

Before you.

With You.

After You.

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Author's note~

This book is written with love, care and many moments which were cherished and moments which never wished it happened.

This isn't for explaining someone or not to blame someone.
This is for the readers who shouldn't repeat my mistakes.

I was learning how to love while loving someone more deeply than I ever can. I made mistakes while holding on, and it made me realize holding onto it is the mistake.

This isn't some book about a girl who did wrong or a boy who did wrong. It's about their journey, their mistakes which you shouldn't repeat and how to react. It's about the people who were trying their best to understand each other with all the strength they had in themselves.

This book includes moments which actually happened in the character's life and I would like to share them with you guys and make you realize what should be done at which time and what should not be done no matter what.

If you're reading this as someone who has loved or been loved imperfectly, I would love to tell you that -

You were not asking for too much. It was what you needed.
What you **need** to feel **loved**, and it's never too much.

I hope this feels gentle to you, and if the moments hurt you, I hope they do softly- like a memory.

- Abhishek

Before the story begins, I want to tell you that -

Love does not always start when two people meet. It also starts when two people need each other and their bond begins to grow day by day. It starts when we don't know much about ourselves.

**Even a small
choice can reflect
big emotions.**

Names and details have been changed. But not the feelings.

Chapter 1

The boy who came back.

“I didn’t want love. I wanted proof that I mattered.”

It was the covid 19 period where the whole world was on a lockdown... Kabir, a 14 year old boy who was stuck in Hyderabad because of a lockdown. Kabir, a guy with a lot of anger issues, doesn't care who is in front of him, just slides by them. A guy who carried thoughts which didn't have words for them yet. He had a small group of friends which he lost contact with due to lockdown.

2022, Lockdown was gone and everyone was asked to come to the school. It was the first day for him and others at school after 2 years. It was all awkward for him in the first.. But then his old friends came and gave him company and he made new friends as well with them. Time was passing and then one of his best friends had come, Nikitha. A girl from Andhra, lived in the same society as him who had liked Kabir since the start. But Kabir had no idea at all about this.

Chapter 2

The first time I felt chosen

"When you grow up lonely, attachment feels like survival."

Nikitha and Kabir were an amazing team together. Their love, their care towards each other is what has drawn them together. Meanwhile, Nikitha's best friend - **Sithara**. She was the brightest student of the class and close to Nikitha. She had a crush on one of her classmates, Mark. As time flew, Mark and Sithara had got into a relationship as well as Kabir and Nikitha. The couples loved their partners so much. It was 10th class now, in the year 2023. These four became bestfriends. Any fight between Sithara and Mark, Kabir would go in and solve it. This has been happening for a long time by now and Sithara has given up on Mark now. While this was happening, Kabir felt chosen, like no fights between him and Nikitha, all the love for her, treating her like a princess at the age of 15. This was the time he felt lucky to have her by his side and wished to marry her. As the days passed, Kabir's and Nikitha's love grew and they were eventually in a Long-Distance Relationship. Kabir and Sithara had joined same schools after their 10th. It was going all good until Nikitha and Kabir's relation started having issues and later came to a point where he had to leave Sithara because Nikitha felt uneasy with Kabir being friends with Sithara. Later on he broke up with Nikitha. **All Kabir mattered was his peace. An end to a beautiful love story.**

Chapter 3

Breakups that never closed

“Unfinished endings follow you into new beginnings.”

Kabir was broken about the separation but also he had the peace of not someone asking him to do stuff which he didn't want to. As time flew he realized peace was when he was with his friends. With Sithara. He noticed how sithara was acting towards him and others. There was a huge difference. He felt like she liked him, but she always used to tell that she missed Mark a lot, so he wasn't sure of it. Kabir was confused a lot. He thought of asking her but he didn't want to ruin the friendship again between them, so he stood silent. The breakup between Nikitha and Kabir was one of the most unexpected ones. Kabir is a person who always chases peace over anything, and is ready to leave anyone for that. Slowly he began to think, *“If she was my love, then why didn't I get peace with her, when they say love equals peace.”* He knew that leaving sithara as per request from Nikitha would just extend the duration of the relationship and wouldn't guarantee it because there were other problems too. So he did not leave Sithara, and she gave him that peace.

Chapter 4

How dependance slowly began

“It didn’t begin as need. It began as comfort I didn’t want to lose.”

Time flew by, Sithara’s and Kabir’s bond had become so close. Kabir did not fall for her at that time, he fell into the warmth of her. Rested where it was easy for him to stay. Everyday at school they used to wait for each other and when they saw each other, that’s when their day started.... He became really close with her. It felt like an unbreakable bond. It felt like they didn't promise to leave each other, but they promised to show up to each other. Show up no matter what it costs. Slowly he began to do things which made her smile, which made her laugh. His mood slowly started depending on her. There were times where his day would go totally bad if she didn't come to school that day. For every discomfort he ran towards her every single time. At this stage he started to depend.. on her. At that time her presence felt like home, not because he needed her, his days felt incomplete without talking to her.

Chapter 5

When the joke was revealed

“What we said as a joke stayed with us as truth.”

As dependency was being constant, Kabir started to develop feelings for her. They both had a friend named Harshal. Clean, innocent, introverted guy. Harshal was one of the important people in Kabir's life as he knew him since 3rd grade. They both were this cool buddies together and he trusts him to the level where he shares stuff which he can't tell Sithara too. He was a classmate of Sithara too and their friendship was really good at one point. It was July 20th. Harshal already knew that Kabir had feelings for Sithara. Kabir and Sithara have thought to do a silly prank on Harshal that they both were actually liking each other. The prank started by Sithara telling Harshal that she has feelings for Kabir, but since Harshal already knew that Kabir had feelings for Sithara. He gave confidence to Sithara and asked her to confess. As per the plan, Sithara had “confessed” her feelings to Kabir and he accepted her. Harshal believed everything was real , meanwhile Kabir and Sithara knew the truth. Three days later.. Sithara randomly starts a conversation with Kabir, she had asked him “Did you like me before?”. Kabir says

“Okay let me be honest with you right now, I can sense that I have feelings for you. I can say that it's just an attraction. It isn't serious, but yeah I do have feelings for you.”

Sithara becomes so confused as she gets to know the truth right now....

Kabir says “I do like you where I can accept you as my girlfriend. But I don't know, I still get Nikitha's memories.”

Sithara has something to confess too-

It was raining heavily that night, the kind of rain that softened the world and made silence feel safe.

Sithara hesitated, her thoughts tangled between what she felt and what she feared might change. Kabir sensed the pause and reassured her quietly — that no matter what she said, their friendship would remain untouched.

For a moment, the rain spoke for her.

Then she told him.

She said she had feelings for him too.

Kabir didn't respond immediately. He stood there, caught between disbelief and something warmer,

something he hadn't allowed himself to expect. The rain kept falling, but inside him, everything had gone still.

He was unmistakably happy, overwhelmingly happy and yet still stunned by what had just unfolded. The kind of shock that doesn't hurt, only quiets you. It felt unreal, like the night had tilted gently in his favor. Two best friends, texting while it's raining, saying yes to something they had never planned but always felt.

The rain kept falling, steady and unbothered, as if it had been waiting for this moment too. There was no grand proposal, no rehearsed words. Just shy smiles, nervous laughter, and hearts beating louder than the storm around them. Everything about it felt soft and imperfect, and that's what made it perfect.

They stayed there longer than they needed to, talking about everything and nothing especially about the next day. About school. About walking into class knowing something had changed. About how strange it would feel to look at each other not just as best friends, but as something more. A real couple. The words felt heavy and exciting at the same time.

