

Thank You Love..

"Taking love beyond words"



Ayush Gupta

Thank you love



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HALF BAKED BEANS LITERATURE

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Thank You Dear Reader,

I have tried with all my heart to explain my odyssey of knowing that “Love” is beyond words and obvious logic. I hope when you turn the last page you will feel elated and happy.

I hope this book will be your friend forever.

Love,
Ayush

Prologue

“How much time will it take for the road to unblock?” I asked the driver.

It was 6.00 in the evening. The weather outside the bus was terrifying; the vehicle and its passengers were stuck in a landslide in the mountains of Garhwal Himalayas. Shivering, we cowered as the rocks came raging down — a result of tumultuous rainfall, gusts of wind, and perhaps a lack of luck on my side. There were 23 of us in the bus, all equally afraid and none with a clue of where this night would take us.

“Road? Forget about that,” the driver said, “just pray this rain stops and we manage to survive this night.”

I looked at him in disbelief. “Seriously? You mean this night could very well be our last ride ever?”

“Of course,” he said, “What other option do we have but to pray for our survival? We can’t move ahead and we can’t go back.”

“Come on! At least *do* something. Call the police, contact emergency....” I looked about — as if by some miracle help would appear.

“Really? You think the police will come in a situation like this?” Though the driver was annoyed, he took pity on me. “There is no way they can get to us right now. Just don’t panic. Sit quietly.”

No cell phone, no food, no water. It was like a terrible nightmare. My fears grew gradually as the weather outside turned worse. On the other side of the road, we had a river, all raging waves and gushing waters. The best part of it all? I had no idea where I was headed — metaphorically, and now literally speaking. I had dubbed it my “journey into the unknown,” something I had only ever dreamt about. Now, it was actually coming true.

After a little while, the storm lessened its intensity and a couple of men appeared beside the bus. They had stopped to enquire about us, seeing us trapped as we were.

“We are locals; we live in a nearby village,” one of them said. “We know of a path that can take you there.”

Hope at last. But it wasn’t that easy as nature was against us this evening. No matter how bad the weather outside was, I could not stay in the bus forever. Deciding to overcome my fears, I stepped outside and joined the men from

the village, some others from the bus already following them, and started my journey into the unknown — yet again.

The rain was still pouring down, soaking me wet and chilling to my bones, so I stopped to take out a towel from my bag. The men were a little ahead of me, moving too fast. As night closed in upon us, I tried harder to catch up with them, but the distance between us kept building up.

“What the f**k!” I cried in frustration.

A sudden landslide happened that resulted in many rocks rolling down from the hills, I tried my best to get to a safe distance, but unfortunately one of them struck my leg, making it bleed. I was in pain, but I couldn’t stop and increase the already gaping distance between the men and myself. I called out to them — yelled, actually — in a loud voice, but they either couldn’t hear me in the wind or had already gone too far ahead to notice. I was beginning to regret this trip. Maybe it was a bad idea in the first place. Cursing myself, I continued walking.

A long way down the road there was a hut and a small temple beside it, looking like a forlorn refuge for all that got lost around these parts. And a refuge it was, for this lost passenger. At least I would be safe in God’s den! But, to my immense frustration, I found that the temple was locked. I almost wept at the dismal sight.

Then I heard a sound.

Someone was inside the hut. Without much hesitation, I limped towards the place and tapped on the dilapidated wooden door.

The door opened and before me stood a man of a high build. He had a clean shaven look on his face that made him look ageless. His face gave way to his soul that seemed to have both sorrowful and happy memories etched on it. Judging by the rest of his body, he could have been around 50-60 years.

Then there was me. A wet sodden soul, carrying a heavy bag and probably looking every bit dirty and hassled that I felt.

He stared at me. I wondered what he was thinking. I introduced myself as a traveller who had lost his way.

“May I come in?” I asked hesitantly. “I’m very thirsty ... and slightly injured too.”

“Come in, be my guest,” the man presented himself, a voice filled with warmth, “Have a seat. I’ll get you some water.”

He moved forward by saying a famous adage, “sky is the roof, land is the floor, and nature all around like walls, a traveller can never be homeless” and grasped my hand with a strength that made me wince —his limbs resembling ice-cold grip of a dead man rather than living.

As I stepped into the hut, I noticed it held nothing except the very basic items: a dim-lit lamp, which made it hard to see the room in its entirety unless you focused on an object; a book that looked well-used; and a dusty bed sheet covering the floor. No bed. Deeming this to be a safe place, I put my bag aside and took a seat on the floor. The calmness of the hut was generous and it put me at ease.

The old man returned with a glass of water. “Here, please have it,” he said. “You look tired and lost. Can I be of any help?”

“Uh... I just lost my way following some villagers in this storm. My bus was stuck on the road Do you live here alone?”

The old man fell silent. Maybe he didn’t want to answer my question.

“Do you think I could stay here for a night?” I asked. I was scared to be driven out of a shelter on a night like this.

The old man smiled. He sat down on the floor near the dirty bed sheet and said nothing for a while. Then he broke his silence.

“Where are you from and where you were going?”

“I am from Delhi,” I said. “To be quite honest ... I don’t have any idea where I was going.”

“Interesting.” He smiled again. “Why you are here?”

“Well ...” I hesitated, trying to put into words the tumultuous feelings brewing inside me, much like the storm raging outside, “it’s a journey into the unknown. I am here to take a break from regular life. I want to find a purpose in my life.”

“The purpose of life. I see....” He paused, “If you are looking for the purpose of life, it means you are not happy with your present. Life has become burdensome for you, has it not?” Still smiling he raised one eyebrow inquisitively.

“Yes,” I said, “I’m suffering from the worst thing that could happen to someone. I feel no happiness, no love, nothing but pain.... I’m trying to figure out if there’s more to my life than all this suffering. I am trying to find the

answer to, ‘to be or not to be.’”

I don’t know how it happened, but I found myself opening up to this old man I had met only a few minutes ago. The stranger felt very easy to talk to.

“Pain helps you grow,” he said. “You don’t need to *do* great things for this. You just need to learn what life is all about,” he continued in a cryptic manner.

“Life is all about cruelty. People break your heart easily,” I said, “They don’t care how you would deal with the aftermath. They only think of themselves.” I was bitter, but not without reason.

The old man chuckled. “Ah, I get it. You are suffering from a broken heart.”

I felt offended. “Don’t make fun of me! Do you have any idea what has happened to me?” I hadn’t realized I was shouting.

The old man shifted to face me completely.

“I was not laughing at you,” he said calmly. “I was laughing at your words. Tell me, what happened?”

I fell silent. I couldn’t afford to insult this man, my saviour.

After a while, I said, “I’m looking for someone who inspires me, supports me, helps me stay focused, motivates me, and heals me. Someone who loves me and makes me feel happy again — like I used to be before. I’m looking for joy in my life.”

“So you are a seeker,” he sighed. “Tell me your story, dear boy. I’ll help.”

I was relieved. Being a *seeker* sounded good.

Should I tell him? After all, it is always good to share your story with someone — it reduces the pain you are going through.

I had started on a journey into the unknown and somehow managed to find this kind old man who was willing to listen to my heart’s troubles, my mind worries, and offer some hope, some solace. I knew going forward it was to be yet another night spent reminiscing about the beautiful memories I had made with *her*. I would have to relive all the good and the bad, the latter being what I had wanted to escape. I had to tell all.

So I did.

Chapter- 1

May 2015, Delhi

I rang the door bell every couple of seconds.

“Who is this??” My sister called out from other side of the door.

“It’s me, Rayan.”

The bolt clicked open. “Why are you ringing the bell like a maniac?” she asked, “Just why are you always in such a hurry, stupid?”

“None of your business!” I brushed past her and went into my room to get changed. I switched off the lights and fell on the bed with my phone in my hand. It was 8.00 in the evening. I had a couple of minutes tranquillity, but then, “Switch on the lights!” my sister roared, “Get ready. We are going to the market.”

"I don't want to go anywhere. I am sleepy!" I yelled back, annoyed. "My head is aching, so please don't prepare a meal for me."

“What’s your problem?” She frowned at me. "You haven't eaten properly is the last two weeks. You come home at 7.00, you come up with the same reason for not eating every single day. You don't talk to anyone. I mean... look at your face. You have to tell me what's wrong!"

I could easily see the level of anger she had on her face.

“It’s nothing,” I said, “just a little headache....” trying to make light of it.

“And then there’s that. You’ve been giving me the same excuse every day. I know you’re online on WhatsApp and Facebook till 3.00 in the morning. And then you get up at 5.00 am” I stayed silent.

“What is going on, Rayan?” she looked worried. “There is no reason for your behaviour. And please don’t give me excuses. Tell me... Are you worried about Mummy’s deteriorating health? Is it about dad’s condition? Is it your career that’s troubling you? Please tell me.”

I was surprised she didn’t mention anything about my girlfriend (ex-girlfriend !). More often than not, the adults assume relationship problems to be at fault. And in this case, it actually *was* true. But my sister had come up with every possible reason except that.

“It’s nothing like that, Di....”

"If you think you can fool me, you are wrong," she said. "I can read your face and tell the condition you are in. I can't see you like this, obviously struggling day after day."

It was good that she had no clue about my breakup — I didn't want the whole family to know about it. "Please, believe me, Di," I beseeched. "It's nothing at all. I just need to be alone for a bit."

At that, she left the room, and I was left with the thoughts about my life.

Who was I kidding? My sister was absolutely right. Yes, I was bewildered and depressed. I had no idea what had been happening to me these past few days. And then there were *strings* of questions:

Why am I doing this?

Where is my life going?

What happened?

Well, I do know the answer to the last one. The 3 year-long special connection between two hearts snapped in a moment, turning into an ugly itch. I had had no closure.

At this stage in my life, I felt nothing, I mean *nothing*. No happiness, no remorse; just some emptiness swirling inside of me. My phone never rang anymore. She never called. She never wanted to know how I was.

She? Akshita.

Looking at the sky full of twinkling stars from the window of my room, my eyes suddenly stopped at the most charming one — "the pole star." That was Akshita for me, the brightest spark in my sky, the most beautiful part of my life.

I gazed at the star. Its twinkling reminded me of her charming smile. I was madly in love with her, and I slowly lost myself deep in her memories. She looked like a painting — and a painting isn't simply supposed to look beautiful; it is supposed to make one feel something special. In a world full of temporary things, hers was a lasting presence.

She used to say, "Baby, I don't know whether you'll always be mine, but I'll always be yours."

"Don't ever doubt my love for you; it's the only thing I'm sure of."

I felt like the luckiest man on earth. I had seen the best and worst of her, and I

had accepted both, just as she had with me.

Here was someone who never cared about what people said. She would break all the rules without hesitation; offered the first and the last bite of her meals to me; relished the sandwiches and idlis I used to make for her, as she didn't know how to cook.

She never complained. Once I said something terrible about her hairstyle. She went quiet. I could make out she was hurt.

"What?" I smiled cautiously. "Did I upset you?"

"No, I am alright." She turned the other way, her hands clasped.

I knew what she wanted me to do. I sat down beside her, took her hands in mine, looked into her eyes and mimicking a four-year old, said, "Beta, are you okay? I am sorry, Beta." I kissed her on her forehead. She threw her arms around me, laughed and said, "Now everything is okay."

When it came to notorious romance, she was a masterpiece:

"Please don't pull my ear," I would say to her, "you know it irritates me when you do this." (I was never irritated. I just wanted to hear her ambrosial response.)

"Aw, Baby, you look adorable when you are irritated," she would say, "and I love to see your pouty face."

She never needed much: a kind word, sincerity, kisses, my protective arms, fresh air, clean water, a garden, and a cosy bed.

If I was about to do something wrong, she simply raised her eyebrows to let me know.

But I was remembering a ghost. She was not around me anymore. Why couldn't I move on? The past, it held me back. She was my past; I wanted her to be my future! I felt hollow. Negative thoughts flooded my head. She filled my life with positivity. Not anymore.

I was shedding tears, rolling down my cheeks, standing near the balcony and was gazing up at the sky, as if I was asking answers from someone. My heart has broken, grieves stricken and was shattered into pieces that couldn't be glued again. How could she? How could she do this to me? This was the first time I experienced this, and it was beyond the limits. How could she do such treacherous act when she was my whole world? Damn, I shouted. It hurt me so much.

Just then I heard footsteps of someone ascending upwards through the staircase to the balcony. I quickly wiped my face, planted a fake smile and tried to look happy as much as possible.

It was my sister again.

“What you are looking at the sky for? Didn’t you have a headache just a few minutes ago?” My sister re-entered my room and saw me standing near the balcony. “Please go away,” I said. “I don’t want to talk.”

“Oh, fine. I didn’t come here to waste my time anyway.” She threw some papers at me. “Read them when you can stop sulking. Maybe they’ll help you out.” She left the room.

I lifted the papers and examined them. It was an article titled “Impatient.”

I smiled. Why had Di given it to me?

The opening lines of the article said that there were two types of impatient people in this world: one — who became impatient because they were too worried about what others would say, they feared people and their reactions, they felt insecure; and the other kind who became impatient due to their infinite desires, which simply meant they wanted all their dreams to come true as quickly as possible. Now *that* was me.

My friends would all say, "Rayan, you are a very impatient guy. This is the only drawback you have."

I had never given it much thought.

My girl had never told me I was impatient — even though I had a habit of calling her persistently, aware that she was busy with important things. Or perhaps not in the room or her phone was charging or just about anything else.

I started laughing thinking about my antics and strangely enough, it made me feel fresh and free. Then, upon an impulse I thought of calling her on her phone. I dialled her number. But I gave up after a few attempts. It was always the same response:

“We are getting a busy tone on this number. Please call later.”

Things changed when she moved to Bangalore a month ago.

After a few days of being in Bangalore, I observed a bit of change in her. Later, it seemed as if everything between us was going in the wrong

direction.

I would call her per usual, but she never answered. Neither did she call me back. I would try for hours in vain. If she did answer, she would sound exasperated, “Are you mad? Why are you pestering me? Are you completely out of your mind? Don’t call me again!”

I listened to her diatribe quietly, thinking maybe it’s the new place. “I am sorry, Love,” I would say. “I should have understood you were busy ... But please do text me over WhatsApp in the morning as you leave for office and also when you reach home in the evening. I am worried about you since you’re new to the city.”

“Don’t give me this frivolous talk. I don’t like your behaviour,” she’d say, “Don’t call me again. I will call you when I’m in the mood.”

Before I could say something, she would disconnect.

I was left baffled. Maybe she was right. Maybe, I was disturbing her too much. I decided that from the next day I would call her only in the morning. Next day she didn’t send any messages, but I could see she was online. *She must be busy*, I thought, but I knew somehow that she wasn’t. At 1.00pm I called her. There was no response. So I decided a different route.

“Hey... how are you?” I couldn’t stop myself from texting. She read my message but didn’t reply.

I felt terrible. It was 4.00 pm now. This time when I called her, she answered immediately.

“Hey, how are you?” I said, suddenly feeling my normal self again. “Is everything fine? You were not answering my calls....”

She was quiet for a whole minute. “Have you gone nuts or something?” she said finally. “If I’m not picking up the phone, don’t you understand that I’m not willing to talk? Why are you pestering me continuously?”

Had I done something wrong? Had I missed an important piece of conversation? We had decided to try long-distance. We had promised each other phone calls and regular texts. We had promised each other that we wouldn't give up, no matter the distance.

On Holi, she called me said, “Rayan, a couple of my friends and I are planning to go to Iskcon temple today.”

It was her first Holi away from her home. I felt good that it was she who had taken the initiative this time and called me. “All right, baby,” I said, “but please do remember to inform me once you reach home. I just want to make sure you’re safe, that’s all.”

“Sure...” she said. “I will call you when I leave the place and reach home.”

That day I was home, but I didn’t dare disturb her all evening. It was 9.00pm, but she neither called me nor sent a message.

Her phone was switched off. I was worried. I’m sure she knew I would be worried. Her phone was still switched off at 1.00 am.

The next morning I typed into the laptop. “Good morning love, how was your day?”

No response.

My patience was waning.

One more night passed. It was only after two days when she answered my call.

She said quite bluntly, “I simply don’t understand why you are hounding me.” Before I could utter a word, she disconnected. Hounding? But, I don’t understand. One day we are together and the next she thinks I’m hounding her?

Things did not change and I went insane. She blocked me on WhatsApp. But I only wanted to know what had happened, where I had gone wrong. I wanted her to tell me clearly once, but it did not happen.

Finally, I accepted she had gone far away from me.

Now, the hope of finding answers to my unasked questions was also lost. I became aware of the two sheets of papers in my hand and dumped them in the dustbin.

Chapter-2

I was caught in a web of negative thoughts. I couldn't stop them, but instead of trying to block them, I thought I should try to replace them with good memories. The only thing I had now were three and a half years of a beautiful relationship. At 12.30 am I left my room and walked into my balcony. I gazed at the stars twinkling right above me, as if trying to give me a message—to not worry too much. Ups and downs are inevitable in life.

When I remembered the spark in her eyes, that lovely smile each time she looked at me, my wrath melted away. Every single moment passing by was reminiscent of the moments we spent together all those years. My mind and heart seemed to be in conflict.

I spent many sleepless nights thinking about her. My attempts to convince myself that it was just a matter of time and everything would be fine – were futile. She didn't know how special she was to me.

I dozed off in the balcony.

The siren from a police car woke me up at 4.00 in the morning. I woke up feeling refreshed.

I loved the mornings when I woke up to a sweet message from her. If we didn't exchange text messages early in the morning, it felt as though something was missing.

But now all I wanted was to be myself and live my life my way. I had no need for material possessions, money or even close friends. I never understood people very well anyway, and they never seemed to understand me either. It was not an act of bitterness, but an act of self-preservation.

Then after a while again I wanted my dark past to disappear somehow. Fade into oblivion. I was about to lose the girl I madly loved, and somewhere I still felt guilty. What could have turned her against me?

I was angry with myself and with everything. Finally, I decided I had had enough and wanted to move on; I had to come to terms with whatever was happening.

“Din bhi wohi raatein wohi,kaisi hai meri ye bechainee...” (The same days and same nights, just me and my restlessness.)

This line from a Bollywood song perfectly described my condition. Most of

my evenings passed waiting gloomily for the next morning. Every morning would pass in anticipation.

There was only a faint hope of everything coming back to normal, a faint hope of the happiness and joy returning to my life, which my heart knew, was only possible with her return.

I looked at my phone. I had received a message from my friend, Mannu. It was a screenshot of *her* WhatsApp status.

“Today I Am Very Happy,” it read.

Many of our common friends had seen her status, and my phone eventually ended up with a string of congratulatory calls from them, in the hope that we might have patched up. I dropped her a text asking the reason behind her happiness. Surprisingly, I received a call from her telling me that her leave had been approved and she was coming home after ten days, for a month.

She said she would meet me and discuss all that had been happening between us.

“There is a lot to tell you and make you understand,” she said. “But please leave me alone until then.”

Suddenly, my phone vibrated again. It was one of my friends, Shivai. Shivai had been my true friend. A day dreamer that he was, he guided me through thick and thin. We met on the first day of college, both of us lost on a new campus, hurrying to get to our class. Well, we couldn’t get to the class on time, were kicked out, and have been best friends since.

Before he could even say a word, I said, “*Bhai*, everything is going to be fine from now on. Everything will be back to normal.”

“Everything sorted out? WOW! I’m very happy, brother” he said.

“She just called up to tell me that she is coming to Delhi after ten days.”

“See, I’ve always told you — what you settle for is what you get and the more you aim for, the more you get.” For me these were magical words or the *mantra* I’ve always followed.

“Yes, Shivai, you were right, brother, all this time. I must meet her and resolve all issues in the first meeting.”

“Stay happy, brother, and start preparing for your meeting.”

“Yes. This time, I won’t be leaving any stone unturned.” I said, before he hung up the call.

I took a deep breath, still sinking into the thought of whatever has happened within an hour. I dialled Riya's number, her friend with whom she was expected to stay in Delhi, but Riya didn't pick up the phone.

I started thinking about what we would do. There were a lot of scenarios my mind was conjuring up. There was a new hope.

Hearing me talk loudly over phone with Shivai, and seeing me happy, my sister said,

"What happened, man? I see a lovely smile on your face after a long time."

"Nothing special, Di" I replied. "It's just that I'm feeling much better today."

"Feeling better today!" she scoffed at me.

"Let's change the subject, Di," I said trying to ignore her inquisitive look.

"You don't want to share your pain and happiness with me, but I can easily guess the reason behind your smile," she smiled. "Don't act as if you are old enough not to discuss your problems with us."

Eventually, she asked me about what I wanted for breakfast.

"How about Chole Bhature?" I asked. For a change I was conscious of my appetite, and I really felt hungry.

"It's obvious that you are hungry; you have not eaten properly for days," she said and left the room.

I started making plans about what we would do once she reached Delhi. I wondered about the places where we could spend our time, about the things I would say to her, about ways to make her understand me, about how I would forget everything that had happened between us and make a new beginning.

