

JAA NU

AN ANIMATED FILM BY ANITA D. SHARMA

JANNA | JANNA



Introduction :

Dear readers, as I sit down to share this story with you, I am reminded of the twists and turns, the highs and lows, and the unexpected challenges that love can bring. This is not a work of fiction but the tale of my own life, one that began as an innocent college love story and took me on a journey I could never have anticipated.

It all started in the cozy nooks of our college campus, where the ordinary became extraordinary, where friendships were forged, and where hearts, including mine, gradually found themselves drawn to each other. But just like any love story, ours was destined to encounter its share of trials and tribulations.

As I recount this story, I invite you to step into my shoes, to experience the joys and tribulations of a love that defied odds and expectations. It's a narrative that started like any other, but, I promise you, it's one that will leave you eager to delve into the next chapter, to discover the twists and turns that life has in store for us. So, let me take you back to the beginning, to the moments that set the stage for our love to flourish.

The college bell rang, snapping me out of my daydream. "Come on, akhil, go faster," I muttered to myself, urging my legs to carry me to the ground floor. This was the moment I'd been waiting for: the "youth fest" dance discussion.

As I hurried along the corridor, my mind raced with anticipation. "At least one girl will join this time," I thought optimistically.

But as I walked into the room and my eyes landed on her, I couldn't help but pause for a moment. "Hmmm," I mumbled to myself, unable to take my gaze off her. While I was in the midst of counting the girls, one, two, ... I lost count as I was captivated by her beauty. Why hadn't I seen this girl before? Her eyes sparkled like stars, and that nose ring, like a delicate piece of jewelry, added a touch of allure that was simply enchanting.

"Hey, akhil, when did you come? We've all been waiting for you, man!" My friend called out, breaking my trance. I blinked, startled back to reality, and joined my friends and fellow dancers, my excitement growing with each passing moment.

I asked him eagerly, "How many girls have we got for the dance?"

My friend looked at me and replied, "Only three girls have given their names so far."

As we settled in, our college professor addressed us, "Listen, everyone, the youth fest is going to be held in our college on the 30th of this month. You know that. As of now, we've only got three girls, so I've already selected two boys, Manoj and Ram." He turned to me and continued, "So, as akhil is the best dancer, he will choreograph and dance with you guys."

I replied confidently, "Okay, sir, I will take care of it."

With that, our professor and the remaining students left the room, leaving only the six of us. The girl next to me spoke up, her voice filled with enthusiasm, "Bro, we start practice from tomorrow."

I nodded, eager to get started, and replied, "Yes, absolutely. We have a lot of work to do."

Curiosity got the better of me, and I couldn't help but ask, "Are you freshers?"

She nodded, a warm smile on her face, "Yes, we three are freshers."

I turned to the other two boys, Ramu and Manoj, who were also newcomers to the group, and asked the same question. They echoed the same answer, "Yes, we're freshers too."

In my mind, I couldn't help but reflect that as a final-year student, I was significantly older than these girls. I needed to be careful and maintain a respectful distance.

I decided to break the ice and get to know my new teammates better. I turned to the girls and asked, "Could you tell us your names?"

The first girl, the one who had been with me from the start, chimed in, "I am Bhagya." She then gestured to the girl next to her, "This is Sunitha." My heart raced as I anticipated the introduction of the girl who had captured my attention earlier.

But before she could speak, I interrupted gently, "Hold on, let her tell her name."

She looked at me, and for a moment, our eyes locked. It made me so happy that she had acknowledged my presence. Finally, with a soft smile, she said, "I am Jahnvi."

Bhagya broke the momentary silence by asking, "What are you thinking, bro? What time should we come tomorrow for practice?"

I quickly pulled myself together and replied, "Let's aim for an early start, say around 9 AM. We'll need all the time we can get to prepare."

I then turned to Manoj and said, "Manoj, can you create a WhatsApp group and add my number? We can use it to coordinate and share updates."

Manoj nodded and swiftly created the group with the name "Youth Fest." I shared my phone number, and he added it to the group. As the group was formed, I said, "Great, I'll message you all in the group with the details. You can go now."

One by one, they left the room, leaving me alone with my thoughts. In movies, heroes often wait for the heroine to look back before they leave, and I found myself hoping for a similar moment with Jahnvi.

However, as the others exited, I couldn't help but feel a pang of disappointment. Jahnvi didn't glance back at me. She simply left the room without a backward glance. I couldn't help but wonder what was going through her mind and whether our paths would cross again in the near future. As I stood there, lost in my thoughts, my phone suddenly rang. I fished it out of my pocket, and the call was from my younger brother.

I answered the call, and his cheerful voice echoed on the line, "Hey, bro! It's time to go home!"

I couldn't help but smile. Having a younger brother studying at the same college had its perks. It meant I always had a reliable companion for the ride back home. No need to worry about public transportation or braving the traffic alone.

"Great, I'll be right there," I replied.

As I rode home with him, his voice filled the air with chatter about his day, his friends, and the latest happenings at college. But I found it hard to focus on his words. My mind kept drifting back to Jahnvi.

"akhil, are you even listening?" my brother asked, snapping me out of my reverie.

I turned to him and smiled, "Sorry, bro. I was lost in thought."

As we rode home, I couldn't shake the feeling that something special had begun on that day, something that had the potential to change the course of my college life. Jahnavi, with her beauty and grace, had left an indelible mark on my heart, and I found myself eagerly looking forward to the next practice session and the opportunity to see her once more.

After reaching home and freshening up, I couldn't help but think about Jahnavi. Thanks to social media, I had a connection to her through the WhatsApp group. I resisted the urge to ask for her number directly; instead, I decided to explore her presence online.

I opened the WhatsApp group and navigated to her profile. As soon as I saw her display picture, I was taken aback. She looked incredibly modern and stylish, dressed in blue jeans and a red shirt, her hair flowing freely. A wave of admiration washed over me as I thought, "Look at you, how modern and fashionable you are." Her youthful appearance made me wonder about her age. Could she be 16, 17, or maybe even 18? After all, she was a first-year college student.

However, I quickly reminded myself, "she's quite young." My mind couldn't help but wander into dreams of the future, imagining how I could influence her style to match my preferences, envisioning her in a traditional saree, and picturing how we would look together in a wedding album if we were to get married. But I promptly scolded myself, recognizing the inappropriateness of having such thoughts about someone significantly younger.

I chuckled at my own musings, realizing how I was jumping ahead, thinking about wedding albums when I hadn't even had a proper conversation with her. "Come on, man, you can't think like that," I chided myself. "She's younger, and she's beautiful, but she's also much shorter than me."

As I continued to ponder, I realized that my initial attraction to Jahnavi was undeniable, but I had to remind myself to maintain boundaries and not make the first move. The first message should come from her, I decided, as I tried to suppress my impulsive thoughts and anticipate the upcoming dance practices where I hoped to get to know her better in a more appropriate manner.

As I continued to think about Jahnavi and tried to keep my thoughts in check, my mom and dad watched me with a knowing gaze. My mom, ever the caring one, asked, "Did you eat something?"

I quickly replied, "Yes, mom, I did."

She continued, "Don't you have to go to the library?"

I hesitated for a moment. It was my daily routine, but not exactly for the reasons they thought. My parents believed I went to the library for studying, but they were unaware of my secret movie-watching adventures there.

"Yes, mom, I'll go to the library now," I replied with a smile, trying to maintain the illusion.

The government library was a mere 300 meters away from our home, and it had convenient timings, open in the morning from 8:30 AM to 12:30 PM and in the evening from 4:30 PM to 8:30 PM. It was the perfect cover for my not-so-studious visits.

My dad looked at me with a questioning expression. I told him I was going to the library, but I could see he wasn't completely sure if I was telling the truth. I knew I had to keep pretending, balancing my secret movie-watching adventures with my family's belief that I was studying hard.

I picked up my bag and left the house. The library was waiting for me, and it was part of my usual routine. Once there, I watched a movie that I had downloaded.

I returned home, had a meal, and took a nap. I was eager and anxious about the upcoming practice session. The day I had been waiting for had finally arrived.

In the morning, I walked briskly to the practice room. Before leaving, I had messaged the group, instructing everyone to be there by 9 AM. I watched as the messages on the group chat indicated that everyone had seen my message, but only Bhagya, Ramu, and Sunitha replied with a simple "ok, bro."

I couldn't help but feel a pang of disappointment. Jahnvi, the one I had been eagerly anticipating, had not replied. I wondered why she hadn't responded. What kind of girl was she? My mind began to race with questions and curiosity. But I decided to keep an open mind. Perhaps this practice session would give me a chance to get to know Jahnvi better.

As I entered the practice room, I was disappointed to find that only Bhagya, Ramu, and Sunitha were present. They were the ones who had responded to my message in the group chat.

Feeling a bit upset and concerned about Jahnvi's absence, I turned to Bhagya and asked, "Where's Jahnvi?"

They exchanged uncertain glances before Bhagya replied, "We don't know, Bro. Manoj hasn't shown up either."

I realized I should have asked about both Jahnvi and Manoj. I couldn't help but wonder if Bhagya and the others thought I was particularly interested in Jahnvi.

Quickly, I reassured them, "Yes, yes, I want to know about both of them. Let's call them and find out where they are."

Just as we were about to call Jahnvi and Manoj, they burst into the room, both looking flustered and sweaty.

Jahnvi, trying to catch her breath, said, "Sorry, senior, our bus was late."

Manoj chimed in, "Yeah, bro, it was a crazy rush."

I couldn't help but be captivated by Jahnvi's presence, especially as I noticed the glistening sweat on her skin. Her figure, accentuated by the dampness of her clothes, was striking, and I couldn't help but admire her well-defined waist. However, a thought crossed my mind: Jahnvi had said, "Sorry, senior, our bus was late." She hadn't addressed me with "bro" like Manoj did. Could this be a subtle sign of her interest?

Suppressing my overactive imagination, I brushed aside the thought and said, "No problem. Let's get started with practice."

As Jahnvi and Manoj were classmates, it was natural for them to pair up for practice. Yet, deep inside, a feeling of disappointment nagged at me. Why hadn't Jahnvi asked me to be her partner? The thought of seeing her dance with someone else, particularly Manoj, was disheartening. However, I masked my emotions, pretending to be unaffected.

Since I hadn't interacted much with Sunitha, she paired up with Ramu, leaving Bhagya as my only option. She appeared comfortable with me, so we became practice partners.

We all began rehearsing, focusing on the dance routine and putting our best efforts into making it perfect. Despite my initial disappointment, I couldn't help but appreciate Bhagya's dedication and enthusiasm as we worked together. Jahnavi and Manoj's chemistry in dancing was undeniable, and I couldn't deny that they made a great pair.

I tried to push aside my feelings and concentrate on the dance, but the sight of Jahnavi and Manoj dancing together kept tugging at my heartstrings. Deep down, I hoped for an opportunity to dance with Jahnavi and get to know her better. But for now, I had to make the best of the situation and focus on our performance for the upcoming youth fest.

During practice, it became apparent that each of us had our strengths and weaknesses. Bhagya excelled in dance skills but struggled with expressions, while Jahnavi was great at conveying emotions but needed some improvement in her dance moves. Ramu and Sunitha were standout performers, impressing us all with their skills.

Despite knowing them for only a day, I found myself taking charge and instructing Jahnavi and Bhagya on how to improve their performance. My words came out forcefully, almost like shouting, though it wasn't something I had planned—it just happened.

As lunchtime approached, we took a break to refuel and recharge. I sat alone with my thoughts, pondering how to enhance our dance routine. I couldn't help but wonder what the others thought of my somewhat bossy attitude during practice.

When we all got back together, I was surprised by Bhagya's decision. She suggested, "Jahnavi, why don't you pair up with akhil, and I'll pair up with Manoj?" Jahnavi agreed, and they switched places. I acted like it was no big deal, but inside, I couldn't contain my happiness. Jahnavi was going to be my partner, and I was thrilled at the prospect.

As practice came to an end, I took the time to discuss improvements with everyone. I made an effort to engage in conversations with Bhagya and Sunitha, discussing their strengths and areas where they could enhance their performance. However, I intentionally kept my interactions with Jahnavi to a minimum.

I noticed that Ramu and Manoj were always trying to strike up conversations with Jahnavi, and it seemed like they both wanted her attention. When we had breaks, I made sure to chat with Bhagya and Sunitha, making sure not to give Jahnavi the impression that I was particularly interested in her.

I had a specific reason for keeping my distance, and it was all part of my plan. I wanted Jahnavi to believe that maybe I wasn't interested in girls romantically. I wanted her to think that I was completely focused on our dance performance.

I was aware of the perceptions people had of me. My innocent face often led others to assume that I was a top student. I couldn't help but thank my mom for my looks, as I resembled her. I decided to use this image to my advantage, creating an aura of studiousness and dedication.

My plan was simple: Act like I was staying away from Jahnavi and let her think I wasn't interested. I had a strong gut feeling that, given time, she might develop feelings for me, and that was a prospect I couldn't help but anticipate.

As the day's practice concluded, everyone bid their goodbyes and left the room one by one. I couldn't help but feel a sense of déjà vu as I stood there, hoping that Jahnavi would glance back at me like in the movies. However, just like the previous day, she didn't turn back.

I watched as she left, and then my phone rang, interrupting my thoughts. It was my brother calling, as usual, to remind me that it was time to head home.

I answered the call and reassured him, "I'm coming."

As I headed home, I checked my messages in the college WhatsApp group and suddenly remembered that I had an assignment due tomorrow. I couldn't help but think how convenient it would have been if Jahnavi and I were closer. In my daydream, I imagined asking her, "Hey, Jaan, I have an assignment to write. Will you write it for me?" And her playful reply, "Oh dear, it's just an assignment. Is there a chance I'll take your exams for you?"

Reality, however, was different. I had to rely on myself to complete the assignment, and it wasn't something I could escape. Just as I was lost in these thoughts, my father called out to me, "Oh, akhil, you're here."

I replied, "Yes, Dad, I'm here. What's up?"

My father explained, "There's some work for us to do."

I couldn't help but sigh inwardly. Our family business involved organizing events for birthdays, marriages, and other functions, and it was named "Lakshmiakhil Event Organizers". It seemed that the workers hadn't shown up, and my father was asking me to help out.

I replied, "Sorry, Dad, I have to go to the library. You know, daily routine."

My father chuckled, "Daily you're going there and reading. I can't believe it's you."

I smiled, keeping my secret safe, and went to the library to diligently complete my assignment. Meanwhile, back at home, my mother reassured my father, "Okay, okay, enough talking about him. You'll see, our son will become an IAS or IPS officer."

Inside, I couldn't help but worry that if they ever found out about my movie-watching escapades, they might not be as proud of me as they were in that moment.

After completing my assignment at the library, my thoughts turned once again to tomorrow's dance practice. Today, we had danced in pairs, and I had been fortunate enough to be paired with Jahnavi. However, I couldn't help but worry about what might happen tomorrow. If Bhagya changed her mind and decided to continue practicing with me, I would lose the opportunity to dance with Jahnavi, and that was a thought that filled me with a sense of longing and apprehension.

The next morning, I messaged the dance group, letting them know that I would be late for practice. I had to submit my assignment and felt a little anxious about it. I hadn't attended class yesterday, as I had been busy practicing all day. The first-year students had written a letter to seek permission for dance practice, but I hadn't bothered because I knew our dance coordinator would support me.

As I entered the classroom just before the bell rang, my friends playfully challenged me. They bet that they would catch me talking to the professor while I was leaving during the second hour. Everyone knew that I only attended the first hour of class, where attendance was taken, and then I disappeared to find an empty room to watch movies. I smiled at their challenge and replied, "Try your level best, buddies."

The bell rang, and our professor started the class. I was contemplating how to make my exit when suddenly, the professor's phone rang. After a brief conversation, he looked at me and said, "akhil, the coordinator has informed me about the dance practice. You can go now." My friends and I were taken by surprise, not expecting this turn of events. I took the opportunity to hand in my assignment to the professor and swiftly left the class.

As I approached the practice room, I couldn't believe my eyes. Bhagya had paired up with Manoj, just like the day before, and Sunitha was dancing with Ramu. My heart sank as I saw Jahnavi standing there,

seemingly disappointed. She appeared to be waiting for me to be her partner, but I avoided making eye contact and simply apologized for my tardiness, saying, "Sorry for being late, guys. Let's pick up where we left off yesterday."

I decided to make subtle changes to the dance steps. It wasn't just about improving our routine; I secretly yearned to feel Jahnavi's touch, to understand how smooth her hands were as they moved with grace. As we danced, I couldn't help but steal glances at her from the corner of my eye. She seemed fully immersed in the dance, her expressions perfectly reflecting the mood. However, I deliberately avoided making eye contact with her, pretending to focus on the entire group's performance. Inside, though, I was acutely aware of her presence and her every move.

While we were enjoying our practice, my friends showed up during the break. They watched us dance and started making jokes. It was annoying because they teased all of us, but I had to keep my cool and just smile along with their jokes. I understood that taking a break was necessary because everyone seemed tired, so we took a break.

But I couldn't help but sense that my friends were planning to tease Jahnavi and me more. This wasn't new; Jahnavi and the others were used to their teasing from senior students in the evenings. However, I couldn't shake the feeling that their teasing would be especially focused on Jahnavi and me, given that Jahnavi, the most beautiful girl, was dancing with me.

The teasing kept going, and one of my friends came up to me, pointing at Jahnavi and saying how beautiful she was. He even asked for her phone number. Telling him to go and approach her because they were just young and you was like "final year fishes" for them.