They wondered who would look first, who would smile, whether they'd sit the same way, talk the same way, pretend nothing had changed or let everything

show. The thought made them laugh again shy, quiet laughs filled with disbelief and warmth.

That night didn't promise forever. It didn't try to be dramatic.

It simply held two people who chose honesty over fear, friendship over silence, and possibility over comfort.

And for Kabir, standing in the balcony, enjoying the rain and feeling everything at once, it felt like the kind of night you carry with you — long after it ends.

It was their first day, and both of them walked in believing they wouldn't even speak to each other. They thought the weight of what had changed would make everything awkward, that they'd keep their distance just to feel normal again. But somehow, the opposite happened. They were effortless together as if nothing had broken, only deepened.

There was a new feeling between them, one neither of them knew how to name. It felt unreal, like something borrowed from a dream, yet it sat gently in their hearts. Familiar, but different. Scary, but warm.

Kabir felt happy in a way he hadn't felt in a long time the quiet kind of happiness that doesn't need proof. He felt seen again. Chosen. Loved. And it surprised

him how natural it felt, as if his heart had been waiting patiently for this moment.

Sithara, on the other hand, grew shy whenever Kabir looked at her for too long. She'd lower her gaze, smile without meaning to, her cheeks giving her away before words ever could. And her eyes, those hazel green eyes held him every time. Kabir had been fond of them for years, long before he understood why. Since ninth grade, they had stayed with him, unnoticed but unforgettable.

Now, looking into them felt different. They weren't just familiar anymore. They felt like home.

Chapter 6

The Unexpected Heartbreak

“I was still building us when it quietly ended.”

They didn't fall in love loudly. They fell in love in small moments, unnoticed, until it felt natural to belong to each other.

The new couple was overwhelmed with love — not the loud kind, not the kind that demands proof, but the quiet, innocent kind that feels pure simply because it exists. Everything between them was new and untested, untouched by fear. They hadn't said *I love you* yet, not because they didn't feel it, but because they were still learning how to hold something so delicate without breaking it.

For two days, they spoke endlessly about the future about how Kabir would ask her properly, how he would turn feelings into words, how that moment would look and feel. They laughed about it, imagined it, carried it with them through the day like a secret promise waiting to be opened.

On the third day, Kabir finally decided.
He would tell her.

During lunch break, with his heart steadyng itself for courage, he was just about to speak — when his phone rang.

It was his grandfather.

His godfather.

The man Kabir believed was unshakable.

He had fallen sick, bedridden. Within moments, the world tilted. Kabir and his family rushed to be with him, traveling to SriKalahasti in Andhra Pradesh, urgency replacing excitement, fear replacing anticipation.

In the chaos of leaving, Kabir didn't get the goodbye he hoped for. Sithara stood back, upset, unsure, unable to find the right moment. That silence stayed with him until later, when his phone rang again.

He expected it to be a friend.

It wasn't.

It was Sithara, calling from her friend's phone.

Kabir froze. It was the first time someone had reached for him like that, across uncertainty and distance. All she said was, "*I'll miss you.*"

That was enough.

Something in Kabir softened completely. In that moment, he believed heartbreak had no place in his story. He believed this feeling was too pure to end badly.

But that night, while traveling, under the hum of the road and the quiet of a moving vehicle, his phone lit up again.

It was a message from Sithara.

She told him she loved him but not as a boyfriend. She told him her heart didn't feel even a fraction of what it once felt for Mark. The words were honest. Gentle. Unintended to hurt.

And yet, they shattered him.

Kabir read the message silently, his heart breaking in places he didn't know existed. Still, he chose restraint. He didn't want to make her feel guilty. He replied as though he was okay. He held his tears back in front of his mother and sister, swallowing pain because love, to him, still meant protection.

What Sithara didn't know was that those three days brief, fragile, unfinished were the purest love Kabir had ever known. Love without expectations. Love without fear. Love that existed simply because it could.

She had accepted him then so he wouldn't feel hurt.
But Kabir cherished it forever — not for how long it lasted, but for how **real** it felt while it did.

Some loves don't survive time.
They survive **memory**.

And this one stayed with him innocent, untouched, and quietly unforgettable.

Kabir was shattered in ways his body couldn't ignore. The heartbreak didn't stay in his chest it settled into his bones, into his breath, into a quiet sickness that followed him everywhere. His body gave in before his heart could make sense of what had happened.

But he wasn't alone.

His cousins, the sisters who had been beside him since his earliest days, since he was still small enough to be held without questions, stayed. They didn't rush him, didn't ask him to explain what he couldn't yet put into words. They sat with him through the heaviness, through the silence, through the moments when strength felt distant.

And then there was Zara.

A sister from another mother.
The one constant he never had to explain himself to.

Zara had been there through every version of him, the quiet one, the hopeful one, the broken one. She didn't arrive only when things fell apart; she had always been there. Every tough phase, every moment when the world felt too heavy, Zara stayed. Sometimes with advice, sometimes with distraction, sometimes just with presence which mattered the most.

Kabir never questioned her loyalty, and he never took it lightly. He knew friendships like hers were rare, the kind you don't just need for survival, but for joy. The kind that reminds you how to laugh again, how to live again.

He was with all of them now, in the middle of his worst days. And slowly, gently, he began to feel okay again. Not healed, just held. Their presence softened the pain, reminding him that love doesn't always leave when things fall apart.

He had been so excited to tell them about his new love, about the happiness he thought he had finally found. He had imagined their smiles, their teasing, their warmth. But life chose a different moment, a different story.

Still, he was grateful.

Grateful in ways that words couldn't fully carry.
Grateful for the people who stayed when things went unexpectedly wrong. Grateful for the kind of love that didn't need explanation or permission.

Kabir knew one thing for certain no matter how many times his heart broke, he would always be indebted to them.

To his cousins.

To Zara.

Not for fixing him, but for standing beside him while he learned how to breathe again.

And he knew this too: a friend like Zara was not someone you find twice.

She was the kind of friend you hold on to for life.

Chapter 7

The Love after Ishq wala Love broke

“The love had left but the real love stayed.”

Even with his family around him — with cousins who had been beside him since childhood — Kabir still felt broken. Love had ended faster than he ever imagined it could, and the suddenness of it left him weak in ways he couldn't explain. He smiled, spoke normally, and acted like he was fine. But broken hearts don't always show their cracks.

Sithara sensed it.

She asked him gently if he was okay. Kabir told her he was. Not because it was true, but because he didn't want her to feel responsible for his pain. And in some way, he was surviving — because she was still there.

She stayed with him as a best friend. Not the burning *ishq* they almost had, but the quieter love that comes after — the kind that doesn't demand, only holds. That love kept him afloat. It didn't heal him, but it stopped him from sinking.

She spoke to him openly, freely. She spoke about Mark too. Kabir knew she had been talking to him again — for three or four days before the truth ever came out. He knew. And he told himself it was okay. People talk. Conversations don't always mean intention.

Every time she mentioned Mark, something inside Kabir tightened, but he stayed quiet. He chose peace over questions. He chose her presence over his discomfort. And even when she spoke about meeting another boy — someone who fit her type — Kabir listened without interruption, his heart breaking silently.

Still, he told himself it was fine.

Because she was there.

Because she still gave him peace.

What more do I need than that? he thought.

Days passed this way — gently, almost deceptively calm.

They began speaking on calls. Voices replaced silence. Kabir didn't believe because she promised him anything — she never did. He believed because of how she spoke, how she stayed, how every "*I love you*" softened something wounded inside him. And in

those moments, it felt real. Not the future. Not a guarantee. Just real.

Slowly, Kabir's smile returned. His laughter sounded lighter. Hope didn't rush in — it settled quietly, without permission.

And then the truth arrived.