But then I said to myself, "how good will it be if I can again feel the train of events that happened between us right through the beginning? From how we met, to how it all started, to how it went for the next 4 years." I was very excited by the thought of getting back down to the memory lane.

It's interesting how a Hindi medium school chap, hailing from a small town, fell in love with a girl from Dehradun, with a high-quality education. She was a very beautiful model — Miss Uttarakhand, to be honest. How did it all start?

Chapter-3

June, 2009

Five years ago, I was a man who didn't know where to use "will" or "shall" or speak proper English. I belonged to a typical "Baniya" family — a Political family — from a small town in western UP. I would write political speeches for my grandfather, something I had been doing it since the age of twelve. After completing school, my next desire took me to the door of an engineering college. I decided to take coaching for AIEEE from Kota. AIEEE was the only hope for me through which I could realize my dream. Though I was not that interested in engineering, it was important for me to have gotten out of my town for some outside experience. The main idea behind this course and career path came from the 2009 General Elections.

A person who had contested the election from the nearest constituency to our place had won, just because he had Engineer (Engr.) as a title before his name. Since everyone deemed him educated, he earned more votes than was expected. I wanted to be a politician and a leader. I loved the luxury of writing and creating landscapes from my words. I wanted to be a writer, and I was here to begin that journey.

The decision rather shocked my family.

I left for Kota. Somehow I managed to snake my way within Kota, but I had no clue as to what institute I would be admitted. It was surprising that even no one from my family asked me the same.

I took a room on rent and started going through the reviews of several institutes on my laptop after searching for a couple of hours, I decided to try my luck at Allen Career Institute. My choice to leave my home, the refuge of my family, everything I've known all my life until then — it was right and I realized this after attending the orientation session on the first day. I started to explore the campus when I saw a line on every wall: "Truth can irritate or even can terrorize you, but can never let you be defeated."

I thought I should ask someone from the faculty what this line really meant.

"Sir, how truth could be torturous?" I asked one of the professors.

"Truth always wins, even after being denied and hidden behind troubles." he said.

"Sir, I know what truth is; I want to know why people have to face troubles when it comes to truth."

"Wait and watch," he said and left.

A month or so later I realized what he meant. The entire Allen faculty wanted their students to fight with their problems alone – they knew if the kids managed it, their confidence would be boosted.

My rank at AIEEE was 70k-something, which didn't help at all. One day, while I was reading the newspaper I saw a post regarding admissions in Uttarakhand's best colleges through the AIEEE ranking, so without wasting a second I enrolled for counselling and, in the first attempt, got the best college as well as the branch I wanted – DIT(Electrical Engineering).

On the second day of college, we got to know that the branch I had opted for had been cancelled by the university. Our batch of forty students was left adrift, but somehow the college management worked it out and I ended up with Electronics and communication.

A small town guy who was shy around girls began to embrace the title "lover boy."

The first year of engineering was on the verge of completion with a whole lot of fun, entertainment and less of studies. Oops, I think I did forget that prime intention for getting admission was to study.

August, 2011. DIT, Dehradun

After four unsuccessful attempts at finding love in my first year, I started my search afresh. I now hoped to find my certain someone among my juniors. That was the time when my friends and I used to have a look at the junior girls as if we were in a showroom with coupons, the only thing we have to do is to choose a T-shirt for ourselves. In all colleges, every guy who is single has a feeling that *now I will select my love from the junior batch*, and I too was waiting for the same.

My friends all knew about my interest in politics and in wanting to keep myself at the helm of organizing all things. So it was no surprise when my classmates voted in to make me the cultural head of my branch and hence in charge of the Fresher's party.

From the very next day the mission started — to make the upcoming event successful. I tried not to let it get to my head.

Being the cultural head also came with its perks; I did not have to ask for the phone numbers of the junior girls, they came to me instead for all sorts of advice.

I would go to the classes of the juniors to announce the event along with my friends from the same batch. Entering each class, I would write my name and phone number on the blackboard in bold letters. When my friends ended their announcements for the party, I would say, “I am your cultural head. Anyone who is interested in appearing for auditions and wants to participate in the fresher’s event can submit their names and phone numbers to me.”

At the end of the day, I would sort the phone numbers and keep a list maintained of all volunteers. In the evening, I would receive a couple of calls from the junior girls who sought my assistance regarding their events. “Sir, should I dance on this song or that song?” “Should I sing this song or that song?” and I would answer them to the best of my ability. One day I got a call. A girl said from the other side, “Good evening, Sir. I am Sheryl, your junior. I want to take part in the event, but I cannot dance.”

“Why is that so?” I asked.

“Sir, the dress I used to wear for my dance has been stolen by monkeys.”

I barely managed to stop my laugh. *This is a tad weird... Do I also have to deal these type of issues?* But suddenly I realized that it was Neeraj, my friend. He played a prank on me. From that day on, I learnt my lesson and stopped responding to unknown numbers.

One day a girl approached me and said, “I want to dance at the Fresher’s” Party.”

I turned to face her, suddenly grey eyes met black, and it was like love at first sight for me. “Yes, why not?” I said, “you should do whatever you feel like doing.”

“Sir, I also participated in a fest at IIT, Roorkee,” she said, “I went there from my college (UPES) for a dance competition when I was doing BBA.”

Upon hearing so, I stopped short. Is she insane? Why is she doing BTech after a BBA?

I remained silent; I couldn’t help my wonderstruck eyes from drowning in the sparkling greys before me.

“Sir, I quit BBA after the first year, which I was doing from UPES, Dehradun,” she explained, as if reading my mind, “I have come here to do

B.Tech.”

Sweat pouring down my face as her voice distracted me “Wonderful, this is awesome,” I said, “This sounds good,” but really I thought this girl was nuts.

“Auditions are in progress you can go to the auditorium,” I said a bit brusquely. She left, bringing on a forever kind of winter to my heart. “She’s amazing,” I thought.

I was as white as sun rays, she came as a prism and left me as colourful as a rainbow. I too moved to the auditorium and the black eyes again stacked to the grey ones.

She caught me staring at her across the room and she blushed.

“What are you searching for?” Her voice came with the gesticulation of her hands.

“Just counting the stars.”

“What? In the daytime, I couldn’t find even one in this polluted mess of the city,” she wondered.

“You forget to notice that you were finding them in the sky, and I was finding in your eyes,” I murmured.

“What?”

The way she reacted on my foolish answer was enough for me to get back. I smiled and said “Nothing.”

“Sir, do you have Aaloo Chat?” she asked.

Strange request. Aaloo Chat? Why would I have any food on me?

“No,” I said, wondering if she was simply hungry and didn’t know where to go, “but if you want, we can go and have it at the market together.”

Now she was the one befuddled. “...Sir??”

Then some understanding crossed her face. She chuckled lightly and said, “Sir, I was talking about the song on which I want to dance.”

“...oh.”

I was embarrassed, and a bit endeared towards her, and we laughed hard for the next fifteen minutes.

She would laugh at the most ridiculous joke I’ve ever told anyone, the corners of her lips lifting up, her teeth peeking out. Placing a hand on her waist, she throws her head back and keeps laughing until I’m shaking my

head, not really in denial, perhaps to the sound of her laughter maybe. A few strands of her hair come loose from her braid and she tucks them behind her ears.

I grumble. It wasn't even that funny.

She puckers her nose, heaving almost and brings a dainty little finger to rest of on her lips.

Though I was able to arrange for Aaloo Chaat, *the song*, for the UPES girl, she didn't dance at the event. At the time of the auditions though, we all saw her perform. It was lovely.

The day of the party arrived. In the morning I got ready and left for the venue — it was being held at the college ground. My duty was to give a tagline to every junior and I fulfilled it diligently.

She crossed my mind day and night. Memories come crashing down whenever I saw her in college. I realised she was the best. *She was the one* is all I used to say. Why aren't we together?

My wish of finding a soulmate amongst the juniors, which was fading, suddenly reaches its peak. This was the time when Facebook had caught up with the youth of the country. I used to receive many friend requests from my juniors, but none from *that* girl. So I sent her a request myself. She accepted, and with this, a new story began. For the first month, we communicated solely through FB. I would borrow my friend's laptop for this purpose, since all I had was a basic phone and a damaged laptop.

She had a problem with her network connection. In fact, it was known for its signal quality, or well, lack thereof. I fondly called it a "*farzi* (fake) net connection." Despite the wavering signals of her Wi-Fi, our conversations weathered on. I couldn't be happier. This was a fresh start; I could feel it.

Diwali vacations arrived, and I was in a dilemma. With so much distance during vacations, chatting via Facebook would not suffice.

I pondered over my options. *Ask for her number?* I could do that. But it might look indecent. Instead, I dropped her a message on Facebook. I told her my laptop was having some problems and I wouldn't be able to talk to her. With that, I gave her my number and said that she could contact me if she wished. There. Now it was up to her.

After that, I left for my home. There were no cyber cafés around my place,

my hometown being a little underdeveloped. Whenever any message popped up on my phone's screen, I wished it was hers.

It was Diwali. I was outside my house, in our backyard watching — and lighting up — fireworks with my family and friends. After we exhausted all the crackers, and ourselves, I came into my room to rest. At around 12.20 am, a message popped up on my phone.

“Hey.” It read.

“Hey, Akshita.” I knew it was her.

“How did you know it was me?”

I smiled as I typed a reply, “I just knew it.”

“Wow. You can sniff out who it is!”

And so it went on. The next day I called her and we chatted about the most random things.

Slowly and steadily the bond between us became stronger. Soon it was December. It was her birthday on 3rd of December. I didn't know if she would invite me to her party, but my partner in every crime of that time and a great friend Aamir and I decided to invite ourselves on that day. Finally, as the midnight I called her. She picked up the phone, clearly happy to have gotten my call, and we talked for a while.

Next morning, I was excited. As the time for the party came near I felt a bit nervous. Aamir was with me though, and he constantly boosted my morale. I only had a budget of Rs. 320 on me. That would have to suffice. So after getting a cake for her we decided to go to a card shop and get her a birthday card for Rs 99. I was nervous to meet her. And because of that, I forgot to write anything on the card. The venue of the party, The Heart, was near the shop. We went on our way.

I called her and asked, “Can we come?”

“Yes of course!” She laughed.

“I feel a bit awkward. Why don't you meet me outside the hotel for two minutes?”

“Wait, I will be there soon.” She came, wearing a black dress and matching black high heels, simple but elegant. Her hair, God, *her hair*. It was open and loose down her back, unlike her usual ponytail that she wore to college. It had red streaks in them, and my fingers itched by my side. I wondered what it

would be like to run my hands through her hair. I wondered if I'd even get the chance to do so.

She looked at me as I held the universe in my eyes, but all I had was her reflection. And, I realized, my slackened jaw. She was smirking, and then suddenly we went inside, Akshita leading the way. I was nervous. As soon as she opened the box of cake, she laughed again. On the cake, it was written "Farzi net connection."

Akshita had ordered Chinese food and I didn't quite like the cuisine. But I couldn't exactly refuse to eat. So I had a cold drink and started to enjoy the party. She kept on insisting that I eat, but I dodged her requests. I didn't know much of the people at the party, so I and Aamir stuck together. Akshita's friends kept staring at us from huddled groups in different corners of the room — giggling and smiling at her every now and then. I don't know why, but that boosted my ego a bit. The uneasiness of being in a room full of strangers dissipated little by little, and soon Aamir and I mingled with anyone we could. By 7 though, everyone decided to leave so we left as well.

She called me around 8.00 pm and said, "Thank you, sir, for coming over," and asked me what was wrong with my phone as she had been receiving the same birthday message every hour.

I smiled, "Guess?"

She said, "Now I got it. This '*farzi*' connection is now an '*asli*' connection." "YES!" I said.

She was very happy and kept thanking me. I was elated.

The next day I saw her before our classes began; we had neither met in college nor had we ever talked. I always kept my distance to save the both of us from becoming a campus gossip. Eventually, though, I began to yearn for her voice in person and decided I'd approach her on the campus grounds soon.

Two days after her birthday, I sent her a text message in the evening. "Something has happened to me. Ever since I returned from your party the other day, I haven't been able to sleep properly."

"But why?" She pretended she didn't get me. "You didn't even have anything there."

"No ... it's not like that," I smiled.

After gathering all the courage, I proposed her “I have...I have feelings for you.” I hesitated before spewing out my fears, “I don’t know if you feel the same way about me. Do you...?” I went quiet and waited, my heart thundering in my chest, wanting to escape the constricted space.

Akshita was silent for a few moments, and then asked me to give her some time to respond. Those minutes were the longest minutes of my life.

I waited, impatiently for her until that shock of my heart announced her call. When she finally called, it was hours later. Everything stopped. Faster heartbeats, sweat pouring down to the face.

“I’m afraid of loving anyone, loving me isn’t easy. You do not know about my past. I’m a broken glass with sharp edges. You will bleed every time you try to fix it. Do you still want me?” She said quietly.

“Till the last drop of my blood.”

“I fell for you for the very first time you came to our class for some announcement,” she said, magical words flowed from her mouth.

“My friends said to me, ‘this dude has a lot of attitude,’ but I told them it doesn’t matter. He’s sweet. *You’re* sweet.”

Hearing her confession, I told her a little secret of mine. I would look for her whenever I was in the college cafeteria — hoping to catch a glimpse; hoping that would make my day. She said, “Yeah, I noticed you every time. Your eyes were full of an unreadable emotion. Now I finally know what that is!”

“And tell me one thing, why you came for the audition when you didn’t dance?” I was curious.

“You don’t understand, do you? I have to do this so that I deserve your love.”

At that moment, I was sure we were the happiest people on the planet.

I updated my Facebook status. “I am in love, and this time it’s serious.”

After reading some of the comments on my status, she texted me, “I feel strange. I’ve heard that you do not know how to handle relationships and all.”

“No, it’s not true,” I said. “This is true love. I have spent a year waiting for you.”

For our first date, we went out on a double date. We decided on a movie, and I was nervous. I took extra care to dress up nice and went to the mall to meet up with her. That day, watching actors dancing on the huge screen in front of us, I held her hand for the first time. She didn’t let go throughout the whole

movie. After that we all went to have some pizzas.

She was incredibly quiet on our first date. Maybe she was scared or maybe she was observing me. I thought of proposing to her in front of everyone, I saw all the guys buying roses, so I did too. I felt shy as I hadn't given a rose to anyone all my life. After that we went to coffee shop and I slipped the rose into her hand under the table. At first she didn't understand what I was doing, but as soon as she realized that it was a rose, she told everyone about it. I *knew* I was blushing; my friends won't let me live this one down. Oh well, this is the loveliest chapter of my relationship, and I'll be damned if I didn't enjoy it.

My friends were worried as there were only twenty days left for the semester exams and I was off track in studies. But everyone knew that taking semester exams in engineering was a one-night fight.

Finally, exams were over and the next day I was to go back home for a vacation. She had an exam that day, but she came to see me nonetheless. That evening Akshita, Aamir, and I went to a hookah parlour. Akshita and I sat at different tables, but after a while I went towards her and she too bent towards me; softly, I touched her lips with mine and we kissed.

She said "you are not supposed to open your eyes while kissing."

"I am new to this," I said. She laughed. We kissed again, this time my eyes were closed. Suddenly a voice came into my ears. It was a waiter. He said, "Keep it up, guys," with a thumbs up. Blushing red, the both of us separated at that.

Before I left for home, she handed me an envelope and instructed me to me open it when I reached home. Following her advice, I waited impatiently to get home and open the card. As soon I got home, I opened the envelope to find a cute card that had a Pooh Bear message: "My days are lonely without you."

I returned to Dehradun after days. It was raining heavily that day. Despite the freezing weather, she came to college to meet me. We spent some time in the library, before going to the hostel. And like every other "in-love" couple, we had a clichéd corner of the library we'd assigned ourselves to. I headed straight for the old dusty section of books and research projects with papers turned yellow, old, and forgotten. She sat there by the window, our desolate corner happily-free of any interruptions. I snuck in behind her and gave her a surprise hug, which in retrospect I shouldn't have done, because she

screamed bloody murder. But after that initial shock and “Rayan!! You gave me a heart attack!!” we settled in. Rather, she settled herself on my lap and I happily accepted the turn of events. We met. We sat. We canoodled. And then we came out of the dusty confines of the library and into the rain, holding each other’s hands.

I was holding her tightly and suddenly my sister’s voice interrupted us:

“Kabse chilla rhi hu Chole Bhature aa gaye, Pta ni kha khoyarehtahi ye ladka”. (For the love of God, your food is HERE!! God knows what daydreams this kid gets stuck in.)

Chapter-4

May, 2015. Delhi

In a flash, my hazy memories smoked away, and I was rudely yanked out of my pleasant memory lane. With a resigned sigh, I gathered my wits to appear a little normal and went to the dining room to eat.

After 2 minutes or so, my phone rang. I paused in my contemplative chewing to look at the phone — it was Riya calling.

I picked her call without wasting a second and left my breakfast in a hurry.

I came into the balcony and was concentrating on my phone, Riya, and whatever she had to say to me.

“Hey, Rayan. How are you?” Riya asked

“I am good, how about you?”

“Likewise; I just saw your missed call,” she said, “I was bit busy when you’d called me.”

“It’s ok,” I replied and asked for a favour.

Riya was the mediator. Friend? Yes. Also mediator. She’s the only link between me and Akshita; a sweet person to have for a friend. A loyal, steadfast yet practical person, Riya has been there for the both of us since the beginning of our relationship. She has the uncanny ability to listen to both sides of an argument without boiling over or giving in to her emotions. Instead, she would offer you her thoughts — unflinching and truthful.

Of course, this time was no different.

“Rayan, tell me what happened?”

I sighed heavily and began, “Riya everything between me and Akshita has gone to hell in the last one month.”

As soon as she heard that she went into her supportive, protective mode, like I had expected her to. “What??Hold on. I talked to her a while back, but she didn’t mention anything! Yet you say this...ok. I promise you I will do all that is possible.”

“I know, that’s why I called you Riya,” I said, relieved to find some help at last, “You are the only one who could save our 4 year-long relationship. She won’t tell me what happened, what changed, what went wrong.”

“Are you serious!?” Suddenly Riya become very serious and asked, “Rayan tell me everything... what is going on? Did you guys break up?”

“No, we are still in a relationship, as far as I know it. I mean, I’ve had no intimation from her about this.”

I paused, and then started to tell her the whole story:

“Everything was pleasant, the usual things to expect from the both of us. But since she moved to Bangalore, it’s all been different. I remember her words when she was leaving for Bangalore. She was scared, she’d said. I also felt very bad on that day. But I was happy too; she was going to fulfil her dreams. I wanted to hold her tightly.”

Riya interrupted me, “I already know Rayan.”

“How do you get to know all of this?? Did she tell you about this?? I asked.

“No Rayan, she did not tell me anything, but I remember those two days when she came to Delhi a couple of months back. And I saw a beautiful chemistry in between you guys. I saw her madness when being placed in Wipro, she only applied for IBM interview in Delhi just to spend some quality time with you. I didn’t expect that after 2 months I’ll have to hear something like this.”

“That day she was acting like a kid, saying she doesn’t to join Wipro and she wanted to stay on here. I tried to tell her that she should prioritize her career first. And maybe if everything is good in her training, with God’s grace she’ll get transferred to a Delhi branch.

“Since that day I haven’t got to meet her. Riya, I made a mistake in those 2 days, and I think I’m getting punished for it.”

“*Yaar* I don’t know much, but when everything was going right then where did it go wrong?” Riya asked.

I trudged on.

“Everything was great till the time she departed for Bangalore. I was helping her on WhatsApp, choosing from different hostels where she could stay. I remember she would share everything in detail — when she joined Wipro, her first day at Wipro, how she spent her day. She even asked me to come to Bangalore once.”

“After a week she made friends with her Wipro colleagues, but at the time of she asked, ‘Should I go, you won’t feel bad?’ And I supported her. I wanted

her to be a little free.

“Later that day she called and asked me, “Rayan, can I drink a little, only one peg?” You know how she gets after a couple of drinks. So I asked her to drink, but only one condition: if something wrong happened she will call me instantly, as I have so many friends in Bangalore who could take care of her.”

Suddenly I felt I was boring Riya with all the emotional crap. I asked for her apology, she replied, “it’s ok Rayan, it happens.”

“So what I was telling you?” I asked instantly.

““You told me that you had given her permission.” She chuckled at this.

“Rayan when everything was going so good then why you are so disturbed? Tell me,” She said.

“Well,” I continued, “after a week I got into some important work for which I had to go to Assam, Nagaland. I called her when I was on the train.

Do you know where I am right now?

Yes of course babe. You are going to the northeast for your work.

Do you know where exactly I am now?

Obviously in the train. Or...are you coming to Bangalore...are you!!??

Soon, love. But right now I am in Varanasi, Constituency of PM Narendra Modi.

Damn it yaar.

What?

Always Modi, I don’t know when this Modi fever of you will leave us alone. From last two years, most of our conversations have been about Modi. And now please tell me what made you go to his constituency?

