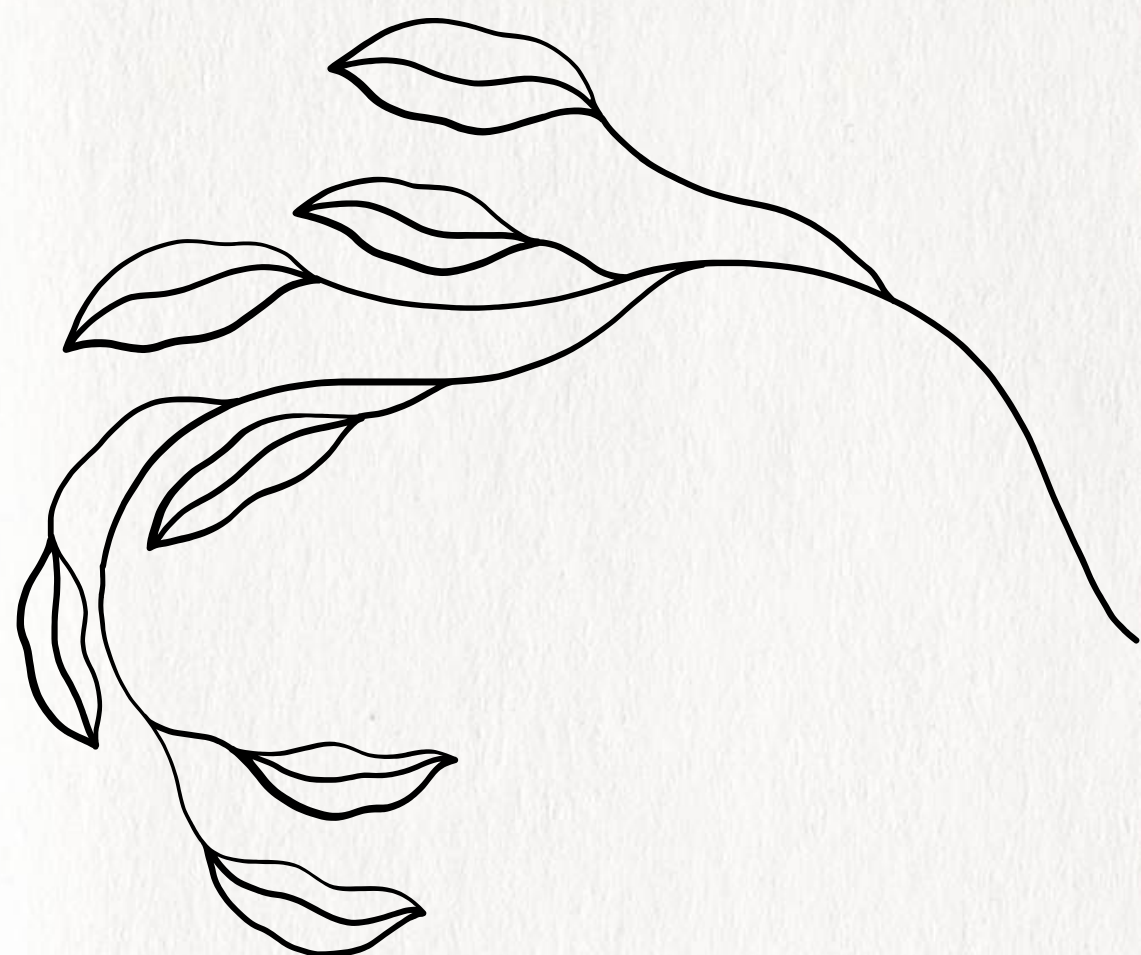
I promise to laugh with you until our stomachs hurt - and to still laugh at your bad jokes, even when I've heard them a hundred times.

I promise to listen, even when the conversation is about something I don't understand, like whatever mysterious sorcery happens at your salon.

I promise to protect your peace, and to be your calm when life gets loud.

I promise to dance with you - whether it's at a club, in a living room, or badly in a parking lot after a smoke break.

I promise to hold your hand in public, in private, in every lifetime.



I promise to never get tired of your face, even when I've seen it on FaceTime for six hours straight.

I promise to always notice - the little things you do, the changes in your tone, the look in your eyes when something's on your mind.

I promise to love you through the seasons - even on the days you're quiet, or tired, or not your brightest self.

I promise to keep Goa trips alive, to make sure we always have "our place" no matter where we are.

I promise to be your biggest cheerleader, your safest place, and your softest landing.

I promise to give you space when you need it, but never make you feel alone in it.

I promise to show up - not just physically, but emotionally, mentally, and with my whole heart.

I promise to keep our late-night chaos alive, even if it ruins our sleep schedules forever.

I promise to make memories with you so beautiful they make the world jealous.

And above all - I promise to love you, every day, in all the ways I know how, and all the ways I'll learn.

No masks. No filters. No pretending. Just us.

So, Aditi -

Will you be my girlfriend?

It started with just a glance.

Not the kind that changes everything in a dramatic flash but the quiet kind, the kind you don't notice until years later, when you're looking back and realizing that maybe... that was the moment everything began.

This isn't a story with a neat ending.

It's not about boy meets girl, or lost love found again - not exactly.

This is a story of threads. Invisible ones.

Of lives that ran parallel through childhood and chaos.

Of long silences and sudden reunions.

Of friendships that blurred, and feelings that didn't always arrive on time - but when they did, they stayed.

Somewhere in the pages, you'll find birthdays missed and texts unread, voices shaking on late-night calls, laughter echoing in a city that forgot how young we used to be. You'll find old photos, forgotten songs, and that one message that finally broke the silence.

But most of all, you'll find that this wasn't the end.

This was the prologue to something far bigger than a story - a life that finally started telling itself.

Because sometimes love doesn't crash into you.

Sometimes, it drips in slowly - through memory, through grief, through the warmth of a voice you didn't realize you missed.

You're not holding a book.

You're holding a time machine.

A soft return.

A quiet beginning.