One of my friends was particularly making fun of Jahnavi, addressing her as "jaan" and asking about her background. I noticed her face turning angry, which was a first for me. She raised her voice and said, "Brother, please call me Jahnavi. My name is Jahnavi, not 'jaan'." Her anger surprised me, and I quickly intervened, telling my friends to stop and leave. They obeyed and left, but I couldn't help but wonder why she had reacted so strongly.

Sunitha asked her what had made her so angry, and she explained that her parents called her "jaanu," and she was fine with that because it was a term of endearment from those who loved and cared for her. However, she didn't appreciate a random guy using the same nickname, which is why she got angry.

The situation had given me a valuable insight into her preferences, and I felt a glimmer of hope that if we got closer, I could ask her if it was okay for me to call her "jaanu." If she agreed, it would make me incredibly happy, as it would signify that she had a positive impression of me.

After some practice, Everyone decided to skip the canteen and opened their lunch boxes to have their meals together. This gesture brought a sense of camaraderie among the group, and I couldn't help but feel a growing connection with all of them, especially Jahnavi.

As they all engaged in discussions and interactions during lunch, I decided to play it cool, not wanting to impose myself on the group. Instead, I patiently waited for Jahnavi and the others to initiate conversation with me, eager to build a stronger connection with everyone, especially Jahnavi.

Sunitha's question about my achievements at the previous year's youth fest caught me off guard. I was pleasantly surprised that they had heard about my accomplishments, but now I needed to find the right way to respond and share this information without coming across as boastful.

I replied, "Oh, you heard about that? Well, yes, it's true. I did win the first prize in solo dance and came in second for the group performance last year." I tried to keep my tone modest and not make a big deal out of it. and I asked, "By the way, how did you guys come to know about that?"

Jahnavi replied, sharing how she had discovered my achievements. She said, "Yes, when I joined the college, they gave us yearbooks, and I saw your achievements in there. And I also saw that you got first place in volleyball during sports day in your second year. I just thought it was impressive and shared it with everyone."

As Jahnavi spoke about how she had learned about my achievements, I couldn't believe that she had been aware of them since she joined college. It made me feel a mix of surprise and happiness. In my mind, I thought, "Oh my god, I can't believe since you joined college, you've known about me through my achievements."

With a smile on her face, she continued, "I just thought it was impressive."

Playfully, I replied, "Oh, is it?"

I was taken aback when Bhagya entered and exclaimed, "Bro, do you know she's a celebrity?" Confused and intrigued, I asked, "What? What do you mean by she's a celebrity?"

Manoj and Ram chimed in, confirming, "Yeah, bro, she has 10k followers on her Instagram account."

I was shocked by the revelation, but I tried to act normal. I looked at Jahnavi, and she seemed excited to show me her followers. She might have been thinking that I wasn't interested in girls, and this could impress me. However, I couldn't help but think about how she gained those followers. It was likely through making reels, and I couldn't understand why her parents would encourage this trend.

I personally didn't like the idea of Jahnavi gaining followers solely based on her looks and the content of her reels. I believed that if someone had a unique talent like painting and gained followers for showcasing their art on Instagram, it would be more meaningful. But these followers were for her face and the videos she created, and I felt uneasy about it. I knew how some boys could react when they saw videos of a good-looking girl, and she was too young to fully understand these things.

Despite my reservations, I reminded myself not to be judgmental. I forced a smile and said, "Oh, that's nice. Good for you."

Ram enthusiastically mentioned Jahnavi's short film on YouTube, and I couldn't hide my surprise. "You acted in a short film?" I asked, genuinely intrigued.

She seemed a bit embarrassed and tried to stop him, but everyone was eager to share. I could sense her discomfort, and I didn't want to make her feel worse. Deep down, I wasn't entirely comfortable with this kind of attention on her achievements, but I forced a smile and said, "Wow, that's nice!" I wanted to be supportive, even if it wasn't something I personally liked.

Unable to stop my curiosity, I asked, "Are your parents okay with this?" I wanted to understand her family's perspective on Jahnavi's activities and achievements.

Jahnavi replied, sensing my curiosity and maybe wondering what I thought about her involvement. "Well," she began, "the director of the short film is actually a relative of mine. They asked me to participate, and after discussing it with my parents, we all agreed, so I went ahead with it."

I nodded, understanding her perspective. It seemed like she had supportive parents who were comfortable with her choices. While it wasn't exactly what I personally preferred, I respected Jahnavi's decisions and didn't want to pass judgment.

As we continued with our practice after lunch, my mind was still preoccupied with thoughts about Jahnavi's involvement in short films and social media. I couldn't help but feel a bit disappointed, realizing that we might have different perspectives on certain things. However, I tried to push those thoughts aside

and focus on the dance practice, determined to make our performance the best it could be.

As the day came to an end, with our goodbyes echoing in the room, I didn't expect Jahnavi to turn back. But to my pleasant surprise, she did. She gave me a warm smile and a friendly "bye."

As I watched Jahnavi leave with a smile, a whirlwind of thoughts raced through my mind. I couldn't deny the attraction I felt towards her, but at the same time, her involvement in social media and short films made me question whether we were truly compatible. I wondered if my initial impression of her as a shy girl was completely off the mark. Perhaps it was best to stop thinking about her and focus on other aspects of my life.

After reaching home, I decided to indulge in one of my favorite pastimes – watching a Hollywood thriller movie. I eagerly downloaded a suspenseful film and settled in for an evening of entertainment, hoping that it would help take my mind off the complexities of life, including the enigma that was Jahnavi.

As I was engrossed in watching the Hollywood thriller movie at the library, my friend Hari unexpectedly appeared.who was my high school classmate and a fellow library enthusiast, greeted me with a smile as he entered. We shared a silent understanding about our library habits – he knew about my movie-watching escapades, and I was aware of his college work routine.

As we settled in for our usual talking hour, I shared everything that had happened with Hari. He listened with great enthusiasm, always eager to see me in a relationship. He believed he knew the kind of girl I wanted and was curious to see who I might end up with.

When I finished recounting the day's events, Hari couldn't resist scolding me, "Come on, you old fish! There's no girl these days without an Instagram account and a boyfriend. You and I are the last of the singles. And, you, you stubborn fellow, you rejected our classmate Ramya just because she aspired to be an air hostess. You're not even in a relationship, yet you're thinking about whether she should have a job or not."

I chuckled and responded jokingly, "Not just that, you know what kind of dress air hostesses wear? It's very short. What will you say if your wife shows her thighs and asks travelers, 'Would you like some drink, sir?'"

Hari couldn't help but laugh, "Stop it, man! Now you've finally liked a girl, and you're thinking about all this nonsense. If you like her, love her, and try to make her stop doing those things. Do you really think our future wives will be like our moms? No girl is like that anymore. We'll be lucky if they're virgins before we get married. Just look at our college classmates; it's clear what's happening."

I nodded in agreement, saying, "Yes, you're right. I've seen it in college too. Girls are either chatting or getting romantically involved with their boyfriends."

The next morning, I woke up without any particular thoughts about Jahnavi. It seemed that I had distanced myself from her, perhaps due to our differences in interests and the recent disconnect. As I got ready for the day, my younger brother reminded me that he had class and needed a ride to college. Since I didn't have any classes that day, only dance practice, and I was feeling somewhat disinterested in the whole affair, I ended up driving to college later than usual.

I was taken aback when I received a message from Jahnavi, and it came as a surprise. Her message said, "Hello, this is Jaanu. Coordinator sir inquired about you and mentioned practicing on the 5th floor in the machine labs." This message felt somewhat different from our previous interactions in the dance group. She had introduced herself as "Jaanu," which was unexpected, especially after our discussion about nicknames. I found myself wondering if this was her way of hinting at wanting a closer connection or if it was just a friendly gesture. I quickly replied, "Sure, you guys go ahead. I'll be joining you soon."

As I made my way to the machine labs, I noticed Ram and Manoj walking alongside me. Manoj greeted me with enthusiasm, saying, "Bro, since today is the 25th of November and the fest is on the 30th, we should aim for first place, bro." It was evident that they were quite confident, likely due to their awareness of my achievements. I assured them, saying, "Absolutely, I'll do my best to improve our dance steps."

While we walked, I couldn't help but overhear Ram on the phone, engaged in an affectionate conversation, ending with a goodbye kiss. It brought back memories of my discussion with Hari from the previous day, making me contemplate once more.

As I entered the room, I noticed Jahnavi making a reel with a humorous dialogue. It caught me off guard, but I couldn't help but smile at her. However, Jahnavi seemed a bit embarrassed when we entered the room. Ram and Manoj, on the other hand, were eager to see her reel, and they were trying to get hold of her phone. They touched her hand while trying to take the phone from her, all in good fun as friends often do.

I tried to act as if I hadn't noticed, but deep down, it bothered me. What bothered me even more was that Jahnavi didn't even make eye contact with me and acted as if she hadn't messaged me earlier.

As Manoj reminded me that there were only four days left until the festival. Feeling the time crunch, I made the decision to push ourselves even harder. We practiced non-stop, without taking breaks, and I successfully choreographed the entire routine for the 7-minute and 45-second track.

But, despite all our hard work, we could only manage to perform about 5 minutes of the routine. It took longer than we expected to learn and perfect the choreography.

Since it was a Saturday, the last two hours of the day were designated for sports activities. My friends invited me to play volleyball as the first-year students had challenged us.

I loved playing volleyball as much as dancing, so I agreed to join them and give the first-year students a run for their money. I told my dance team to continue practicing while I went to play volleyball.

As I left for the volleyball game, I noticed a hint of disappointment in Jahnavi's eyes. I couldn't be certain if it was because she missed my presence during practice or if there was another reason behind it.

As the volleyball game began, the first-year students looked at me with a hint of curiosity, having heard about my gaming skills. However, I purposely didn't showcase my abilities initially, allowing my teammates to play and gain some experience. Our team's score started to decline, and it was only when the situation became unfavorable that I decided to step in.

I noticed that my dance group, especially Jahnavi, was watching my game closely. Even though I was aware of their attention, I chose to act like I hadn't noticed, fully immersing myself in the game. As the match progressed, I eventually removed my T-shirt, revealing my muscular build underneath, knowing that Jahnavi could see my physique. My friends cheered me on, urging me to lead the team to victory.

After we won the game, I expected my friends to lift me up and celebrate the achievement, especially with Jahnavi watching. However, to my disappointment, my friends were solely focused on collecting the winning money, and they ushered me to the canteen without acknowledging the victory or my performance on the court.

After returning home late from the volleyball game, my brother expressed his concern about me switching between dance and sports. He reminded me that I had initially gone to college for dance practice, and playing a game unexpectedly could have consequences.

However, when we arrived home, things took a different turn. My dad was upset because he thought I had played the game without considering my past injuries. He raised his voice in frustration. On the other

hand, my mom was more understanding and tried to mediate the situation, asking my dad to calm down. I understood their worries and promising to be more cautious and not play in a way that could lead to injuries, like I always do.

Since tomorrow was Sunday, I sent a message in our group chat, suggesting that we all practice on Sunday to use the day for our preparations. It appeared that everyone agreed because they responded with enthusiastic "yes" replies, showing their dedication to the practice session. Jahnavi messaged me separately to ask about the time. I decided to schedule it a bit earlier, so I told her to come at 8:30 am, hoping she would be able to make it on time. However, she replied that her legs were hurting from the previous practice, and she couldn't come that early.

I couldn't help but wonder if Jahnavi was trying to initiate a conversation with me. It seemed like she was interested in chatting, perhaps wanting to be friends or even more. But I was hesitant to engage in too much conversation, so I recommended a hot water massage for her legs, to which she responded that she was already doing that. I decided to create some distance by saying I had work to do and wished her goodnight, hoping to convey that I wasn't too interested in chatting. However, I couldn't help but think about the effect my messages might have on her and whether they would make her think more about me.

I skipped going to the library due to tiredness from playing the game, and I decided to sleep. No one woke me up in the morning, and I ended up waking up to a call from an unknown number, but I chose not to answer it. I received another call from same number, and when I answered it, I heard a familiar voice. It was Jahnavi, and she greeted me, saying, "Good morning, senior." I quickly checked the time and realized it was already 8:35 AM.

Jahnavi informed me that she had arrived college as per my instructions, but no one else was there. I felt a mix of surprise and curiosity. Did her willingness to come early mean something?

I quickly came up with an excuse, telling Jahnavi that I had just arrived and was in the parking area, chatting with the security. I asked her to wait there, and she agreed. I hoped that she believed my lie, and I started to make my way to where she was.

I sent a message in the group chat, informing everyone that Jahnavi had already arrived and urging them to come quickly. Without even having breakfast, As I made my way to college, I couldn't help but think about how Jahnavi had referred to me as "senior" instead of using my name or addressing me as "bro." It struck me as an interesting choice of words, and I wondered if it meant something more. The fact that she had called me directly was a positive sign, and it left me pondering about our evolving relationship.

Since Jahnavi had initiated the conversation by calling me, I hadn't saved her number in my contacts, I decided to save Jahnavi's number simply as "Jahnavi" since I didn't have any other friends with the same name.

I arrived at the practice location, and it was just Jahnavi and me. We began our first conversation without anyone else around.

Me: "Still, not everybody came?"

Jahnavi: "No."

Me: "Okay, call them and ask where they are. By the way, did your leg pain get better?"

Jahnavi: "Yes, somewhat..."

She started calling the others and replied, "Yes, they are on the way."

We sat there, and I pretended to be engrossed in my phone, waiting for Jahnavi to initiate a conversation. She eventually sat beside me and started a conversation by asking if I had an Instagram account. I could see that she was a bit nervous, and I wanted to keep the conversation going, so I replied, "Yes, I do."

What's your account name?" She took my phone and typed it in, and I couldn't help but check out her profile. I complimented her on her posts and shared some do's and don'ts.

As I was about to close the app, I noticed her disappointment when I didn't follow her account. I asked her, "Should I follow you?" She smiled and said, "Yes." I responded with a playful smile, saying, "If you follow me back, I'll follow you." She smiled in return, and we continued chatting, with me enjoying our conversation but acting like it was no big deal.

Ram and Manoj arrived, catching us in the midst of our conversation. They had a playful smile on their faces, and it was clear that they were teasing Jahnavi about me. I noticed their antics but chose to act as if I didn't mind. They greeted me with a "good morning," and Manoj, in his usual playful manner, asked if they had disturbed my practice with jahnavi. I simply smiled in response, and Jahnavi seemed to be silently urging Manoj to stop with the teasing.

As I watched them engage in conversation, I couldn't help but wonder how close they had become in such a short amount of time. I thought about the possibility that they might walk together to the bus stop at the end of college, which could explain their growing closeness. It was difficult for me to see them so comfortable with Jahnavi, especially when I had been trying to maintain a bit of distance from her.

When Bhagya and Sunitha finally arrived, I greeted them with a serious look because they were late. They quickly apologized, blaming their tardiness on the bus being delayed. I accepted their apology with a nod and decided to focus on our dance practice, eager to make the most of the time we had together.

During our practice, I found myself lost in the moment. Jahnavi was my dance partner, and although we hadn't really looked at each other while dancing until now, today was different. As we practiced, our faces came closer, our hands touched, and our eyes met. Her eyes seemed to convey a message, as if they were proposing to me, silently asking if I wanted to spend the rest of my life with her.

We danced together with synchronized expressions, and she sang the lyrics of the beautiful song we were performing to. In that moment, everything else faded away, and I could only imagine us dancing together at our wedding reception in the future.

I continued our practice with full energy and the best expressions, driven by the desire to impress her with my dance skills and make her fall for me. My newfound energy and talent on display during practice left everyone shocked, and it was all fueled by my desire to impress Jahnavi.

As our practice came to an end, Manoj asked me, "Bro, did you bring your bike? I can't walk to the bus stop; my legs are hurting so much."

As my dad allows only me and my brother to use the bike, and today being Sunday, I didn't bring it. So, I replied, "No, man, I also came by bus."

By listening to my words, Jahnavi asked, "I thought you said you were in the parking in the morning." I had forgotten that I had lied to her this morning, but I replied, "Yeah, while I was walking, the security called me to help him with some work in the parking.". She said, "Oh, is it?" and then everyone left, saying goodbye.

As I was walking out of the college gate, I couldn't help but imagine walking with Jahnavi. What surprised me was when she called and said, "Hello, senior, we saw you. Wait for us; we're also coming. Let's all go together." I couldn't see them, but I had a feeling they were watching me from the first floor. I replied, "Yeah, okay, come fast."

It had only been 2 minutes, but I was already contemplating pretending to have some urgent work so I wouldn't have to wait for them. I called Jahnavi and asked, "Where are you guys?" She replied, "Just 5 minutes away." I decided to go ahead and said, "Okay, it's getting late, and I have to leave. I'll start." She

responded with a simple, "Okay, bye," and I replied, "Bye."

I had a moment of self-doubt, wondering why I had expected Jahnavi to request that I wait for them. I questioned my actions and thought, "Come on, man, why would she ask you to stay? Don't you think you're reading too much into things, you foolish fellow?"

As I began walking with disappointment, I heard Bhagya call out to me, saying, "Hey bro, wait! We're coming too." They joined me, and we walked together.

While walking together, I had expected all of us to engage in a lively conversation, but that didn't happen. Instead, the three girls walked ahead, and we guys followed behind. I hadn't anticipated this turn of events, and it was not what I had hoped for.

The good thing was that Jahnavi and I both lived on the west side, and since we were locals, we would be heading in the same direction. The others, being non-locals, headed to the east side to catch their buses, which was something I hadn't expected but had hoped for.

As their bus arrived, they left for their respective destinations, and Jahnavi and I were the only ones left. My home was nearby, so I could take either the bus or an auto. I asked Jahnavi how she was planning to get home, and she replied that she would take an auto. Curious about the distance between our homes, I asked her where she lived, and she mentioned she lived in Radha Colony, which was about 5 kilometers away from my place. I responded with an "Oh, okay."