This is a very place that has given future to the country! (I was happy, excited, and almost hopping on the spot).

Stop it, please do not start Modi Puran now. You are completely a Modi bhakt.

MODI-BHAKT

She was right of course, I am, as she so eloquently put, a Modi bhakt. Politics is my passion, but yeah, sometimes she would get irritated with it all. Whenever we went out on dates and while we were in the restaurant, I always had the habit to instructed waiter to change channel to ‘AAJ TAK.’ While my

friends downloaded and watched movies and played games, I spent my time in watching speeches of Narendra Modi.

Once she asked, 'if Modi Ji became PM, then you will shift your attention towards me?'

God, I smiled at that. 'Love, my attention is always on you, and my mind is on Modi Ji's work,' I said, she hugged me tightly. I got lost in the stream of thoughts.

"So ... uh, where were we? "I asked Riya, I'd lost track of the problem, as was always the case when I thought about us.

"We were in Varanasi" Riya exclaimed.

I laughed and said, "Yes Riya I was in Varanasi."

"Suddenly Akshita asked me something that left me stunned. The situation was like; she quickly caught on to my mistakes. Nothing dangerous of course.

She asked me something- "Rayan, on Valentine's Day I had sent you a gift and along with it was a letter that I had written with so much love. You still haven't told me how it was?

"Yeah, I have read and I almost forgot to tell you."

"I hadn't, I had forgotten, I am never good at lying and especially to her, so she caught me within a second. She started in an insecure voice, "Rayan, you haven't taken that gift from your friend."

"I tried excuses, Riya. They didn't work. This had become a norm for us. I was too careless to respond to her lovely gestures."

"The thing was, I had sort of tried to say that she was overreacting and not listening to my problem. I kept blaming her and in doing so I left her crying. I disconnected the call and went to sleep, but afterwards I realised if she had done what I did I would be hurt too."

"Rayan, that wasn't a good thing to do."

"I know. I did wrong, but still I called her again; but — instead of arguing with me or even hanging up on me —she didn't disconnect, received in first attempt, didn't complain about my behaviour. We talked for a while and I went to sleep. This was the first time when we slept without resolving our issues. She was hurt so badly that she didn't even argue.

Akshita placated me after a while.

“Rayan don’t worry, when you return to Delhi you can check that gift.” Simple!

“She was hurt and I thought problem was now solved, so I bid her goodnight kiss and went to sleep. Nothing, but her silent "hmm" spoke many things that night even without uttering a word. According to me, the whole matter was sorted out but really it hadn’t. Her teary eyes and murmuring words were the evidence then; "good night" she said and left the conversation.

“Rayan, you should have tried little efficiently to pamper her,” said Riya.

“Hmm, may be.” I said.

“Well, next day around 11 pm, when I reached Kohima (Nagaland) I was a little nervous. I wasn’t feeling good about the place, given its past dalliances with terror. She continuously consoled me with her talks and I reached hotel safe. While disconnecting call, she said something to me that put me on the edge.

Rayan, please if you can then come to Bangalore, I will arrange your flight ticket.

What happened, are you alright?

I am OK, I want to meet you.

OK I will try my best, don’t worry, I am always with you.

“Riya, she kept searching various flights and suggesting different ways to come to Bangalore, but I ignored.”

“And you came home,” asked Riya relentlessly.

“Yes, I was feeling very low.”

“Rayan, should I ask something,” Riya sounded hesitant.

“I know what you going to say,” I said, “I didn’t think about her needs.”

“Yes, of course you didn’t even realise that she was dying to meet you.”

“You are right, if I had thought about these things, situation would be different.” I started sobbing.

“Don’t cry Rayan, sometimes we don’t know, but things happen automatically,” Riya tried to reassure me, “the good thing is that you are accepting your mistake. Don’t worry. everything will be alright. But, where did it all go wrong?”

I started telling her the mystery of disconnected calls. Riya goes, “I don’t

know what to say, but I wish everything between you two will get better. I will try to talk to her to sort out your matter.”

“Please don’t talk to her,” I said.

“Then how can I help you!?”

“Akshita is coming back to Dehradun for 10 days, while she will be in Delhi at your place for 2 days. She said to meet there and sort out everything,” I told Riya.

“Wow man, this is good, I knew it she will not be happy without you. So wait and watch everything will be exactly like before,” Riya said, “and now I’m going to office. See you later,” Riya said before she hung up.

And now I was fully motivated and overloaded with enthusiasm, so for the moment I started to concentrate again on “Chole-bhature.”

Chapter-5

It was 10 am almost, time to leave for office, I was extremely happy, so while on the bus I started to plan our meet. I took a blank page and started to plan out where to go and what to do.

Although I knew many places; I wanted to take her to someplace nice, somewhere I could express my apologies and not be subject to public scrutiny. Went to Google for help, but it showed me so many links and options that I was a bit baffled by it all.

Finally, after much poking around, I got some ideas but still it wasn't what exactly I was looking for. I wanted to gift her something handmade. I'm a creative person. I can do this. Hmm. Once, on a whim, I'd made her a scrap book full of lovely moments together. I got this. Yes. *Absolutely*. Google has nothing on me.

Riya called the next day.

"Rayan I have talked to her and she just said she'll explain it all once she gets to Delhi." She paused, before saying, "And she asked to tell you to have patience; it's only for 7-8 days. So don't worry, just wait for the right time."

Riya's words worked like a soothing balm, but I couldn't wait longer. So I called Akshita.

"Hello how are you?" I asked

"I'm good. How are you? Need any favour from me?" She asked.

"What? You have never reacted like this ever," I said, "what's going on?"

She said, "Rayan I am not in a mood to talk. I am not feeling well, so please can you just leave me alone for some time."

After thinking for a while I said, "May I ask something?"

"Yes."

"Is everything OK between us or is there some problem?" I asked

"No Rayan all is OK; you just need to give me some space. I will call myself. But for now I need rest and just be out of all this," she said.

So as usual I replied, "OK love, take rest, I will always be there for you."

"Bye, Goodnight," she wished.

Extremely happy and exhilarated I was, as after long time she talked to me

without any lies, she spoke her heart out. *Everything is good now Rayan. I thought to myself. Everything will be back to normal, she is coming and we are going to meet.* I made a beeline for bed thinking of a good night's sleep this time. But what I got instead was restlessness — I kept thinking of our favourite moments, the love we shared, I kept wondering what went wrong.

Robbed of a goodnight text from Akshita, I couldn't sleep. I didn't feel right, there was an uneasy emotion swimming under my skin.

Morning ensued with me thinking of doing something special for her welcome this time. I was so lost in her thoughts that I forgot everything. As I went to office today, my mind was bubbling with plans on how to spend those two days of her visit.

First, I'll pick her up. I would give her a surprise by being at the platform with a beautiful apology letter in my hands.

March, 2015 (1 month before)

The first time in 4 years of our relationship that I doubted her, that...that problem had cropped up a mere day after her landing in Bangalore. I even thought of her cheating me, after going to Bangalore. I was coming to terms with the reason of her behaviour towards me.

She'd been talking weirdly since Holi, she would avoid my calls, give hesitant one-word answers. It all boiled into one big fight on Holi. I had called her to wish her, but she never picked up. Concerned I tried her phone again the next day, and the day after that, to get the same results. When she finally responded, she somewhat rudely said, "I'll go with my wish of being anywhere."

"What's your problem?" I was infuriated, and that argument eventually ended with a fight. I thought as this time I wasn't really at any fault; I'd wait for her phone call. But I waited for that one call from her for 2 days, no reply.

On the 3rd day I got a call from her sister who told me Akshita wasn't well and wanted to hear my voice. She was bedridden, missing me, and couldn't even speak as she was that weak. Hearing all this I called her, but it was switched off. I glanced at my phone and then remembered — she had a new number now. So, I dialled her number with the new sim, and she picked up.

Before I could even say hello, I overheard her talking to someone saying quite politely, "Hey, it can be my parents, so please allow me to talk." Then I heard some boys from the background saying, "Come on, keep the phone

aside. We are here to travel and have fun, not talking over phone.”

“Shh. Just 1 min.” I heard she was saying to her friends.

I was baffled. Her sister said she was sick to the point of being bedridden, yet here she was, apparently out of her sick bed and laughing and talking with people. I quickly disconnected the call.

I called her again, with my old number this time.

She didn’t pick up again. After 4 hours I called the same number, again 64th reply was still the same.

“The number you are trying to call is busy, please try later” May be she has put my number on auto reject.

It was only after five hours at 11 pm that she called.

“Hello, you called? I just saw,” She said and then remained silent.

I was expecting a new excuse from her side for not replying me, and she could not have come up with the same excuse of bad health.

“How are you?” I asked. “And what has happened to you? You were in trouble all this time and you didn’t even tell me.”

“You only know how to get angry right” she replied. “So I didn’t bother. Listen, Rayan, I can stay without you now. I don’t need your support.”

“What?” I was shocked.

“I even changed my WhatsApp status to ‘Fever, Cold’ thinking that you might call me, but you didn’t, she continued.

“I am sorry love. And I know that by saying sorry won’t change anything but I shouldn’t have left you alone even when we were in fight,” I continued.

“Please don’t do all this drama now. I don’t need you anymore Rayan. I can stand on my own now,” she continued with a flurry of anger.

“Drama? Me?” I was a bit furious, “You’re the one who put up a WhatsApp status and waited in silence to see if I’d notice and call, which, by the way, I did do, but you have a knack of not picking up my calls these days. I’m not the one stirring up drama here.”

It all turned up to an argument. It was as if we were competing of who can fight better, without even settling for something. It was a fault committed by both of us; still we were passing the buck.

“It was your sister who called me,” I said. “Your sister said you’re bedridden.

You are unable to move, unable to speak, but you are out with friends, enjoying. What exactly is going on?"

"I don't want to talk to you now. I'll do whatever I wish to do. Who are you to tell me what to do?" She replied rudely and then hung up.

The fuck?

"Sir, I am heading for the market. Do you want me to get you something for lunch?" the office boy asked me. I jolted out of my memories. I was at office, wanting to write an apology letter to her. Well, here goes nothing.

Whenever I had expressed my love, she had always reciprocated the same. I just thought of forgetting whose mistake it was and start making amends. I was angry with myself.

"Starting has to be something that should change her mood, making her laugh" I thought and started writing.

To,

My Love, My Life, My Mitthu

Permanent Address- Always In My Heart, My mind<3

I know that you are angry. I know I have done things that have hurt your feelings. I know that my actions and my words have both been misinterpreted.

I lost my temper, and there is no excuse for that. I am adult enough to know that.

I cannot take back the things I said, nor can I ever change the way I made you feel. I understand that the way I behaved has affected the way you think of me.

I want to say I am sorry. I will not hurt you that way again. I am sorry for what I have done and for how I have behaved. I know that I cannot make it up to you, because a wrong can never be erased. However, I hope that you can come to forgive me in time and to understand that when I say I am sorry for my actions, I do sincerely mean it.

Words will never fully express how sorry I am, but I truly hope that it is a good start:

I want to make amends. I truly do. You're too important a person to lose and I hate myself for realizing that now rather than earlier. I understand the

gravity of the situation, and I hope that you can find it in your heart to forgive me.

And I know baby, if you ever go in full sunlight with a torch in your hand, you won't be able to find a jackass lover as me. You've got no idea how much I love you, loved you and will always continue loving.

I'm so sorry and I am such a big jackass. Please forgive me for what I have done & please come back.

From-
You're Baby, Your Motu
You're Love

Permanent Address for Every Birth- Always In Your Heart <3 <3

With the letter done, I got an even better idea.

We've been together for 1500 days, give or take a few. So on the day I meet her, I am going to apologize before her, 1500 times, by writing it on a piece of paper. I just thought that this much is good, if not enough. Suddenly I gazed at the printer which was placed by my side on the table.

It was enough spark more creativity from inside me, and I started coming up with ideas of printing a photo of us together using A4 sheets and writing what I thought by the side of it.

For the first day, I only managed writing 167 lines, in an hour. I started packing my stuff to go back home, leaving for the day. I took all the pages and started heading towards home. I kept writing the whole night, reliving all the beautiful and enthralling moments we shared.

The result was quite an accomplishment. I spent eight hours, from 9 pm to 5 am, moving my fingers continuously, and ended up writing all the lines. It was quite a night for me. Fingers were aching, eyelids drooping, I walked down to my balcony and looked up at the wondrous sky above, and prayed with a complacent attitude as if everything is going to be good now.

The next thing I know, somebody's shaking me by my shoulders. "Hey, get up...Get up" a blurred voice was passing my ears as if I was in a dream. It was my sister.

"What happened?" I said making an attempt to get up from the bed. "Why are you shouting? It's been only 2 minutes since I slept!" I said.

"2 minutes?" she replied with a raised voice as if in a surprise. "I came to

your room at 5:30 am and you were sleeping.” She continued. “hurry up, you’ll be late for work.”

Feeling tired as I was, I grudgingly got up and started to get ready. Today was going to be a long day.

As I was on my way to the office I spotted an Arvind Kejriwal poster on the metro. With a jolt, I realized that I was so engrossed in Akshita that I’d lost touch of the political landscape. With an uneasy emotion stronger than the one before, I knew that when we were together, I was so focussed on politics that I forgot my own love; my life; my everything.

I reach office and I thought what a gigantic mistake I had been committing all this time. Now it’s time to fix it.

Tomorrow, we are going to complete 50 months of togetherness, it’s our anniversary. I hope she remembers. We used to celebrate fifth of every month; be it in a big way or small. We will talk tomorrow, and I know, I *know* everything will be fine. Even as I reassure myself, I wonder just how many times in the past month I’ve repeated those words to calm my fears.

After finishing the work, I left for home. I was thinking was how to wish her tonight, what to say — I was positive she would call me tonight. I was ready with a long message to be sent to her as the clock strikes twelve. She would be waiting for my message. She knows very well that under any circumstance we have always wished each other.

It is 12 A.M. I messaged her.

Silence.

On the opposite side of the phone, today I read each other's silence. The mind said delivered, the heart said seen.

I decided to check social media, see if she’s online somewhere, busy so she missed my message. When I logged in to Facebook I saw that she was online, I copied and sent her the same message again. I was notified that she has seen the message. The whole night went off, but she did not reply. Still, I waited for that one message the entire night.

In the morning, one of our common friends Aditi wished me for the anniversary. She said that she was very happy that being in the long distance also we have such a good and lively relationship. With a heavy heart, I thanked her.

She messaged me again asking me why I had put up a banal status declaring

our love for each other, when Akshita's was a much more romantic declaration.

What?

As I was replying she messaged "Rayan is everything ok, your reaction has me worried."

Then I told her nothing is right, everything is confusing. She hasn't wished me since morning. After seeing her romantic declaration for someone (not me, I know this wasn't for me) I felt depressed. I sat with my eyes open and everything stopped.

I told Aditi everything what was happening since one month; she was shocked, to say the least.

Aditi started bitching about her; though in my heart I knew she wouldn't do that to me.

I called her. As soon as she answered I could not stop myself from sobbing uncontrollably. She asked me to calm down and said, "I was just going to call you, love. Has it ever happened that we don't talk on our anniversary?"

I wished her. She said her usual spiel these days — "... not in a mood to talk..." "...we will discuss it later..." but before she gets to the end of her regurgitated speech, I interrupt, "may I know for whom have you updated your status? 'Happy to be with you?'"

Before she could say anything I added, "You must have updated it just to make me jealous. Haven't you?"

She smiled. I could feel it, and she replied, "yes Rayan I have updated it to make you feel jealous. Now stop asking all these silly questions all right."

As she said so I was so relieved and with a knowingly gesture I told her how stressed I was since morning. After a while she asked, "Why you are so stressed. I am coming in 5-6 days wait a little then we will meet and discuss the whole matter."

Lastly, I asked, "Can everything become just like before?"

Annoyingly, she asked, "what do you mean by that?"

Genuinely, I asked "can we be together again like we used to be?"

She said "Rayan there are only 10% chances left." At that, I elated! No really, hear me out. Whenever we fought she would use numbers, percentages to tell me of the damage done. This time, the percentages are quite high. Finally,

something was in my favour.

I sat in my balcony, riding my glorious high, and thought all was good again.

I call Riya the next day and tell her everything.

“She’s only nagging you; perhaps she wants you to get a feel of her absence and importance,” she said. “Just take this in a positive way, and please have some patience as she is coming and you are going to meet.”

I agree and put the phone down. While going about my day, I’m hit with a poignant memory.

December, 2013. Dehradun

It was fourth of December, 2013, and the next day we would have completed two years of our relationship. We had exams going on though, so we knew we couldn’t celebrate in the middle of them. I was a bit sad about that.

“It’s ok baby,” she said, “we will celebrate our anniversary after the exams.”

“Ok love.” I continued still feeling uncomfortable.

Fifth of December came. Long and emotional texts were exchanged. We met, exchanged gifts and roses, and went for an outing. But that was it for the day. After our exams finished, however, I whisked her away for a surprise.

We had planned that we will be booking a hut at one of the most famous resort in Mussoorie after her exams got over.

We both left for Mussoorie. After reaching Mussoorie, the first thing we did was, book a room in a hotel as it was raining outside. It was time for the surprise. I asked her to stand facing the wall, which she did. I then asked her to go inside the bathroom and wait.

After 5 minutes I asked her to come into the room and open her eyes. As soon as she opened up her eyes, she hugged me. I was so happy from that reaction. I just wanted to see her smile. She gradually noticed the whole room, which was lit with candles. A chocolate flavoured cake on the table and the wall full of heart shaped red balloons.

After that she observed the small pieces of paper on the wall and on which “I love you” was written. She felt each of them, kissed my right hand and said, “Baby, I can’t believe this. It’s beautiful.”

“Ok, now you tell me what you have planned for me,” I said.

“I haven’t planned anything this time” she replied. “Whatever you did for me is absolutely perfect. There is no need for my plan now.”

“Oh come on... This is not done.” I said eagerly willing to see what she’d planned for me. “We both were supposed to plan something for each other. And I know you got something for me.

She felt a bit reluctant, but it was only when I forced her that she agreed to tell. I closed my eyes before she could even ask me to go face the corner of the room. “Let me know when you are done,” I said.

“You don’t have to close your eyes for this” she said as she took a packet out of her bag asking me to open it.

As I opened that packet I saw the same number of candles, a chocolate flavour cake and the same small pieces of papers. I was shocked and started laughing. It felt great to know that we share many similarities, one way or the other.

There were these sweet memories one moment, and then there is this situation I am in, that is making me weep. With these memories another sleepless night passes away.

Next morning, I wake up to a message from Akshita, “Rayan if you ever loved me then please don’t come to Railway station to receive me.”

I dialled her number, “Hey what happened? I always come to receive you. What’s so different this time?”

“Listen, I don’t know anything, I don’t want you to be there at any cost,” she said, “Rayan lots of my friends will be there and I don’t want any nuisance over there.”

“What? Drama? So what if your friends are with you? Everyone knows me right?”

“I am not interested in any of your drama, I just don’t want you to be there creating some nuisance,” she said, “I’ll handle everything. You needn’t worry.”

“Baby, when have I ever been a nuisance? I’ve always loved you and respected your wishes, and I’ll try to do so now. But, really, I will not be stupid around your friends, I will sit quietly. I will drop you home without saying any single word, I promise. Please.” I pleaded with all my might. I hadn’t seen her in weeks, and now she won’t let me come get her.

“Never. I don’t want to hear anything.”

What do I do now? How do I fix a situation I haven’t even created!? Still, I

replied, “Okay I will not come, happy now?”

Call disconnected.

Wow.

Okay Rayan. You have 48 hours, so in that way you have got enough time. You got this. You are also talking to yourself, but then fuck it. So does the rest of the world.

I take my phone and dial Riya’s number.

“New update, my friend. She has forbidden me from picking her up from the station. What did I do now?”

“Listen Rayan, why are you wasting your time and mind on this? Just don’t think negatively,” she consoled me, “I talked to Akshita and she was miffed. Don’t crowd her, okay? We don’t know the pressures she’s been through in Bangalore. You both have decided on a meeting point, date and time, yeah? Just stick to that. All will be fine.”

“You know what her concern was?” she asks.

“What?”

“That you’re the type of guy who’s a bit on the possessive side. Not in a bad way or anything. But she didn’t want her family and friends to know about your relationship yet, she’s not comfortable with going public, Rayan. So please don’t worry, I will go station to receive her. She is *not* going to betray you. She *loves* you, okay? Don’t you doubt that?”

I sighed. I seemed to be doing that a lot these days. “Thank you so much Riya, you are such a true friend,” I tell her, “you’re the only one helping me cope here.”

“Haha! Relax you dummy,” she says, “and don’t turn your brain into mush.” With that our little chat ended.

As of now, all I could do was keep myself busy, wait for her return, and meanwhile just rehash our happy moments together.

There wasn’t much time left for her arrival and I still wanted to do a lot for her. I decided to buy something for her, but fell short of ideas. So I decided to take Shivai’s help.

His first suggestion? To buy her something unique and sweet.