Not as betrayal.

Not as cruel.

But as reality.

She told him they had decided something.

Kabir felt something tear open inside him — deeper than before, sharper because he had already begun healing. He realized then that knowing something *might* happen doesn't prepare you for the moment it actually does.

She never promised him anything.

He never accused her of anything.

And still, it broke him.

Because some heartbreaks don't come from being deceived —
they come from expecting restraint where the heart has already moved on.

Chapter 8

The Cost of Letting Go

"It hurt most because she didn't do anything wrong."

Mark and Sithara found their way back to each other. Kabir wasn't surprised. Somewhere inside him, he had already prepared for this ending. Sithara was back with the love of her life, and Kabir told himself he was okay with that. He smiled when he saw her happy even though the happiness didn't belong to him.

Still, there was a quiet absence beside him. Nikitha wasn't there anymore.

Days passed, slow and uneventful, until something small unsettled him. Nikitha sent a follow request on Instagram not to him, but to Ashu. Ashu, his closest friend. The one who knew his laughter, his nonsense, his worst moods. His *bhai* in every sense.

Kabir's heart jumped to conclusions before logic could stop it. He wondered if the request was meant for him, if it was a way back disguised as coincidence. Ashu accepted it, but nothing followed. No messages. No explanations.

Then Kabir and Nikitha started talking again.

Casual. Polite. Familiar.

Kabir believed she was only being kind, offering the peace she couldn't give him during their last moments together. And yet, something inside him stayed guarded. Because this time, he wasn't empty. He had peace now, fragile but real, found in his connection with Sithara. And he wasn't ready to lose it again.

He remembered what it felt like the last time peace left him how close he had come to losing himself completely. He promised himself he wouldn't return to that place.

Nikitha, however, believed something else.

She thought Kabir had left her for Sithara.

So Kabir wrote her a paragraph not to convince, not to win her back, but to be honest. He told her he didn't leave her for anyone else. He left because he needed peace. Because holding on had begun to cost him himself.

Peace, he said, was all that mattered now.

Her reply arrived quietly.

Short. Casual. Unprepared for.

“Honey, I’m dating.”

That was all.

And in that moment, something inside Kabir collapsed in a way it never had before. This wasn't the sharp pain of a breakup, or the slow ache of distance. This was different. This was final.

She had moved on. She was with someone new. Someone she believed was *the one*. Someone her mother liked effortlessly. A stranger walked in and was accepted with ease, while Kabir remembered every attempt he had made to be enough, every effort he had poured in over five and a half years.

The contrast hurt more than the truth itself.

For the first time, Kabir felt disappointed not in her, but in himself.

At that moment, he realized how little he had understood the value of timing, the weight of holding on, the fragility of love.

And that realization came too late.

He hadn't just lost a girl.

He had lost someone rare not only in beauty, but in the way she loved, the way she existed, the way she mattered.

Some losses don't announce themselves as endings.

They arrive quietly as someone else's beginning.

Chapter 9

Gravity

“Everything had already happened. She just asked it out loud.”

Kabir had accepted the loss fully now. There was no anger left in him, no urge to question what had already chosen its path. He understood it with clarity; he had given what he could, and she had chosen what she wanted. And that was fair. According to her truth, what she did was right. Kabir learned that acceptance doesn't always come from agreement; sometimes it comes from understanding.

Mark and Sithara's relationship went well, at least for a while. But love doesn't exist in isolation. Reality waited quietly in the background. Sithara feared what she already knew their inter-caste love would never be accepted by her family, no matter how deeply they felt. Rather than letting the future wound them beyond repair, they chose to step away early. They broke up not because love ended, but because the world around them wouldn't let it survive.

And slowly, without announcements or expectations, Kabir and Sithara grew closer again.

Not dramatically. Naturally.

They sat close in class, shoulders brushing without effort. They ate together, shared lunches, and shared silence. Assignments became conversations, and conversations became comfort. Everything felt easy the kind of ease that doesn't need to be named.

Until one day, it was noticed.

The principal watched them from a distance and decided that closeness needed correction. Without explanation, Kabir was asked to move sent to the corner of the classroom, away from Sithara. The separation was sudden and visible. Too visible.

Students whispered. Teachers noticed. One by one, they asked Kabir the same question "*Did you both have a fight?*"

That's how obvious it was. That's how incomplete the classroom felt without them together.

But Kabir and Sithara said nothing. Fear kept them quiet. The authorities left no space for explanation.

Days passed.

They spoke through online texts now. They saw each other only in real life, never too close, never too far. And slowly, without resistance, Kabir began returning to his old place. One bench closer. Then another.

Step by step, without defiance just gravity pulling him back to where his peace lived.

Eventually, the principal noticed again.
And this time, he let it be.

Kabir knew one thing with certainty: Sithara had truly loved him. He saw it in moments words couldn't hide. Every time their eyes met, her pupils widened, instinctively, honestly. It was something she couldn't control. And every time Kabir noticed it, he melted. Stress dissolved. Anger softened. The world slowed.

Days passed like this.

And Kabir found himself falling for Sithara more than ever not because of longing, not because of loss, but because of closeness. Because love felt safe again. Familiar. Warm.

One day, as the final bell dissolved into the noise of students pouring out of school, Kabir found himself walking slower than usual. The day had been ordinary — classes, laughter, small conversations that meant nothing and everything at once. He wasn't looking for anything.

And then he noticed her.

She was a junior, a year or two younger, standing near the gate with her friends. The light caught her

just right — the kind of accidental beauty that isn't rehearsed. Her hair moved when she laughed, her confidence effortless, untouched by the weight of memories Kabir carried. She wasn't someone he wanted. She was just... beautiful.

And for a moment, Kabir allowed himself to notice.

There was no intention behind it. No desire. Just admiration — the way you admire a sunset without wanting to keep it, knowing it will pass anyway. His eyes lingered longer than he realized, not because his heart moved, but because beauty sometimes asks to be acknowledged.

That's when Sithara walked up beside him.

Kabir turned to her, unaware of the storm quietly gathering. And in his usual — careless, innocent, unguarded — he said it out loud.

“Hey... that junior looks really good, no?”

The words landed softly for him.

They landed **loudly** for Sithara.

She didn't respond immediately. She smiled — not the warm kind, not the teasing one — but the kind you wear when you're trying to understand something you didn't expect to feel. Her fingers tightened around

her bag strap, a habit she didn't notice when she was unsettled.

Jealousy arrived before she could stop it.

Not because she thought Kabir would leave.

Not because she doubted him.

But because the realization hit her suddenly, sharply

I care.

And caring made her vulnerable in ways she hadn't prepared for.

They weren't in a relationship.

There were no rules, no claims, no boundaries drawn in words.

And yet, the thought of his attention resting somewhere else — even briefly — stirred something raw inside her chest. It wasn't anger. It was fear dressed in silence.

Then after a while, Sithara marched towards Kabir with a blade.

Kabir never witnessed this kind of situation before. He was shocked instead of terrified. Sithara wanted to scratch his hand with a blade just because he was

looking at a girl. Of course he tried to stop her but he couldn't. She scratched his right arm with the blade. It was bleeding and all Kabir thought was - "What did I do?"

They both go home and solve the fight and Sithara says "*I've scratched you because you didn't talk with me much today.*"

That moment stayed with Kabir.

It wasn't the junior.

What stayed was **Sithara's reaction.**

The way jealousy had surfaced in her without warning.

The way her voice had tightened, not to accuse, but because she felt something she hadn't prepared for.

The way anger flickered in her eyes — not cruel, not reckless — but raw, unfiltered, honest.

That was what undid him.