The auto arrived, and we both sat inside. It was a bit cramped, and our shoulders were touching, which made me feel a bit uncomfortable. I couldn't help but think about her daily routine of commuting in such discomfort. Trying to make conversation, I asked her if she took an auto to college every day.

She replied, "Yes."

Curious, I continued, "Why don't you use the college bus?"

She answered, "I don't really like it."

I probed further, "Is there a specific reason?"

She responded, "No, I just don't like the whole college bus thing."

I nodded and said, "Okay."

I found myself contemplating why Jahnavi preferred taking an auto instead of the college bus. To me, it seemed like a less safe and less comfortable way to travel. I couldn't understand why some parents would allow their daughters to travel alone by auto or bus, considering the potential risks like harassment or uncomfortable situations in crowded public transportation. It made me reflect on the importance of ensuring the safety and well-being of young students during their daily journeys to college.

The auto driver asked us where we wanted to be dropped off. I said, "To the Amul ice cream parlor," and Jahnavi mentioned "Radha Colony." Jahnavi then added, "I know the ice cream parlor. My father and I used to go there during my school days." I replied, "Oh, is it, I also enjoy ice cream a lot." She then asked about my address, and I told her that it's within walking distance, near the ice cream parlor. She nodded in understanding.

I couldn't help but wonder if her response indicated that she wanted me to invite her for ice cream. Unable to resist, I asked hesitantly, "Shall we have some ice cream?" She declined, saying, "No, I'll be late getting home." Regretting my assumptions, I scolded myself for making it seem like I was interested in that.

As my destination approached, I could sense that she wanted to pay for me, but she didn't ask. When my stop arrived, I got out of the auto and told the driver, "She'll pay for mine." When I said that, she gave me a mischievous look or something, and I couldn't help but feel something special about those looks and her eyes. She responded with a smile, and the auto drove away.

As I walked home, I decided to use a gentlemanly trick and called her to inquire whether she had reached home safely. She picked up the call and confirmed, "Yes, I'll be home in about 5 minutes." I thought that maybe this gesture could impress her, as it would show that I cared about her, and it wasn't just a pretense.

When she reached home, she sent me a message saying, "Reached home." That message brought a smile to my face, and I couldn't quite explain why.

I replied, "Okay." Then, realizing that my assumption might have been wrong, I asked her in the chat if she felt bad about me asking her to pay. I hadn't considered whether she had money or not; it was just a playful gesture. She replied, "No, not at all. I actually wanted to ask you if I could pay for you, but I thought you might think too much about it." I responded with, "Oh, really?" and she replied, "You are so good."

In my mind, I was wondering what she meant by saying I was so good. Nevertheless, our chat continued as I reached home. She asked if I was free today or if I had other plans like I did yesterday.

She seemed to want to chat with me, and I replied that I was free today, curious about what she had in mind. She asked me if she was matching my pace in dance or if there were any corrections she needed to make.

I replied, "No, you're doing great," and she followed up by asking about her expressions.

Me: No, you're doing great. Among the three of you, you're the best.

She replied with gratitude, saying, "Oh, is it? Thank you, senior."

In my mind, I couldn't help but think that she wanted me to praise her, just like many girls often do. As our chat continued, we exchanged details about our families, like what our fathers and mothers do for a living, among other things.

Since I couldn't chat at home due to my mom keeping an eye on me when I used my phone, I decided to go to the library to continue our conversation. I shared my daily routine with her, and she reciprocated by sharing her own.

As our chat was winding down, the messages became shorter, consisting of phrases like "oh," "ok," "ha," and "hmm."

She continued to ask if there was anything else, indicating that she might be interested in keeping the conversation going or if there were any more topics or questions to discuss.

So, I think it's time for us to play truth or dare. I asked, my heart pounding with anxiety, "What about truth or dare? Shall we play?"

She replied, "Yeah, sure. Let's start with you. Truth or dare?"

I replied, "Truth," and waited anxiously to see what kind of question she would ask.

She asked, "Did you ever kiss yourself in the mirror?"

In my thoughts, I couldn't help but wonder, "What type of question is this, Jahnavi? I was expecting something different." Nevertheless, I replied aloud, "No, I haven't."

She responded, "I kiss myself every day."

I replied with a smile emoji, trying to keep the conversation light, "Well, that's some self-love there, Jahnavi. now its Your turn, Truth or dare?"

she replied truth

Wondering whom she would choose, I asked, "If you had just one day to live, who would you want to spend it with?"

I couldn't help but wonder if she would mention my name, although I couldn't fathom why she would choose me.

As I awaited her response, a part of me couldn't help but wonder if she might mention my name, even though it seemed unlikely. Nevertheless, she answered, "I would want to spend it with my parents." I nodded in appreciation of her answer, recognizing the importance of family in her life.

As it was my turn, I decided to go with "truth." Jahnavi quickly responded, letting me know that she had a question for me and that I had to answer honestly.

Her question made me pause for a moment. "What's your opinion on me?" she asked.

I pondered her question for a moment, carefully considering my response. "You are a good-looking girl with talent in dance," I replied. I wanted to give an honest answer, one that highlighted her beauty and skills, but without revealing too much.

She responded with a smile emoji and chose "dare". She chose "dare" likely expecting that I would also choose "dare" next. It seemed she had a dare in mind for me.

With a mischievous thought in mind, I dared her to take a selfie with her mom, giving her a kiss on the cheek. I wondered if she would accept the challenge, and what the resulting photo might look like.

I was pleasantly surprised when she actually went ahead and took the photo, kissing her mom on the cheek. It was a heartwarming moment captured in a picture, and it became the first image in my album of memories with Jahnavi.

I couldn't help but notice the resemblance between Jahnavi and her mom in the photo. I complimented her, saying, "You look just like your mom in that picture. It's a lovely photo."

Jahnavi responded with a simple "Thank you, senior" to my compliment about her photo. The use of "senior" in her response left me with a sense of intrigue and curiosity about her feelings towards me.

So, thinking that she expected me to choose dare, I decided to go along with it. I replied, "Okay, I'll take a dare too. Hit me with your best shot!"

Her reply left me in shock. It read, "Propose to me tomorrow during practice in front of everyone."

Seeing her dare made it clear that she had feelings for me. She was expecting me to express my love for her, which is why she asked for such a daring dare during our truth or dare game.

In an attempt to gauge her feelings and also play it cool, I replied, "Well, I've played this dare with my friends before. Out of the nine girls I played it with, six asked for the same dare as you did. Why do you

think girls like the idea of a guy proposing in front of everyone?"

I received a new message from my friend Hari, who had taken a photo of me and sent it over.

I didn't notice that my friend Hari had come into the library. He saw me engrossed in a chat and asked with a hushed voice, "Is it Jahnavi?" I responded with a smile, acknowledging his curiosity.

Since she knew I was in the library, as we had discussed earlier. I replied, "What do you think? I might just do it. Let's see what happens tomorrow. and I'm going home, bye"

She replied with determination, "Okay, but you have to complete the dare." However, I didn't open the message immediately, leaving her to wonder whether I was hesitant about her dare.

With my friend Hari here and our time for a chat, I decided to exit the library and continue our conversation in person.

We started discussing Jahnavi, and after sharing how we played truth or dare, Hari couldn't resist making fun of me. He teased that Jahnavi had fallen for me, especially after I mentioned her dare for me to propose. Hari even suggested that I should go through with it tomorrow, but he knew me well enough to understand my hesitation.

As I reached home, my phone buzzed with a new message from Jahnavi. She asked, "Did you reach home?". I decided not to open the message at that moment since I couldn't chat comfortably from home and wanted to avoid giving the impression that I was too eager to engage in conversation.

Later I had dinner and spent some time watching TV, I finally opened Jahnavi's message. Ignoring the previous messages, I asked her if she had dinner yet.

Within a minute, I received her reply. She had just finished dinner too. It seemed like she was always with her phone. I replied that I had also eaten and bid her goodnight.

She replied with a simple "Good night" but brought up the topic of the dare once again.

I left her message in the notification bar and planned to respond to it in the morning because I can chat with her during that time.

The following day, as I woke up in the morning, I sent her a good morning message. Her quick response of "Good morning, senior" got me thinking about her family dynamics. I couldn't help but wonder about her parents and how they felt about her constant phone usage. It appeared that she enjoyed a significant level of privacy at home, which left me pondering why some parents granted their daughters such autonomy, a concept I found somewhat perplexing.

She revisited the dare subject, and I retorted, "Do you believe I'd go through with it? Come up with something more achievable. Well, the game's done, so get ready and be on time. See you soon." That's how I concluded our conversation and left another unopened message in my notification bar.

As I contemplated her feelings for me, my thoughts wandered into the realm of what our relationship might be like in the future. It consumed my mind to the point where my body was physically present but mentally absent. My distraction didn't go unnoticed, and my mom reprimanded me for not attending to my duties. Her scolding brought me back to reality, but the thoughts of Jahnavi had me feeling like I was floating on clouds.

As my brother rushed me to get ready, we headed to college. However, Jahnavi was constantly on my mind, and I couldn't shake the memory of the look she had given me the day before at the auto, especially the intense gaze of her eyes, which seemed to pierce through my thoughts and linger in my memory.

When I stepped into the practice room that day, everyone greeted me with cheerful smiles, including Jahnvi, who had a particularly bright and friendly one. We began our practice routine, and something unexpected happened, Jahnvi started talking to me more than usual. It was almost as if our conversation from yesterday and the truth or dare game had never happened, and she treated me like any other practice day. But there was something else beneath the surface that was hard to ignore.

During our practice, I couldn't help but notice the way she looked at me. Her eyes met mine frequently, and there was an unspoken connection between us. It felt like we were communicating without words, sharing feelings and thoughts that went beyond our spoken conversations. Her smiles and gestures seemed to convey something deeper, something I couldn't quite put my finger on.

Jahnvi's increased interaction and those meaningful looks made it challenging for me to concentrate on our dance routine. There was an unspoken bond growing between us, something hidden from the rest of the group. It added excitement and intrigue to our practices, leaving me both thrilled and puzzled.

During our break, Jahnvi couldn't resist herself from singing a playful tune about the dare. I tried my best to act disinterested, but Ram and Manoj noticed our secretive sign language. They couldn't contain their curiosity and bombarded Jahnvi with questions, "What are you asking? What's going on?"

To my surprise, Bhagya chimed in, "Are you discussing the dare? I don't think akhil will go through with it." I was shocked. Jahnvi had discussed our chat, including the dare, with Bhagya. It seemed she wanted to convey that we were close enough to engage in such games and conversations.

I tried to hide my embarrassment and replied casually, "Oh, come on, guys, we were just fooling around. It's no big deal." Deep inside, though, I couldn't help but wonder how much Jahnvi had shared with them about our conversations. It was a strange mix of flattery and discomfort, knowing that she was opening up about our interactions to our friends. But maybe, just maybe, it meant something more to her.

After Ram and Manoj knowing about the dare and our playful conversation, they decided it was time to join in on the fun. They seemed excited about the idea and said, "Come on, let's play the game now!"

It seemed like our little truth or dare game was gaining more participants, and I couldn't help but wonder how this would unfold.

As we gathered around and prepared to play the game, the excitement in all was palpable. Ram and Manoj had brought a bottle, Despite my attempts to act disinterested, deep down, I was secretly thrilled that this was happening.

I couldn't help but give Jahnvi a playful look that seemed to say, "This is all because of you," though she appeared equally excited about the game. The bottle was placed in the center, and as we waited for someone to spin it and kickstart the game, a sense of anticipation hung in the air. It was evident that our little truth or dare session was about to take an unexpected turn, and none of us could predict where it would lead.

Ram took the initiative and gave the bottle a vigorous spin. While secretly hoping it would stop in front of me, I maintained my nonchalant facade, as if I couldn't care less about the outcome. To my surprise, the bottle came to a halt, pointing directly at Bhagya. The room filled with a mixture of excitement and curiosity.

Bhagya chose "truth," Sunitha, who had been rather quiet until now, decided to ask her a revealing question. She inquired about the last text Bhagya had sent to her boyfriend. This caught my attention as I hadn't known Bhagya had a boyfriend, and it piqued my curiosity. Bhagya promptly retrieved her phone, opened the chat, and read aloud the message she had sent, "Take care, kanna."

The bottle continued its unpredictable journey, and this time it came to a halt in front of Jahnavi. My heart raced with anticipation as she chose "truth." I hoped someone would ask her a question that would reveal her relationship status or her interest in me, just as Sunitha had done with Bhagya earlier.

Bhagya gently took Jahnavi's right hand, pointing to the cuts that Jahnavi had made on her hand. With a concerned tone, she asked Jahnavi about the reason behind those cuts. Jahnavi hesitated for a moment, her eyes flickering with a mix of emotions. The room fell silent as we all waited for her response, our curiosity growing with each passing second.

Everyone in the room urged Jahnavi to answer Bhagya's question about the cuts on her hand. Jahnavi seemed taken aback by the sudden attention, her eyes darting around the room as if searching for an escape from the prying questions. In that moment, I realized that I was the only one who had been completely unaware of this aspect of her life. My shock and curiosity intensified as I anxiously awaited her response, hoping to understand the reasons behind those self-inflicted cuts.

Jahnavi's revelation sent shockwaves through the room. Her voice quivered as she explained that the cuts on her hand were a result of the emotional pain she had experienced after a breakup with her ex-boyfriend, a relationship that had lasted for four long years. She described the deep sadness and the overwhelming sense of loss that had accompanied the breakup, in the midst of her emotional turmoil, she had resorted to hurting herself as a way to cope with the pain.

I had never pictured her as someone who had been in a long-term relationship, let alone one that had gone on for four years. It was a surprising revelation that made me rethink what I knew about her.

As I tried to process this new information, I felt like I was disconnected from the world around me. In an era where fleeting relationships and casual dating were the norm, Jahnavi's story stood out as an exception. She had been in love since her 9th grade, a concept that felt outdated compared to the typical college experiences.

I had a flurry of questions racing through my mind. What kind of person was she to have maintained such a committed relationship for so long? Did I not fit in with the current generation's dating habits? This revelation made me reflect on the intricacies of human relationships and the various paths people take when it comes to matters of the heart.

Jahnavi, in an effort to steer the conversation away from her past, enthusiastically suggested we move on and spin the bottle again. We were all in agreement and eager to leave behind the heavy topic of discussion.

As the bottle spun once more, its momentum gradually slowed until it pointed directly at Ram. With a grin, he decided to go for "truth".

Jahnavi, seized the opportunity and asked Ram, "Have you ever kissed your girlfriend?".

As I observed the interaction and heard Ram's response, it struck me just how different this generation was compared to what I had grown up with. The ease with which they discussed intimate matters like kissing and relationships left me feeling like an outsider in my own time. It was a stark reminder of the changing times and the evolving dynamics in the lives of these young college students.

The bottle's unpredictable journey continued, and this time, it landed in front of Sunitha. Just like the others, Sunitha also opted for truth. With no one else stepping up to ask her a question, I took the initiative and inquired, "How often do you give yourself a kiss in front of the mirror each day?" I couldn't help but notice Jahnavi's knowing smile as my question echoed the playful one she had directed at me the day before.

Sunitha responded with a casual, "Maybe twice a day, I think."

The bottle's capricious journey continued, and this time, it came to me. I, too, opted for truth, and it was clear that everyone in the room was pondering what question to pose to me. Their curiosity revolved around my relationship status, did I have a girlfriend or not? Jahnavi seemed just as intrigued as the others.

When Bhagya asked me for my girlfriend's name, I knew this question was coming. Jahnavi seemed particularly interested and was closely observing my response. I replied honestly, "I have no one." Jahnavi seemed somewhat skeptical and responded, "Really? We don't believe you." I reiterated, "No, seriously, if I had a girlfriend, why would I hide it? I'm not in any kind of relationship." My response seemed to pique Jahnavi's curiosity even more.

When the bottle once again stopped in front of me, I eagerly chose "dare." I was filled with curiosity about what kind of dare they would come up with this time. To my surprise, it was Jahnavi who spoke up, her eyes gleaming mischievously as she said, "You didn't complete our dare yesterday, so you have to do the dare I give you now." I agreed without hesitation, genuinely intrigued by what she had in store for me.

Jahnavi's dare took me by surprise. She requested that I unlock my phone, a proposition I hadn't anticipated. It struck me that she might want to check my chats, perhaps to confirm that I wasn't involved in any relationships. I hesitated briefly, unsure whether to comply or not, but I decided to act as if fulfilling the dare was a challenge. Our playful argument ensued for a good five minutes, with Jahnavi displaying a hint of disappointment when I initially resisted.

In the end, I reluctantly agreed to the dare, realizing that prolonging the discussion wouldn't serve any purpose. I understood that the tension generated by the dare could be eased by resuming our dance practice, so I chose to prioritize our preparation for the performance over the temporary discomfort of having my phone scrutinized.

As our dance practice continued, I noticed a palpable tension in the air. Jahnavi seemed distant, avoiding eye contact and not engaging in conversation with me. It was clear that my refusal to complete the dare had affected her mood.

After some time, both Jahnavi and Sunitha decided to take a break and stepped outside. During this break, Bhagya took the opportunity to discuss my decision with me. She asked me why I hadn't unlocked my phone for Jahnavi, and I explained my reluctance. I told her that I wasn't worried about Jahnavi finding any relationship-related chats since I was single, but I was concerned about the candid and bold content exchanged among friends in our chats.

While I was explaining this to Bhagya, I noticed Jahnavi returning. Seizing the moment, I started showing my phone to Bhagya, making it seem like I was sharing something innocuous. Jahnavi, however, saw what was happening and left in apparent frustration.