He’s absolutely right. Akshita isn’t one for costly gifts. She adores heartfelt ones.

I started searching different showrooms to get something better. There were a lot of things, but I want something extra ordinary. After spending two hours for searching finally found these;

1. A bracelet with white pearl.
2. Set of golden and black bangles
3. A necklace with a beautiful golden pendant
And the best one...
4. A necklace with a heart shaped pendant, which I really liked at first sight

I don't want to simply give the last one to her, but I want to put it on her myself. I knew this was going to work.

God bless Shivai. Now there was not much time left to wait.

It was 7 in the evening. I went to my room. Tomorrow is 9th, she will board the train and soon be here.

I started missing her badly. So, I called her.

I repeated the same line, "hello, how are you love?"

"I am good, what about you?" she too completed the formality by asking me.

"How are you Rayan," after a long time she asked again.

"Doing good, insomnia is my friend now," I said, "What are you doing, done with your packing?" I added.

"I was studying, tomorrow morning I am having a test and journey in the evening, so feeling little tired," she added.

"Why are you taking so much of stress, I had never seen you in so much stress during engineering." I asked.

"You don't know how much this test is important for me so it is better you stay quiet," she said.

"How would I come to know when you never explained?" I asked.

"Please don't talk this nonsense now, I don't have mood to talk to you right now. Can't you just wait? I am coming there," she said.

"Okay, I am not going to say anything, it's just I need a favour from you."

"Yeah, what is it?"

"You always talk to me before entering the examination hall, will you do the same tomorrow?"

“Okay. I’ll pick your call in the morning, but I can’t talk to you right now, good night,” and with that she hung up.

I woke up next morning, and called her before she entered the exam hall. She didn’t pick up. I composed myself again. After 3 hours I called her again, I wish to know how the exam went.

She picked up. Sounding very elated, she said “It went well and I got 78%.”

“Same day exam and result?” I asked her with a tone of surprise.

“Obviously, it was an online test and results were declared soon after it,” she said.

“Wow, that’s pretty cool.” I responded. “So, what’s your plan now?”

“Rayan, I am going directly to my PG, and have loads of stuff to do. Can I call you later?” She asked.

This was the first time in a month that she’d spoken so sweetly to me. I was completely mesmerised by her voice, bringing back the memories of the past. I was dying, wanting to listen more. Was there a way I could extend our talks?

“Rayan, you there?” I asked you something?”

Oops.

No more daydreaming, you dingus.

“Yeah, sure love.” I replied. “You get some rest. We can talk later!” I added, doing mental jumping jacks out of happiness, and we hung up.

Time passed gradually and the clock struck 4, with me still waiting for her call. I tried to console myself, thinking that she might be busy doing her packing or taking rest. I waited. It was 8 pm now, time for her train to depart. I called her again. She didn’t pick up. I called her again after 30 minutes or so, and —

“Holy fuck, just say what you want!”

I was flabbergasted “What was that for? You said we’d talk afterwards! You never picked up. And now that you do you’re screaming at me?” I asked. Why did you say you’ll talk to me later when you obviously had no plans of following up on that?”

I continued, “What have I done to deserve this!?”

She calmed down a bit and said “I’m sorry. I was busy in packing as I had to

reach station which was too far from the city. It took me 3 hours to get here, and I was stuck in a traffic jam,” she said.

“I was just worried about you. You could have dropped a message. Let’s leave it. Can I ask you one more thing?” I added.

“Yes,” she replied.

“Can I come to the station and meet you? Please don’t say no,” I said

“Sorry Rayan” she replied. “You can’t come to station as I need some peace, not any drama. I don’t want to make a fool of myself, that too in front of everyone,” she added with a tone that really surprised me.

“But you please make sure that you meet me tomorrow at Riya’s home at 8 am,” I said.

“You can’t come that early, one of my friends is dropping an advance birthday party tomorrow —his birthday comes mid-May, and we won’t be there then. I’ll meet you afterwards.” She said.

“What is all this? Why am I hearing about this now?” I asked as I was really waiting for that one moment from quite a long time now. “You know very well how difficult it is getting for me to spend every single minute without you. Please don’t do this to me.” I implored.

“Sorry Rayan,” she said without any remorse in her voice, “we already have plans, if I back out now they won’t like it.”

I was crying. She realised that and said “Rayan, please don’t make the situation more complicated now. I am staying in Delhi for 2 days, just to meet you and discuss us. So please try to understand my situation too.”

Yet again, I became her puppet and agreed to whatever she said. The scariest thing about love is that you’ll do just about anything you’re asked to if asked by the one you love. Suddenly I heard a guy’s voice from behind her, “Hey Akshita! What are you doing here? Come and join us.”

Her tone changed completely at this interruption, and she starting shouting at me. “How many times I have to tell you to not disturb me again and again? I had already made it clear that nothing can happen now, so please just stop calling!” and she hung up the phone.

I was dumbfounded and couldn’t believe my ears.

I was dying for her call the whole day and when she does, suddenly I get to hear all this, with her getting metamorphosed completely in the middle of the

call and hanging up the phone.

And, who *was* that guy with her? There's something really weird going on, but my heart, as always, was not willing to doubt her. My heart was not ready to believe that she can cheat on me. So I called her again.

She never picked up.

Chapter-6

Next morning, I decided to do some work to avoid any negative thoughts. But my efforts went in vain. That stranger, whoever the guy was, his voice in the background and the whole conversation with Akshita was still going on in my head, gnawing at me from inside.

I called Riya again and told her everything. She agreed with me.

“I don’t think she can cheat on you, ever,” she said, “so don’t think too much and don’t worry. She will be here tomorrow, have some patience idiot!” Riya had once again assured me

I started finding her pictures in my laptop, of all the pictures I scrolled by to find the perfect one. I realised, the many so called "imperfect clicks" were the most "memorable ones." I took some pictures of her, and printed them out to write 100 reasons of loving her on the back of the photos. I thought it the most appropriate way to spend my time. I would gift those pictures to her eventually. She’ll get an idea of how much I love her.

I had no idea of how the day passed. Now, she was just one night apart from me. I began constructing scenarios in my head — how the meeting would go, how she’ll receive me, how excited she would be, just how much crying will take place. While lost in those thoughts, I spotted my reflection in the mirror and almost scared myself to death. I looked like a ghost coming out of his grave! If she sees me like this she won’t recognize me for sure. I opted to go for a haircut and shave.

Upon reaching the salon it was almost full, so I had to wait for 20 minutes. I had a nice haircut and shave just like the one she loved on me. Once done, I went home, had dinner, and prepared myself for yet another sleepless, restless night.

Next morning, I was up early. I was ruing for not able to receive her at the station but I had to keep my words. Checking the time, I found that it was already 7.15. Riya texted me right then, “I’ve safely picked up your precious diamond of a girlfriend. Don’t worry. We’re on our way home.”

I texted her back, “Thank you so much Riya, what are you guys doing now?”

“Nothing Rayan,” she replied. “She will sleep for least a couple of hours, she is very tired from the journey.”

“Yeah, I can guess.” Hers was a 36 hours-long journey, no wonder she’d be tired. “When Akshita wakes up, do tell her to call me.”

“Sure,” Riya replied and hung up.

I followed my daily routine; took a bath, stood in front of the mirror, did my hairstyle, as if had all the time in the world. And no sooner was I done, my sister entered the room, “Wow dude, you’re ready to battle the day. And that too so early!” she teased, “And you look like a proper human too — with your hair cut and shave. Any special occasion that I know should about?”

“Nothing di, I am going to Shivai’s house for one day and might get back tomorrow,” I said.

“Listen, mister, tomorrow’s Sunday and you having that Delhi Metro written exam. Did you forget?” She reminded me.

Crap. I had completely forgotten about the exam.

In an attempt to control the situation, I said, “Yes I know, no worries. The exam centre is in Noida. So, I’ll be back after the exam.” Crisis averted.

After some time, I left for Noida. On my way, I saw a key ring stall where one writes a name over rice and that is printed on one side of the key chain. During our college fest, I gifted one such key chain to Akshita— she loved it a lot. Emboldened by that memory, I asked the stall owner to provide me two key rings, one with “I am really sorry, Love” and the other with “I love you a lot” crafted on it. I headed to meet her.

She called at noon. I quickly answered, almost dropping my phone in the process, “Welcome to Delhi Madam, I’ve been waiting for this day for a long time. We will meet soon!”

“Hey Rayan, I have some news for you,” she hesitated, “I’m going to my friend’s place for the party,” After the party gets over I’ll contact you to be here and we’ll go together and have some fun.”

“Yes, contact me as soon as the party gets over” I responded. “I’ll be there in time and then we will talk a lot.”

Exactly after 3 hours she called me and said “Rayan I am at metro station, waiting for my friends. They are coming to pick me. After getting free from here, I will call you and tell you the place to meet.”

“Yeah sure, I’ll be there to get you,” I said and I decided not to disturb her during party.

But she never called.

So I pick up the phone and call her once again. She didn't pick up. All my plans for which I had worked since last few days, everything seems to be a waste. Her first day was almost over. I was scared in lieu of being angry. Is everything fine? As I didn't even know anyone among her those friends. They all were her friends from Bangalore. I called Riya's number and I was surprised because the number I dialled was of Riya, but Akshita picked the call.

"You are at home?" I asked her angrily.

"Yes," she said, her voice was like as if she doesn't care.

"But you asked me to pick you." I said. "I am waiting here and you are at home. You should have at least informed me."

"My friends dropped me home." She said. "I had asked them not to, but they insisted. I wasn't able to say no to them."

"That's alright, but what about me?" I replied, completely lost and in chaos from inside. "I was waiting impatiently for your call, counting every single second. You came here to meet me or your friends? At least inform me! Fine...just... I am coming to meet you at Riya's place," I added and started moving from the place I was in.

"What?" she said. "Don't come here, we'll meet tomorrow. It will not be possible to meet now."

"Have you gone mad or something? I am coming right..." She disconnected the call in between.

My mind froze. The whole universe stopped. There were rivulets of tears floating down my cheeks. Shivai, who was listening the whole conversation came to me and offered some water. I wasn't even aware of his presence. He was asking me something, but I didn't react.

Shivai just splashed that water on my face thinking something might happen to me if I didn't respond. I came out of my imagination and hugged Shivai and start crying badly. He got a clear idea of what all was happening in my life, but still suggested me to stay positive.

"Dude, there must be some reason for her acting this way." He said with a futile attempt to calm me down. "Just dial her number once more and tell her that you want to meet her for five minutes."

“No bhai, she will ignore me again, and I’ll not be able to cope with that,” I said.

“Bhai listen, your love for her is unconditional, right.” He said. “She is your true love. You have prepared a lot since last few days with all the gifts and plans. Today’s the day you were waiting for, so don’t spoil it with anger. You just go and give her all this. No need to say anything. She will understand your worth, and what you’re going through. If she had loved you ever once, she herself will come back to you.”

I decided to follow Shivai’s words, as my mind was incapable of independent thoughts.

I took out that bag filled with gifts and opened it on Shivai’s bed. I was still in doubts because in the past years she was always invariably desperate for every single meeting. This is the first time that I couldn’t comprehend her changing behaviour. I was not prepared for such a drastic change. I packed all gifts in the bag and left for Riya’s home. On my way I called up Akshita and requested her to meet me for five minutes. At first she directly disagreed, but later when she realised how upset I was, she agreed saying, “Alright, but just for five minutes only and that too outside Riya’s place.”

At that time, I was ready to agree on every single condition. I only wanted to meet her once. Within next ten minutes, we were standing outside Riya’s home. 10 minutes that were like 10 hours for me. My expressions changing continuously; sometimes crying, the very next moment I was smiling, then blushing, and then suddenly anger overtook all. Shivai stopped car just little before Riya’s house.

“What will you ask her?” He asked me. “What are you going to do at first?”

“Nothing dude” I replied. “I’ll simply ask her, why she is doing all this. Why is she making a fool out of me?”

“Are you nuts? You are trying to do and say that only which she wants you to do. Just go and express your feelings. You were waiting eagerly for this day. Now just because of a temporary rush of emotion don’t spoil your evening. Whatever and however she reacts it’s totally her decision.” Shivai was reminding me everything that I wanted to do; all that I waited for is going to be in front of her in no time.

He looked concerned and asked again, “Tell me what’s going in your mind now? What exactly you are thinking of doing?”

“I just want everything to be perfect like before.” I said. “I want her to be mine again; I want to love her, like her as always.”

“Then why are you having negative thoughts in your mind?” he strongly reacted.

“Why are you thinking about her deeds? Just focus on what you want to do, not on what she is doing. That’s it, breathe in breathe out for two minutes. Relax yourself! And remember those moments only which make you happy.”

Whatever Shivai said to me is exactly right. It takes great effort on my part, but I finally manage to follow his advice and calm down the storm of feelings brewing inside me. “Now I feel better, let’s move,” I said to Shivai.

Then I called her and asked her to come down.

“I am already there waiting for you, come on, and I don’t have much time to keep waiting. Come fast,” she replied.

Her tone was enough to annoy me, but I tried not to let it get to me. As we entered the lane of Riya’s home, I saw her standing outside. I left the car and walked towards her. As I approached her, glancing at her, she felt uneasy I could sense, but the choice was hers anyway, I thought. And then her sparkling eyes met mine, even in the lights dim blue, I saw her eyes that held love, her eyes held that unique shine, she was trying to hide it. Why was she doing that? I knew she was hiding her real emotions. I walked away, steeping on her heart breaking it into tiny pieces. She knew, I thought that she wasn’t mine, if only I knew, I was wrong that someday again I’d be her pigeon, she’d be my dove.

My feelings tucked deep inside my throat.

Are you lost? She asked.

“No”, I am just on my way there. I murmured

I clutched my hands tightly when we both came close to each other and said "hello!" in a very casual way. I hugged her, “How... how are you?” I spoke fluently, but stammered for the first time while expressing my feelings for her.

That was very difficult for me to say as my throat was jammed. Then I noticed that she wants to say something, and that turned out to be “please don’t ask these questions, and tell me exactly why you are here?”

Well, I have a millions of words inside my conscious mind to tell her why I

am here but my voice didn't cooperate. Without saying anything I handed her the gifts, full of my feelings, and with lots of dreams packed into a small bundle of love. I stood silent as I watched her inspect the bag. Hoping that she'd be glad. But, I was not prepared for what happened next.

She didn't even look at it once. She kept looking back to the house, towards her friends who were calling her for party. She knows I was eagerly waiting for this day but she didn't give it a second thought. May be she was too far gone or maybe she didn't want to think about it. She was looking around her furtively, eager to leave me, eager to move on. My mood was already spoiled because of her when she picked up my call and said to her friend that she is going down for five minutes. "That idiot is here again," I didn't tell Shivai about it. But still I control myself.

I know she is never going to open that bag in front of me so I myself started pulling things out. She asked me to stop. But to me it was like that is all I wanted to do at that moment. She says she cannot accept all this.

"Why, what happened now that you can't accept my gifts?" I asked. She just shrugs at that and accepts the bag from me. I started opening that packet. I can see insecurity written on her face; she knew whatever she was doing was wrong. My face was just blank, emotionless after seeing her reaction; I first gave her my apology letter. I know she is not going to read it but still I ask her to open it whenever she gets time. Then I take out that cake box and give it to her. She simply accepted that too.

"Rayan this all is not needed now and I can't accept all this. But as I can see you have prepared it yourself. So I'll take this bag with me, I don't want any kind of scene here. Now you please go, five minutes are already over," she looked just about done.

"I have asked to meet in morning too that you don't remember but 5 minutes you clearly remember that," I said and took out those bangles from the bag. I hold her hand and one by one I make her wear all those bangles. Then I take out that bracelet. She seems little uncomfortable as if she was going to lose her control over this, and says, "listen, I will wear them myself once I reach back to room. Please don't do all this."

"Ok, fine you can do as you want. But please let me put this necklace on you myself?" I take that necklace and try to put it on her. "Fine. Just put it fast and leave."

She took that bag from me and she said, "Please understand my situation too. I am here at Riya's house. I don't want her landlords to scold her later. Please go from here I will surely read all these. I promise you for that." I understood her feelings and in a hope that maybe she would also understand mine after reading all that, I took my unspoken dreams back with me.

Although nothing was going as I thought but still i asked her for a last photo together and she agreed. May be she was agreeing because she wanted me to leave as soon as possible, but my heart was hoping for something good. As she came closed I quickly turned off my camera as I did not want that moment to be our last. I still had a ray of hope, a feeling inside me that we will remain one soul forever.

"I need to leave Rayan, my friends are waiting for me," she said. I wanted to stop her but I couldn't.

Shivai, having seen it all from his car, came and hugged me and took me back to his car.

On our way back to his house, he asked, "Why you are getting worried now, you did your bit, don't feel bad just give her some more time may be she needs it."

I had no idea what he was saying because I just lost everything I had. Shivai knew that situation was getting worse by every passing moment. I knew, though, if I went inside Shivai's house then I'll not be able to leave tonight.

"Shivai you go back home, I'll manage now," I said.

"Where will you go? Do you think of me as a fool that I'll leave you in this condition here?" he said.

"I am going to Mannu's house, one of my college friends who live nearby, he also knows that I had to meet her today," I said.

He left me at Mannu's house at my request, though not happy with the turn of events.

I had never consumed alcohol, but that day I went to a wine stall and bought two beer bottles.

"Hey, what you are doing here, Rayan?" Suddenly someone called me, I turned back and it was Mannu.

Seeing beer bottles in my hand he understood everything. He came to me and

slapped me hard.

“If you want to kill then kill that love you have for that fake girl.” He said.

“She’s never been fake to me,” I countered in a feeble voice.

“What is wrong with you?” He was terrified and angry at me. He took me to his house.

Well, it doesn’t take time for things to change. There was a time when I used to come to his place just to have a conversation with Akshita the whole night. But, this was a whole different scenario, and I couldn’t even speak to him. He tried consoling and calming me down.

I wanted to take her back to our memory lane where — it seems — we wasted almost 4 years of our life, where we had spent time together, talked day and night, ate together, even cried at sometimes, but we were always one soul, made for each other like everyone used to say.

Ghanta made for each other, I thought. Still, I needed to meet her again once.

It was 9 pm now, I rushed to Riya’s house. Mannu tried to stop me, but I was in no condition to listen.

I reached her house in no time and called Riya, requested her to send Akshita down, I need to talk, I said. But life was cruel to me — they have already headed to Connaught Place for the dinner. “She will meet you tomorrow, but you go home right now,” Riya said.

Like I was going to listen to her, “I’m going nowhere” I replied.

“Just call me when you guys reach home,” I said and disconnected the call.

It started raining heavily. As if the myriad clouds conspired to unite two cynics. An optimist was born, in the most entrancing manner ever witnessed. As if for the first time nature wanted us to unite, it seemed a dream to me. I took shelter at a temple nearby, completely numb and disturbed.

There must be some reason, for what she was doing. I was continuously watching every car come and go, wishing from one car she might come out.

Somewhere around 1 am she called me.

“Where are you?”

“Still waiting for you to come back. How much time it will take?”

“Are you mad? Why are you still waiting? It’s raining, why you don’t go home. Please go home for now.”

“Why all of a sudden this concern for me? Why don’t you enjoy and let me wait for you?”

“Rayan, if you ever loved me, then please go home, for now, I will see you tomorrow.”

I kept silent.

“Please?”

“Promise? Tomorrow, you will spend whole day with me and we will settle out everything.”

“Promise, tomorrow 10 am, we will talk,” she said, “Now, please go and message me when you get home.”

Maybe she still cares for me. I had to walk for 4kms as there were no auto rickshaws available at this hour. I tried sleeping, but she dominated all my thoughts.

Next morning, Akshita called up, “You have your DMRC’s exam, right? I don’t want you to leave the exam, we will meet afterwards.”

Wow, I have an exam that I don’t even remember. I panicked because I really didn’t know what to do now. “How did you come to know about this?” I asked her.

“It was me who forced you to fill the form.” she reminded me. “Go give your exam first then we’ll meet, and I am going to sleep now, as we haven’t slept for the whole night.”

What the fuck. Well, it was nice that she cared about my exam. But, her behaviour was giving me serious whiplash.

She knows exam date, but nothing about my schedule, so I told her, “I’ll be free by 1 pm.”

I switched off my cell phone between 10-12 pm, so it would look like I am writing my exam.(I was feeling like I am fooling her, but the reality was that I was fooling myself).

The time to meet finally came, and she came down the stairs of Riya’s house. I looked at her like a canvas craving for art, and this time, I stood confidently....As I moved a step ahead I had the greatest fall.

“Why are you still in night suit? We are going out, right?” I asked.

“We are not going anywhere, why don’t you understand a simple thing that

you are being replaced with my friends. I don't need you now, why don't leave me just don't irritate me," she started shouting.

"But why? Tell me my mistake; you can't do this on your own. This is a decision that needs two people, the very two people who are in a relationship! Why are you doing all of this?"

"Rayan, I am bored of you," she said, "it's my life and I will decide what will happen in my life next. You cannot stop me from doing any of this."