Kabir realized then that what she felt wasn't insecurity. It wasn't control. It was **fear of losing** something she hadn't even named yet. Fear of watching someone slip away quietly, without permission.

And that kind of fear... meant attachment.

Her possessiveness wasn't loud. It didn't scream ownership. It didn't demand obedience. It simply existed — heavy, uncomfortable, undeniable.

And Kabir loved that.

Not because it was perfect.

But because it was real.

He had always wanted to matter like that — to be wanted not politely, not casually, but intensely. To be the reason someone's emotions shifted without warning. To be the person who could unsettle calm and awaken anger simply by existing.

That flicker of jealousy, that moment of restrained anger — it made him feel chosen in a way nothing else ever had.

Sithara didn't try to hide it.

She didn't pretend she was unaffected.

She didn't wrap it in sweetness.

She felt it — and let him see it.

And that honesty pulled him deeper.

Kabir understood something about himself in that moment — something he hadn't admitted before. He didn't want a love that was always gentle. He wanted a love that could **burn**, that could feel threatened,

that could care enough to feel anger when lines blurred.

Not violence.

Not control.

But **fire**.

The kind of fire that says: you matter enough to shake me.

That day, Kabir didn't fall in love suddenly.

He fell **further**.

Because in Sithara's possessiveness, he saw proof — not of ownership — but of depth. Proof that her feelings weren't casual. Proof that he wasn't replaceable. Proof that he occupied a space in her heart she hadn't planned to give away.

And that kind of love — messy, intense, imperfect — was the kind Kabir had always wanted.

Not because it was safe.

But because it was **alive**.

One evening, like every other, they were texting. Casual words. Comfortable pauses.

Then, suddenly, Sithara asked almost playfully, almost shyly:

“Acha... can I kiss?”

And just like that, the air around Kabir changed again.

Chapter 10

Before We Called It Love

“Some beginnings don’t need labels to be real.”

Everything in Kabir’s world paused even though some part of him had expected this to happen. Time didn’t rush him forward or pull him back; it simply stopped, waiting to see how he would respond. He didn’t show excitement. He didn’t let the moment spill over. Instead, he replied lightly, almost carelessly, “*lol, obviously.*”

She laughed and added, “*On the cheek only, don’t worry.*”

And just like that, they laughed it away. The air loosened. The moment folded itself back into familiarity. They returned to being best friends or at least, that’s what it looked like on the surface.

The next day arrived like any other weekday. Ordinary. Predictable. Lunch period passed with the same shared conversations, the same ease, the same comfort. And then, casually as if she were commenting on the weather, Sithara said, “*I think I like you more than a best friend.*”

Kabir stayed calm. Too calm.

He had imagined this moment enough times to recognize it when it came. Sithara, on the other hand, grew anxious. She watched him closely, wondering why his heartbeat didn't show on his face, why his silence felt steadier than hers. She didn't know that sometimes, calm is just a place where feelings are carefully held.

Kabir said, "*I like you too in the same way as you do.*"

They were something more now.

Not lovers.

Not strangers.

Something in between unnamed, unclaimed, but unmistakably real.

That evening, they reached the bus stop early on purpose. Just to steal a little time before the world reclaimed them. Sithara leaned against the bus, relaxed but alert, and Kabir stood in front of her, close enough to feel the quiet between them.

After a pause that felt longer than it was, Kabir asked softly, "*Can I kiss you?*"

She said yes.

He leaned in and kissed her on the cheek gently, carefully a kiss so innocent it stayed with him forever.

It felt like tenderness, like protection, like holding something precious without wanting to own it. It felt like kissing a memory before it had the chance to fade.

Then Sithara smiled and asked if she could kiss him. Kabir said yes.

She held his cheeks firmly, like she needed him to stay exactly where he was, and kissed him with a certainty that surprised him. It wasn't hurried. It wasn't hesitant. It was full, real, and grounding. The most romantic kiss Kabir had ever known — not because of passion, but because of presence.

That night, they spoke endlessly. About the kiss. About how it felt. About how strange and exciting everything suddenly seemed. The future hovered in their conversations, glowing but distant.

Still, Sithara reminded him gently not to build expectations. She told him she had only said she liked him more than a best friend, nothing more.

Kabir understood.

And yet, he knew what she felt.

He kept it inside himself, carefully, because he didn't want to ruin what they had just begun. Some things grow best when they aren't rushed into words.

And so, a new era began.

For them.

For Sithara.

For Kabir.

An era without labels, but full of meaning.

Without promises, but rich with possibility.

Chapter 11

Where We Ran Towards Each Other

“The world watched us pass by, unaware we were running toward a memory.”

It was a new beginning for them, a beginning wrapped in quiet excitement and small tremors of joy. Kabir and Sithara had stepped into something they hadn't named yet, but everything in their world began behaving differently. The days felt lighter, voices felt softer, and even the familiar corridors of school carried a secret glow simply because they walked through them together.

They were in their honeymoon phase but not the cinematic kind people dramatize. Theirs was made of little things: late-night texts that stretched into sleepy goodnights, hands brushing against each other during class until they didn't need excuses anymore, shared lunches that tasted different because of laughter in between, and the constant, gentle awareness of the other's presence warm, steady, and new.

For two weeks, their affection stayed in the territory of cheek kisses shy, quick, barely-there, but filled with an innocence that felt precious. They joked about

when the “real kiss” would happen, half teasing, half wondering, both pretending not to care even though they absolutely did. It wasn’t about the kiss itself it was about the anticipation, the waiting, the knowledge that something special was on its way.

Then came that day.

It wasn’t a festival, or some dramatic event. Just a normal evening, with younger students running around the bus parking, shouting and chasing each other through sunbeams and dust like they always did. But ordinary days are sometimes the ones that carry the biggest shifts.

Kabir and Sithara stood in their usual spot near the buses where they always met before going home. They weren’t hiding; they were simply unnoticed in the background noise of everyday school life. And somehow, that made it feel magical.

They looked at each other, eyes locked, smiles flickering between seriousness and mischief. The world didn’t go silent, it just faded enough for them to hear their own hearts. They leaned in slowly, not because they planned it, but because closeness has its own gravitational pull.

Sithara's patience broke first. She leaned forward and kissed Kabir quick, soft, almost startled, like a spark born from instinct.

It lasted only a second, but it was the kind of second that expands in memory and refuses to shrink back to size. They pulled back immediately, both convinced someone had seen them. Eyes wide, breath held, waiting for something to happen.

Nothing did.

The world continued. Buses honked, kids shouted, teachers walked by without looking twice. And in that strange realization that the universe wasn't watching or judging they looked at each other again, this time with a burst of courage that felt almost childlike.

They ran towards each other.

Right there, in the middle of a public space, with chaos spinning around them and no music playing in the background, they met halfway and kissed again not rushed, not scandalous, just real. The kind of real that sinks into your heart and makes a permanent home there. A kiss made of mutual wanting and mutual choosing, not performance or display.

It was their first kiss. Their shared secret. Their tiny universe.

Kabir felt like someone had given him a gift he didn't know he had been waiting for. And the timing was poetic too the next day was his birthday. A day Kabir never celebrated with much enthusiasm, but somehow life had decided to celebrate for him a little early.

The next morning arrived. Kabir wasn't expecting much. Birthdays were just days on the calendar to him. But Sithara had been excited for weeks quietly, secretly, wholeheartedly. She handed him a letter not one of those one-line birthday notes people tear off in seconds, but a real letter, written with time and intention and care.

Kabir had received letters before, but this one was different. This one had tears between the lines, warmth in the ink, and sincerity in every sentence. It wasn't about how the words were written, it was about how they were meant. Kabir felt his throat tighten as he read, realizing what he had been given without asking.