Soon after, Sunitha approached me and questioned why I hadn't handed my phone to Jahnavi but was now showing it to Bhagya. I tried to explain my reasoning to her, but it was clear that my actions had upset Jahnavi, and she had chosen to distance herself from the situation.

Frustrated by the tension and distance Jahnavi had created, I decided to take action. I asked Sunitha to call her back, hoping for a resolution. However, Sunitha returned with the news that Jahnavi wasn't willing to return to our practice.

I sensed that Jahnavi might be playing a bit of drama, perhaps to test my reaction or to gauge my feelings. To get some clarity on the situation, I decided to have a candid conversation with Sunitha and Bhagya. I wanted to understand why Jahnavi was behaving this way and what might have caused her to be upset.

My questions persisted as I probed for answers, repeatedly asking why Jahnavi was acting this way. It was then that Bhagya finally revealed the truth. She told me that Jahnavi had a crush on me. My suspicions were confirmed – Jahnavi indeed had feelings for me.

As Bhagya disclosed this information, Jahnavi reentered the room and overheard the conversation. She realized that her secret feelings had been exposed, and without saying a word, she left once again, leaving me stunned by the revelation.

As Sunitha scolded Bhagya for inadvertently revealing Jahnavi's feelings, Bhagya apologized, explaining that she hadn't noticed Jahnavi approaching. Bhagya decided to approach Jahnavi to try and resolve the situation.

Meanwhile, I seized the opportunity to speak with Sunitha privately, seeking confirmation of what Bhagya had disclosed. Sunitha confirmed that it was true – Jahnavi had a crush on me from the very beginning, and she had confided in Sunitha and Bhagya.

My mind raced as I processed this newfound information. Jahnavi had feelings for me, and now I had to figure out how to handle the situation. I played it cool, responding with a nonchalant, "Oh, is it?" while internally, I was trying to come to terms with this revelation.

Bhagya returned, informing Sunitha and me that Jahnavi was crying.

With the knowledge of Jahnavi's feelings now out in the open, I decided it was time to address the situation and offer comfort. I told them to wait as I headed towards Jahnavi, my mind buzzing with thoughts of how to approach her.

Jahnavi stood alone in the corridor, tears glistening in her eyes. I watched her from a distance, torn between wanting to approach her and the uncertainty of what to say. The knowledge of her past relationship weighed on my mind, making me hesitate.

Part of me wanted to seize this moment to comfort her, perhaps even share some light-hearted banter to make her smile. However, the thought of her four-year-long relationship held me back. I had always imagined being with someone for whom I'd be their first love, their one and only. Jahnavi's past seemed to complicate that vision.

I said to myself, "Okay, this is not the time for these thoughts," and approached her. I started by saying, "Okay, let's forget about it. I can sense how embarrassed you must feel, and I know that feeling. Let's just leave it at that," but she didn't stop crying. I was at a loss for words.

I continued, "All of this is because of me, and I'm sorry," but she quickly responded, shaking her head, "No, you don't need to be sorry. I didn't think Bhagya would tell you this."

I tried to ease the tension by saying, "Okay, let's just leave it. That's not an issue. Besides, I had a crush on you too." I hoped that admitting my feelings would make her feel better, knowing that I wanted to comfort her.

I continued, "Let me share some of my experiences. When I was in my 10th grade, I was preparing to propose to a girl, but I didn't realize she was standing right behind me. All my friends laughed at me. So, you see, we've all faced embarrassing situations like this. It's a part of growing up."

After sharing these words, she finally returned, and I felt relieved that I had managed to bring her back into the group.

As the practice continued, there was a noticeable somberness in the atmosphere, and it remained that way until the end. When it was time to leave, Jahnavi didn't smile, but she bid farewell. I couldn't let things

end like this, so I approached her.

"Please, just forget about it. Don't linger on it," I said to her, trying to reassure her. With those words, I said my goodbyes to everyone and left the practice session, hoping that Jahnavi would find some peace and comfort in my words.

As I headed home, my mind was a swirl of conflicting emotions. There was good news and bad news in the air. On the bright side, it seemed that Jahnavi might be developing feelings for me, which was a pleasant thought. However, the shadow of her past loomed large in my mind, casting a pall over my excitement.

The fact that she had been in a four-year-long relationship was a significant concern for me. I couldn't imagine being with someone who had such a long history with someone else. The thought of those self-inflicted cuts on her hand weighed heavily on my conscience. What had led her to do such a thing? Was it a result of her past relationship?

My mind raced with questions and doubts. I couldn't help but wonder about the dynamics of her previous relationship. If her ex had been significantly older than her, had he taken advantage of her youth and inexperience? Could that have been the reason behind her self-harm? I found myself delving deep into her past, trying to understand the pain she might have endured.

But then, I reminded myself that she was just a kid when it all happened. Perhaps, she had been overly serious about her future and had built up hopes that were shattered. Maybe the pain had been too much for her young heart to bear. I needed to tread carefully, considering the complexity of her experiences and emotions.

I understood that these thoughts and doubts were creating a significant barrier in my mind, preventing me from pursuing a relationship with Jahnavi. She wasn't the person I had initially envisioned as a potential partner, and I couldn't simply ignore the complexities of her past that were now so vividly in front of me. I yearned for a simpler love, one where I could be the first and only one in her heart.

I couldn't help but question why fate had brought me to this point. Why had I met Jahnavi at this particular moment in my life, when my expectations were so clear? Why couldn't I find someone who fit the image I had in my mind – a person whose heart and history were uncharted territory, just like mine?

These thoughts weighed heavily on my heart as I grappled with the conflicting emotions of hope and doubt. I couldn't deny the attraction and connection I felt with Jahnavi, but her past was a formidable obstacle. I wondered if it was fair to both of us to pursue something when my heart and mind were so entangled in these uncertainties.

As I continued to wrestle with my feelings and thoughts, one thing remained clear – I needed time to process and understand my own emotions before I could consider taking the next step in whatever path lay ahead.

With my mind still occupied by the events of the day and my thoughts about Jahnavi, I decided to stick to my routine. I needed a break from the complexities of life, and watching a feel-good movie at the library seemed like the perfect escape.

As I made my way to the library, I hoped that my friend Hari would join me so I could share the events of the day with him. However, he didn't show up, and I decided to start watching the feel-good movie I had downloaded. As I got engrossed in the film, I suddenly realized that there was a message from Jahnavi that I had seen in the morning but hadn't opened. I had ignored it, thinking about the day's situation and wanting to appear as a gentleman in her eyes.

Curiosity got the better of me, and I decided to message her, asking, "Did you reach home? Is everything

alright? I hope you're feeling good."

I received an unexpected reply from Jahnavi, asking if she could call me. This took me by surprise, and I immediately called her back, concerned that something had happened. When she answered, she reassured me that nothing was wrong and that she simply felt embarrassed about how the day had unfolded.

I could sense that she wanted to talk with me, so I decided to go along with it. I told her not to worry and advised her to share her feelings with her closest friends rather than everyone. Jahnavi explained that she didn't anticipate Bhagya would directly tell me about it, and she felt sorry for that.

I quickly reassured her, saying there was no need to apologize. I redirected the conversation, suggesting we talk about something else, wanting to ease any discomfort she might be feeling.

As we continued talking, Jahnavi brought up the topic of me consoling her and asked if I had actually proposed to the girl I mentioned from my 10th grade story. I clarified that it was just a story to make her laugh, not a real proposal.

Then, she inquired about my statement that I had a crush on her, wondering if that was also a lie. I found myself in a bit of a bind. Jahnavi seemed to be getting closer, wanting a deeper connection, but I had reservations. I wanted someone who was obedient, respectful, and followed me without conditions, someone different from her. Jahnavi, with her past and complexities, didn't quite fit the mold of the person I had in mind.

I reassured Jahnavi that I had only said those things to make her feel better. Her voice seemed to calm down after hearing my response. Trying to ease the tension, I confessed that sometimes when I saw an innocent and beautiful girl like her, I couldn't help but imagine her as my future wife. She playfully questioned if she looked that innocent, to which I replied affirmatively, adding that she appeared very innocent and cute. Jahnavi laughed and thanked me, addressing me as "senior."

Jahnavi's question about my past relationships led me to reflect on my dating history. I began by sharing a story from my 10th grade, where a girl had a crush on me. Although we never officially entered into a relationship, we spent some time together. However, I decided to break things off because our life goals and priorities were vastly different.

I explained to Jahnavi that I had clear ideas about the type of girl I envisioned as my life partner. I emphasized my desire for a wife who would prioritize taking care of our family over pursuing a career. I wanted someone who shared my values and beliefs, someone who would be there for our family at all times.

As I recounted this story, Jahnavi listened attentively, and it seemed like she was understanding my perspective.

Curiosity got the better of me, and I felt it was the right moment to ask Jahnavi about her past, particularly what had led her to harm herself. It was a delicate topic, and I wanted to approach it with care and sensitivity. I could tell that Jahnavi had been through some painful experiences, and I genuinely wanted to understand and support her.

I took a deep breath and asked, "Jahnavi, if you don't mind sharing, could you tell me what led you to harm yourself in the past? I want to understand and be there for you, as your friend."

Jahnavi's words carried the weight of her past, revealing a painful chapter in her life. She had loved someone deeply, but that person had betrayed her trust by being in another relationship. The anguish of not being able to make him choose her had pushed her to a point where she resorted to self-harm to cope with the emotional pain.

Listening to her story was both heartbreaking and enlightening. It gave me a glimpse into the depth of her emotions and the resilience she had shown in dealing with such a challenging situation. It also made me realize the importance of being sensitive and compassionate towards her, as she had been through a lot.

In an attempt to understand more about Jahnavi's past and the person she had been in a relationship with, I asked her about what her ex was studying. It was a subtle way of trying to gauge his age and get a sense of their age gap during their relationship. While I didn't want to pry too much, I was curious about the dynamics of their past connection.

I was taken aback when Jahnavi revealed that her ex-boyfriend was 28 years old, indicating a significant age gap during their relationship.

I carefully expressed my concern to Jahnavi, explaining that older guys like her ex-boyfriend often take advantage of younger girls and then abandon them. I wanted to convey my support and understanding without being too judgmental.

Hearing Jahnavi's response, I felt a mix of relief and concern. It seemed like she hadn't experienced any physical harm from her past relationship, which was a relief. However, the fact that she was meeting someone significantly older regularly, especially during vulnerable times like traveling between home and school, still raised red flags in my mind. I gently reminded her about the importance of being cautious and not trusting strangers blindly, especially older individuals who might have ulterior motives.

I wanted her to understand that her safety was paramount, and I urged her to be more vigilant about her surroundings and the people she interacted with, even if they seemed friendly at first. My intention was to protect her and ensure she remained safe in all situations.

I couldn't help but harbor doubts, even though Jahnavi assured me that her ex hadn't taken advantage of her. It was a complex situation, and I found it hard to believe that she would openly admit to such a painful experience.

Our conversation continued late into the night until I felt a wave of weariness wash over me. Sensing my exhaustion, I gently informed Jahnavi that it was time for me to adhere to my usual routine. I reminded her that my evenings were typically spent in the library, and it was now time for me to return home, have dinner, and rest for the night.

She understood, bidding me farewell with a simple yet warm "Take care senior bye."

I spotted my friend inside the library and decided to join him.

As I spilled the beans to my buddy in the library, he looked stunned but tried to offer some guidance. He said that the way girls are nowadays, this kind of stuff is pretty common. He advised me to go with the flow: if Jahnavi had feelings for me, I should reciprocate; if she wanted some physical affection, I should be game; if she fancied going out, I should take her; and if she ever wanted to end things, I should just roll with it.

His advice was in tune with how relationships work these days, with norms shifting quite a bit. However, I couldn't fully embrace it. The idea of diving into a relationship with Jahnavi, knowing about her complicated past with an older guy, left me feeling uncertain. I wondered how I could genuinely develop feelings for her when her history was like a big, looming cloud over us, making it all so complicated.

My friend sensed my doubts and agreed that they made sense. He knew that my emotions were tangled up with what I knew about her past, making it hard for me to dive headfirst into love. He suggested we could just let things unfold naturally, without any rush.

While I appreciated his advice, my mind remained in two minds. Jahnavi's past still hung over us, leaving me unsure about where our relationship would go in the future.

As Hari and I continued our lengthy conversation, we ended up talking even after the library had closed its doors for the day. It was one of those times when I lost track of time in the midst of a good chat. Suddenly, I received a call from my father, his tone playful as he jokingly asked if I was still buried in books or chatting with friends. I chuckled and assured him I was on my way back, feeling hungry and ready for a meal at home.

Upon reaching home, my family, being their usual playful selves, teased me about whether I truly spent my time studying in the library. It was a routine jest they enjoyed making, and it brought a sense of warmth and comfort to be back in their midst.

As I settled into bed, my mind couldn't help but return to thoughts of Jahnavi. Her message, "Did you eat, senior?" popped up on my screen. Although I could have engaged in another chat, I felt a sense of urgency to conserve my time and energy. So, I replied with a simple "Yes, good night," as I drifted off to sleep.

Her quick response, merely a minute later, with a simple "Good night, senior," remained unopened as I lay in bed. Sleep eluded me that night as I found myself wrestling with thoughts. I couldn't shake the anticipation of what seemed inevitable: that one day, Jahnavi might propose to me. It left me wondering how I would react when that moment arrived, a question that seemed to haunt me into the late hours of the night.

These thoughts played on my mind like a never-ending loop, making it a restless night. With each passing minute, the anticipation of what the future might hold kept me awake, and I found myself lost in contemplation until the early hours of the morning.

In the morning, I was greeted by a message from Jahnavi, a cheerful "Good morning, senior." Although it was tempting to respond, I decided to leave it unopened, determined to focus on other matters. I had a pressing task at hand: my upcoming solo performance at the youth festival. As I freshened up, I was suddenly reminded of the Michael Jackson costume I had ordered for the performance. It had arrived that day, and my excitement was tinged with a touch of anxiety as I realized there were only two days left for the festival on the 30th of November.

The costume served as a stark reminder of the need to practice diligently. Due to the distraction caused by Jahnavi's messages, I had almost forgotten about the performance. With just two days left, there was no room for complacency. I hurried to college, ready to tackle the day's challenges.

At college, my team was gathered, and I wasted no time in explaining my situation. I shared the exciting news that I would be performing a Michael Jackson dance solo, and the enthusiasm was palpable. Jahnavi, in particular, seemed ecstatic, her eyes fixed on me with eager anticipation. The morning session was dedicated to our group song practice, and I performed flawlessly, infused with a newfound joy.

Throughout the day, Jahnavi's jovial demeanor was hard to ignore. She cracked jokes, engaged in more conversation with me, and seemed genuinely pleased with my company. However, I remained aloof, acting as if I was unaffected by her presence. In the afternoon, I decided to start practicing my solo MJ routine.

I instructed my team to practice on their own, having already choreographed the entire song for them. They obediently followed my directions, but it was clear they were keeping an eye on my solo practice, especially Jahnavi. While I noticed their watchful gaze, I remained focused on perfecting my moves. The intensity of my practice was such that I didn't realize how I had shouted at my team for not practicing and instead observing me.

As the day came to a close, I was still engrossed in my solo practice. My teammates bid their farewells and left, but Jahnavi, ever curious and supportive, had other plans. She convinced Sunitha to stay back and watch my dance. I couldn't ignore their presence, but I continued dancing to the rhythm of MJ's iconic tunes.

As I wrapped up my performance, I heard the applause from Jahnavi and Sunitha. Their enthusiastic claps and Jahnavi's glowing praise filled me with a sense of accomplishment. Still, I maintained my composure, acknowledging their appreciation with a polite smile.

However, I had lost track of time during my intensive practice. It was late, and my brother had been trying to reach me with missed calls. I realized this when he arrived to pick me up. I introduced him to Jahnavi and Sunitha, who were visibly surprised by our striking resemblance.

Jahnavi inquired about her messages, to which I confessed that I hadn't checked them due to my busy schedule. She seemed understanding, given my dedication to practice. As we walked out of college, she openly asked if we could chat at the library. Her candid approach suggested she was comfortable with me, perhaps due to her feelings for me, which were no secret by now.

I seized the opportunity and agreed, deciding to leave my brother waiting outside. As we walked together, Jahnavi kept the conversation lively. She praised my dance performance, making me laugh with her humorous anecdotes. I responded with a friendly demeanor, acknowledging her compliments while trying to maintain my emotional distance.

Eventually, we reached the point where I needed to part ways with Jahnavi and Sunitha. I waved them goodbye and joined my brother, who had been patiently waiting. As we rode home, my thoughts were consumed by the day's events, and the complex dynamics between Jahnavi and me.

Upon reaching home, I felt a rush of urgency to get to the library as Jahnavi had suggested. She had asked if we could chat there, and while part of me was curious about what she wanted to discuss, another part of me was wrestling with uncertainty.

As I made my way to the library, I recalled her earlier message, asking if I had eaten anything. It was a simple inquiry, but it left me feeling perplexed. What more was there to chat about? If Jahnavi was indeed interested in me, and it seemed increasingly likely, what was the purpose of our conversations? I couldn't decide whether I should take steps to grow closer to her or distance myself because she didn't quite match the image of the girl I had been searching for.

Lost in these thoughts, I chose to ignore her message for the time being and decided to unwind by watching a movie. To my surprise, my phone soon rang, and it was Jahnavi calling. I was caught off guard, unsure of how to respond since I had not replied to her earlier message. but eventually picked up the call.

"Hello?" I said, my voice betraying my surprise.