"When did I stop you? Instead of supporting my family with their problems, I went with you to your auditions. In any case, my family needed me, but I chose you. Have you forgotten everything?"

"Look, I am not at all interested in past. Whatever I am now you cannot even think of it, because you don't have the guts to achieve."

"We were always meant to be together," I said.

She smiled, "just like the opposite sides of a river."

Without giving me the slightest clue "This is the last time we're meeting," she said. "So from today, neither of us knows each other."

"Tell me something more hurtful that I will forget you."

"You won't," she laughed at me and went back to her friend's house.

"Please wait, give me a single reason, and please don't go like this." I was crying, shouting, pleading, but she even didn't turn back to see. And then there was me, the most vulnerable and helpless person to have ever existed.

Now I understood everything. My words will not affect her; she had gone very far away from my life. I was still living in my dreams that she'll come back, hug me and everything will be normal. But soon I realized I am leading my life in a dream that will never come true. I was sick of it all. And I chose to ignore those thoughts of mine.

Akshita, one day you will look back to find me, where you left me and you will find the shattered pieces of the broken promises you made lying on the ground but I won't be found, I promise.

A broken smile, eyes full of tears, searching for hope, for the one who left will come back, said my broken heart. But my mind countered, the ones who have gone will never return. The smile still remains broken and the eyes still in tears.

“Hey, what happened? Are you okay?” Shivai was standing in front of me.

“Yeah I’m okay. Wait, what are you doing here?” Did I call him? My mind was jumbled.

“Thank god you are okay. Someone called me from your number and told me that you fainted down here; you were out of your mind, lost somewhere. What happen to you?” Shivai asked.

“Really, I am fine.”

“By the way what are you doing outside Riya’s house?” Shivai asked.

“I came here to meet Akshita, and after meeting her I sat down; after that, I don’t remember anything. It wasn’t a suicide... It wasn’t a murder... The words were the weapons this time, with no traces of it.” I said.

“What did she say?”

“Everything is finished, nothing left to tell.”

“I am least bothered about her, you are okay and that is more important to me,” he said, “let’s move from here, I am hungry,” and we left the place.

After sitting in the car I asked, “where is my bag?”

“Bag? What bag?”

“Dude obviously, bag that contains my wallet, laptop, some clothes and one spare mobile,” I said

“I think you lost your bag dude,” Shivai said.

Shit. SHIT. What the hell. The day just keeps getting worse. Can’t I catch a fucking break!

I searched for my bag everywhere, but I didn’t find. Irrked, saddened some more, we both left the place. We were on our way when I got a call from my aunt. I picked up the call wondering what she wanted.

“Rayan, I’m sorry for calling you right now, but something has happened,” she was crying uncontrollably, and my heartbeats intensified, “your mom met with an accident. One of her legs is fractured, come as soon as you can; she really needs you right now.”

My life, my love, my dreams, my fear, my memories, my destiny, my past, my present, my future, everyone is playing with me, making fun of me. I started laughing; I was in a state of shock. I didn’t know how to express all that I was feeling and Shivai was truly concerned. I asked him to drop me home ASAP; he didn’t ask anything; he must have understood something was

wrong.

When I reached my sister's house she was already waiting for me, from there we left for mom's place.

On my way to home, I got a call from Akshita's sister.

She was about to cry. "I'm extremely sorry for you; please forget her as she doesn't deserve you."

"Why? What happened?" I asked her.

"She is cheating you, you are being ditched," she said.

"What? Why are you saying like this?"

She said, "you have seen her status?"

"No, what is written on her status?"

"'I'll miss you, my love.' I thought everything was sorted out in between you two. But when I asked her about this she said, 'Are you mad, I have forgotten Rayan long time back; this status is for somebody else.'"

"What!!! Are you serious?"

Aghast at this revelation, I disconnected the call. "The battle was lost", her status conveyed the message to me which her "lips" couldn't.

And now my sister knows everything about the things happening in my life.

"What's wrong? Please, Rayan, I want to help." She asked by giving a tissue paper.

I wiped the tears flowing down my cheeks and all my fantasies reside in the tissue paper on the dustbin.

I told her everything.

Chapter-7

When I reached home, I hugged my mother fiercely and started crying.

“Nothing has happened to me, why are you crying,” she is laughing. “I’m fine! But look at your face, seems as you have not slept since nights. What happened?” she asked.

I didn’t say anything as I could only cry, then my mother asked my sister.

“What happened to him?? Why he is behaving like this?”

My sister was angry with me, she was like “Rayan, can’t you wait for some time, don’t you know about mom’s condition. She is already tensed and you want to worry her more? This girl has created a lot of mess in your life; you are dying for her and that girl doesn’t even care for you.”

I didn’t care for a single word from her, and moved towards the balcony of room, but she continued.

As soon as my sister said “this girl” my mom understood the whole story.

She knew her son very well. And she knew my equation with Akshita; she didn’t say anything but asked my sister to leave me and her alone.

I had seen mom after a long time. Mom sceptically saw me standing near the balcony, teased me with unusual nicknames and hugged me when I came close to her. For me, this was much needed at this time. I somehow controlled my tears from rolling down my cheeks. We sat together on the bed near the balcony, both gazing the sky. Time passed in seconds and then in minutes. No one talked. Mom remained silent reading my face trying to grab something out from my face. The silence between was making me deaf as ma could sense the screams of my heart. Then suddenly she broke the silence and said: “how's your love?”

I remained silent. She gazed me suspiciously and asked what happened.

I hugged her and started crying. She comforted me, but my grip grew tighter as I was getting weaker every second. I believed if I told her she’ll become more tensed. But when she strictly asked, I poured down all my pain, narrated my painful incident.

She held my hand tightly and hugged. Mom wiped my tears and kissed my forehead and convinced me that nothing is going to happen wrong. She is always with me till her last breath. Then we talked about it for a while.

“Have you did anything wrong to her?”

Wow, finally I got to hear something interesting (I thought), I got someone who blamed me for what is happening.

“I did everything wrong mom, I made her cry; I became careless.”

“That’s not what I meant. Given all the troubles she has put you through; don’t you think that forgetting her will be the best option for you?”

“I want her back at any condition, Ma. I can’t live without her.”

“You’ll commit suicide because she left you?? I never expected these words from you. I never knew you to be such a weak man, Rayan.”

“Listen you are not doing justice to yourself,” she continued in her sage, motherly voice, “you should move on and let her be the way she is. When she is not even thinking about you, why you are wasting your mind and everybody’s too?”

“I’m not interested in everybody and I don’t care about anybody. Yes, I am weak now; she is my strength and weakness too.”

“ If she doesn’t want to be a part of your life, so be it.”

“I want, but I won’t. It’s tough for me to be happy with this feeling.”

“You’re torturing yourself for no reason. Don’t waste your love on somebody who doesn’t value it,” she said.

“I never stopped when you did all the foolish things in the name of love,” she continued, “When you look at your life, do you see any justice for your actions? What have you got in return from her?”

“You caged yourself, Rayan. “You thought this was the best solution for you, and the truth is that people you have in your life are greedy, they are selfish and they’ll never appreciate the way you care. They’ll never focus of what you have done for them. They always focus when they need you.”

“Please don’t criticize her.” I pleaded, hoping she’ll stop. Akshita surely cares about me. Or she used to. Right?

“Don’t you realise the truth? She used you when she needed you and now she knows being with you is no more profitable for her, so she left you in this way. You know what, whenever you told about her to all relatives, I felt good but I always had a feeling that she’s fickle. If she left you in future, how could you handle the situation?

“Be vulnerable if you must, it is after all an important aspect of life, but be so

for the people who love you, don't push us away. If you want to push people away, then push fake people not the real ones."

"I am sorry, Ma. But I never got the feeling of unconditional love in my life before I met her. Barring you of course. But she's different. Her love was different," I continued helplessly, "she is like a miracle in my life, which disappeared after showing me true happiness."

"Yes, I know everything what she did for you, I know, but you should still follow my advice. The truth is she used you, Rayan. Please see that. Why you were not rude to her although she treated you so badly?"

"I cannot hurt those hearts who themselves are responsible for my heartbeat. I am sorry if I hurt your expectations, Ma." My scarred heart replied.

Ma stared at me. After quite a few silent moments she said, "yes it hurts! Not your behaviour my son, but your madness, your love for her hurts me a lot because I know you who you are and I can't see you like this. It hurts me when I see you bearing all this pain alone."

"I just want to check that is she really important for you or not, but now I know that she is important to you and you will absolutely find a way, to get her back."

I saw tears in her eyes. I know I could stop them, but I was helpless.

Then she said, "I won't stop you. I wish you get the positive result for what you are burning yourself —her love. One more thing; as you know I'm going to hospital for next few days, I request you, after my operation when you go back to Delhi please take that bag and that big portrait with you."

I saw that bag, which is full with lots of love, dreams, promises, and cards, roses, some letters, some gifts, a mug, and many more things and that portrait (a beautiful big picture of me and Akshita, I was in black suit and she was in pink suit, it looks like the picture of our engagement.)

"Whatever you think is best for you both," and with that she kissed my forehead.

I felt so good. This was the first time ever that I and mom talked about Akshita so freely, and the way mom behaved made me believe strongly about her.

I lay on my bed, thinking today's night was different as today my fear was

turned into my belief — the words of her sister still murmuring in my mind. I was thinking how she could do this to me.

Yes, we have faced a lot, from argument to breakups, and then from breakup to everything alright, but I never ever expected this.

She would always say, “Rayan, if we ever get separated then it will only be your decision, I will never leave you and never stop loving you. You know I cannot live for a moment away from you.”

Oh, how the times have changed.

I unpacked the bag full of her gifts. I found left me insane — roses that were 4 years old, all dried up. At this moment, I could empathize with those shrivelled up flowers. I remember when she meant nothing to me, I even wasn't aware of her existence but now she was the reason I have this awful bag under my eyes; I stayed up till 4am thinking about her.

It's bizarre how a person could mean nothing to you, but in a matter of hours, days, weeks or months, they could mean the world to you even if they make your heart down in a sea of regret and leave a hurricane of bittersweet memories behind. “Sleepless nights” “Sweet memories” before her and with her, it was all the same but after her it a little bit different “Sweet memories” changed to “Haunted memories.”

It was yet another sleepless night for me. I was refreshing my FB feed every few minutes. Checking for her activity online.

“Together, forever” read the text on the screen which she has sent just one month back. A month later “We should lead two separate lives” she said on the same date.

A drop fell from my eyes and I still, couldn't delete the 1-month old message. On the still night, when only the clock makes a sound, I look out of the window into the darkness, and wonders, what's darker; the night or her heart? My mind was stuck and was struggling to find a solution to make amends by any means whatsoever. But there was one voice, I guess from my heart, continuously gnawing me from inside, making me feel that I am losing touch with myself. I was completely lost.

We all got up early the next morning and reached the hospital — it was Ma's operation today. I knew for sure that my struggle with life was more worrying for my mother than her condition. My sister was worried the most, as she was all alone to take care of the whole situation, especially when she's

not getting any help from my side. Moreover, I was more of a burden for her; I was aware of what all is happening around and was not helping her. I even overheard her talking with someone over the phone saying, “I am not able to handle this situation myself as there is Ma’s condition on one side, and Rayan’s messed up life on the other. I am in distraught, wanting both of them to be all right.”

I was completely lost in my own world, sitting at one corner of the hospital with my eyes subconsciously stuck to the screen of my phone, still with a hope of a call and things getting right. Time passed and suddenly I got aware of Di asking, “Hey, do you have any idea of what time is it now?”

I was shocked as I took notice of the time. It was 1PM already. “I was looking for you for quite some time now and what are you doing sitting here in the corner?” she inquired with furrowed brow. “Are you not ashamed a bit of what you are doing? Is this girl more important to you than your mother? And how am I supposed to handle all of this alone?”

Dejected, I got up silently and went straight to my mother’s ward. I think Di was really worried for me, thinking I might take some wrong step. I went close to Ma’s bed and sat beside her. She was sleeping. The next 15 minutes passed in utter tranquillity. Di came inside to ask me a question.

“Did you get a call from her?” Di asked. It surprised me, making me wonder how she knew I was to get a call from Akshita.

“Who told you that I am supposed to get a call from her?” I asked.

“I talked to her an hour ago. She promised that she’ll call you,” Di said.

I didn’t know how to react. But my mind intercepted yet again and came up with an unsettling thought. *You know about her promises. You know very well of what actually happened to all the previous promises she made.*

I asked Di about the conversation she had with her, in exact words.

Di took my hand and gave her phone to me. “I knew you would ask me this and would pester me.” She said. “So I recorded the whole conversation I had with her.”

Without wasting a single moment, I went out of the ward and played the conversation.

Hello, Akshita... Priyanka here, how are you?

Hello Di, I am good, how are you and Auntie?

Both mom and I are good. Listen, I want to talk to you. Do you have the time now or should I talk to you later?

Yes, Di, I am free, tell me.

What is going on between you and Rayan? There is a shift in his behaviour these days. What is it that really happened between you two? I am your elder sister too; you can tell me.

Di, everything is fine and we are just struggling with each other. But it's really difficult now for us to live with each other. It's not much of an issue Di. You just tell him to give me some time and focus on Auntie's condition.

He told me that you guys are no more together. I just want to know the reason. You know about the sour relation between him and Dad, and you also know that the reason he is away from home and is in Delhi — it is just for you, and the way he loves you, unconditionally is there for all to see. You know everything, and today is Mom's operation and he is least bothered about it. I seriously cannot see him in this condition. He is my only brother and is the hope of the family. Please talk to him, and make him understand.

Yes, Di, my sister also made me realize the same and tried to make me understand the situation. You don't worry Di, I'll talk to him. You take care of Auntie and tell him also to take care of Auntie as she is far more important.

Yeah, and please do me a favour. I'll be obliged if you could counsel him and make him understand as nobody is as close to him as you are. My family needs your help, Akshita.

Yes, Di, please don't worry, I'll call him now and will try to make him understand that what he is doing is not right.

You are really sweet. Thank you so much.

Hearing all this, hopes of getting her back cranked up; now I could tell for sure that she'll be back. I could feel the pain and guilt in her. Di was also very angry with me that day and scolded me for fighting and hurting such a sweet girl like her.

But it was only me who was aware of who was hurting whom. I was a bit shocked and was laughing at the same time that in spite of all my tears — she is scolding me and supporting her.

Now, I was desperately waiting for her call, with every second acting as an hour to me. When I didn't get any call from her, I thought of calling her, thinking she might be out of balance or she might have forgotten. I dialled

her number and she picked up the phone in my very first attempt.

“Listen...” She said. My heart skipped a beat thinking she’d finally say those magical words again.

But I was completely taken aback by the way she responded. “Tell me what you want to say,” she shouted at the top of her voice.

“Why are you not letting me live freely? I told you to give me some time, right. And I also told you that you are already replaced by my friends. I don’t want you anymore in my life. The void is already filled now.”

“I don’t know what has happened to me,” I said. “I am completely lost. And it was always you who showed me the right path.” And I told her everything her sister had told me, about her new relationship.

And no sooner had I said that than she slowed down her voice, realizing what I was talking about. “There’s this guy who had proposed me, lately,” She said. “He works with me and I like him very much. You have no idea how much he helped me in Bangalore. And for me it’s not only about choosing a boyfriend, it’s about choosing my life partner with whom I can spend my whole life.”

“But you never told me that,” I said, finding it hard to come to terms with all that was happening.

“Rayan, I can’t tell you each and everything,” she continued. “There are some things you have to understand by yourself.”

“... you are right,” I said, finding it really hard to utter a single word. “I did not know that the girl I trusted more than myself can do this to me. I’ve always loved the girl who was sweet and honest. Sorry it’s my fault, I misunderstood everything,” I added and burst into tears.

“Sure, sure. I took advantage of you and used you for my own benefit. And tell me, for how long you expected me to be with you? I’ve got many more things to do in my life other than you.”

“What do you mean? I never put any pressure on you for doing anything. So why are you saying all this?” I reverted between the sobs.

She was unstoppable now.

“I seriously feel embarrassed to say you were my boyfriend; you don’t even know English; you and your dad have a lot of issues and you hardly talk to each other; you don’t even care for your career and you have no idea of what

you'll do in your life. With love, you can't fill your stomach. What will I say to my dad when I'll introduce you to him for our marriage, after 2 years? What will you give me, when you don't have anything to yourself? You don't have anything of your own, everything belongs to your dad. With love, we also want money to lead a happy life and with you, I don't think it's possible."

Everything was clear to me now. The reason for her behaving this way it was all clear now. Now she's concerned about my future, and the prospects I might or might not bring. Now she's concerned about money when in past it was all "Rayan, you follow your heart." It's not as if I'm jobless, aimless. I have hopes and dreams. I work for a living. Her concerns and (false) accusations seem to be more of an excuse.

I got all the answers to my questions that very moment, but I did not say anything to her because she was right on her part in some ways. She was right when she said I don't know English, as I'd always thought that love doesn't need any language to express, it can only be felt; she was right when she said I don't care for my standard as for me her standard was always more important than mine, with no exceptions; she was right when she told me I don't have anything of my own because when 3 years back I told her about my relationship with my dad, she said "don't worry Rayan, you are not alone. I am happy with you" and hugged me tight. She was right when she said, for living love is not the only thing that is important, I am a practical being too.

But I was completely taken by surprise the way she said it all.

It was unexpected. I could easily understand her emotions as she's been away from home for a month now for the very first time. I thought of it as natural that by seeing new people she must have been attracted to somebody and it is only temporary.

But my mind was not convinced. I eventually decided to follow my mind, knowing well the repercussions of what might happen.

"Although you have ditched me, but I still have faith in you," I said. "And I strongly believe that you cannot be with a new guy."

"Rayan I don't care." She replied. "I have moved on in life and you're still there where you were 3 years ago. I have come too far off and you can never reach where I am now."

"And there is one more thing — Lakshay proposed to me the other day

saying “I want to spend my whole life with you, do you want the same.”

“Do you know what I said? I said yes.”

“Rayan, I am in a new relationship now and I have accepted his proposal. We are together now and I am very happy with him. I want you to accept that,” she said.

“Don’t call me or text me from now on.”

I was being fooled by the very girl I loved a lot.

“Why did you come into my life when you already knew that one day you would quit without any reason?” I almost screamed. “Why did you come into my life when you had no plans to remain my soulmate forever?” Why did you come into my life when you can’t keep your promises? Why did you do this?”

“Why did you come into my life, became a special part of my life, a well-wisher and a special person whose place cannot be replaced by anyone in my heart?”

“I believed you, Akshita, had dreams about you. When I decided that you’ll be my life partner and my soulmate, you started ignoring me and started acting like a stranger!!”

“You not only broke my heart but also made me not to trust again. *This* is the return gift that I received for trusting you.”

Then I paused. Only to beseech later, “Akshita, I don’t want the truth, please tell me a lie, please.”

“I promise,” she then said, “I have left an imprint on your heart. Anyone who comes in your life will have to know me in order to understand you.”

I shouted and yelled on the phone, but she had no answers to the questions. As I saw my phone, call was disconnected; and with this disconnected call, it was all clear that she had no feelings left for me.

“I want you out of my life” a message popped up on phone’s screen.

“Someday I will” only the keypad and my heart knew how much it pained to write those three words.

You left me, but darling someday you will realise what you have lost, I sent this last text to Akshita.

Chapter-8

"At the end of this long and lonely path, all misery shall be gone."

Down this long road, I walk with heavy feet, my head sunk down below. Everything that has happened is grossly unfair. I am surrounded by sadness, guilt, and regret. I am a broken heart, and I don't even know how to mend it. Life has no meaning for me now. There is an emptiness inside. My heart is no more.

What do I have left now?

Nothing.

Then why don't I commit suicide?

I have made up my mind. It's time to end this life. Then and only then will I find peace.

I am going to die.

I am leaving. I am tired of fighting. I am tired of struggling to survive. I have finally made a choice today. Yes, I give up. I can feel death approaching me, shrouded as it is thanks to the cover of all the darkness in my life. But I see it all right. Sneaky little shit, that death. Crawling towards me, hoping to catch me by surprise.

Meanwhile, my heart aches. I can't scream. This right here is my life without her. Not a dream that I'd hoped for, but a nightmare I never wished to have.

Thinking about what she did to me, I sit still — completely paralyzed by fear, the game she played with me was clear to me now. My cheeks are filled with drops of tears.

Suddenly my mother opens her eyes and starts searching for a glass of water with the light of her phone. She spots me doing something with a knife. The cuts on my skin weren't deep enough to take my life, but it did rip apart mom's soul.

Her phone and glass both fell on the ground.

"No dear, don't go!" She shouts in pain.

"It won't hurt," I said as I inserted the knife slowly.

"Oh you fool, what will you gain by doing this?" Mom shouted.

I felt ice cold. But her warmth melted my heart.

“Mama, I love you.” But I can’t live without her.

“No Dear, don’t cry. Don’t go, don’t die. There’s so much left in life.”