Because it wasn't the kiss that made him feel chosen.
It wasn't even the letter.

It was the bond, the quiet, steady bond that had grown out of friendship, survived chaos, and now sat between them like a shared promise. A promise

without labels, without rules, without future expectations just presence.

For the first time in a long time, Kabir felt completely happy.

Not because of romance, or celebrations, or attention.

But because somebody saw him, chose him, and stayed.

A new era began that day for both of them.

For Sithara, who learned she could love quietly.

For Kabir, who learned he could be loved gently.

And for the world that kept spinning, unaware that two teenagers had just rewritten each other's futures in the space between two kisses and a birthday letter.

Chapter 12

The Night Trust Broke

"Love doesn't always end with goodbye. Sometimes it ends with one truth said too late."

Things were going well — or at least they *looked* like they were.

Kabir and Sithara were laughing again, sitting close enough to share warmth, close enough to pretend that the past had finally loosened its grip. The laughter wasn't loud or careless; it was careful, almost cautious, like both of them knew how easily it could disappear. Still, for a moment, it felt real. It felt earned.

Then, casually — without warning — Sithara spoke. She said she would send a follow request to Nikitha.

Kabir froze.

Not in anger. Not in defensiveness.

In fear.

That name still carried weight. It still carried consequences. A chapter Kabir had never properly closed and Sithara had paid for without ever asking

to. His denial came instantly — too quickly, too stiffly. Sithara noticed. She always did.

They spoke after that. Slowly. Carefully. As if every word had to survive before being spoken. Silence filled the gaps between sentences, and in those silences lived everything Kabir was afraid to admit.

And then he said it.

He told her he had contacted Nikitha.

He said it without pride. Without confidence. Almost like a confession whispered to the floor. He told her he hadn't known what it would bring in the future, that he hadn't thought beyond the moment, and that somehow, without intending to, it had caused trouble for Sithara.

Then he told her why.

A few days earlier, Kabir had met with an accident.

It wasn't severe enough to be dramatic, but it was serious enough to shake him. Serious enough to leave him staring at the ceiling later that night, thinking about how easily things could have gone wrong. Sithara didn't know about it. She couldn't. She had already warned him not to drive, had asked him to be careful, had trusted him to listen. And he didn't.

So he stayed silent.

He didn't know how to tell her that he had disobeyed her, that he had put himself at risk, that he had broken her trust before she even knew it existed. He was scared — not of her anger, but of her disappointment. Of the look she got when she realized she had believed in someone who didn't listen.

And in that fear, Kabir did what weak people often do.

He reached backward instead of forward.

He texted Nikitha, without telling Sithara. Not because he loved her. Not because he wanted her back. But because for four and a half years, she had known how to console him. She had been there in moments when he felt small, uncertain, and afraid of himself. She was familiar. Safe. She didn't demand explanations.

He didn't ask for anything.

He didn't plan anything.

But he crossed a line anyway.

Sithara heard all of it.

She understood the story. She understood the fear. She understood the weakness.

But understanding didn't make it hurt less.

Because the pain wasn't really about Nikitha.

It was about what Kabir chose in his weakest moment — secrecy over honesty, comfort over courage, and someone else over the one person who deserved the truth first.

That sentence shattered Sithara.

She broke quietly.

And sometimes, quiet breaking is the loudest kind.

That very night, Sithara decided it was over.

Kabir begged.

Not with pride. Not with strength. Not with dignity.

He begged with raw fear — the kind that comes when you realize you're about to lose the one person who made the world feel survivable. He stripped himself of ego, of defense, of everything that once made him feel in control.

She didn't listen.

The next day at school, she ignored him completely.

No eye contact.

No words.

No acknowledgment that he even existed.

Kabir walked through the day like a ghost — present but unseen, breathing but hollow. Sithara was hurt.

Kabir was broken. And both of them were exhausted in ways sleep couldn't fix.

He promised himself he would wait.

Not because he was strong — but because there was nothing else left to do.

That evening, a message came asking him to meet her on her apartment terrace.

Kabir went without expectation. Empty. Numb. Prepared for nothing — not forgiveness, not hope, not even closure.

The moment she saw him, she slapped him.

It wasn't anger.

It was a pain finding its way out.

And in the very next second, she kissed him.

As if her heart didn't know how to choose between love and hurt — so it chose both.

Fate refused to separate them.

That night, they lay under the stars together. No explanations. No promises. Just silence — the kind that carries what words are too fragile to hold. For a brief moment, it felt like love again. Gentle. Familiar. Forgiving.

Until Kabir went home.

That's when Sithara found out.

She learned that Kabir had spoken badly about her to Zara — after she had already told him she didn't like him as a best friend and that he mailed Nikitha on his birthday that he missed her as a friend. After she had trusted him to protect her, even when everything was falling apart.

The wound reopened instantly.

All the healing she thought had begun collapsed in a single moment.

The next morning, Kabir returned to the terrace and fell at her feet.

Not metaphorically.

Literally.

He begged again — quieter now, smaller, carrying more shame than hope.

She accepted him back.

But trust did not return with him.

Love stayed.

Fear stayed.

Memory stayed.

Trust did not.

Because love can survive mistakes —
but it cannot survive being ignored.

Chapter 13

Love Without Trust

“When trust is gone, love becomes a punishment instead of a place to rest.”

They were together again — but something fundamental was missing.

Love was there. Presence was there. Even laughter returned sometimes.

But trust never did.

Sithara no longer believed Kabir's words the way she once had. Every day, she reminded him of what he had done — not out of cruelty, but because the memory refused to loosen its grip. Her words came sharp, precise, and relentless. Each reminder reopened the same wound, pressing on it until it hurt all over again.

Kabir accepted it all.

Somewhere deep inside, he believed he deserved every cut, every accusation, every moment of disappointment reflected in her eyes. He carried guilt like a second skin and wore it quietly.

And for a while... things almost felt normal.

They wrote letters to each other during class — hurried handwriting on torn pages, folded carefully, passed like secrets. Practicals kept them apart, but distance only made the longing sharper. From different rooms, from different corners of the same building, they stared at each other like teenagers holding onto stolen moments — as if eye contact alone could make everything okay.

Board exams came and went.

Stress filled the days, silence filled the nights, but through it all, they held on — not tightly, but desperately. Like people afraid that if they loosened their grip even slightly, everything would slip away.

Then came farewell day.

Kabir saw Sithara in a saree for the first time.

The world blurred.

Noise faded. Time slowed. For a moment, it felt like he wasn't breathing — like the universe had paused just to let him see her that way. She looked unreal. Untouchable. Like something sacred he was lucky enough to love.

In that moment, everything felt worth it.

Every mistake.

Every punishment.

Every night spent apologizing in his head.

But pain doesn't vanish just because love dresses beautifully.

For days after, Sithara kept getting hurt — not by intention, but by Kabir's inability to **truly change**. He still didn't listen the way she needed him to. Still reacted instead of understanding. Still promised improvement but failed to deliver it when it mattered most.

Each small failure piled onto the past.

Eventually, she broke again.

This time, there were no tears.

No shouting.

No drama.

Just clarity.

She ended it — finally.

Months passed without contact.

No messages. No calls. No accidental encounters. Just absence — the kind that echoes louder the longer it lasts.

Kabir began walking to her apartment every day.

He never went close enough to be seen. Never crossed the line. He stood far away, at the same spot, every single day — hoping for nothing more than a glimpse of her window, a shadow moving behind the curtains, proof that she still existed in a world that no longer included him.

Hope kept him moving even when reality didn't respond.

One day, she came to the terrace.

Just once.

They talked.

Not like lovers. Not like strangers.

Like two people carrying the weight of everything they used to be.