"Hi, senior! You didn't reply to my message, so I thought I'd call," Jahnavi said, her tone playful and childish. I understood her intentions, but I couldn't help feeling torn. On one hand, I didn't want to hurt her feelings or make her think I wasn't interested in talking. On the other hand, I was grappling with my own doubts about pursuing a closer relationship with her.

I replied, "Oh, I'm sorry about that. I was caught up in something. What's up?"

She giggled, clearly unfazed by my lack of response to her text. "I just wanted to talk. Did I disturb you?"

"No, not at all. I just need a few minutes. Let me finish something, and I'll call you back," I said, it was a feeble attempt to buy some time to gather my thoughts and figure out how to navigate this delicate

situation.

As I hung up, I couldn't help but wonder about the path ahead. Jahnavi had clearly developed feelings for me, but I was still unsure about my own emotions. The ambiguity of the situation weighed on me, making it challenging to determine whether to embrace or distance myself from this connection.

I had an epiphany. Why would Jahnavi, who had experienced heartbreak in her past, want to delve back into the world of love? Maybe I had misunderstood her all along. Maybe she wasn't seeking romance. Perhaps she just wanted a genuine friend or someone dependable. Maybe she just wanted a friend in me. It occurred to me that I might have misread her intentions all this time. Her feelings had only come to light because Bhagya had let it slip.

Could it be that she wasn't keen on embarking on a romantic journey again? Maybe she just treasured our friendship or appreciated my support. Perhaps she saw qualities in me that went beyond the usual expectations of a romantic partner. Could it be that she simply enjoyed having a friend in me?

With this new perspective in mind, I decided to call her back. Jahnavi picked up, and we resumed our conversation. She continued to praise my dance skills, even mentioning she had watched me play volleyball. Although I had known she was present, I chose to act surprised, saying, "Oh, really? I'm glad you watched." I didn't want to appear overly eager, but her words brought a smile to my face.

She opened up further, sharing her first impressions of me. According to her, I didn't seem like a typical dancer. Instead, I came across as a diligent college topper. I thanked her for the observation, though I found it amusing how she perceived me.

Then, Jahnavi admitted to having a short temper. She recalled instances when I had raised my voice during practice, albeit often in a controlled manner. I chuckled again, realizing how she saw me. Curious, I asked her to share more about her perception of me.

She described me as someone who appeared strict and uninterested in forming romantic connections. In her eyes, I was a solitary figure who kept to himself. Her words struck a chord, as they aligned with my past disposition. I had been reserved and focused on my studies, rarely displaying an interest in romantic pursuits. It seemed she had observed my demeanor closely.

As our conversation continued, Jahnavi ventured into the topic of love. It was an opportune moment for me to express my thoughts about relationships and articulate the kind of partner I envisioned. I spoke of my desire for a girl who respected and followed me, someone who would be my first love. Drawing from recent experiences and the changing landscape of modern relationships, I elaborated on the values and qualities I believed young women should uphold.

In the midst of my impassioned discourse, I subtly referenced her own past, hoping she would connect the dots. I described how, in today's world, people often faced difficulties in maintaining healthy relationships. I alluded to the significance of valuing one's self-respect and choosing partners wisely.

Jahnavi seemed receptive to my words, nodding along in agreement. She even confessed that she had no intention of venturing into love again due to her past experiences. Her revelation felt like an attempt to provide me with clarity, to assure me that her feelings were not what I might have assumed. It was as if she wanted to dispel any misconceptions and make sure we were on the same page.

My heart swelled with a mixture of relief and happiness. If what she said was true, it meant that my apprehensions and doubts were unfounded. It also suggested that we shared a common understanding of the situation. However, I remained cautious and decided to wait and see how things would unfold.

Our conversation eventually came to a close, and I advised her to continue practicing for the dance competition. I suggested that she practice at home as well to ensure she was well-prepared. With that, we

bid each other farewell for the moment.

As I ended the call, a sense of optimism washed over me. Perhaps Jahnavi's feelings were not what they initially appeared to be, and perhaps we could continue to build a strong friendship based on mutual respect and understanding. Only time would tell what the future held for us.

With my newfound clarity about Jahnavi's feelings and intentions, my thoughts were no longer consumed by uncertainty and doubt. Instead, my mind was wholly focused on the impending dance competition, which was now just one day away. The pressure was mounting, but I was determined to secure first place in both the solo and group categories. With this goal in mind, I woke up with renewed motivation.

On this particular day, I channeled all my energy into motivating our dance team. I conducted a rigorous practice session, covering everything from stage positions and expressions to the do's and don'ts of performing. I knew that every detail mattered, and I was committed to ensuring that each member of our team was well-prepared for the competition.

As the hours passed, I closely monitored every dancer's performance, offering guidance and corrections where needed. By afternoon, our group was finely tuned and ready for the competition the next day. It was a moment of pride and relief as I saw the team perform flawlessly.

Lunchtime arrived, and the group sat down to eat. Jahnavi, however, was waiting for me to join them. I decided to keep her guessing and sat apart from the group, eating my meal. Predictably, Jahnavi couldn't resist the temptation to join me. She took a seat beside me, and I couldn't help but smile inwardly; I had anticipated this move.

While we were eating, I noticed that she had brought chicken biryani in two small boxes. The portion size surprised me, as it seemed quite small. I commented on it, expressing my amusement at the modest quantity. Jahnavi explained that she brought two boxes daily, but typically only ate one, while her friends consumed the other. She offered one of the boxes to me, but I declined, suggesting that she enjoy it herself. However, in a playful manner, I encouraged her to bring a larger box the next day so that I could have more. I wanted to see if she would take my comment seriously, and her immediate response confirmed that she did. She agreed to bring a larger portion, indicating her willingness to accommodate my playful request.

As we ate, Jahnavi began sharing her photos and videos from her phone's gallery. She seemed eager to showcase her beauty to me, and I played along, offering compliments and admiration for her stylish photos. Our conversation led to her WhatsApp profile picture, the same one I had seen on our first day of messaging—a picture of her in blue jeans and a red shirt.

Jahnavi asked for my opinion on her profile picture, and I decided to be honest. I mentioned that, as a girl, she should display her full photo in her WhatsApp display picture. I pointed out how stunning she looked in our college dress and how modern and stylish she appeared in her profile picture. I also shared my personal preference for girls who embrace a more traditional look. Jahnavi playfully teased me about having a liking for girls from the '90s, and we both shared a laugh.

She took my comments seriously and changed her profile picture to a photo I suggested from her gallery. It was evident that she wanted to impress me and align herself with the image of the kind of girl I had mentioned during our phone call the previous day.

After lunch, our discussion shifted to the logistics and props required for our dance performance. We meticulously went over the checklist, making sure we had everything we needed for our act. As we were engrossed in our preparations, our principal and the dance coordinator unexpectedly paid us a visit.

They observed our practice and were impressed by our dedication and talent. The coordinator, in particular, suggested that Bhagya partner with me instead of Jahnavi due to the height difference between

us. We complied with the suggestion, and I rehearsed with Bhagya, while Jahnvi paired with Manoj. However, Jahnvi's enthusiasm waned, and she seemed dejected.

She spoke to the coordinator about her concerns, and it was clear that she wanted to dance with me. To our surprise, the coordinator made a swift decision and reassigned me as Jahnvi's partner, while Bhagya returned to her previous partner. Jahnvi was elated, and her joy was evident. I couldn't help but feel a sense of happiness and excitement about partnering with her for the performance.

As we continued our practice, there was an undeniable chemistry between us, both in our dance moves and our camaraderie. The upcoming competition had taken on a new level of significance, and I was determined to give it my all, not just for myself but for Jahnvi as well.

With my determination firmly intact for the upcoming competition, we concluded the day's practice in high spirits. Jahnvi, perhaps hoping for us to walk together after practice, waited for me. However, I decided not to fall into the habit of always being by her side. Instead, I stayed back, continuing to refine my solo performance and patiently awaiting my brother.

As the evening wore on, my brother finally arrived, and we left the college premises together. He too encouraged me to give my best in the competition. Upon arriving home, I knew there were messages from Jahnvi on my phone, but I deliberately refrained from opening them. Instead, I settled down to have some snacks and focused on perfecting my solo performance.

The Michael Jackson costume that had arrived the previous day fit me perfectly, and when I donned it, I felt transformed into the King of Pop himself. My family, consisting of my parents and my brother, were elated to see me in the costume. They marveled at how closely I resembled MJ, and I took some pictures to capture the moment. I decided to send the best one to Jahnvi, wanting her to know why I hadn't responded to her messages earlier.

Once the photos were sent, I dived back into my practice, striving for perfection. Michael Jackson's style of dance isn't easy to master, and it took hours of dedicated effort to achieve the level of precision I desired. Despite the challenges, I was determined to give my best performance. After hours of practice, I finally felt confident in my dance.

With my family gathered around, I decided to perform in front of them. Their enthusiastic response filled me with confidence and further fueled my determination to secure first place in the competition. I had chosen the MJ concept for my solo performance precisely because it was unique and had the potential to stand out. Few would dare to perform a solo MJ routine, and I was convinced that my daring choice would pay off with a first-place victory.

After enjoying a hearty dinner, I decided to check my phone, and to my surprise, I found a missed call from Jahnvi. I quickly opened her messages, and there it was, a heart symbol in response to the photo I had sent of myself in the Michael Jackson costume. Her message read, "You look just like MJ! All the best for tomorrow." I couldn't help but smile at her compliment and well-wishes. I replied with a simple "Thank you" and added a smiling emoji.

Curiosity piqued, I asked her why she had called, and she replied with, "Just wanted to know what you were up to." I responded honestly, telling her that I was engrossed in practice. She seemed understanding and replied with, "Yeah, I figured. By the way, did you have dinner?" I replied in the affirmative, letting her know that I had eaten. I couldn't help but reciprocate her concern, so I asked her if she had eaten too. Her response, "Yes," reassured me.

As the conversation continued, I asked if she was planning to sleep soon, to which she replied, "Yes, I am. Are you?" I replied that I was indeed quite tired and ready to call it a night. As always she added a friendly touch by calling me "senior." I wished her a good night's sleep in return, and we concluded our conversation for the night.

Upon reading her message this time, which read, "Goodnight senior" I couldn't help but feel a rush of emotions. It triggered a memory of our time together in the auto when she had given me a particular look that had left an impression on me.

Her eyes, oh, those eyes, they were truly mesmerizing. I had caught myself getting lost in their depths during our conversations. The way she looked at me, with a mixture of playfulness and sincerity, was something I couldn't easily forget. It was as if her eyes held secrets and stories waiting to be unveiled.

With these thoughts swirling in my mind, I drifted off to sleep, hoping that the night would bring dreams filled with her presence, perhaps even a virtual kiss in the dreamworld. But regardless of what my dreams held, one thing was clear: Jahnavi had left an indelible mark on my thoughts, and I couldn't help but look forward to our next interaction with eager anticipation.

The morning of the dance competition had arrived, and I found myself startled by a dream in which I had not emerged victorious. It was a disconcerting start to the day, and I decided to seek solace in my mother's words of wisdom. I approached her, recounting the dream and wondering aloud if morning dreams held any significant meaning. She looked at me with a reassuring smile and said, "Dreams are not prophecies, my dear. What truly matters is the effort you put into achieving your goals." Her words provided the comfort and motivation I needed to face the day ahead.

With newfound determination, I replied to Jahnavi's morning message with a warm "Good morning, Jahnavi." The excitement for the competition was palpable, and I wanted to focus on the tasks at hand. I took a moment to remind everyone in our WhatsApp group not to forget their costumes and to arrive promptly. My brother was by my side, assisting me with the costume bags and props we would need for the day.

Upon entering the college premises, I was immediately struck by the grandeur of the event. The campus had been beautifully decorated to welcome participants from various colleges, and the stage itself was a sight to behold. It was an awe-inspiring backdrop for what promised to be an unforgettable day.

As I made my way to the designated room, I was met with a vision that left me utterly breathless: Jahnavi, gracefully draped in a saree. In that moment, my heart skipped a beat, and I couldn't help but feel an overwhelming desire to share my life with her. She looked resplendent in the traditional attire, and I was captivated by her timeless beauty.

Despite my emotions running wild, I managed to compose myself and complimented her. "Hi Jahnavi, you look absolutely stunning in that saree," I said, my admiration shining through. Jahnavi responded with a playful tone, revealing that she had messaged me earlier for my opinion on the saree's color. I was taken aback; my morning preparations had caused me to miss her message. I quickly apologized, explaining that I had been preoccupied with packing.

Jahnavi was understanding and shrugged off the incident, suggesting that we head to our designated room. She mentioned that everyone was eagerly awaiting my arrival. I nodded in agreement, my heart pounding with a mix of excitement and anxiety. My brother, who had been a steadfast presence by my side, also received a warm greeting from Jahnavi. Together, the three of us embarked on the short journey to join our fellow competitors.

We entered the room where Bhagya and Sunetha were already dressed in stunning sarees. Manoj and Ram couldn't help but comment on how Jahnavi was accompanying me. It added a bit of light-heartedness to the atmosphere. My brother, who had been standing beside me, seemed intrigued and asked, "Is it true?" I chuckled and replied, "No, man, just leave it."

With everyone dressed and ready, I decided to check when our performance was scheduled and how many competitors we would be up against. Just as I was about to do that, our dance coordinator

approached me, his expression a mix of hope and concern. He informed me that a total of 23 colleges were participating this year, making the competition exceptionally tough. It was a significant increase from the 15 colleges that had participated the previous year when our college had emerged victorious.

My initial shock gave way to determination, and I assured our coordinator that there was no need to worry. I was confident in our performance, the choreography, and our team's capabilities. I took the responsibility to ease his concerns and told him that we would give our best.

Accompanied by the coordinator, I proceeded to complete the registration process. Meanwhile, I urged my friends to stay confident and continue practicing. After finishing the paperwork, I also took a moment to check the list of solo participants. To my surprise, there were 77 participants in the solo category. It was indeed a significant number, but it didn't shake my confidence. I knew I had prepared well for my solo performance.

As I made my way back to the room, my friends were eagerly waiting to fill me in on what I had missed. They explained that they had been responsible for looking after the participants from other colleges, including some girls. Jahnavi, who had been watching me closely, seemed slightly disappointed that I had chosen to go with my friends. I had to maintain some distance to avoid giving her the wrong impression, so I decided to join my friends.

The atmosphere at the youth festival was lively and filled with the exuberance of youth. We enjoyed the performances, speeches, and the general camaraderie with students from other colleges. Eventually, it was time for the dance competition to begin, and we were called to sit at the stage area. Our team was all set and positioned behind the stage. I had strategically arranged for our performance to be the last, believing that it would leave a lasting impact on the judges.

One by one, the performances unfolded, and we watched from behind the stage. I couldn't help but feel a sense of pride in our preparation. I was confident that our performance was top-notch. However, as the competition progressed, two other groups stood out with exceptional performances. It was a little unsettling to see the competition getting tougher, and a slight fear crept in.

Despite the impressive performances of the other groups, I reminded my team that none of them were as good as we were. I assured them that we had the talent, the choreography, and the teamwork needed to win.

As we prepared to step onto the stage, I felt a sudden squeeze on my hand. It was Jahnavi, her nervousness palpable. I reassured her, "Don't worry, just give it your best." We took our positions, and the music began. It was as if we became one with the music, pouring our hearts into our dance. The audience was electric, especially our college students who cheered us on. I could hear my classmates calling out my name, "akhil, akhil, akhil!" It was an exhilarating moment that filled me with energy.

While we danced, I couldn't help but notice the overwhelming support from our college. Their cheers and shouts fueled our performance. Jahnavi danced beside me, her expressions matching mine perfectly. Her presence and her commitment to the dance motivated me to give my all. As the performance reached its climax, the audience erupted into applause, whistles, and cheers. It was a surreal feeling, like performing in a grand theater.

At the end of our performance, we were met with a standing ovation. The audience showered us with praise, and my name rang out through the crowd. It was a moment of triumph for our team, and we expressed our gratitude to the audience before stepping down from the stage. We were surrounded by our college staff, students, and my brother, who couldn't have been prouder. Friends took pictures with me, and Jahnavi, eager to capture the moment, asked for a selfie with me.

After our performance, it was time for lunch. Jahnavi seemed eager to accompany me, but my friends whisked me away, leaving her with her own group of friends. I could sense a hint of disappointment in her

eyes, but it was essential to maintain a balance and not give her the wrong impression. I joined my friends for lunch, and as I was eating, my phone buzzed with a call from Jahnavi. She asked if I had eaten, and I confirmed that I was having lunch. She wished me good luck for my solo performance, and her words provided me with an extra boost of energy.

Once I had finished lunch, I began preparing for my solo performance. I needed some rest and decided to take a short nap beside my brother, Jahnavi who had been chatting with my brother, noticed me waking up and urged me to freshen up and get ready for my solo. Her support was unwavering, and I appreciated her presence and encouragement.

I dressed in my MJ costume, which drew astonishment and admiration from those around me. Friends and even strangers approached me for photos and compliments. Some girls I didn't even know wanted to take pictures with me, discussing my dance and my performance. I couldn't help but notice a tinge of jealousy in Jahnavi's eyes as she watched me interact with others, and I decided to playfully intensify my interactions to tease her further.

Finally, the time arrived for my solo performance. The audience was excited and enthusiastic, waiting for the highly anticipated performance. Jahnavi, with an encouraging look in her eyes, wished me the best, while my brother cheered me on. I took the stage with confidence, my heart racing with excitement and adrenaline.

As the music started, I became one with the rhythm. I gave my all, performing with the same passion and precision that Michael Jackson was known for. The audience was captivated by my performance, and their cheers grew louder with each move I made. The energy on that stage was incredible, and I felt like I was soaring.