But how? I feel blank without her. Akshita left my life and took away my happiness with her.

“Rayan, does this love matter? Think of those who love you.”

“There’s love, there’s care! Stay here and fight if you dare! Show her what she’s missed on by leaving you like this. There’s no courage in ending it all. But there’s one if you rise each time you fall. If you die, others die with you. Day after day, you won’t know what they’ll go through. Night after night, they’ll have to fight to live with only your memories. If you won’t live for yourself, live for those who care.”

“Mom, I am completely hopeless. Please don’t stop me!” I urged.

“You just have to hold on to hope. Throw away that idea of quitting. One day, you’ll feel joy again. One day, you’ll smile again! You just have to believe it for a while. Life is beautiful! And always remember you are unbreakable! Live dear, live, it’s all about love and life.”

“I know what I’m doing is wrong,” I tell her, “but deep inside it just hurts, Ma. This is so unfair. Life is being unfair, Ma! I can’t live like this.”

“How easy to say others are cruel how easy to blame others, while you are being cruel to yourself and you know it — but you are too weak to change your situation. It’s time to resist those dark thoughts, Rayan, when good and bad are fighting inside you; you accuse yourself of others mistakes, you are trapped in your own filth. I know it hurts, but whatever you were doing two minutes back will hurt a lot more than this.”

Now I feel guilty. How could I become so weak? I hugged mom and cried.

Mom stopped me and said, “For some people, life is easy, they are clear about their paths and goals. But for people like you, it's never easy and you know it. The struggle, the failures, heartbreaks, guilt, and fear everything comes as a lesson. And it's fine.”

“Yes mom, its fine,” I replied, emboldened a bit by her constant faith in me, “I am strong and I will win. I am not the kind of person who gives up the fight. Even if I fall, I will rise, fight and win again. I endured unbearable agony, I was washed by the waves, but I fell down only to rise again.

Maybe it’s just a fall to rise again with more enthusiasm, I thought. I was

consoling myself trying to breathe, but I knew somehow that this won't help me as well. Now I'll never call her, let her feel my absence. All this is nothing, but a fallacy.

For the next week, I did not call her nor her sister. But during that week I shared my secrets with a few people I trusted, they kept telling me "she can't live without you," "she will definitely come back in your life." They kept giving me hope and told me to have patience and take care of my mother. The whole week I spent in the hospital fighting with myself. But I never lost hope for getting her back. My family sent me to a psychiatrist. My sister, seeing my condition, had taken me to the doctor — I was in a state of major depression.

When, after two days I was planning to go back to Delhi, I remembered the words said by my mother "don't forget to take your gifts"; but I did not want to keep the gifts with me. I need to go to Dehradun and see her, to return her gifts back — *these gifts won't let me live*. I knew that in my present condition nobody would allow me to go to Dehradun alone.

It was difficult to do so, but somehow I made everyone understand that this is very important for me, and next morning mom packed everything in one bag and I was out for Dehradun. I knew this meeting would be very difficult for both of us. I called and told her I was in Haridwar and coming to Dehradun in 2 hours, and I wanted to pick up my mark sheet and "return to you everything you ever gave me."

"Call me after reaching Dehradun; till then I will search your mark sheet," she hung up.

It had been so long since I heard her voice. For a moment after the call ended, I simply basked in the afterglow. But then I shook myself and went on my way.

In the sparkling light of the evening sky, my eyes are everywhere, but I still can't find her.

Suddenly, after much craning around of my poor neck, I spot her standing far away from me. I saw that she is coming towards me, I saw that now she is with me, I tell her how much I love her, she smiles, her smile is the world's prettiest smile, she hugs me, we both are crying together holding each other, I come close to her and kiss on her forehead —

“Wake up man, you have reached Dehradun,” suddenly the conductor said and I realised, it was just a dream. I’ve been awake long; let me sleep for some more time. There's still some night left, let the morning come, I have half incomplete dreams that could never come true. Let me, in my sleep, weave those dreams again.

I asked myself what I should do next. Where shall I go? Then I decided that I will board a bus to Delhi and from my side, I will do everything to meet her. There were almost 12 hours before I go to Delhi; while passing through the market I was remembering each and every place where I had spent time with her. Those were one of the pleasant days of my life, I even went to my college and saw each class room where we met daily for lunch; one of her favourite seats in the canteen where she used to make me eat by her own hand; and her class room where I would lay on her lap and kiss her forehead, those memories were amazing, hazy but beautiful.

It was now four in the afternoon, no calls from her, her phone was out of coverage area.

I dialled her number again, she picked up the call and said: “I can’t meet you, and for 1 minute I will come to give your mark sheet.”

“Why you are doing this to me, I have come all this way not to take my mark sheet, mark sheet was just an excuse to meet you; why you are doing this to me?” I asked and started crying.

“Try to understand Rayan, I am in a relationship with somebody else and by meeting you I can’t break his trust.”

Well, at least she is loyal to somebody. She broke my trust and doesn’t want to break anybody else’s.

“It’s ok if you don’t want to meet me,” I said, “at least come for a while, give my mark sheet and take all your belongings that I brought with me.”

It was 8 in the evening. There was no sign of her. She could have easily spared 5 minutes to get here. But nope. She’s not going to come, and I continue wasting time on this stupid girl.

I could have gone directly to her home, I wanted to see her again, to say goodbye the way that I wanted. Then I realised if I got my way, I’d never say goodbye. It was 11:30pm now and I left for Delhi. As my bus left for Delhi, I decided I will lead my life without her and do so happily. I sat in despair for I didn’t know how to mend a broken heart, Google searches failed this time.

She was once a beautiful dream to me, now I dread going to sleep.

In the morning around 4:30 am, I reached Delhi. My patience was on the verge of breaking, I deleted her pictures from phone gallery, I don't care about her anymore, I murmured but my Facebook search history tells different stories, it still had her name on top. I opened our last Facebook chat: the heart I sent was still beating. I thought of writing a letter to her on Facebook.

"You cannot reply to this conversation" was all it took to ruin my mind.

I started typing a letter for her on my laptop, thought of emailing her. If she won't give me time in person, maybe she'll read this instead.

Hey Love,

Hope you are good. You had every right to leave me, but at least you should let me know why. I have been abandoned by you, but am I not worth an explanation? I want to tell you some truth. Your behaviour doesn't matter to me; your love is the only thing that does. Don't ever think my love for you will go away because of what you did. Your presence in my life brought wonderful smiles to my face and loving thoughts in my heart, although we are not together now, but my love for you remains. I loved you yesterday, love you still, always have, and I always will. For me being with you was not a one-time commitment, I choose you in every moment of my life. You are always mine, my soul, my treasure, my today, my tomorrow, my forever. Now I have decided that I'll never call, or message you if it gives you happiness, and your happiness is all that matters to me.

I'll wait for the day you come back to me (I hope you will), this is my promise to you. You left me, but I haven't, keep that in mind. You were the one who made me laugh when I didn't want to smile, and now your lovely thoughts do the same. Neither I'll forget the beautiful memories you gave me nor the unbearable pain.

I want to be with you. Always. Now I will do everything you wanted me to do.

I know you must be thinking — how mad this kid is about me. Well, it's true. You were the one who loved me unconditionally when I was not lovable and the reason why in the saddest part of my life I smiled. I'll always look at million reasons to love you. I wish all my luck, success, and love to you. Your smile is the best thing you have, please keep smiling.

With plenty of love,

Your Dorky Lover (who doesn't have a good career and speaks broken English).

And I want to tell something to my substitute "Lakshya," please forward this message to him;

Dear Brother,

There are a few things you should know about Akshita, as you are now the object of her love.

She may not talk to you about me; she didn't talk to her friends about the reason why and when it ended, so I don't know if they will know either. It was a beautiful, one-sided love story of the past...you know what, leave it man, now you are her future.

We don't know each other, and I am sure you already don't like me (same here). You know what, we do have something very wonderful in common and it connects us whether we like to admit it or not.

I won't text your girl or like her posts on social media. I can't tell you every secret because it took me time to figure those out myself. But trust that there are reasons she doesn't say what you want her to, and there are reasons she doesn't do what you want.

You are going to notice how she gets excited like a child when it comes to certain things, some small beautiful surprises and learn to hear giggles in her laughs.

She'll get mad sometimes. She has a temper, as I'm sure you may have noticed — so don't take it personally. When she storms off, let her go and trust she'll always come back with a smile and bright eyes that could blind anyone.

When she falls in love with you, let it not scare you when she cries because that's how she reacts to happy moments. When she falls in love with you, you'll notice you sleep better at night; her touch will help remove every fear from your life.

She'll do whatever you ask of her and you'll rarely fight. She doesn't like advertising things like relationships and feelings and she is not even brand conscious, so don't expect that of her, just know she loves you. She may not think of you every moment, but you'll cross her mind often.

Now comes the most important point —she has bigger dreams than she is

confident enough to believe in, so it's your job to tell her every day how beautiful she is and that she is capable of it all. She won't believe you, but don't stop saying that.

She'll make you see the world in a new light, and you'll start wondering about things you never knew. She loves to eat momos & chop suey and you are very lucky because she will feed you with her own hands, everyday. You'll find yourself laughing at her little catchphrases, and if you do something she doesn't like, one eyebrow will be raised and she'll look at you without blinking. That would be your cue to fix your errors.

She'll tell you about the past and her mistakes, so it's your job to take her hand and let her know you're not judging her. She is a better person because of all of that, and she's found you because of her relationships in the past. I hope you love her the way she deserves and I hope she loves and cares for you as deeply as I thought she did for me. We separated, love was the reason for me, while for her, it was passion.

Also remember that I don't dislike you, but to be honest, I am jealous of you. I have found acceptance, and I'm also happy someone else gets a chance to experience what I did.

I hope one day I can properly meet you. Like I said before, we have a connection that no one else can say they have and I'm sure you are a wonderful person.

I only ask one thing of you: Don't hurt her the way she hurt me. I believe in karma and I believe people get what they send out to the world, but I never wish that pain upon anyone, especially her.

Good luck for both of you... Hope I'll meet you soon.

Sincerely,
The Other Guy

This wasn't easy for me, but somehow I knew that she loves me a lot — it's just the situation which is different, she was away from home for the first time, maybe it was that new world that changed her so much. I was determined to shape my life in a better way. I need a break, I thought and turned to my bed for sleep as I was very tired.

Chapter- 9

Dear friend,

I know it's been long since I last spoke to you. I have been noticing you these past few months. I guess now it's really needed —I know a lot has been happening in your life. You have to move through this castle called time, and now you're wondering about the things that once made you feel like home. You are sad about it, I know.

There was a time when you felt complete. Everything was in place, as you found it to be, as you wanted it to be. Your life was a coffee mug —full to the rim, complete with the essence of a sultry morning. Today you miss things that you once felt were important —and I agree, they were.

If there are these places, which you know as voids, there must be spaces like the ones between pages of a book, lips of your mother as she'd smile, spaces between an endless word like these, and spaces where awkward silences could make you feel complete.

You cry tears you don't deserve because you fell in love with opportunist people.

Voids may be places to visit for you, but places filled with a sparkling haze should now be home to you dear stargazer. Now you know why we are all travellers, and why wanderlust is not merely a choice.

Move Forward, I am always With You!

-Your Unseen Friend (Your Soul)

When I got up, I felt these words reverberate inside me. Finally, I get it.

ENOUGH! Enough fighting, crying, blaming and struggling to hold on, then like a child quieting down after a tantrum; I blink back my tears and begin to look at the world through new eyes.

Akshita!! Yes, whenever I was in trouble this was the name I knew would never leave me, but at the moment it was replaced by Shivai.

“What the fuck is happening with me? How can I control all this? Am I completely exhausted? Where do I have to go?” I called and asked Shivai.

“What are you searching for?”

“Was it your favourite toy which you lost when you were a kid? Is it your

first crush that uses to sit next to you? Or your favourite cartoon sticker, probably a magnet on your refrigerator with your favourite super hero or your favourite bicycle which your dad gave when you went to school? Is it the end of journey or the reality of the world?”

“Is it the responsibilities? Peer pressure? Disappointments? Anxiety? A call or message from someone? Craziness? Family issues? A reason to get away? Sadness? An expression? A reason to unite? A reason to be alive? So let me ask again what are you searching for?” Shivai replied with a volley of questions.

“A reason to say, someone, how much I love her and how desperately I need her. I'm searching for my real self.” I murmured.

“This is your awakening.”

“Are you kidding me? I know I am a jackass, but I don't want to cross the limit.”

“Yes, seriously it's your awakening. Believe me or don't, but now you should realize it's time to stop hoping and waiting for something to change, or for happiness, safety and security to magically appear over the horizon.”

“So you want me to stop hoping and waiting for something to change?? How could you even think of that? This hope is the only thing has kept me alive.”

“Rayan, you must realize that in the real world there aren't always fairy tale endings, and that any guarantee of 'happily ever after' must begin with you,” he said, “tell me did she love this Rayan or the one you used to be?”

Yeah, I get it.

“If you really want her back,” he continued, “then first you must change yourself. You have to become that guy she fell for. You are not perfect, dude, and not everyone will always love, appreciate or approve of who or what you are. And that is okay. Before loving her you should learn the importance of loving and championing yourself first. ”

“You are right dude; I know you are right. But it is really very difficult for me.”

“I know. But if you really love her then do this,” he replied.

“Yeah, the last few days taught me the difference between desiring someone and actually wanting someone. I learnt that principles such as honesty and integrity are not the outdated ideals of a life gone by, but the mortar that

holds together the foundation upon which you must build a life. Now I know everything.” I took a deep breath.

“No, learn to accept that you don’t know everything, it’s not your job to save the world. You need to look at relationships as they really are and not as you would have them be. You learn that ‘alone’ does not mean lonely. There’s a huge difference between the two.”

“Fuck, I hate it when you make sense,” I said, making him chuckle, effectively lightening up the mood, “yeah yeah, you are right, the mistake was mine. I will handle the situation, hopefully in a much better way now.”

“Just stop complaining and blaming yourself for the things you did or didn’t do for her,” he said, “start there, and stop trying to control people, situations and outcomes. You should know the difference between guilt and responsibility and the importance of setting boundaries and learning to say NO.”

“Now listen Rayan, do one thing.”

“What?” I ask.

“When we first met seven months ago, you were writing a diary. Open it and start reading the first page that you wrote,” he said, “perhaps you will understand why this happened to you and who is responsible for it. Have faith in yourself, Rayan. That’s the beginning of it all.”

I do have those diaries I wrote, but could never find the courage to open and read it. But Shivai’s words echoed in my ears and I realized, this might be the wakeup call I needed. I must stop working so hard at putting my own feelings aside, smoothing things over and ignoring my needs in favour of others.

I started finding my diary.

As I opened the diary the first few lines went like this:

19th Dec 2014

I lost my soul, now I am on the way to Dehradun to bring my soul back. I am on the way to live, love, laugh. I intend to fulfil her hopes and make her realize that I am always with her.

I stopped suddenly, and started to remember that incident.

Miss Uttarakhand (December, 2014)

When you love someone with all your heart, you put their needs before your

own. No matter how inconceivable those needs may be; no matter how fucked up you were; no matter how much it made you feel like you were ripping yourself into pieces.

In our relation we see one thing, we care, for one thing, we live, for one thing, we are swallowed-up in one thing — that one thing is to love blindly. I learnt the secret of living life from my relationship: “Following love instead of dreams.”

In our relationship she cares for my desires more than me and I care for her dreams more than her.

Whether we tease or whether we fight; whether we are healthy or sick; whether we have notes in our pockets or whether we have some coins; whether we please each other or whether we give offence; for all this we care nothing at all. We believe in one thing and that one thing is to love each other, and to do selfless sacrifices for each other.

Someone said “Loyalty and devotion lead to bravery. Bravery leads to the spirit of self-sacrifice. The spirit of self-sacrifice creates trust in the power of love.” The main reason behind our long relationship is thousands of sacrifices she did for me. I too did many but silently, she didn’t know till now.

In my relationship, she always complained: “you don’t care for me openly, love me openly, or don’t get involved in my happiness.” She wanted me to get involved in every achievement of hers.

I, being a careless man, didn’t care about her happiness or maybe I did, but never showed so. She would say “you give me tears more than smiles.” So I thought to recall an untold story, I hope it makes me feel better.

She had a habit that whenever I was with her, her focus used to be on me. She would forget everything else. My point of view was different on this issue. I wanted her to be with her friends, family and for her to give equal importance to everyone in her life.

When our relationship started, she said “I don’t have anyone I can trust, loyal friends are hard to find. Even I want to have some fun, go out like you guys do.” I promised myself one day there will be a million-dollar smile on her face. Most of the time I didn’t get involved in celebrations of her achievements because I wanted her to be happy because of others. I wanted her to be enjoying with her friends as well.

That day I thought I will never make her dependent on me for her happiness.

I just wanted to see her happy by standing far away from her. Whenever she was a bit sad or anything would bother her, I was always with her, because I had appointed myself for this. I made her believe that her dream of becoming Miss Uttarakhand shall be accomplished in her 1st attempt. She always used to tell me “On my finale when I will walk on the ramp I want you to be standing in front of me and when I will wear that crown, I want you to be standing with me.”

But I never wanted it because I had an experience of this also, when she participated in Miss Doon finale, she was searching for me while walking on ramp and she paid for this. She lost that finale. I did not want this to happen again.

1 week left for her Miss Uttarakhand Finale, she was very busy with the sub contests of the same and she was sounding very low and stressed on phone. I knew that this time her dream was going to be completed and I didn't want her to miss on any effort to achieve that crown. It was 19th of December I quickly packed my bag and got ready.

After reaching station I simply texted her “Hey love. Please come to railway station at 9.00pm.” I was waiting for her reply and the message I received was “Call.”

I called her and her reaction was so cute — she kept asking me, “what happened?”

“I am coming into your arms darling.” She laughed and said, “you must be kidding... please tell me what happened?”

“Seriously I am coming to Dehradun.” It took 30 minutes to make her believe the same. She asked me why I was coming. If I had told the truth she would definitely stopped me. I said I am a bit stressed and “want to meet you.”

For the next 4 days I was in Dehradun, but we met only 2 days and that too for only 30 minutes. She was very busy that time. I just wanted her to realise that I was with her and she can achieve any milestone. In those 4 days, we did not meet often. On the 4th day I told her, “Today I am going back home.” She said, “It's my finale after couple of days and you are leaving today, this is not done you know it's my finale so you should have planned that way.”

I said there is some urgent work in Delhi and I have to go. She said “Okay, but promise me one thing. You will come here on the day of finale just for 2 hours. I want you standing in front of me when I walk on ramp.”

I knew, if I would be there she would lose her focus and her all focus will be on me.

After that I left for Delhi. She won the title and more than her, my dream was achieved for my princess.

Such incidents happened quite frequently in our relationship. But she never got to know the real reason why I did this. Every time she blamed me and I would try to fulfil her dreams. This is what I earned in my relationship.

Chapter-10

Suddenly I received a message from Shivai.

“Have you found those diaries Bro?”

I called him, “yes, and you know what; when I opened that diary first of all I saw some pages that I wrote when I was travelling to Dehradun for her Miss. Uttarakhand finale.”

“What, you had a flashback just like a Bollywood movie?” Shivai asked.

“Hahahaha, yes bro, that sweet feeling will never leave me alone, I can live a whole life with only a single glimpse of it.”

“Just read your personal diary man, you will come to know what you are capable of!”

After many days, more than millions memories in my head, many ups and downs and a heartbreak, I found my “Aim in life.”

The first page of my diary read "To be Happy." You deserve to be happy... No matter what you think or what you did, you deserve to happy.

I start reading pages I wrote on **14th august 2014.**

To be Happy

“You deserve to be happy... No matter what the situation is. Happiness is a beautiful journey and life is all about happiness. At every step of this journey, we have miracles, joy, smiles, laugh, people and some obstacles as well. And these obstacles are equally important as the rest of the things. In order to live life with compassion you should be strong and face all these troubles. And being happy is the only way to create happiness in your life.

You should focus on the things that make you feel good; feeling good is the only way to live. If thinking about something makes you feel bad, then keep that thing aside and focus on something which you love to do or which makes you happy. I am very grateful to God for giving me a precious gift “LIFE” and really, thank you God for fulfilling it with lots of desires, dreams and compassion. I believe in me, and don’t need anyone to motivate me. You gave me a very beautiful family, friends and my best lady “Akshita.” They are always with me in my good and bad times.”

I stopped suddenly and drifted back to the time when I wrote these lines.

One night I called her when I was at my home and asked her “listen, babe, my family is asking me to join their business. Is it not good?”

“It may be good for you and your family, but not for me Rayan, before taking any decision you must discuss it with me,” she said.

“Yes, Baby you are just as important to me as others, which is why I asked you first. Why do you think it’s not good for you?”

“Rayan, I want you to get a job like all your friends. And before any decision you should remember that I too want to do a job. You must do a job if you want to spend your whole life with me. I have to answer my parents, you know. I don’t think they’ll approve of a husband who has a business. That’s not a steady career, and you know it.”