Kabir told "*I cant live without you-*"

She looked at him calmly — not coldly, not cruelly — and said something that broke him more than any breakup ever had.

She said "*Till now , you have. From now on too, you can.*"

He said, "*I don't want to survive like that*"

He didn't want days that passed without meaning, nights that ended in silence, a life that technically continued but felt emotionally dead.

After a long pause, she agreed to be *friends*.

And for a while, Kabir felt alive again.

They talked. Shared small things. Laughed occasionally. Those conversations became oxygen — fragile, limited, but necessary. He convinced himself that this was enough. That friendship was better than nothing.

Until one question escaped his mouth.

A question he had been holding back for days.

“Am I forcing you to be friends with me?”

She didn't hesitate.

She didn't soften it.

She just said,
“*Maybe.*”

That single word finished him.

Not loudly.

Not instantly.

But completely.

Everything collapsed in that moment — hope, denial, the lie he'd been telling himself that this connection was mutual. He realized that even now, even as a "friend," he was a burden she was *tolerating*, not choosing.

He promised her he wouldn't contact her again.

And when she left that terrace, Kabir finally broke.

Not in front of anyone.

Not where someone could comfort him.

But alone — where grief finally had permission to exist.

He cried like someone mourning a life he almost lived.

Like someone who loved deeply but learned too late how to love correctly.

And in that silence, he understood something he had avoided for too long:

Love without listening is just noise.

And sometimes, the hardest punishment isn't losing someone —

it's realizing **you** were the **reason** they had to **leave**.

Chapter 14

When Love Came Back Louder

“Love returned wearing hope, and I forgot to ask what it cost.”

College began far away from everything Kabir once knew.

A different state.

A different city.

Fifteen hundred kilometers between him and the life he had lived before.

He lived with strangers who slowly became friends — roommates who laughed easily, who pulled him into conversations, who made jokes without knowing how badly he needed distraction. They didn't know his past, and for the first time, that felt like mercy. With them, Kabir wasn't *the boy who had lost love*. He was just another person learning how to exist again.

And then there was Harika.

She didn't arrive dramatically. She didn't demand space in his life. She simply stayed. Conversations with her felt effortless, as if time bent to make room for familiarity. They spoke about ordinary things — classes, days, memories — but beneath it all was safety. No expectations. No pressure. No fear of being misunderstood.

With Harika, Kabir didn't have to explain his silences. He didn't have to perform healing. He could be tired. Broken. Honest.

Slowly, almost without realizing it, Kabir smiled again. Not the forced kind. The real one. The kind that returns when the weight lifts just enough for your lungs to fill properly.

And then one day, the past knocked.

A single word appeared on his screen.

“Hi.”

It was from Sithara.

His body reacted before his mind could catch up. His breath turned shallow. His chest tightened. His hands trembled as if they remembered pain his heart was trying to forget. Some connections don't fade — they wait.

They spoke again.

Sithara told him she couldn't live without him. Her words carried familiarity, longing, and something dangerously close to hope. Three days later, she asked if they could get back together.

Kabir didn't pause.

He didn't think.

He said yes.

It was Vinayaka Chaturthi that day. Lights, prayers, celebration — and suddenly, the festival felt *real* again. Kabir smiled like someone who believed the universe had finally aligned.

But love didn't return alone.

It came with *conditions*.

She asked him to stop talking to all girls. Kabir agreed instantly. He blocked people without hesitation. He was willing to lose connections, friendships, even stability — anything to not repeat the mistake that had once cost him her.

But still, Kabir lagged in obeying Sithara's words.

And she kept disrespecting him again and again everyday.

And this was the reason why Kabir chose not to listen to Sithara's words at a few points.

Kabir believed obedience was love. Silence was an apology. Pain was payment.

Soon, fights became routine. Disrespect became familiar. Kabir stayed quiet, swallowing everything because he believed this was what he deserved.

Then the truth arrived.

Sithara told him she had been with Mark for three days during one of their breaks.

He cried on the video call.

Not the kind of crying you can hide — not the kind that stays quiet. His eyes filled before he could stop them, his voice breaking mid-sentence as the truth settled in. Sithara watched him fall apart in real time, and Kabir hated that she could see him like this — stripped of control, stripped of the strength he thought he had.

She told him she had been with Mark for three days.

He had learned it late.

Much later than he should have.

The words didn't just hurt — they **stayed**. They carved themselves into him and refused to leave. Even after the call ended, even after the tears dried, they kept replaying in his head, over and over, like a sentence his mind wouldn't let him forget.

Three days.

That broke him — not loudly, not suddenly — but completely. Something in him folded inward, something that never quite returned to its original shape.

All he had on his mind was, when he was going to her apartment everyday she was in another relationship for three days.

Every evening during that break without telling anyone, Kabir walked toward her apartment. He never went close enough to be seen. He stood at a distance, at the same spot every day, looking up at the building like it still held answers for him. Like she might appear on the terrace. Like something might undo the truth he already knew.

All the while, she was in another relationship.

Life had moved on for her.

But Kabir was still walking.

Still hoping.

Still hurting.

Still showing up to a place where he no longer belonged.

And that was the cruellest part — not that she had chosen someone else while he was waiting for her.

That's where he finally understood it:

Some people don't leave your life all at once.

Sometimes, they leave — and you're the only one who hasn't realized it yet.

Later, she said it was a lie.

Then he discovered something worse — that she had been speaking to Mark for ten days, asking him to help her move on from Kabir.

Something inside Kabir cracked in a way it never had before.

Afterwards, Sithara had fought with her mother.

Later that night, after the fight with her mother had drained everything out of her, Sithara reached out to Kabir.

When the call connected, she didn't say anything.

Not a word.

Her face was there on the screen, eyes tired, lips pressed together, breathing uneven — but silent. The kind of silence that isn't empty, just overloaded.

Kabir felt his chest tighten instantly.

"Sithara?" he asked softly.

No response.

“Are you okay?” he tried again, leaning closer to the screen, searching her face for any sign that she was still holding herself together.

She nodded once. Barely.

Kabir didn’t believe it.

“Talk to me,” he said gently. “Please. Just say something.”

She stayed quiet. Her gaze drifted away from the camera, like looking at him might make everything spill out at once. The silence stretched, heavy and uncomfortable, but Kabir didn’t let it scare him away.

“Hey... are you really okay?” he asked again.

“Did something happen?”

“Did the fight get really bad?”

Each question came softer than the last.

He kept asking — not because he didn’t understand the answer might hurt — but because he couldn’t stand the thought of her sitting in that **pain alone**. Even after everything he had been through, even after the betrayal that still ached inside him, his instinct was the same.

Stay.

Check.

Care.

“I’m here,” he said quietly. “You don’t have to say anything. Just... tell me you’re okay.”

Her eyes filled then. She shook her head slightly, still silent, and that tiny movement broke something in him. Kabir swallowed the lump in his throat and kept his voice steady for her sake.

Sithara was impressed by this, even after betraying him. Kabir still stayed with patience and consoled her. She promised she would change her behavior. But she was still the same the next day.

Another thing Kabir learned — slowly, painfully — was how loneliness can exist even inside a relationship.

There were times when Sithara’s friends spoke badly about him. Not in front of him — never directly — but to her. They questioned his intentions, his character, his worth. They reduced him to assumptions, twisted moments into judgments, and painted him as someone he wasn’t.

What hurt him wasn’t that people spoke badly about him.

People always talk.

What broke him was this:
Sithara didn't deny it.

She knew what her friends were saying was wrong.
She knew the truth.

She knew the effort he was putting in, the patience
he carried, the way he stayed even when it hurt.

And still, she stayed silent.

That silence taught him something cruel.

That loving someone doesn't always mean they'll
protect you.