With the final notes of the music, I completed my performance and stepped off the stage to a thunderous applause. The anchor referred to me as "our college Michael Jackson," and the audience's admiration overwhelmed me. I quickly changed out of my costume, and my friends congratulated me, but my attention was fixed on Jahnavi.

I was eager to hear her feedback, and I made my way toward her group. However, my friends surrounded me, making it difficult for me to approach her directly. I pretended to be heading back to my group, but I subtly moved closer to Jahnavi. She was beaming with joy, and her words of praise for my performance were music to my ears.

To my surprise, my father had arrived at the event and congratulated me on my performance. I introduced him to my friends, and when it was Jahnavi's turn, she greeted him with a respectful "Namaste, uncle." The warmth in her eyes was unmistakable, and my heart swelled with happiness.

With my father's arrival, I had taken him to the front row to watch the results eagerly. We were all waiting with bated breath to hear the outcome of the competition.

As the results for the other events were being announced, I anxiously awaited the outcome for the group dance competition. With bated breath, our team clung to each other, and I tightly held Jahnavi's hand. Her reassuring gaze met mine, and she encouraged me to stay calm and relaxed. I closed my eyes, trying to calm my racing heart, and waited for the chief guest to reveal the winners.

The moment of truth arrived as the chief guest began to announce the winners of the group dance competition. The tension in the air was palpable. I could feel my heart pounding in my chest, and I could sense the nervous energy radiating from my teammates. Jahnavi, by my side, continued to offer her support, whispering words of encouragement.

Then, it happened. The chief guest declared, "The winners of the group dance competition are akhil and group." My heart soared with joy and relief. I couldn't contain my happiness. I wanted to hug Jahnavi, but

the formality of the occasion held me back. Instead, I congratulated each of my teammates with enthusiastic high-fives and embraces. I glanced at my father, and with a subtle nod and a proud smile, I communicated to him that I had achieved victory. He, too, was overjoyed by my success, and everyone around me joined in the celebration.

With the group dance competition won, we eagerly anticipated the results of the solo dance performance. I was filled with confidence, convinced that my performance had been exceptional and that I would emerge victorious. I clung to the hope of hearing my name announced as the winner.

As the chief guest began to announce the winner of the solo dance performance, I held my breath. But to my shock and disappointment, he declared, "The winner of the solo dance performance is Kavya." My heart sank as I realized that I had not secured the first place. The chief guest continued, "The runner-up is akhil."

I stood there in a daze, unable to process the news. I hadn't expected this outcome. I looked at Kavya, the winner, who was reveling in her victory alongside her college mates. Tears welled up in my eyes, and I couldn't help but cry openly. The disappointment was overwhelming.

Jahnavi, who had been holding my hand throughout, tried to console me. She reassured me that it was okay and that achieving second place was still a significant accomplishment. I wiped away my tears and tried to regain my composure.

My father came over, offering words of comfort and support. He encouraged me to stop crying and focus on the success I had achieved in the group dance competition. It was a moment of realization; I had allowed my emotions to get the best of me.

In the midst of my distress, I remembered that I was crying like a child. I apologized to my friends and asked if they had a video of Kavya's winning performance. They obliged and showed me the video. As I watched, I couldn't deny that Kavya's dance was truly exceptional. She had performed with grace and precision, blending different styles seamlessly.

After viewing the video, I found Kavya and congratulated her on her well-deserved victory. She seemed surprised by my sportsmanship and remarked that she had expected me to win, given my electrifying MJ performance. I thanked her and praised her talent once again.

In that moment, I briefly considered asking for her phone number, but the watchful eyes of my dad and friends, especially Jahnavi, made me think otherwise. Kavya eventually returned to her friends, and I was left to ponder the day's events.

Though I hadn't clinched the top spot in the solo dance competition, My second-place finish was still an achievement to be proud of, and I knew there would be more opportunities in the future to shine.

As the prize distribution ceremony began, I proudly took the stage with my group to receive our award for the group dance competition. The feeling of accomplishment and camaraderie among my teammates was overwhelming. We had put in hours of practice, and it had all paid off.

After receiving our group award, I eagerly stepped up once more to accept my runner-up prize for the solo dance performance. The applause and cheers from the audience were uplifting, and I couldn't help but smile as I held the trophy. The day had been filled with highs and lows, but ultimately, it was a day to remember.

With the event now concluded, I took my group to meet my father and brother. We gathered for a group photo, capturing the moment of our success. The smiles and jubilant faces in the photo reflected the shared sense of achievement.

With the group photo taken, my friends hurried off to change their costumes, and my father suggested that it was time to leave. It was already 7 pm in the evening, and the day had been eventful.

I felt a sense of responsibility towards Jahnvi, knowing that she was waiting for me. I decided to give her a call to see where she was and to ensure she had a safe way to get home. Jahnvi answered my call, her voice filled with anticipation. I asked her if someone was coming to pick her up, and to my surprise, she mentioned that her brother was on his way.

I couldn't help but feel a pang of guilt. Jahnvi had mentioned her brother during our previous conversation, and I had forgotten about it. I apologized for not remembering and asked her how long it would take for her brother to arrive.

Jahnvi estimated that it might take about 15 minutes for her brother to reach the venue. She seemed hopeful that I would stay and keep her company during the wait. However, I knew that if I stayed with her, it might lead to unwanted speculation. Given that my father was also present, I thought it best to maintain a respectful distance.

I conveyed my decision to Jahnvi, suggesting that she return to her friends and wait for her brother with them. Although she agreed, I could sense a hint of disappointment in her voice. I reassured her that it wouldn't be long before her brother arrived and that she would be safe with her friends.

As I rejoined my father and brother, I couldn't help but share the amusing situation with them. As we began to walk away, I assumed Jahnvi was following us. To my surprise, I spotted her a distance away, still with her friends. I pointed her out to my father, teasingly saying, "Look, Dad, there's my dance partner. Did you notice?" My father, in good spirits, replied affirmatively and even complimented her performance, saying she had done exceptionally well, perhaps even better than me. We shared a laugh, lightening the mood.

While chatting, I asked Jahnvi if her brother had arrived. She confirmed that he was en route, reassuring me of her safety. After bidding farewell to our friends, we continued our conversation, relishing in our success. I couldn't wait to share the news with my mom, overflowing with pride and excitement.

With our hearts full of triumph, we left the college premises.

When we arrived home, my mother was overjoyed to hear the news of our success. My father had shared the details with her over a phone call, and she couldn't contain her excitement. We gathered in the living room, and while reminiscing about the day's events, we decided to play my performances on the television. As the familiar dances filled the screen, my mother couldn't help but comment on them in a playful manner. She laughed and praised me, making the whole experience even more enjoyable.

Amidst the laughter and applause, my father pointed to Jahnvi in one of the photos and asked if she was the girl I had mentioned earlier. I confirmed her identity, and then I shared a surprising tidbit about her. "You know, she has around 10,000 followers on Instagram," I mentioned. Intrigued, my father watched her dance videos and commented on her talent, though he couldn't help but notice that she was on the shorter side, especially when dancing beside me.

My mother, still engrossed in Jahnvi's Instagram reels, raised an interesting question, asking whether her parents allowed her to pursue such activities. My father responded, "Well, dear, you've been watching TV lately. You can see that many youngsters are doing similar things these days. It's becoming quite common." He made a valid point about the changing dynamics of the younger generation and how they express themselves.

The conversation then took a playful turn when my father noticed Jahnvi's excitement when talking to me earlier in the day. In a teasing tone, my mother chimed in, saying that Jahnvi was indeed quite short compared to me. My father, perhaps in jest, commented that we shouldn't choose someone like her for

my future partner. The discussion playfully veered into the topic of my marriage, a subject that often comes up in Indian households.

My father, being traditional and valuing ethics and family values, expressed his intention to find a suitable match for me. He assured me that he would choose a girl who shared our family's values and principles. My mother, with a smile, backed him up, emphasizing the importance of finding a partner who matches our family's ethics and values.

In a playful but determined manner, I interjected, stating my desire for a love marriage. Both my parents responded firmly, saying that if I harbored such thoughts, I was welcome to pack my things and leave home without any hesitation. Their stance reflected the generational gap and the evolving views on relationships and marriage in today's society.

As the conversation continued, I couldn't help but nod in agreement with my parents' perspective.

As the evening unfolded, I suddenly remembered Jahnavi and the need to check if she had safely reached home. I found a pretext to step away from the family gathering, mentioning that I needed to make a call to a friend. I retreated to the terrace, the familiar backdrop for many of my phone conversations, and quickly checked my messages. There it was, her message: "Reached home, senior. Hope you did too." I decided not to open it just yet, wanting to maintain an air of concern when I called her.

I dialed her number, and she answered promptly. "Hello?" Her voice sounded warm and friendly, just as I had grown accustomed to.

"Hey, Jahnavi," I began. "I just wanted to check if you reached home safely."

She replied with a hint of amusement, "I messaged you, senior, to let you know I'm home."

I acted as though I hadn't seen her message and said, "Oh, I didn't check my phone. Sorry about that."

She didn't seem to mind my forgetfulness and continued the conversation by asking if I had seen her Instagram status. Confused, I admitted that I hadn't. She promptly asked me to take a look, and I obliged.

There, on her Instagram status, was a post that simply said, "Miss you." I was intrigued and asked her what it meant. Her response was candid: "It's about you. I'll miss you from tomorrow because there won't be any practice, no routine classes, and we won't get to spend time together like we do every day."

Her words caught me by surprise, and I couldn't help but contemplate her actions. If I were to win her affections and make her love me, should I be doing similar things? I realized that her gestures were an expression of her fondness for me, and I felt a sense of responsibility to reciprocate her feelings. So, I responded with reassurance, "Don't worry, Jahnavi. We're still in the same college, right? We can find time to meet up when it's possible."

But her tone grew melancholic as she replied, "Yes, but I'll still miss you. I'm going to be so sad, senior."

Her sentiment tugged at my heartstrings, and I found myself in unfamiliar territory, trying to navigate the emotions of someone who cared deeply for me. Her childlike innocence left me at a loss for words at times. But I knew I had to respond with kindness, so I softly said, "It's alright, Jahnavi. I'll miss you too."

We continued to chat for a while, discussing various topics as we often did. However, my mother's voice calling for me in the background signaled the need for me to wrap up the conversation. I explained the situation to Jahnavi and told her I had to go. She bid me goodnight with a hint of sadness in her voice.

Ending the call, Jahnavi's affection and her transparent expressions of care had touched me in a profound way. It was a feeling I had never quite experienced before, and it left me questioning the direction in which

our relationship was headed. Little did I know that this was just the beginning of a journey filled with ups and downs, uncertainties, and surprises.

That night, I enjoyed a hearty meal and went to bed with a heart full of happiness.

The following morning, I awoke with a hopeful anticipation, wondering if Jahnavi would message me. To my delight, her message popped up: "Good morning, senior." It brought an immediate smile to my face. Swiftly, I replied with a cheerful "Good morning."

She wasted no time in getting to the point: "Coming to college?" she asked.

I responded, "Yes, I am. What about you?"

Her reply confirmed her presence: "Yes, I'm coming."

However, I didn't open the message immediately. I knew that once I did, it would initiate a conversation, and right now, I was still at home. If my mother caught me glued to my phone this early in the morning, I'd be in for a scolding. So, I busied myself with getting ready for the day. My brother was also getting prepared, and soon we set off for college.

During our journey, I finally opened Jahnavi's message. She had confirmed that she was indeed coming to college today. As I headed to class, I couldn't help but ponder the return to the routine of monotonous classes that awaited me.

As I entered the class, once again, everyone congratulated me, including my class teacher. The first hour of class started, and it was as boring as ever. I often found myself drifting off to sleep during class, but today was different. I had a new distraction - chatting with Jahnavi. We pretended to be attentive in class, but everyone secretly used their phones. If the teacher caught us, it would be a bad day, but if not, we were safe.

I opened Jahnavi's message and asked her if she had arrived at class. She replied that she was already there, and I questioned whether it was okay for her to chat in class. She reassured me, saying it wasn't a problem because she was sitting in the backbench.

Our secret chatting continued, and she mentioned that she had brought a big lunchbox. I had expected this, but not so early in the day. I thanked her for the gesture, and she asked how she could give it to me. I replied that I would take it, and she agreed.

As the first hour of class came to an end, I decided to bunk the next class, as I often do. I found an empty room and settled in to watch a movie. I messaged Jahnavi about it, knowing that she was aware of my plan to watch movies during class. She replied, acknowledging that I had started from today, and I left the message unread as I began watching the movie.

While I was engrossed in the movie, during our break time, Jahnavi, along with Sunitha and her friends, paid me a surprise visit in the empty room on the fifth floor where I was watching the movie. Jahnavi had brought the lunchbox for me as promised, and her friends couldn't help but comment about our interaction. Their playful banter brought a smile to my face, and after a short visit, they left.

I continued watching the movie and then joined my friends in my classroom during lunchtime. Jahnavi called me to ask how I liked the dish she had brought for me. I told her it was delicious, and we engaged in a pleasant conversation while enjoying our meals. My friends, noticing me talking on the phone, couldn't resist their usual teasing and comments, which had become quite common in our classroom.

After lunch, as was my daily routine, I decided to catch a short nap in the same empty room where I had been watching the movie. During my nap, I became aware that Jahnavi and Sunitha were wandering in

the corridor near the room. I noticed their presence but chose to act as if I hadn't seen them. As the clock struck 4 pm and the bell signaled the end of the college day, I was reminded that it was time to leave for my volleyball game. My friends called me to join them, and I eagerly headed to the volleyball court, excited for the game ahead.

I received a message from Jahnavi that read, "Where are you, senior?" I quickly replied, "Just woke up, coming down." Moments later, my phone rang, and it was Jahnavi calling. She asked if I would join them on the college footpath.

Jahnavi's unexpected request to meet up on the footpath caught me off guard. In our college, it was common for couples and friends to sit on the footpath after classes, but I was cautious about the image I projected because I was well-known among my faculty, classmates, and even juniors due to my achievements. I couldn't afford to be part of any rumors or misunderstandings.

With that in mind, I politely declined Jahnavi's invitation, explaining that I had plans to play volleyball. I could sense her disappointment, but I felt it was the right decision for both of us. She wished me to be careful while playing, and we exchanged goodbyes.

I headed to the volleyball ground, as playing the sport was one of my regular activities. When I played volleyball, I would often give my phone to one of my friends who wasn't involved in the game to hold onto it.

While I was engrossed in the game, Jahnavi called me again. This time, my phone was in my friend's hand, and he noticed her name on the caller ID. Since everyone had come to know her through our event the previous day, he handed me the phone. My friends were busy gossiping with each other, and I answered the call.

Jahnavi informed me that she had forgotten her lunchbox, the same one she had given to me earlier. I felt a pang of guilt for neglecting it. I asked where she was, and I was taken aback when she mentioned that she was on the footpath, watching our volleyball game. I was startled by this revelation because I had taken off my shirt to play, and I would have thought twice about doing so if I had known she was watching.

On the call, my friends were making comments and teasing me, so I decided to end the call. I quickly went to where Jahnavi and her friends were sitting and handed her the lunchbox. I asked her if she was still not heading home, and she explained that they usually stayed there for a while with her friends before going home. Her friends nodded in agreement, and I bid them farewell before returning to the volleyball game.

My brother was waiting for me there and expressed his concern about me playing. As per our usual arrangement, I asked him to go home and tell our parents that I was working on some assignments and would be home late. He agreed to cover for me, and I rejoined the game, fully immersed in the spirited match.

After the volleyball game ended, I had expected to receive a message from Jahnavi letting me know that she had reached home safely. However, to my surprise, there was no message from her. I suspected that she might be waiting for me to message her first to check if I was concerned about her, so I decided not to send her a message and see if she would initiate contact.

I began my journey back home, and when I arrived, my mom believed the lies I had told her about working on assignments. However, my dad, as usual, was skeptical, but I managed to convince him of the same lie. It wasn't always easy to deceive my dad, but this time, I had succeeded.

As I had shared the news of my achievement with my friend Hari, he suggested that we celebrate by going out for a party. So, I called Hari, and we decided to meet up at a local park. We discussed my

recent accomplishment, our daily routines, and naturally, the topic of Jahnavi came up. I recounted her actions and behaviors towards me, and Hari suggested that in the future, we should consider skipping college and going to the movies, and I should take Jahnavi along with us.

I hesitated at the idea because Jahnavi and I were both locals in the city, and any public appearance with her could potentially lead to rumors or gossip. Our city was relatively small, and my father was a well-known figure. If anyone saw me with a girl and reported it to my dad, it could spell trouble for me.

Hari asked for Jahnavi's address, and I informed him that she lived in Radha Colony, which was approximately 5 kilometers away from our neighborhood. While I had shared this information, I still couldn't help but feel apprehensive about the idea of venturing into unknown territory with Jahnavi, especially given the potential consequences of being spotted together in public.

As Hari and I continued to discuss our plans, I thought it would be a good idea to call Jahnavi and explain our intentions to her. I figured that sharing the details of our outing would help me learn her address. However, before I could make the call, I was taken by surprise when Jahnavi herself called me.

"Hello, senior. Where are you? I'm guessing you're at the library, watching a movie, right?" Jahnavi said with a tone of familiarity.

I recalled our previous conversation where I had mentioned my only best friend, Hari. I replied, "No, I told you about Hari, remember? I'm with him right now."

She seemed to accept this and said, "Okay, carry on. I'll call you later."

As Hari and I strolled along the streets, we discussed our plan to visit Jahnavi's colony. In a playful manner, I joked, "We will come to your home."

Jahnavi appeared shocked by this statement and asked if I was serious. I quickly clarified, "No, I was just joking. Just share your location with me, and I'll figure out where your home is."