“Yes of course, I could do everything for you. I’ll aim for a job.”

I had planned for engineering to have a foundation, a base of an education. Not to hunt for a job through it. I was planning on taking over our family business. Nevertheless, I convinced myself that her argument has merits.

One day I met Shivai when I was giving an interview in a company. Both of us were selected and started working together, you may feel like LOL after reading next line. But — and here comes the shocker —we left that job after 19 days.

In those 19 days, however, Shivai introduced me to a little something called “The Law of Attraction.” Knowledge is the most powerful law in the world. Shivai shaped my mind towards positive programming.

After reading that page my mind was catapulted to spiritual thoughts. My desire was to do something by which my words transform the lives of people and make them happy. Should I go back to that?

I turned to the next page.

There were three blocks on that page and the topic was Obstacle. In the first block it was written me and in the second and third block, it was written Obstacle and Desire. Under that block some lines were written in weird handwriting; I myself couldn’t understand my own handwriting, I started reading:

“Words like Obstacle, problems and trouble are nothing but the last phase

you have to cross for achieving your desires. In reality, these contain a big gift for us. They are an indication of God that a big piece of happiness is at your door; you just have to overcome this trouble. It's a process in which you will be tested — whether you are eligible or not for your desires. When you think you have a big obstacle, you should know that this came to you with a big gift wrapped inside of it. Sometimes problem is the reason for your transformation.”

On the next page, I wrote, “What is negativity and how can I remove it?”

“We encounter bad vibes from time to time. Being around negative people or having a negative experience can put us in a bad mood, even if we pride ourselves on being positive people. In times like these, we must learn to find the origin, the crux of our problem, and stop the bad vibes.

We should do something to neutralize negativity and get back into a more positive mindset. Be aware, though, that the very first thing you will want to do is accept your negativity. Remember — the goal here isn't to fight negativity, because that will only bring more of it into your life. Instead, it's best to allow it to be there and accept it before you attempt to let it go. In other words, if you're mad — be mad for a minute. Let it be an okay process to vent your frustration. Release the pressure, so to speak. Once you've accepted the negativity, but find yourself ready to release it and move on, take a break from whatever you're doing in order to let it go!

If you are in the middle of an activity and you feel bad vibes starting to amplify, stop what you're doing. Take a break and come back to it when you are centred. There's no sense in trying to tackle your work, do your chores or hold a conversation when you are emitting bad vibes because you'll only get bad results. Tell yourself you are going to focus on something else in the meanwhile and you will think about this problem later when you feel better.”

After reading these lines, I realised it's time for me to accept what I wrote and find the origin of my bad vibes. You must detach yourself from bad thoughts, Rayan.

But how?

Simple. Identify the problem and then take a break from it.

Well, I can easily identify it, but I don't know how to take a break from it? It's a difficult task for me to detach myself from all this.

Yeah, it may be difficult for you, but not impossible, when you find the origin. You can easily take a break from it.

Let's hope my inner monologue comes to fruition.

I picked up a pen, a blank paper and started making a list. At first, I got nothing. The paper underneath my palm stayed pristine and bereft of any words. I thought and stared hard into the unseen distance and came to one conclusion: ME.

I feed myself negativity. I am the culprit here.

The next few lines read:

“Take a nap, for they are your best friend. Sleep automatically raises your vibrations. When you are sleeping you are connected and your energy is realigned. Before falling asleep, set your intention to wake up feeling refreshed and in a better place.

Think about the person you love. What are the things or people I love most in the world?

1. Akshita
2. Love
3. Baby

I laughed at myself. Instead of making a list, it is good to write some lines about her.

I Love her, when she sips my coffee or drink. She only wants to make sure it tastes just right for me.

I Love her, when she is jealous. Out of all the men she can have, she chose me.

I Love her, when she has annoying little habits that drives me nuts, I have them too.

I Love her, when her cooking is bad. She tries just for me.

I Love her, when she makes me watch corny love dramas while a sport is on. She wants to share these moments with me.

I Love her, when she spends hours to get ready. She only wants to look her best for me.

I Love her, when she buys gifts I don't like. She puts in all her savings for

me.

I Love her, when often she cries for me. She actually had a thought of losing me.

I found the most beautiful words coming together, expressing the way it felt with her.

But the truth was different; today I was left counting the broken pieces of my heart.

Suddenly tears started flowing to my cheeks and I turned to the next page.

“Identify what they are right now, and when you find yourself wanting to release negativity, pick one and spend a few minutes thinking about all of the reasons why you love them.”

I like to think about her, and how cute I think she is.

Well, she’s clever too, with the way she fooled you.

But to release my negativity I paid those thoughts of mine no attention. Again I start thinking about her, the unconditional love she gave me. This was good enough for me; firstly I used to feel happy for all the memories (either good or bad). Secondly it was a phase when I was realising that this God to whom I was totally devoted, he had no plans to transform my life.

At that time of life I was nothing, but a passionate boy who wanted to do something that could connect people and heal their sorrows, but I knew that this was all temporary, because I could see myself flying and chasing my dreams within 2 years. Maybe she never trusted my feelings.

Maybe it was destiny, maybe it was to be and I have no hard feelings for her because whatever she did, she made me a better person. Even I was determined that I can't live in that negativity anymore, I need to change. Like Buddha said in two words "everything changes." These two words might be able to change my life forever or this will drown me deep down, but like my mother always taught me that everything happens for a good reason. Maybe after all the pain, this was the beginning of my existence.

This was my awakening and I was sure enough to do something for myself.

I know exactly where I needed to head. It was a place where I spent my 4 years, where I spent my love life, Dehradun. A place where everything started. But it wasn't going to be easy, given my history.

I made up a plan and I set Shivai's mind up for this.

"Di, I need a break."

"Break? What break and why?"

"I need a break from all this shit, hatred, fighting, crying, guilt and struggling to hold on. I want to refocus and redesign my life."

"I'm glad, Rayan. That is so nice to hear. Ok take a break; I have no problem with it."

"It's ok, but what I meant was — I want to live with Shivai for next 5-6 days, away from home, away from all pain, because he is the only one who taught me the real meaning of life."

"You are out of your mind, Rayan. After all that has happened in the past few months, I can't possibly let you go! Mom is still recovering; I can't let you go of my sight. It'll drive me crazy."

I remained silent thinking what should I do next, I called up Shivai and handed it over to Di. As I expected, he easily convinced her in just 20 minutes. But she had no clue that I had some other intentions or master plans as we say it.

Next morning, I packed my bag and was ready for the journey of my life. I had no idea where this would take me. As I took my step outside the gate, a voice came "I don't know why I am doing this, why I am letting you go, I am afraid and I trust you so much, just don't break it and do something good with your life Rayan."

Yes, it was Di. I knew that this wasn't easy for her as well; she didn't tell mom and dad, I was sure that I would not let her down this time. I smiled and left the house, with a new ray of hope. Before beginning my new road I spoke to Shivai and he told me the same thing, "Rayan you are only one step away from a completely different life. This journey is going to be special and a life changing one for you; I can already see it, by the end of it you will be a changed and a better person Rayan."

And with those words of wisdom, I caught my bus and began my journey into the unknown.

"That's how I ended up here tonight, sir," I tell the sagely person sitting in front of me. "Had it not been for you and the roof you provided for this stormy night, I don't know where I would have ended up."

At that I paused, lifting my face up to catch his expression. The old man sat where he was at the beginning of my spiel — on the floor with his eyes twinkling, his expression somewhat amused but not unkind; breathing calmly, unlike the weather tonight; his body giving off vibes of someone who has all the patience in the world.

The storm outside the hut raged on.

Chapter-11

The old man kept staring at me for a while, as if mulling over all that I just told him. I thought I felt some judge-y vibes emanating from him. I frowned.

“One thing I want to tell you, I don’t need any sympathy from you,” I said and looked at my watch. It took me four hours and thirty seven minutes to tell the old man my whole story, and it’s almost four in the morning, it was also a sleepless night but somehow different from others.

Some moments were good; some were bad, but that old man patiently sat through my story; he was expressionless for most. I told him to go away, but he didn't move. I realised that I need to move on from here, as I walked down 2-3 steps I heard a voice saying "Yes, Shivai was right, this is your awakening, a fall to rise Rayan, you already have all, you just need to search it inside you, this is time and that spark in you, whatever Shivai told you was bitter truth of life, you are a seeker, my friend. Love is a war, it always has been; you loved her so much and you are still not ready to give up on her and this is right my friend, you will win it and will be a changed man,” the old man said.

Maybe the reason life feels so hard is because the universe knows you can handle it. “No one can take her from you. She is only yours,” he added.

I wondered, it took me hours to express my thoughts but he concludes this within a minute. But those words were very inspiring from unwanted phrases that some people used to tell me.

“You just need to do a very simple thing ‘uplift your spirit,’ he said.

“Now what should I do for this?” I asked.

“Nothing,” he replied.

“What do you mean by nothing?” I asked.

“Your feelings are valid, you aren’t being dramatic even not exaggerating, you’re just feeling, you have every right to feel whatever emotions you want. And that’s okay.” He placated me.

“You are already aware of the truth of life, you don’t need to do anything,” he said. “Just sit there, close your eyes and start meditating, let go of everything. You just need to sit quietly, allow yourself to ask all your questions to the universe. Your inner intelligence will give you the answer.”

“Yes, I think so,” I smiled, “I could use my thoughts as a healer.”

“Do you know what meditation is meant for?”

“Not the actual meaning, no,” I said, “I only know how it helps us master the mind and allows the life force energy to flow freely. Stress is an important contributor to diseases and in some cases a direct cause. Relieving persistent anxiety, worry, fear, anger and hopelessness will help set the wheels of healing in motion,” I added.

“You are right, barring the big words. There’s no need for heavy-handed talks,” he said. “Time has come for you to know how sitting peacefully on the floor for few minutes can change your world.”

“But I don’t have much time for you. So go to that rock,” he pointed in a direction, “sit there comfortably and I’ll tell you the secret of chakras: how to open them by meditating; a perfect meditation technique is the only knowledge about life you need to know.”

Seeing my confused expression, he explained, “Chakras are the nodes or The Energy Points in the subtle body. Subtle body is that which controls your physical body. In Bhagwat Geeta Shree Krishna said ‘The subtle body consists of three things only; composed mind, intelligence and false ego.’ Now the time has arrived for you to get rid of false ego and direct your mind and intelligence in a way you wanted to make your life.”

This was the first time I heard about chakras and the subtle body. “How many chakras do I have? Where in my body do they exist? Can I see them?” I asked, curiously.

He smiled and said, “They exist in the subtle body and you can only feel them. Your body comprises of a total of seven chakras.”

“Okay... then what do you mean I need to open these chakras?”

“It means you have to open the path between each chakra by meditation. These chakras have direct connection with your soul and you can open them by taking your soul onto the path of devotion. I’ll tell you how, but before I start you have to promise yourself and to me that the answer to my every question, must be true.”

I agreed, eagerly awaiting this process.

“Don’t forget your promise, Son, because in that case it will be your loss.”

I nodded.

“Now,” he said, taking a deep breath, “let’s begin.”

Chapter 12

“The first is called The Root Chakra.”

“Root chakra is situated at the base of the spine and it is blocked by fear; for opening this chakra you must surrender all your fears in front of yourself, you must let go of every fear and let yourself be free. Do you have some fears?”

“Yes, I have lots of them, always torturing me,” I said.

“Don’t worry; everyone has fears, but if you start focussing on letting them go, then you will be different from the mass,” he said. “Now close your eyes and make a list of all your fears that are moving in your mind right now and tell them to me, one by one.”

After scrounging through my entire mind, I made a list of some big fears within me.

“Fear of losing her”

“Fear of emotional pain”

“Fear of being alone”

“I am nothing without her,” I said aloud and open my eyes.

“Never fail to remember that fear is only an illusion,” he said, “I can easily tell all your fears are related to one thing. If you don’t fear death, then all your fears are just an illusion.”

“I know your mind is full of questions,” he said as I was about to open my mouth, “I have the answers to all of them, but it’s better for you to find the answers yourself.

“Now work with me here. Focus your root chakra. Close your eyes and let your fear flow down the River.”

I closed my eyes and started thinking. All my fears flowing down from my mind into the infinity.

After repeating the same thing for 3-4 minutes, I could feel a change happening within me. I enjoyed this flow.

“How are you feeling now?” He asked.

“Much better than before. There is something new in my head; I don’t know what it is, but it’s relaxing for me. I want to feel the same forever, how can I?” I asked desperately.

“Wait, everything comes to you at the right time, Patience is bitter but its fruit is sweet. By feeling the same you can heal your first chakra, you have to keep thinking the same way you just did. Now let’s come to the second one.”

“Sacral chakra — this chakra is situated in the lower abdomen; it deals with pleasure. It’s usually blocked because of guilt and blames that are hidden inside you. Tell me, son, do you blame yourself often?”

“Yes, quite a lot actually,” I said. “I blame myself for all that is happening from last two months. I was the only reason for this phase in my life. I feel guilty whenever I think about her, I am the only reason for her tears, and my behaviour was the only reason for her action. I am the reason behind whatever has happened and whatever is going to happen next.”

“Stop Rayan stop; I know why you have filled yourself with all this guilt. And you know what, in a way it’s good for you.”

“Good for me? Good for me how?” I asked.

“You’ll realise that later. For now, all you need to know is that you are exactly where you need to be. You won’t take long, Rayan, you’ll get there soon.”

His words made me feel better.

He continued, “Look at all the guilt that’s burdened you. Take a deep breath and start absolving yourself of all the blame.”

I close my eyes and start thinking of all my guilt flowing down into the infinity. After doing this continuously for 1-2 minutes I start seeing an image of the same in the centre of my head, I feel something good is happening in me. But it is tough for me to forgive myself for hurting her and others.

“Don’t let that guilt cloud and poison your energy, if you are to be a positive influence on the world then you must need to forgive yourself for all your blames,” he said, “Take a deep breath and forgive yourself and feel free as you could do, forgive and forget is the mantra for being happy.”

I try. I try real hard.

After 9-10 minutes he said, “Why you are holding back?”

I shook my head, annoyed at myself, and open my eyes.

“How are you feeling now?” he asked.

“Better than before. But...”

“But what?” “I can’t forgive myself, I made her life hell. I know it, I feel it,”

I said.

“Rayan, you can’t reach what’s in front of you until you let go of what’s holding you back,” he said, “I hope you understand how to heal the second chakra, I know it feels difficult, but it actually is not. Now come to the third one.” He said and starts explaining the third one.

“Fire chakra is situated in the centre of your stomach and blocked by shame, it deals with the will of thinking or the power of imagination. Release all your let-downs and disappointments with your close eyes. And before you start making a list, let me ask — Is losing her is your biggest disappointment in life?” He answered his question by himself.

I laughed and he got his answer.

“You simply close your eyes and release all your let-downs and disappointments that hold you back in your life. Accept and love all the aspects of which you are, even your mistakes.” I could feel the difference.

“Let’s come to the fourth one, it is something most suitable in your situation among the all three. Heart Chakra is situated in the middle of the chest, he said. “It deals with love, but also grief. It is blocked by grief. Lay all your grief out in front of you. Release all your sadness and loss. Love everything around you. And before loving yourself you must truly know one thing — what do you think about yourself?”

What do I think about myself? After thinking two or three minutes I said, “I don’t stand anywhere in my life, my sufferings today are because of my own mistakes. How can I love myself? I can’t.”

“It’s okay. This is supposed to be hard. Close your eyes for 2 minutes and think about all your grief, sadness, losses flowing down from you, healing chakras is not easy for you, I know it, but I know you could do it soon by applying your knowledge.”

He said and I did the same. I said to myself, “Loving her is like a war and I never came back same.”

As I was following those words, I felt some of the worst rays releasing from me and I felt lighter.

“Let’s come to the fifth one, Sound chakra. It deals with truth. Situated in throat and blocked by lies, the lies which you have told to yourself. You don’t need to tell these lies to me, you have accepted that you lie and it is more than enough. Do the same release yourself from all these lies and feel

free from them.”

“Let’s come to the sixth one “The light chakra or Third eye” now listen to my word carefully and feel them if it is possible for you. The light chakra is situated in located in forehead, it deals with your inside, your inner power and it is blocked by illusions. Do you have any idea about the greatest illusion in the world?” He asked

“I always remain alive? I am Perfect? I am Supreme?” I said but he refused.

“Then what is the greatest illusion?” I asked

“Separation. Illusion of separation is the biggest illusion among the world. Whatever I am instructing you is the only path which leads you to your destiny, you should do only one thing — Listen carefully and follow my words. Separation of the element is an illusion, open your mind and then you’ll see all the elements are one. We are like a drop in the ocean; as like a drop of the ocean have the same quality as whole ocean have, we also have all the quality within us that every person has. We all are the part of a supreme energy, and we came from same place after completing this journey of life we’ll go back to the same place.”

“Separation is just an illusion.” This one line includes everything in it.

After saying this, he concludes that topic and says, ”let’s come to the last one, the seventh chakra.”

“Crown chakra is located at the top of the head. If you control this point you have a control on all your wishes, a complete control on your thoughts and actions. It is blocked by earthly attachments, it deals with pure cosmic energy, which is directly coming through God.”

“Meditate on what attaches you with this world, release all your earthly attachment and let all go. Learn to let the attachment of your girl go or you won’t get pure cosmic energy flow in from universe. Many can’t release this chakra, you must open this and surrender all your attachment which keep you blocked. Think of your attachment with her and let her go.”

Let her go. But how? How can I let her go? I was able to remove everything that belonged to her from my heart, except one. My heart.

The old man noticed the turmoil brewing on my face. “Just your attachment to her, Rayan.”

And then I realised it was never real, “Ohh, ok, got it,” I replied and closed

my eyes and started meditating on this. After few seconds I felt a millions of statues of her inside of me, and one by one they flew out.

“Now it’s done.” He was smiling at me, a glint in his eyes.

Let it all go: the mistakes, failure, frustration, tears, worries, doubts, heartaches, fears... and try again, never give up.

As for me, I couldn’t transform my feelings into words.

“Now I have completed my work, it’s your time to understand it, applying it and discover yourself, I have only shown you the way by which you can heal, discover, identify yourself. You have everything in you, Rayan.”

I realised the meaning of his words, “I am very lucky that I met you. I needed this. I was meant to be here, tonight, in this storm. Thank you for providing me shelter. Thank you, for everything.”

“It’s not about luck or fate; it’s His perfect plan for you, now I don’t think you need to spend five or six days away from your home because you have simplified the path of your unknown journey. Please wait a minute; I have something for you,” He said and headed back into his hut; he handed over a folded paper to me on and said “Rayan, read this paper only after reaching home. And it was really great to meeting you, Good luck for your life,” he said and he started walking down the road.

I tried to stop him, but he continued on his path without even looking at me, I went up to him and said: “I want to ask you something.”

“My dear, you have reached your destiny, I know you have so much going inside your head but answers to your questions lied within you only.”

And with his quote, he went away without looking back. I had millions of queries in my head, but somehow it was clear what I have to do now.

Chapter 13

My mind, once full of hatred, was now relaxed and at peace. I looked at the paper the old man gave me and kept it in my pocket.

Happy and rested, I took the next available bus and went to stay at a nearby hotel. That night was different from others as I was at peace. Without wasting any time, I wrote a commitment.

“I’ll reshape my destiny according to me and will only allow happiness and will extract the best from the worst.”

I had a higher conscious feeling after a long, long time; I thought I should thank Akshita as she was the reason behind my transformation.

“Thank you Akshita, for everything; I am here now all thanks to you. You showed me the path towards my dream, and I am grateful for that. I loved you, love you and will always do. “

Next morning, I woke up feeling pleasantly refreshed. I looked at my face in the mirror and smiled. For the first time in months, I looked like a proper human being, face filled with hopes and the promises of a smile. Silently, I thank God; finally, my right time is finally here.

On that note, I left the hotel and started my journey back home, with a clear vision towards the purpose of my life. Before that, though, I made my way to the hut again, to see the old man one last time.

One month Later

It was 11:30 pm. I decided to stop working and leave the remaining part for the next day. But I was not particularly sleepy. My phone had been stolen a few days ago, so while I felt out of touch with my friends, it was also a sort of relief to not have that source of constant distraction.

Since sleep was evading me, I thought of checking my Twitter account. There was a message from my college friend whom I had followed in the morning. The message was “Thanks for following me Rayan:)” I also got a notification saying she followed me back so now I have a chance to reply to her message.

“Thanks for following me Aditi (:”

I got a message from her within the next minute. “How r u? How is your

Miss Uttarakhand?”

Ah, crap. There goes my good mood. I type, delete, type, then delete some more and finally ended up saying, "I hope she's good, she broke up a month ago."

“Are you serious? What happened?”

“Listen Aditi, the thing is, it doesn't matter. Either she is with me or not, I only want to feel her existence in me and I can do that easily without meeting her or talking to her, because she is living inside me. I'm living in the world of dreams and spirituality, and in my world she is my soul mate at every point of time.”