That sometimes, people choose peace with others
over fairness with the one who loves them.

That being present for someone doesn't guarantee
they'll stand up for you when you're not in the room.

Kabir realized then that the pain wasn't just coming
from fights or misunderstandings — it was coming
from **being undefended**. From knowing that while he
was choosing her every day, she wasn't always
choosing him in the moments that mattered most.

That lesson stayed with him.

Because nothing makes you feel smaller than
knowing you were talked about, judged, and quietly

agreed with — by the person who was supposed to know you best.

And that was when Kabir understood:

Sometimes, the deepest hurt in love isn't betrayal.
It's silence where protection should have been.

After this,

He became cold. Sharp. Aggressive. Defensive.
Someone he didn't recognize when he looked inward.
It was wrong — he knew it was — but pain had hollowed him out until reactions replaced emotions.

And finally, after everything he had endured, he left.
Valued himself over everything now.

His friends had helped him a lot by valuing himself.
And he **left**,

Not in anger.
Not in triumph.
But in exhaustion.

Chapter 15

After You

“After you, I learned that peace does not shout — it waits.”

When everything ended, Kabir expected relief.

People often say leaving brings freedom — that once you walk away, the weight disappears, the pain fades, and life becomes lighter. That wasn't how it happened. Leaving didn't feel like victory. It felt like silence.

The kind of silence that lingers after a long conversation ends.

The kind that echoes instead of comforts.

For a long time, Kabir missed her in small, unexpected ways. In half-written messages. In familiar streets. In moments where he instinctively reached for his phone and remembered there was no one to call anymore. Love doesn't vanish just because it ends — it changes shape and stays quiet.

But slowly, something else began to grow.

Not happiness.

Not excitement.

Stability.

For the first time in a long while, Kabir wasn't measuring his worth through someone else's reactions. He wasn't waiting for replies to feel calm. He wasn't adjusting himself to avoid conflict. He wasn't shrinking to keep love intact.

He was just... himself.

And he didn't do it alone.

When Kabir was at his lowest — when his thoughts were loud and his confidence was gone — there were people who stayed without asking him to explain his pain again.

Zara stayed.

She didn't try to fix him or rush his healing. She listened to the same fears on repeat, held space for the same memories, and reminded him who he was before heartbreak made him doubt himself. With her, Kabir never had to perform strength. He was allowed to fall apart without being judged.

And then there was Harika.

Quietly, steadily, she helped him rebuild. Not by pulling him forward, but by walking beside him. Conversations with her felt safe — free of pressure, free of expectations. With her, Kabir learned that

support doesn't have to hurt, and care doesn't have to come with conditions.

They didn't save him.

They reminded him that he was worth saving.

Peace didn't arrive dramatically. It arrived as sleep without anxiety. As laughter that didn't need reassurance. As days that passed without emotional bargaining. Peace didn't erase memories — it simply stopped letting them control him.

Kabir learned that love is not proven by how much pain you can endure.

It is proven by how safe you feel being honest.

He learned that choosing yourself is not selfish when staying means losing who you are.

He learned that walking away can be an act of respect — not just for yourself, but for the other person too.

And most importantly, he learned this:

You can love someone deeply and still let them go.

Not because they were bad.

Not because you stopped caring.

But because love should never demand your self-worth as payment.

After everything ended, Kabir began to write.

Not to accuse.

Not to defend.

Not to rewrite the past.

He wrote to understand it.

He wrote the things he couldn't say out loud. The truths he learned too late. The moments where love turned into fear, where silence replaced listening, and where he lost himself trying to hold on.

This book is that writing.

Kabir is him.

And him — is Kabir.

This story is not fiction dressed as truth.

It is true learning how to breathe on paper.

Kabir does not end this story with someone new.

He ends it with something stronger.

Clarity.

Boundaries.

And the quiet confidence that comes from knowing he will never abandon himself again.

If you've read this far and saw pieces of yourself in these pages, remember this:

You are not weak for loving deeply.
You are not broken for staying too long.
And you are not a failure for choosing peace.

Some chapters exist only to teach you how to close
the book.

And when you finally do, you don't lose love —
you make space for a healthier one.

This is not the end of Kabir's life.
It is simply the end of the version of him that believed
love required suffering.

After everything,
He chose peace.

And this time —
He didn't choose it alone.
He chose himself.

On Self-Worth and Letting Go

If you are reading this with a heavy chest, if the pages before this felt uncomfortably familiar, I want you to know something first:
you are not weak for feeling this way.

Heartbreak does not come in one moment. It comes as silence. It comes as memories that refuse to fade. It comes as mornings where you wake up and briefly forget — and then remember everything all over again. It comes as the unbearable question of “*Why wasn’t I enough?*”

This book was never written to blame anyone. It was written to understand what happens when love becomes the center of our identity — and what it costs us when we forget ourselves along the way.

Kabir loved deeply. He stayed when it hurt. He accepted disrespect because he believed love meant endurance. He confused patience with self-erasure and sacrifice with silence. None of that made him a bad person. It made him human.

But love that asks you to disappear is not love — it is fear wearing affection’s mask.

One of the hardest truths Kabir had to face was this:
loving someone does not require abandoning yourself.

For a long time, Kabir believed that if he just endured more, stayed quieter, apologized harder, or changed faster, things would finally work. He believed pain was proof of sincerity. That belief nearly destroyed him.

And here is the truth many people don't say out loud after a breakup:

You can love someone honestly and still be wrong for each other.

Sometimes, relationships don't end because love wasn't real.

They end because the cost of staying becomes higher than the cost of leaving.

If you're reading this after a breakup, you may feel like your confidence is gone. Like your future feels uncertain. Like the person you were before love is someone you don't recognize anymore.

That doesn't mean you are broken.

It means you invested fully.

But here is what I learned — and what you deserve to learn too:

Your worth is not defined by who stayed.

Kabir spent years measuring his value by whether someone chose him again. Each breakup felt like proof that he was lacking something essential. It took him time to realize that self-worth cannot be outsourced.

No one else gets to decide whether you are enough.

Love is not a certificate of value.

It is an experience — not a verdict.

Peace is not boring. It is healing.

When Kabir finally chose peace, it didn't feel exciting. It didn't feel romantic. It felt empty at first. Quiet. Almost unfamiliar. But in that quiet, something important returned: clarity.

Peace allowed Kabir to breathe again. To sleep without anxiety. To laugh without fear. To focus on his health, his work, and his growth. Peace did not erase love — it simply gave him room to exist again.

If you are afraid of choosing peace because it feels lonely, remember this:

Loneliness with self-respect is safer than company that drains you.

You are allowed to walk away without hating anyone.

Kabir didn't leave because he stopped caring.
He left because staying was harming him.

Walking away does not make you cruel.
It makes you responsible for your own life.

You can still cherish memories.
You can still miss someone.
You can still love parts of them — and still choose
not to return.

Healing does not require anger.
It requires boundaries.

Support does not always come from romance.

One of the most important lessons in Kabir's story is
this: healing didn't come from another relationship. It
came from safety.

From friends who listened without judging.
From people who reminded him who he was before
he doubted himself.
From conversations that didn't demand anything in
return.

If you are hurting, reach out — not to fill the void, but
to be reminded that you exist beyond it.

You do not need to suffer alone to prove strength.

Your life is bigger than this chapter.

When heartbreak feels overwhelming, it narrows your vision. It convinces you that this pain is permanent, that nothing meaningful exists beyond it.

That is not true.

Kabir didn't find instant happiness after love ended. He found something quieter — and more important. He found himself again.

He learned to value his time.

His effort.

His health.

His future.

And slowly, confidence returned — not because someone validated him, but because he stopped abandoning himself.