I then inquired about the best street food in her colony, and she mentioned that the panipuri there was exceptional. She also shared her location with us, and we set out on our journey to meet her. As we walked, Hari couldn't resist teasing me about our call with Jahnavi and the unexpected plan we were embarking on.

When Hari and I arrived at the location Jahnavi had shared, we spotted her house. I decided to give her a call, and she answered. To our surprise, she came out of her house, waving her hand to us.

I couldn't resist scolding her over the phone, saying, "Why did you do that? Waving your hand to boys like this might make your neighbors misunderstand," I reprimanded her.

I explained that if someone from her neighborhood saw her waving to boys like us, they might get the wrong impression. Jahnavi understood and replied, "I thought it's just basic courtesy to greet someone who has come near my home."

However, I insisted that she didn't need to do that and suggested her to go back inside her house. She agreed and said, "Okay, I'll call you later."

Hari and I proceeded to enjoy some panipuri, discussing various topics, including Jahnavi, our daily routines, and our recent adventures. As the evening drew to a close, we made our way back home, promising to meet up again soon.

As I approached my home, I decided not to go in just yet and instead called Jahnavi. Our conversation began, with her expressing her excitement about my visit to her colony and her home. Then, to my

surprise, she asked, "Senior, can I say something about you?"

Curious, I replied, "Yes, tell me."

She hesitated and then said, "You are a gentleman, Senior."

I was taken aback and asked, "Oh, is that so? Why do you feel that way?" Although I knew the meaning of the word "gentleman," I quickly googled it to confirm, and it said, "A man who is polite and behaves well towards other people."

Jahnavi seemed a bit shy as she continued, "You are really a nice person. You never misbehave with girls, you don't make fun of them, and sometimes you even advise me on what a girl should or should not do. You have good values and ethics."

I smiled at her words and replied, "Thank you, Jahnavi. I believe in treating everyone with respect and kindness, regardless of their gender. It's important to have values and ethics that guide our behavior."

Even though I had shared my beliefs with Jahnavi, I couldn't help but chuckle to myself, thinking that only my close friends truly understood my intentions and principles when it came to interacting with girls.

She continued, "One more thing, Senior."

I replied, "Yes, tell me."

She asked, "Can I call you akhil garu?" Hearing those words, I was deeply moved by the respect in her voice. In our local language, Telugu, adding "garu" to someone's name is a sign of respect, especially towards elders. Jahnavi calling me akhil garu felt like sweet music to my ears, and I couldn't help but smile.

I said, "Jahnavi, I didn't expect this, but I'm really impressed and I like it when you call me like that. So, I want to buy you chocolate."

She hesitated and replied, "No, akhil garu, you don't have to."

I insisted, "No, you should have it. I'll buy it for you."

She agreed, and then she added, "akhil garu, one more thing, please call me Jaanu. I would love it if you call me that."

I remembered that in our initial days, she had mentioned that only certain people she cared about could call her by that name. I smiled and said, "Okay, Jaanu, I will."

She responded with gratitude, "Oh, that's really sweet to hear. Thank you."

On that day, I couldn't help but think about the possibility of Jahnavi becoming my wife in the future. Our conversation continued for hours, and towards the end, she said, "akhil garu, we should become much closer."

Hearing those words, my feelings for her grew stronger, and I replied, "Sure, we will soon."

As it was getting late, I told her I had to go home and bid her goodbye. With a heart full of new and warm feelings, I made my way back home.

As my body was physically at home, my mind and heart were with Jahnavi, especially after our conversation the previous day. Her call and messages had intensified my feelings for her, and I couldn't

stop thinking about her. I quickly finished my dinner that night, eager to chat with her again. And then, I received a notification from her: "akhil garuuuu ."

Seeing that message, I felt like I was floating on air. I replied, "Yes, Jaan, did you have your lunch?" Our chat continued late into the night, and I hadn't expected this, but it was happening, and I didn't want it to stop.

I went to bed that night with thoughts of Jahnavi filling my mind. I imagined her as my future wife, taking care of me after a long day, removing my shirt, and giving me a massage. These sweet dreams filled my sleep, and I woke up the next morning with a smile on my face. I immediately messaged her a cheerful "Good morning."

As I woke up early in the morning, surprising my mother. When she asked why I was up so early, I quickly responded, "I have assignments to work on." I used this excuse to hide my excitement and the fact that I was eagerly waiting for Jahnavi's reply.

However, she hadn't woken up yet, so there was no immediate reply. I went about my morning routine, trying to act normal and pretending to work on assignments while secretly waiting for her response.

After about 20 minutes, I received a reply from Jahnavi. Our morning chat began, and for those precious minutes, everything felt just right. As I got ready for college that day, I couldn't help but wonder what the day had in store for me and Jahnavi.

As the day unfolded, it followed a similar pattern to the previous one, with us chatting during class and me watching movies in the empty room. During the break, Jahnavi surprised me by addressing me as "akhil garu" in person, just as she did in our messages. Her friends heard her and playfully teased her, but she didn't let their comments bother her. She continued to call me "akhil garu," and every time she said it, my heart skipped a beat. It sounded so sweet coming from her lips.

As I mentioned earlier, I had bought a chocolate for Jahnavi, and I kept it in my bag. In the evening, as I was getting ready to go for my volleyball game, I hoped that Jahnavi would call and invite me to join her on the footpath. This time, I was determined to join her, even though I didn't know why. When her call came, she asked, "akhil garu, will you come today and join us, or will you play volleyball?" How could I resist such an invitation from Jahnavi? I agreed, saying, "Yes, I will come, and I also need to return your lunch box."

However, she responded somewhat disappointedly, "Oh, you're coming just to return the lunch box?" I could sense her disappointment, but I stuck to my plan and replied affirmatively. I went to her and handed over the lunch box. She seemed a bit let down, and I took the opportunity to explain why I hadn't been interested in sitting with her earlier. I mentioned how people might perceive me if I suddenly started chatting with a girl, as I had never done that before. Jahnavi understood my point and nodded in agreement. After returning her lunchbox and giving her the chocolate, she thanked me with a sweet "thank you, akhil garu."

Since I wasn't really interested in playing the game that day, I decided to head home early in the hope of chatting with Jahnavi when I got back. I knew that she might message me or call, and I wanted to be ready to respond. So, I said my goodbyes and left for home with my brother.

It seemed that Jahnavi and I were growing closer with each passing day, and I couldn't help but be charmed by her. Our conversations were becoming more affectionate, and I found myself falling for her. The way she called me "akhil garu" and then playfully corrected me to call her "Jaanu" melted my heart. I couldn't resist her childlike charm and agreed to call her by the new name.

I had called Jahnavi while heading to the library from home, wanting to express my feelings for her and let her know how much I appreciated our conversations the previous day. I began by asking if she had

reached home, and she replied, "akhil garu, what did I say? Please call me Jaanu." I apologized and said, "Yes, yes, sorry, I forgot." She insisted I repeat my question with "Jaanu," so I playfully complied, saying, "Did you reach home, Januuu?" She responded, "Just now reached, akhil garuuuu," and our conversation continued for hours.

As we chatted, our playful mood continued, and I found myself talking more childishly, mirroring her tone. However, she eventually brought up a topic I found somewhat unpleasant – her ex-boyfriend. I had never asked her about him, but she voluntarily shared that his name was Sravan. She explained that he had recently called her after seeing her status with our achievement photos and had inquired about me.

She told me they had broken up, but he was still keeping tabs on her. I asked her why she had taken his call, and she explained that he had used a different number to contact her. When he asked about me, she replied, "I was none of your business," and promptly ended the call.

I was surprised by this revelation and asked her why she had unblocked him if they had broken up. She clarified that she had unblocked him so that he could see her status and know that she had moved on.

While I felt a growing connection to her, her past experiences with her ex-boyfriend made me uncomfortable. Despite this, I pretended to be supportive and emphasized the importance of being cautious when dealing with such situations. I hated discussing her past relationships, but it seemed to be an unavoidable part of our conversations. Eventually, we changed the topic, and our chat continued.

I found myself in a constant battle between my heart and my mind. My heart was drawn to Jahnavi's affectionate behavior, her childlike charm, and the immense respect she showed me. It made me believe she could be the person I could spend my life with. Yet, my mind was clouded by doubts and concerns about her past, especially her recent contact with her ex-boyfriend Sravan.

Days turned into weeks, and our conversations became more frequent. Each call left me even more enamored by her, but the uncertainty about her past continued to haunt me. I knew deep down that one day, she might confess her feelings and propose to me. And when that day came, I would have to make a decision that could potentially change the course of both our lives.

I started contemplating my options. Should I let myself fall for her completely, ignoring her past and focusing only on the present? Or should I distance myself, preventing any deeper emotional attachment to save myself from potential heartbreak?

On one hand, I saw Jahnavi as an incredible person, someone who genuinely cared about me and showed immense respect. Her kindness, affection, and the little things she did for me tugged at my heartstrings. Yet, on the other hand, the uncertainty about her past relationship created a barrier, making it difficult for me to fully commit.

I couldn't help but think that I needed a distraction from my swirling emotions about Jahnavi.. You know, in college, we have celebrations for different occasions. Christmas had just passed, and it was okay, but I really liked the New Year's celebrations because they had cool activities, especially dances. These dances were a great way to meet new people and make friends.

So, after Christmas, we had a meeting with the teachers to plan the New Year's party. I was the head student in charge of helping organize things. They talked about cutting a big cake and making speeches, but they didn't mention the dances and fun stuff I loved. I was worried they might not have any dancing this time.

I raised my hand and asked the teachers if we could have some dances, like a flashmob. A flashmob is when a group of people suddenly starts dancing in a public place, and it's a lot of fun. The teachers weren't sure at first because we already had a party recently, called the youth festival. They thought we didn't need more celebrations.

But I really wanted to have some dancing, so I kept asking nicely. Finally, they said yes, but with one condition: I had to organize everything for the flashmob. I was thrilled! It meant I could focus on planning this exciting dance event, and it would help me forget about my confusing feelings for Jahnavi.

I was so happy about the flashmob. It wasn't just something fun to do, but it also gave me a new purpose. Instead of thinking too much about Jahnavi, I could concentrate on making the flashmob fantastic. I wanted to make sure everyone at college had a great time, and it would also let me meet new people and keep my mind off my mixed-up feelings for Jahnavi.

While I was chatting with Jahnavi about the flashmob, I noticed she and her friends were walking around where I was sitting. Some teachers were giving me strange looks, probably because they thought I was encouraging dancing and flirting among the students.

But that didn't bother me. Last year, during the New Year's celebrations, I was in charge of a group of girls for a dance performance. It was a lot of fun, and we all worked hard to make our dance awesome. Among those girls, there was one named Pallavi. She was a really nice person, and I kind of had a crush on her. We spent a lot of time practicing together, and it was a great experience.

But here's the thing, during our practice sessions, Pallavi called me "bro." Yep, she saw me as a brother figure. That was her way of looking at our friendship, and I didn't want to mess that up. So, even though I had a crush on her, I respected her feelings and never told her about my crush.

To make things even more interesting, during the festival of Rakhi last year, Pallavi tied a rakhi on my wrist. In Indian culture, this is a symbol of a sister tying a protective thread on her brother's wrist. It was her way of officially making me her brother. So, not only did she call me "bro," but she also made it official with the rakhi. I couldn't just ignore that.

As time went on, Pallavi and I became really good friends. We talked about all sorts of things, and she felt comfortable around me, like a true sister would. I didn't want to jeopardize our friendship by telling her about my crush, so I kept it to myself.

When Jahnavi asked me about my crushes during our phone conversations, I mentioned Pallavi to her. I even showed Jahnavi a photo of Pallavi, and she jokingly said my taste in crushes was bad, probably because Pallavi and I had a brother-sister bond. In response, I playfully retorted that Jahnavi had excellent taste because she had a crush on me.

Now, fast forward to this year's New Year celebrations. I still had a crush on Pallavi, but it was more like a secret crush. I had to focus on organizing the flashmob for the upcoming celebrations. It was my responsibility, and I was excited about it. I wanted to make it a fantastic event for everyone at college.

So, I decided to gather a group of talented dancers for the flashmob. I remembered the group from last year that I had choreographed, and I thought they would be perfect for this year's performance. We had a WhatsApp group from last year, and I messaged everyone about the flashmob idea.

To my delight, they were all enthusiastic about participating. It felt great that they wanted to be part of it again.

To gather more participants, I personally went to every class and made announcements, asking for names of students interested in joining the flashmob. Eventually, I managed to assemble a group of about 48 members, including my team from the youth festival and the girls I had choreographed for the previous New Year's celebration.

I gathered all 48 members in a room, ready to organize the pairs for our flashmob dance. While I was busy arranging pairs, the group of girls I had choreographed for last year's dance performance

approached me, with Pallavi among them. Pallavi spoke up, saying, "Bro, we're not really interested in doing a pair dance."

I could sense their discomfort, and a new idea popped into my head. I had always secretly wished to dance with Pallavi, so I decided to seize this opportunity. I told them, "Okay, you eight members can form a separate group, and I'll dance with you. The rest will pair up among themselves." They agreed, and I was thrilled because dancing with eight girls would be an exciting experience, especially since it's not very common for a single boy to dance with so many girls in college.

Jahnavi observed this decision and playfully suggested that I had planned it because of my crush on Pallavi. I chuckled and explained that it had just happened because they approached me first.

I directed the eight members to another room and told them to wait for me to come and practice. I returned to the main group, which now consisted of 20 girls and 20 boys, making a total of 40 participants. This meant we would have 20 pairs dancing. I discussed the dance routines and left them to pair up.

Jahnavi had been eagerly anticipating the opportunity to be my dance partner, while two of my close friends from the same class also wished for a chance to dance with me. The three of them were playfully arguing about who would pair up with me. Inside the room, there was a lot of gossip and chatter about me and Jahnavi. The fact that Jahnavi had a crush on me was well-known within the group, Rumors had been spreading day by day, fueled by the presence of the youth festival group.

Moreover, Jahnavi had been openly addressing me as "akhil garu" in front of everyone, further fueling the belief that there was something more between us. I didn't want to encourage these rumors, so I decided to have a candid conversation with Jahnavi. I explained to her how everyone was perceiving our relationship and the gossip that was spreading like wildfire. I told her that to avoid any misunderstanding, I would pair up with my two friends instead.

Jahnavi, respecting my decision, agreed and stopped arguing with my friends. The three of us, friends and I, decided to divide the songs among us. With that settled, our morning practice session came to a close.

It was lunchtime, and everyone was having their meals in the same room. Jahnavi sat beside me, sharing her lunchbox and talking with me as if no one else was around. Even though I could sense that everyone in the room was watching us, I couldn't ignore Jahnavi's presence. Avoiding her would hurt her feelings, so I continued to enjoy my lunch with her.

After lunch, I instructed everyone to start practicing, and I headed over to the group of 8 girls who were waiting for me. Jahnavi followed me, playfully teasing me about Pallavi as we walked towards the practice session. I sensed a hint of possessiveness in her teasing, but I just chuckled and enjoyed her playful banter.

As I went to practice with the 8 girls, we started rehearsing mass songs where I was in the center position among them. I noticed Jahnavi coming to our practice room and keeping an eye on me, but I chose to ignore it. After finishing that practice, I rejoined the main group to complete the choreography for some other songs. The evening came to an end, and everyone left, including my friends. However, Jahnavi was waiting for me, and we decided to walk together. My brother came to pick me up, and I went home as usual.

Once at home, Jahnavi called, and we began discussing the events of the day. She was quite possessive, especially when talking about how closely I danced with my classmates who were paired with me. She even teased me about how I seemed to focus more on Pallavi than the others. I understood her possessiveness and chuckled at her playfulness.

Our conversation took an unexpected turn as Jahnavi brought up her ex-boyfriend. She mentioned that Sravan had called her before our conversation and expressed his concern about her dancing with other boys. I was puzzled by how he even knew about it. Jahnavi explained that Sravan's friend's brother was studying at our college and might have been keeping tabs on her activities. I found it strange that he was still bothering her after eight months of their breakup.

Jahnavi continued, revealing that Sravan wanted them to get back together, claiming that he realized her value now. I was taken aback by this revelation and started thinking about the complexities of relationships.

I couldn't help but notice how the world around me was changing, especially in situations like this. My mind was racing with thoughts about whether she had been physically mistreated by her ex-boyfriend. Whenever the topic of her ex came up, my mind couldn't help but focus on this aspect. I had heard stories of individuals who preyed on vulnerable girls like Jahnavi, taking advantage of them sexually and then leaving them in despair. Knowing that Jahnavi had also engaged in self-harm only fueled my concern, and I couldn't help but wonder if such a terrible thing had happened to her. Despite asking her about it before, her reassurance that nothing had happened didn't entirely convince me, as I felt she might not have been comfortable enough to share such a traumatic experience.

However, I couldn't shake off the nagging feeling that she might not have felt comfortable sharing such a traumatic experience. I decided it was time to broach the subject again and understand her intentions better. I tried to gently suggest, "Perhaps it's better for you two to be together if he had taken advantage of you physically."

Her immediate reaction was one of anger and frustration. She retorted, "What, akhil garu? So, if he took advantage of me physically, I should love him back now just because he wants to be together? It's not about that. He cheated on me with another girl, and when I found out, I asked him to break things off with her, but he didn't."

I realized that my words had touched a nerve, and I quickly tried to explain my perspective. "Listen, Jaanu, my point was that I've seen guys who use girls like you for their physical desires, and I was worried that something like that might have happened to you."

Jahnavi interrupted me firmly, "Stop it, akhil garu. He didn't use me or take advantage of me. I know my limits."