“OMG...!!!!!! Really Rayan you are going insane. You know what I already knew that you guys broke up, not only me the whole college knew it; it was a hot gossip around the college. “But Rayan now I want to say something, it may hurt you but it's important. She has completely changed now; she doesn't care for you anymore. Rayan she did everything wrong to you now it's high time you move on. Please don't think about her. I mean...She left you in your tough time and moreover she cheated on you!!”

I started laughing and said “Aditi, her unpredictable decisions hurt me a lot. I was completely broken at that time, but now I have a sense of faith in me, that nothing is permanent in this world, not even our pain. I was very depressed at that time. But it's all good now.”

“Yes, I wanted to win this game, a month ago, and I did everything that a person could do. Then I realized it's not about winning or losing. I can't force her to be with me, but what I could do is let go of the fear of losing her, in order to live my life with zest.”

“All this sounds good, but the reality is completely different from this Rayan, don't you know about her new boyfriend? It filled me with anger, how can she do this!?”

“I don't let myself worry about it. I don't care what she did; I only care what I have to do for her.”

“This is nothing, but over thinking!” She exclaimed

Yes, I over think but I also over-love.

“Honestly, I'm just glad you're okay now. Better, even. I'll always be here for you.”

“Yeah, sleep is catching up with me too. Thanks a lot for reaching out, Aditi. It was great talking to you again! Good night!” I said and turned off my laptop. I left my room and made a beeline for my balcony. I was continuously gazing at those beautiful stars twinkling right above me, this time their message was different from before. I started thinking how I changed my perception about life, and how I got here today.

The next day, I went back to the hut of the old man — well, not an old man but my spiritual teacher; I searched for him but didn’t find him anywhere. Then I went to the Pandit of the temple and said: “I want to meet that old man.”

He looked at me confused.

“You know, the one who lives in that broken hut?” (I said pointing towards the hut.)

“Son, look at the condition of that hut, how can someone live there?” he said as he smiled at me.

“But I saw him yesterday! He also had a heavy torn bag, like the one you’re carrying now.”

At that he laughed, “Son, there are many beggars who come here for shelter, but I don’t know who you are talking about.”

“He may have been a beggar, but he spoke like a saint.”

The Pandit ignored me, walked ahead a few steps and then turned and asked, “was he having any cuts or marks on his forehead?”

“Yes!”

“Son, he is mad. He’s been coming here for two days every year since the last 25 years.”

“Do you know where he lived? Anything?”

“I don’t have any information, Son. All I know is on the last day 25 years ago; he lost his wife in a landslide at the same place. And then he left.”

I understood then that great teachers don’t come from big houses, luxury cars, joyful households; they come from a place of much pain, suffering, broken heart, and rugged places. They have worked through the tough layers to reach the place where they can now help others.

I looked up to the sky, thanked God and thought that now I have to search for

that person, who knows me even better than I do. So I decided to forget everything and follow his instructions. I was eager to read the letter that he gave me, but he asked to do it after reaching home. I took the direct bus and after a journey of 16 hours, I finally reached Delhi.

I wanted to share this with someone but if I will tell anyone then they will surely call me mad and then I thought of Shivai. From the time he picked the phone and till I explained him everything, he remained silent and then he said, “Yes miracle happen only when you are ready for it. And here comes your awakening brother. Just don’t think anything Rayan, open and read that letter, I am with you, now don’t walk, start running. Everything that you have desired for is waiting for you.”

I opened that letter.

Son,

The best revenge you can take from her is to forgive and forget. You are loved; you are here for loving people. You too deserve love from others, but for now, you deserve love from yourself. Let go of everything that hurt you and focus only on positive aspects. Expect nothing and appreciate everything in life; if you truly love her then the distance would not matter. Instead, go live your life.

Throughout my life, I have been told that success is to be someone, but I found out for myself that success is losing all identities and being okay with that. Until you’re broken, you don’t know what you’re made of. It gives you the ability to build yourself all over again, but stronger than ever. Your dreams are waiting for you to embrace them and make them true. Accept the present, let go of the past and have faith in the future. Be the love you never receive.

Everything written in his letter was a fact and was enough for me to understand the meaning of life. Thank you Akshita, because of you I got to experience these magical feelings.

Just a month ago I was a person who was filled with fear, grief, depression, and despair, and now I am full of joy, knowledge, positive belief and love. And my motto was to find the origin of the negativity inside me. As the old man said that I know everything, I just have to give peace to my mind and focus on my thoughts and then turn to positivity.

I started giving 10-12 hours daily to extract it out and I realized:

The final obstacle is me.

I am the only person responsible for everything related to my life.

All I want is happiness. That is the crux, the base of it all. I never believed myself worthy enough for her love, worthy enough for any success in my life; all happiness in my life is fleeting; everything everyone said was always of supreme importance, my own emotions were put on the backburner.

She did not love me.

She used me.

She cheated on me.

Now I want to eliminate mental blocks, self-doubt and invisible barriers that's stopping me from having all I want. It was time for a new me. I don't want to wait to be discovered by anyone else, I should do it myself. Step out of my own residual sense of smallness.

Let's get on it, Rayan.

I am Lovable.

I deserve all the happiness and success

I will not bother with hearsay

I'll always express what I feel.

I can change; turn my life into right direction

Nothing is impossible for me now, I can do anything.

She always loved me and she'll always love me

This self-analysis helped a lot because this time instead of being too harsh on myself I was being critical and practical. I found the origin of my prejudice and mended it and for that I just have to follow 'believe the way you feel.'" Changing our circumstances will never change us, but changing ourselves is the only way to change our circumstances.

Who am I?

I should accept the way I am and try to work on the person I want to become. And I knew that to make it possible I'll have to let go of all the worldly attachment to get a feel of eternity. Hearing people talking about the existence of eternal soul along with body was one thing, but to experience it is completely another. It's euphoric. It's blissful.

I am a soul, and a great soul is full of knowledge. I CHOSE to be where I am right now, even if it is a place really difficult to cope with. In fact, my

hardships and difficulties are a blessing because they provide me with an opportunity to do what the soul came here to do in the first place: evolve.

Chapter 14

I was not able to meditate for the first few days, but I never quit. If I was unable to do it for long, then I would take little breaks. As I was improving I found a profound impact on my physical and emotional self. Still, there were some memories I could not forget, so I started concentrating on my body and giving attention to each part of my body. Sometimes I would chant mantras, as it develops a positive energy.

My diary and pen were my best companions because whenever you read or listen to something good then it's better to note it down — you never know writing your thoughts would help you create your own different world, the world where you always find peace.

Mornings passed, nights came to an end. I realised nothing stays forever and we should be relieved. Changes do happen in whatever we believe. It's not about how much you gain, it's about how much you fight.

I was happy no matter the consequences. All I wanted was to love her unconditionally. People might misunderstand me, but that's fine everyone makes their own choices and this is mine.

I remember Shivai telling me time and again “Your thoughts have the power to heal or harm anything.” And he was right. I knew that my mind was my biggest enemy. I didn't fight it. I didn't suppress anything. I simply understood things. Now it's more of a habit for me, no matter what the situation is, no matter what other people say, I thank them from the heart if they say well about me. Otherwise, I simply let things go.

Now, no matter in what situation I'm in, no matter in what place I'm in, I always say thank you to every single person I meet through the day. I also have this appreciation diary with me that I keep by the side of my pillow, filling it with thanksgiving. As I get up now, I thank god for everything; I thank the whole universe for putting things the way it is; and by the time I get up from bed I smile thinking of Akshita and thank her.

Isn't that good? I can't even explain how cathartic the whole process feels.

I stopped hanging out with negative people. I realised they drained me on a daily basis and prevent me from reaching my positivity potential.

In my relationship I realized, sometimes I used her and sometimes she used me. I used her for support, as my motivation. I used to love her and she did the same. We had arrangements to fulfil our physical, emotional, and economic needs in a more aesthetic manner.

I always got confused thinking whether my love for her was unconditional or not. After my so-called breakup, many of my friends and others who knew about my relationship said —

“She used you when she needed you and that's what your relationship was all about, now it's your time to show her what you can do, take revenge. You have many other options Rayan.”

And like always I said, “If you love someone you don't need any options other than loving unconditionally.”

Instead of looking elsewhere for a perfect relationship I looked inside me. I learned to be alone, but happy.

My friends, however, were right about one fact — my love for her was too unconditional. In that, I never cared for my own needs.

One day, a friend asked me “why don't you get detached from her thoughts? They only cause you pain.”

Yes, it gives me pain because I didn't have a broad vision about life, I realised that the relationships are for some days, months or year but life is much bigger. Now, I don't think I need to detach. Sometimes it makes me think whether it's right or not to do all this. I'm enjoying doing this, but what about Akshita? Is she aware of all this? Do I want her to know?

And the best question from the acquaintances “she broke your heart, after all this you still love her?”

If someone had asked me this question one month back, my answer would be the same “Yes she broke my heart,” but the answer has changed now.

I let go of everything which holds me back and wake up to see the truth of life, what breaks my heart? Her behaviour, her words, her reactions, I realised why I hung on to that. It was just the weakness of my heart, for knowing yourself perfectly the weakness of the heart should be hunted down and then truth would be known — that truth is “Everything Changes” everything in the world is going to change or has changed or change in future.

No matter what the words of others were, would their behaviour stay same forever? No. Life is a teacher it never stops teaching even if we stop learning,

it will make it a point to teach us.

She was there, she was always there, right in the corner of my mind, she never left my thoughts. My all thoughts, emotions, and everything flowed in one direction, and that direction took me towards her heart.

I listen to my inner voice, which I was suppressing from past some time, because heart never lies.

Drinking tea during rains gives me more pleasure than going around the city in a closed car. My father is happy that I am able to understand him; he shares things with me, which makes me happy. I no longer worry and stress over things like social reputation, popularity, and peer-approval, because my sense of identity comes from something much deeper than that. My interests and desires change, as I begin to awaken, I'm more interested in the pursuit of knowledge, wisdom, and experience. I want to spend time in nature, reading, going for walks alone, and sitting under the stars, going on adventures, meditating, and yoga. This is the biggest sign that something new is coming alive inside me.

My energy, thoughts, and emotions are aligned with the flow of the universe; it begins to work in my favour. I stopped working against it, it stops working against me. I started allowing myself to be guided by my heart and my spirit. Awakening is about self-realization.

I could hear the wind chime swinging to the rhythm of the wind in my balcony. Suddenly I get back from my memory. It was 3 in the morning, and I took my diary and went to the terrace. Standing alone on the terrace with cold breeze, sky full of stars, and some lovely memories to keep me company.

Sometimes you can't explain what you see in a person, it's just the way they take you to a place where no one else can. Thinking about her makes me feel that she is the only aim in my life, maybe she is the only one for me.

Do I still love her?

Yes.

Would I die for her, though?

No, not anymore.

I want to do something that makes her happy, makes her smile. I want to live

in her arms by being only hers.

I blink and suddenly I am stunned with sun rays on my face. It is morning now. Time sure does fly by when you're busy having intense philosophical conversations with yourself.

Under the sky, with my face upside, I smiled and with my open hands, I shouted, "THANK YOU LOVE" and started to feel like she is with me and is hugging me tightly. It was the best morning for me since last 2-3 months.

I turned back to my room and started following my routine; which starts with feeling great, 3-4 times I said "thank your god and thank you Akshita," I turned to the mirror and started smiling, laughing by seeing my own face. Sometime later I turned for yoga and meditation, after this it's time for spending some time with anything that doesn't matters to the world. Next, I took my diary and started writing appreciation journal, after this it's time for asking the universe and thinking about my desire, Visualisation, I started listening romantic songs for next half an hour, which made me feel of Akshita touch, her smile.

And then a miracle happened.

It was 8 in the evening. I saw my phone and it was Akshita calling. I was so shocked; I didn't move for a solid 30 seconds. But, I picked up the phone.

"This is Rayan?" (Before she could say anything, I asked her, I was confirming whether she really called me or it was a mistake.)

"Yes, I know, it's you. I called you only. This is Akshita, still remember? How are you?"

Listening to her voice I realised something was wrong.

"Akshita, you seem a bit upset. I can sense it in your voice. Don't lie to me unless you are absolutely sure that I'll never find the truth. Tell me what happened? Why do you sound so low?"

"I don't understand why everyone is considering me guilty," she said. "Everyone is talking wrong about me like I ruined everything. I trust you, that you won't talk trash about me. I have done so much wrong to you but I know you are the only one in this world that will never try to ruin anything related to me. But all are acting like I have committed a sin."

"Listen, I don't go to anyone to ask for sympathy because I know I have done

wrong and it's my time to pay. I have always talked well about you to everyone, I have taken all the guilt over me."

"I don't know Rayan; it's been 4-5 days I am getting this shitty feeling. I cried a lot because everyone has made me the culprit. Even my friends have stopped talking to me and said, 'We really don't like to talk to you.'"

"How come you care about these friend? All they do is criticize you and gossip behind your back. Don't be another brick in the wall. It doesn't matter how others see you, how you see yourself means everything. No one knows what you are going through expect you (and me too). When I don't have any problem with what you did to me then why are you caring about their words? You've moved on and also you are happy then why are listening to anyone. Don't worry about anyone; make your own choices without even asking to anyone. Do not look back into past it will not give you anything, you don't need society to love you, just certain people, and sometimes just one. So just move on and chase your dreams full on." I went on a tirade against her friends, weren't they supposed to support her? Some friends they were.

"Rayan, I really feel guilty sometimes ... you know, about you. I had to choose and tried making choice which resulted in neglecting you, but really I am not happy. I used to talk about you all time, spent time in thinking all the good memories we had together. I still unconsciously look for you in everyone I meet." And Rayan point is, it's not about how much I miss you, it's about why I still do?

"Love", smiling I replied. "Don't ever think you did something wrong," I placate her, "You only did what you felt was right and I can count on you for not doing something stupid and hurting me back. Just think what you did was for good. I was also not able to accept the reality but now with time I have realized that everything happens for reason. So, just enjoy now with what you have. Life goes on, please don't waste your time worrying about past."

I carried on "Don't underestimate your strength Akshita, you were born for a unique purpose and you have all power in you to achieve it." It was important to me that she'd know that.

"You are too good. I had thought you will also react like everyone else but seriously the way you treated me... I just want to say thank you. If ever I have to regret about thing at the last moment of my life, it would be our breakup. You really are too good, you didn't even think what I did to you and you keep on your kindness with me and...I wish things to go back to how

they were. I wish I could come back to Noida.”

“You know I’m always there for you, no matter what or where our relationship is.”

“Thanks Rayan,” I could hear her smile in that sweet voice of hers, “my only wish — you should also move on with things. Everything must go right with you and your family too. Just stay happy and yes I want come to your marriage soon. I don’t think we should talk after today though. We should have a clean break.”

“Yes, that’s fine. You too stay happy and only listen to yourself and don’t ever give a damn what world says. Promise me, promise me Akshita that you’ll never fall weak and will stay strong like you were before a month. I want you to be independent in life. Stop over-thinking, over-analysing, over-reacting, just simply be yourself.”

“So do you miss me now?”

“No” Just those habits, I murmured to myself.

Wasn’t it hard to let me go? She asked.

Ummm.. Trust me, It’s hard to tell, really hard. Sometimes I wonder if you know, how it feels to let you go. It was hard but somehow I realised the hardest things and the right things are the same.

Do you still love me?

My memory loves you, she said.”It asked about you all the time.”

I knew I couldn’t go on talking to her without breaking down, so I said, “Stay happy and never worry because my best wishes and all my good luck are with you always in every condition.”

“I do not deserve to say sorry; I tried so hard to text you that I was sorry for everything, but my ego and the backspace button made sure that the message didn’t reach you,” she said, “but it’s ok goodbye, take care.”

She unfriend me on Facebook, on WhatsApp I was blocked, she put my calls on auto reject but “Heart” still connected. 100 ways to stop communication not even a single way to erase memories. Somewhere in between “Now I am not happy” and “I used to think about the memories we had together” the actual thing remained unsaid. I thought after disconnecting the call I kissed my phone and kept it near my heart and started to cry. Miles apart we

contemplate about each other, staring at the same moon just from different angles

I wanted to tell her all the feelings that I had for her in my heart, but as I listened her voice, I understood what she is feeling.

I made a beeline for bed, gazing at the sky from the window, cold night air, real conversation and a sky full of stars can heal almost any wound, I thought. My eyes were exuding confidence as if there was a great spark of a new beginning. And there was no sleep at all or maybe I didn't want to sleep. But somehow I managed, I realized this when I suddenly woke up at 4 and started searching my phone to dialled Shivai's number. I'd just had a vivid dream. And he needed to hear about it. I told him the whole story, which he listened to after yelling at me for one minute for waking him up so early.

"Hey, I just woke up dreaming something. It was very different. I got up all excited and just couldn't resist the temptation of calling and telling. "

"Okay, that's fantastic and all but could you tell me what it is already?" He grumbled. "Not that I'm not happy to hear you all happy and excited...it's good to hear that happy tone of yours again, brother," he said softly. And he was right. "But tell me about this dream that made you go nuts!"

"Bhai, when I was talking with her yesterday over the phone, she said she badly wanted to get transferred to Noida. And the dream I just had is connected to it.

I saw that I penned down everything that has happened to me and published a book related to us, I saw her getting privy to everything that I went through as she read my book. She even dared to give a copy of it to her HR. And eventually, all of this resulted in her transfer to Noida."

"Now... What the hell are you waiting for? Perhaps it's an indication for you. Perhaps the whole universe is responding to you . . . You never know. I think this dream of yours is a good opportunity for you and is a part of the perfect plan you have always wished for. Time has come to get wisdom from your dream. Go take a pen, paper and start writing."

"What? Are you serious?"

"I'm serious bhai. Go and get over it. It was the only perfect plan you have always wished for. Your dream awaits you to make it all happen."

I thanked my stars for a friend like Shivai, disconnected the phone to let him

sleep some more, and got myself a piece of paper. I started to write.

But from where do I start writing? asked my mind. A letter to her, mind replied happily.

Maybe it's not about the happy ending, maybe it's about a happy beginning and continuing on from that moment, trying to stay true to your path. That's all one can do.

Hey, Beautiful!!!

I saw you in my dreams again and it felt so real. Life is the most unpredictable game. And I've learned it the hard way. When you feel everything around you is just how it should be and just how it's supposed to be, life gets down to seeking attention.

But then, it isn't really as cruel. People get success, money, fame and sometimes, just sometimes, love.

I got it in you. I got what actually being loved is. I could feel it. You made me feel like this beautiful boy who has a girl right next to him all the time no matter what. I remember that one time when in the college I got sick right after we had a huge argument. You took me to the hospital and spent the whole night there, when the nurse came to me for injection and you said don't worry, 'I'm here, right here. I'm not going anywhere. I'm right here baby.' That was by far the best thing I have ever felt. I found shelter in you in the winter's dark nights, when my soul was homeless.

You still make me smile.

I don't need to search for you anywhere, because you are here, inside me. So please don't ever think that I lost you. But the truth is that you lost me, and now I cannot be found ever. These were a few things I really wanted you to know. I don't have a clue what my future holds, but I know wherever it is, you are there. I turned out loving you a lot more than I originally planned.

"..... you're like snow, beautiful but cold." I never had any dark perception about you. I'm the one who knows your beauty when you feel ugly; your wholeness when you are broken; your dreams when you are hopeless; the magic I feel whenever I see you; your innocence when you feel guilty; your purpose when you are confused; your fake smile when you get hurt, things which you are passionate about.

You are braver than you believe; stronger than you seem, smarter than you

think; You are a book I once found and read it all. I feel blessed when I think of all our memories together. I'll always be an option for you; I'm waiting for you not because I don't want anyone else, but because honestly, I can't love anyone else. I have already given my heart to you. One day I'll wake up at four in the morning. I won't be alone, I won't text you, I won't call you, I won't write a letter to you, I won't miss you, I won't cry, because that one day when I wake up at four in the morning you'll be lying next to me and not miles away. I'll be here only. These few lines aren't enough; you deserve a thousand books written about how amazing you are.

“Million life, million choices and still I choose you, again...” I love you. I'll stay with you; there is nothing you can do to lose my love for you and above all thing I wish you love...

Or, well, you always have the option to block me of course and we won't speak ever after that.

Thank you, Beautiful!! Thank you, Love ☺

About the Author



Ayush Gupta is a notorious gypsy, driven by a bountiful zest for life. He studied Engineering at Dehradun Institute of Technology. At the ripe age of 23 his career has spanned 3 other occupations so far: author, businessman, speaker. With all these experiences at a young age, he cherishes a wish to share thoughts, dreams, aspirations and love with the people of this world through his writing.

According to him, writing merely follows the rhythm of nanoseconds of life strings. He has been deeply in love with words since the age of 12 — his grandfather was a politician and Ayush would write his political speeches. His aim is to become a politician, and a person who is loved and followed by the world. He wants to pen down simple thoughts with ardent meaning. Ayush can be reached at www.thankyoulove.in and thankyoulove.in@gmail.com.



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