If you are standing at the edge of despair right now, hear this clearly:

Your life is not meant to end at a breakup.

Your story is not over because one chapter hurts.

Pain is a moment — not a destiny.

Before you leave this book believing only one heart was broken, I need to say this clearly — Sithara was hurt too.

Her pain didn't always look quiet. It didn't always look reasonable. Sometimes it came out as anger, distance, or harsh words. But hurt doesn't follow rules. It leaks out in ways even the person carrying it doesn't fully understand.

There were moments when Kabir failed to listen. Moments when words were dismissed instead of understood. Moments when promises were made too late, or change arrived after damage had already settled in. To Sithara, those moments mattered. They stacked up silently until trust felt unsafe.

Love doesn't break only when someone leaves. Sometimes it breaks when someone feels unheard for too long.

Sithara loved deeply, too. And loving deeply means vulnerability. When that vulnerability is met with inconsistency or fear, it wounds. Her reactions came from that wound — not from cruelty, not from intent to destroy, but from pain that didn't know where to go.

This is something Kabir learned too late:

Listening is not hearing words. It is taking them seriously before they turn into resentment.

Being true to your partner doesn't just mean loyalty. It means honesty — even when it's uncomfortable.

It means speaking before silence becomes distant.
It means choosing clarity over avoidance.

Love cannot survive on intention alone.
It survives on communication.

If you see yourself in Kabir, it's probably because you were the one who stayed.

You stayed even when conversations hurt more than silence.

You stayed even when your needs felt inconvenient.
You stayed when walking away would have protected you, but staying felt like love.

You explained yourself again and again, hoping clarity would save what effort already couldn't.
You lowered your voice instead of raising concerns.
You learned how to swallow discomfort because you were afraid that speaking up would make you *too much*.

Like Kabir, you may have believed that loving deeply meant enduring endlessly.
That patience was maturity.
That being understanding meant being invisible.

You probably became the person who checked in first.
Who asked “Are you okay?” even when your own chest felt heavy.

Who showed up after being hurt, because leaving felt crueler than staying.

And maybe — like Kabir — you mistook emotional exhaustion for commitment.

Kabir didn't lose himself overnight.
He lost himself slowly.

In moments where he chose silence over honesty.
In moments where he accepted being misunderstood just to keep the peace.

In moments where he kept loving someone who no longer knew how to protect him.

If you see yourself in him, understand this clearly:

You were not weak for staying.

You were loyal.

You were hopeful.

You were trying.

But trying alone is not love.

Kabir learned that love should not require constant self-sacrifice.

That effort without reciprocity turns into self-abandonment.

That explaining your pain repeatedly does not make someone understand it better — it only teaches them how much you are willing to tolerate.

If you have ever cried quietly so you wouldn't look dramatic...

If you have ever apologized just to keep a connection alive...

If you have ever felt guilty for asking for the bare minimum...

Then you already know Kabir.

And like him, you deserve to learn this without losing yourself completely:

Love should not make you feel small to survive.

Love should not punish you for needing reassurance.

Love should not cost you your voice.

Walking away does not mean you failed.

It means you finally chose to stop hurting yourself to keep someone else comfortable.

Kabir didn't become stronger because he stopped caring.

He became stronger because he stopped disappearing.

And if you see yourself in him —
let his ending be your reminder:

You are allowed to choose peace.

You are allowed to be whole again.

You are allowed to let go — even if your heart still remembers.

And if you recognize yourself in Sithara — know this too:

Your pain is valid.

Your feelings matter.

Being hurt does not make you dramatic.

Being angry does not make you cruel.

Being jealous does not make you wrong.

You loved deeply — and deep love makes you vulnerable. It makes small moments feel threatening, silence feel loud, and distance feel unbearable. When fear enters love, it often disguises itself as anger, control, or withdrawal. That doesn't make you a bad person. It makes you human.

Sithara didn't stop caring.

She stopped feeling safe.

She carried wounds that didn't heal all at once — wounds formed when words were missed, when listening came late, when reassurance arrived only after damage had already settled in. Her reactions weren't born from hatred, but from exhaustion. From feeling unheard for too long.

But pain, when unprocessed, looks for somewhere to go.

And sometimes, it goes toward the person who once felt like home.

If you see yourself in Sithara, understand this gently but clearly:

Hurting someone back will not heal what hurt you first.

Silence does not teach lessons.

Anger does not restore trust.

Punishment does not create safety.

Love is not about winning arguments.

It is about protecting connection.

There were moments when Sithara knew what others said about Kabir was wrong — and still stayed quiet. Moments when love asked for defense, but fear chose silence instead. That silence mattered more than the words spoken against him.

Because love isn't only about how you feel toward someone.

It's also about how you protect them when they are not in the room.

And this is the hardest truth Sithara had to face:

Forgiveness is not partial.

If you forgive someone, forgive them fully.

Not halfway.

Not with reminders.

Not with punishment disguised as accountability.

Because forgiveness that keeps reopening wounds is not healing — it is control born from fear.

And if you cannot forgive fully — if the memory still feels too sharp, the trust too fragile, the resentment too heavy — then do not return.

Going back without forgiveness only creates a relationship where love survives, but trust does not. And love without trust becomes a place of constant pain — for both people.

Forgiving does not mean forgetting.

It means choosing not to weaponize the past.

And choosing not to forgive is not cruelty either — it is honesty.

Relationships don't fail because one person is bad and the other is good.

They fail when two people stop feeling safe enough to be honest — and brave enough to listen.

If you recognize yourself in Sithara, remember this:

Your pain deserves care.
But so does the person you love.

Healing does not come from making someone else bleed for what you endured.
It comes from choosing clarity — either through true forgiveness or through letting go.

Both require courage.
And both are forms of self-respect.

If you love someone, defend them in public — no matter what.

Disagreements belong in private.
Corrections belong in conversations between two people.
But loyalty belongs everywhere.

When others speak against your partner — when friends, relatives, or strangers question their character — your silence is not neutrality. It is a choice. And more often than not, it feels like abandonment to the person being spoken about.

You do not have to agree with everything your partner does to stand by them.
You do not have to pretend they are perfect to protect their dignity.

Defending your partner in public does not mean denying their flaws.

It means saying, “*This is not the place.*”

It means choosing respect over comfort.

It means making sure the person you love never has to wonder whether you are on their side.

In Kabir’s story, the pain did not come only from harsh words spoken by others — it came from knowing those words went unanswered. From realizing that love was present, but protection was missing.

Love that is private but unprotective is incomplete.

And if you recognize yourself in Sithara, remember this:

Never let the world hurt someone you love while you stay silent beside them.

Because a partner who feels defended feels safe.

And a partner who feels safe can heal, listen, and grow.

Without that safety, love slowly turns into fear — and fear has a way of destroying even the deepest affection.

There are people who walk with you during the happiest chapters of your life, and then there are

people who sit with you when everything falls apart. This book would not exist without the second kind. To Harika and Zara — thank you for being there when I didn't know how to be there for myself. Thank you for listening to the same pain on repeat without making me feel like a burden. For reminding me, gently and patiently, that my life was bigger than one relationship, and that my worth didn't disappear just because something ended. You didn't try to fix me, and you didn't rush my healing. You stayed. And that mattered more than advice ever could. To my friends, my family, and everyone who checked in, who distracted me, who motivated me, who sat in silence with me or made me laugh when I didn't feel like smiling — thank you. You were the reason I didn't give up on myself. You helped me choose growth over bitterness, reflection over anger, and life over loss. This book carries my story, but it also carries your kindness. I will always be grateful for the love that didn't demand anything from me, except that I keep going.

*With love,
Yogabhishek*