Her words had a tone of finality to them, and I decided to trust her on this matter. I knew that pressing further might only upset her more, and I didn't want to do that. We agreed to move on from this topic and began discussing other things. Despite the weight of that conversation, we continued to talk for hours.

The days were passing swiftly, but I found myself constantly drawn to Jahnavi. Whenever I was practicing for the flash mob, As she was there too, her eyes, and her endearing way of addressing me as "akhil Garu" kept me captivated. One evening during our phone call, she surprised me with a video. As I watched it, I was genuinely taken aback. The video featured me sitting on a bench in the dance practice room, engaged in a conversation with Jahnavi. We were laughing and chatting, completely unaware that she was filming us. She had added a romantic song in the background, creating a cinematic atmosphere. Seeing that video, I realized how deeply I had fallen for her.

After the New Year's celebrations concluded, Jahnavi and I were in high spirits and decided to take numerous photos together. We were enjoying ourselves when some junior girls approached me and asked if I would dance with them for a reel to be posted on Instagram. I noticed Jahnavi signaling for me not to do it, but I didn't want to give the impression that I was obeying her every wish, so I went ahead and danced with the juniors for the reel. They were thrilled, and after they left, I asked Jahnavi why she had discouraged me from doing it. She replied, "Well, in my opinion, the song didn't suit you to dance with

them." I could tell she was feeling possessive, but I accepted her explanation with a nod of agreement.

As New Year's Eve approached, I discussed my plans for the night with Jahnavi. We bid farewell for the night, and I went to my friend's place to celebrate the last night of 2022. We had a great time in a room, joking around and chatting. In the meantime, Jahnavi kept messaging me, and we continued our conversations.

During the night, Jahnavi initiated a video call to show me the New Year's celebrations happening in her neighborhood. It was our first video call, and even though she was hesitant at first, she eventually showed her face. We talked until 2 am, enjoying each other's company. Eventually, she had to go to sleep as their celebrations ended. I also went to sleep at my friend's house.

The next day, January 1st, 2023, was a holiday. I spent the entire day chatting with Jahnavi. We shared stories, laughed, and got to know each other even better. The conversations we had on that day deepened our connection, making me look forward to what the new year would bring for both of us.

On that chilly Monday, January 2nd, 2023, the day began like any other. I went to college, and Jahnavi was there as well. We exchanged messages during our first hours, but then she sent me a message that caught me off guard.

The message read, "Today, I have a situation, and I want to know about your feelings on me, akhil garu." It left me perplexed, trying to decipher what could have happened or what she might be feeling. My heart raced as I anticipated her next message.

Then came the bombshell, "I love you, akhil garu."

I was taken aback, to say the least. While deep down, I had sensed the budding feelings between us, I hadn't expected this declaration in a casual chat. I knew we needed to talk about it more thoroughly, to understand the gravity of what had just transpired. So, I replied, "We will discuss this in person."

She agreed, but as the day progressed, she seemed hesitant to meet face-to-face, her shyness perhaps getting the better of her. Realizing her discomfort, I suggested we discuss our feelings over a call, which she found more agreeable.

That evening, as we both reached our respective homes, I called her. I couldn't help but wonder about the situation she had mentioned earlier. Before diving into that, I asked her, "What was the situation you mentioned earlier?"

Jahnavi, however, was more interested in hearing my answer to her confession. She asked, "akhil garu do you love me or not?"

Her confession caught me off guard, even though I had anticipated it. The gravity of her words washed over me, and I knew I had to respond carefully. I began by expressing my understanding of her feelings and how much I cared for her in return. I acknowledged that I had feelings for her too and the happiness her love brought me. However, I had concerns that needed addressing.

I said, "Listen carefully, Jaanu. I understand your feelings for me, and I too have strong emotions for you. The idea of you being my future wife brings me immense joy. However, there's something I need you to understand. I fear the uncertainty that comes with promising to marry. What if our parents don't agree? What if circumstances force us to part ways? I can't promise that I will definitely marry you because there are factors beyond our control."

Jahnavi listened attentively, and when I was finished, she responded with a deep understanding of the complexities of our situation. She shared her perspective, expressing her agreement with my sentiments. She acknowledged that while our love for each other was undeniable, she, too, believed that the path to

marriage should involve our parents and God. She understood the importance of consulting our parents, and she was willing to stand with me in the face of any obstacles that might come our way.

She said, "I understand, akhil garu. I understand that you love me, and I love you too. Our love is strong, and it's built on care and understanding. When it comes to our parents, I believe that we should fight for our love together. We shouldn't marry without their blessings; instead, we should consult them and seek their approval. We should stand strong in our love, even if we face opposition from our families and society. I don't want to rush into marriage without their knowledge and consent. I want us to have their blessings and God's grace."

Her words resonated with me deeply. Her maturity and her willingness to face the challenges together only deepened my admiration for her. I realized that what we shared was something profound and beautiful, a love that could withstand the tests of time and adversity.

With a newfound sense of clarity and determination, I confessed my feelings to her more formally. I told her, "I didn't reply to your message in chat because I wanted to say it in our call. I love you, Jahnavi."

Her response was filled with a shy yet genuine happiness, "Love you too, akhil garu. I'm so happy; I'm getting happy tears."

And with those heartfelt declarations, on a cool January evening in 2023, we officially became a couple. Our love story had taken a significant step forward, and as we looked ahead, we knew that the journey would be filled with challenges, but our love and determination would guide us through.

After we both confessed our feelings and proposed to each other, Jahnavi explained the situation she had mentioned earlier. She told me that her ex-boyfriend, Sravan, had been persistently bothering her, urging her to rekindle their past relationship. Since she was in love with me and wanted to make it clear to Sravan that she had moved on, she messaged me that morning. She hoped that if I replied with "I love you too," she could send a screenshot of our conversation to Sravan as evidence of her new relationship.

Understanding her predicament, I offered to handle the situation by warning Sravan to stop bothering her. However, Jahnavi insisted that she could handle it herself and assured me not to worry. She explained that she knew how to deal with such matters and had already taken steps to protect herself. She blocked Sravan's number after sending him the screenshot, ensuring that she wouldn't receive any more messages or calls from him.

Although I still felt uneasy about the situation, I trusted Jahnavi's judgment and respected her decisions. We continued our conversation, discussing various topics and trying to focus on the positive aspects of our growing relationship.

Our love story continued to unfold, and each day brought us closer together. On the second day of officially being a couple, Jahnavi invited me to join her and her friends for lunch. She had thoughtfully prepared an extra lunchbox for me, just as she did every day.

We decided to have our meal in the college courtyard, a popular spot where students gathered beneath the shade of trees to enjoy their lunches. Although this was a common practice, it was a novel experience for me, and I was eager to share it with Jahnavi.

As we settled down, Jahnavi introduced me to her friends, who welcomed me warmly. We all sat together, and Jahnavi, being her playful self, tried to feed me with a spoon. Her affectionate gesture was endearing, but I politely declined, choosing to enjoy my meal independently.

As we enjoyed our lunch together in the college courtyard, Jahnavi continued to display her affectionate nature. She playfully placed her hands on me, engaging in light-hearted banter, and even teasingly poked fun at me, occasionally giving me friendly little taps.

Her playful behavior brought a smile to my face, and I cherished these moments of closeness with her. However, the playfulness didn't go unnoticed by the other students in the courtyard. Their curious glances hinted that our interactions might be perceived differently by onlookers. While I relished Jahnavi's affection, I also realized that we needed to be mindful of the public setting.

After we finished our lunch and returned to our classroom, I decided to address this issue with Jahnavi. I initiated a chat with her, saying, "Jaan, I need to talk to you about something." She responded with curiosity, calling me "akhil garu" as usual. I said, "Look, Jaan, if we were alone, you can do and act however you like with me. But when we are in public, like when we had lunch in the college ground, your actions, like holding my hand, leaning on me, and feeding me with a spoon, might be misinterpreted by others. I don't want people to get the wrong idea about us, especially when there are others watching us."

Jahnavi replied, "Oh, akhil garu, I told you that you were a gentleman, didn't I? And you've just proved it once again."

Her response conveyed her understanding and appreciation for my concern, reassuring me that she respected my perspective. This exchange strengthened our bond, and I felt reassured that we could openly discuss and address any issues that might arise in our relationship.

Days passed in the usual rhythm of routine calls, chats, and shared lunches with Jahnavi. Our relationship was blossoming, and Jahnavi, respecting my concerns, behaved appropriately in public. However, one evening as we sat on the footpath, she shared a concern about her ex-boyfriend Sravan's friend's brother, who was studying in our college.

"You remember I mentioned Sravan's friend's brother, right?" she asked. I nodded, curious about the situation. "He's been teasing me whenever he sees me," she explained, her expression troubled.

Concerned for her, I offered to confront the guy, but she resisted, fearing it might escalate the situation. Instead, she suggested talking to Sravan about it. Reluctantly, I agreed and took Sravan's number from Jahnavi.

After Jahnavi left, I gathered my thoughts and mustered the courage to make the call to Sravan. When he answered, I introduced myself, saying, "Hello, who's this?" I replied, "Yeah, bro, it's me, akhil, Jahnavi's boyfriend." His voice carried a hint of shock as he asked, "What, really, bro?" I confirmed, "Yes, bro, she's the one who gave me your contact. I called you because your friend's brother, who is studying in our college, has been teasing her. I want you to talk to him and make him stop. Otherwise, he'll face the consequences. Are we clear on that?"

Sravan listened attentively but kept asking, "Bro, is that true? Are you really her boyfriend?" I reaffirmed, "Yes, bro, that's the truth. Now, please understand the situation and do what I asked." With that, I hung up the phone, hoping that my message had reached Sravan and that he would take the necessary steps to stop his friend's brother from harassing Jahnavi.

Feeling a mix of satisfaction and concern, I messaged Jahnavi, informing her about the conversation. She seemed relieved and thanked me for handling the situation. As the evening drew to a close, I headed home, my thoughts lingering on the challenges that love brought, but determined to face them for Jahnavi's sake.

As I reached home, I found myself bombarded with messages from Sravan, Jahnavi's ex-boyfriend. He was relentless in his questioning and pleas, repeatedly asking if Jahnavi and I were truly in love. It was

clear that he was struggling to accept the fact that Jahnavi had moved on from their four-year relationship to be with me.

Despite my attempts to get him to stop, Sravan continued to express his emotions, telling me about their past together and how Jahnavi had suddenly broken up with him. He implored me to leave Jahnavi, begging me to end our relationship.

I decided not to respond further to his messages. The situation was becoming increasingly frustrating, and I felt that engaging with Sravan would only escalate the tension. I couldn't help but wonder why I was entangled in this complicated situation.

I was taken aback when Sravan sent me a video in which he had cut his hand with a blade. In the video, he was expressing his desperation, saying that he would end his life if Jahnavi didn't return to him. The situation had escalated to a point I never could have anticipated, and I was deeply concerned for Sravan's well-being.

I was taken aback and felt a rush of anxiety upon seeing Sravan's distressing video. It was difficult for me to comprehend the extreme lengths he was willing to go to. Uncertain about how to proceed, I decided to confide in my friend Hari and share the details of the situation with him. However, rather than offering support, Hari seemed to minimize the gravity of the situation, referring to Sravan as "immature." He suggested that I delete the video and block Sravan's number, advice which I promptly followed.

Feeling overwhelmed and concerned for Jahnavi, I reached out to her to ensure she was okay. To my surprise, she revealed that Sravan had also sent her the video, imploring her to reconsider their relationship.

She reassured me by saying, 'akhil garu, you don't need to worry; he may resort to such actions to win me back. I've blocked his number as well.' Despite her comforting words, I couldn't help but wonder why I was feeling so much anguish over witnessing such distressing behavior. The whole situation was becoming increasingly hard for me to process.

The day ended with me chatting with Jahnavi, where I tried to put on a facade of strength and offered her supportive advice regarding the day's incident. However, deep inside, I couldn't help but fear what this situation might hold for us in the future. My parents were strict about relationships, and if they found out about my involvement in such matters, they would be furious. I went to bed with these thoughts weighing heavily on my mind.

The following morning, I woke up and immediately checked my phone for any unknown messages or videos, similar to what had happened with Sravan the day before. To my relief, there were no such messages. I went about my day at college as usual, with Jahnavi appearing as if nothing had happened the day before.

As the days passed, I noticed that there were no more disturbances from her ex, and his friend's brother had stopped teasing her as well. It seemed like things were finally settling down, and I hoped that our relationship could continue without any further complications.

Everything was going smoothly, and I was enjoying my relationship with Jahnavi. Then one day, she asked me if we could skip college and visit a temple near her neighborhood. I was eager to do so, but I had concerns about what might happen if our neighbors or her neighbors saw us and told our parents. So, I explained my concerns to Jahnavi, and she understood. We decided that it would be better not to go out alone. Instead, we planned to go with her friends so that I could join them, ensuring there would be no problems, and she agreed with this plan.

As every Saturday was a holiday for the first-year students, including Jahnavi, we decided that the

following Saturday would be the best day to visit the temple. Jahnavi messaged me with all the details: her friends would meet at her house, and from there, we would head directly to the temple. She mentioned that she had already sought her parents' permission, which they had graciously granted. I was on board with the plan, and the thought of spending quality time with Jahnavi filled me with joy

Finally, the day arrived, Since I hadn't informed my parents about this outing, as I knew they wouldn't agree, I went about my morning routine for college. I dropped my brother off at college and acted as if I were heading to class as well. and i left my bag in the classroom and quietly exited the college premises on my bike.

The clock read approximately 9:10 am, and I knew it would take me roughly 30 minutes to reach the temple. I sent Jahnavi a message to assure her that I would be there well before 10 am. My heart raced with excitement as I embarked on the road to the temple, eager to meet her.

However, fate had a different plan for me that day. As I was driving towards the temple, a girl appeared on the roadside, her face partially concealed by a mask. She signaled for a lift, and, assuming she was a fellow college student who needed a ride home, I stopped my bike without hesitation. She climbed onto the back, and we continued on our journey.

As we rode along, I politely asked her where she needed to go. Strangely, she remained silent, and her refusal to respond raised my suspicions. The situation took a terrifying turn when I noticed four men on motorcycles suddenly tailing us. They began to capture pictures of us, their actions growing increasingly suspicious and unsettling.

I had a gut feeling that something was wrong, and as they kept trailing us, they eventually blocked our way. Fear overcame me when one of the men spoke to the girl and took her away on his bike, leaving me feeling confused and frightened.

The other three men shifted their focus onto me and, without any explanation, launched a vicious attack. They accused me of being with the girl and questioned why she was with me, ignoring my desperate attempts to clarify the misunderstanding. They didn't let me speak and even took the key to my bike, leaving me unable to move.

The merciless beating intensified, and the pain was excruciating. Tears welled up in my eyes as I cried out in agony. To make matters worse, we were stranded on a desolate highway, far from any potential saviors. With no one around to help, I felt utterly helpless. They forced me onto my bike and took me to a nearby police station.

At the police station, they spoke to the officers, and the police confiscated my phone. They instructed me to sit on a bench, and the men who had brought me there left. As I sat on the bench inside the dimly lit police station, my mind raced with a mixture of fear, confusion, and frustration. The pain from the recent assault still throbbed in my body, but what troubled me more was the situation that had unfolded so unexpectedly.

The police officers were engrossed in their conversation, every so often giving me skeptical looks. I was eager to clarify the misunderstanding, but nobody seemed willing to listen or pay attention to me. The room was filled with a suffocating silence, only occasionally disrupted by the distant sounds of traffic outside.

Time seemed to stretch on endlessly, and I couldn't help but think of Jahnavi. She must be waiting at the temple, wondering why I hadn't shown up as planned. Guilt gnawed at me as I imagined her growing increasingly worried.

Suddenly, the door to the police station swung open, and in walked a stern-looking officer. He looked at me intently and then began speaking to his colleagues in hushed tones. I strained to listen, but their words were barely audible.

One thing was clear, though – they were discussing me. I watched as the officer took my confiscated phone and examined it closely. He seemed to be scrolling through my messages and contacts. My heart pounded in my chest as I tried to fathom what was happening.

Then, the officer turned to me and said, "You're in quite a situation, young man."

I swallowed hard, unable to respond. The officer's words hung in the air, leaving me in a state of heightened anxiety.

He continued, "But perhaps you're not as alone in this as you think."

With that cryptic statement, he walked away, leaving me in a state of even greater confusion. What did he mean by that? Was there more to this situation than met the eye? I desperately wanted answers, but I also knew that I was in no position to demand them.

As the minutes ticked by, I couldn't help but wonder about the events that had unfolded since that fateful morning. Jahnavi's worried face flashed before my eyes, and I silently vowed to find a way out of this predicament and reunite with her.

But as I contemplated my next move, another nagging fear crept into my mind. How would I explain this situation to my parents? The very thought of them finding out about my current predicament filled me with dread. I knew I had to find a way to keep this ordeal hidden from them, or else the consequences would be dire.

Little did I know that this was just the beginning of a series of unforeseen events that would test the limits of our love and resilience. The mysteries surrounding that day in 2023 were far from being unraveled, and I couldn't help but feel that the journey ahead would be filled with unexpected twists and turns.

Cocclusion:

As I recount these memories, I'm reminded of the beauty of that fragile period of youth. The uncertainties, challenges, and heartaches we faced laid the foundation for a love story that would continue to evolve. This was just the first chapter, a prelude to the epic love story Jahnavi and I would create together. We had our entire future ahead of us, and with it, more adventures, twists, and turns that would shape our love in ways we couldn't yet imagine. So, stay tuned for Chapter 2, as our journey through college life and love continues to unravel, offering you a deeper glimpse into the world we created together.