CHAPTER 11

**DEVELOPMENT**

As the day drew to a close, Yash couldn't shake off the feeling of disappointment. He had hoped for something new and exciting in the second year, but instead, it felt like more of the same routine. To make matters worse, the lectures had been particularly heavy, leaving him feeling drained and exhausted.

While everyone else had already left for the day, Yash found himself still lingering on the school campus, his footsteps echoing in the empty corridors. With a weary sigh, he made his way towards the southern exit gate, the path leading him back to the familiarity of his hostel where H10, H11 and H12 are located.

As Yash reached the gate, he noticed a familiar figure standing there, looking just as worn out as he felt. It was Misa.

"Hey, Yash," she called out, her voice reflecting the exhaustion they both shared.

"Hi, Misa," Yash replied, nodding in agreement. "Seems like we've both had quite the day."

Misa glanced up at Yash, her expression tired but relieved. "Which hostel are you in?" she asked.

"H10," Yash answered. "And you guys are in H12 now, right?"

"Yeah, looks like we're headed in the same direction," Misa remarked, her gaze meeting Yash's. "Mind if I tag along?"

Yash smiled wearily. "Not at all. Let's go," he said, feeling a sense of relief at having some company for the walk back to the hostel.

As Yash and Misa walked together, a subtle warmth spread through Yash's chest, making him feel unusually content in Misa's presence. The silence between them was comfortable, filled with the sound of their footsteps against the wet pavement.

Yash broke the silence, his voice soft, "Thanks for helping me that day, Misa. I really appreciate it."

Misa smiled, her eyes lighting up, "No problem at all, Yash. It was my pleasure. So, did Prathamesh and Srushti hit it off?"

Yash shrugged, a faint blush tinting his cheeks, "Not exactly dating, but they've become really close friends."

Misa raised an eyebrow playfully, "Oh, so I unintentionally played cupid for a friendship?"

Yash chuckled, "Something like that. But who knows, maybe something more will happen eventually."

Just then, the sky darkened, and raindrops began to fall, gradually building into a heavy downpour.

Misa's face lit up with excitement at the sight of the rain, "Wow, rain! I love it!"

Yash glanced around and spotted a closed shop nearby. Without hesitation, he took Misa's hand and led her under the shop's awning.

Misa pouted playfully, "Hey, I wanted to play in the rain!"

Yash shook his head, a smile tugging at his lips, "We'll catch a cold if we stay out here.”

Misa turned away from Yash, her lower lip jutting out in an adorable pout. "You're such a spoilsport, Yash."

Yash couldn't help but chuckle at Misa's playful indignation. "Alright, alright, Misa. Let's play in the rain, but if it starts pouring too heavily, we'll come back to shelter, ok?"

Misa's eyes lit up with mischief, her playful grin returning. "Deal!"

Hand in hand, they dashed into the rain, laughing and splashing water at each other. The sound of their laughter echoed through the empty streets, mingling with the gentle patter of raindrops.

As they reached the nearby garden, Misa's face lit up with excitement, "Yash, let's go to the garden! Sliding around in the rain sounds like so much fun!"

Yash grinned, feeling a sense of warmth and companionship with Misa. "Absolutely, let's go!" he exclaimed, allowing Misa to lead him into the garden, where they continued to revel in the simple joys of the rain.

Both Yash and Misa relished each other’s company, reveling in the simple joy of being carefree. Unintentionally, their hands found each other, their fingers intertwining naturally as they skipped and laughed through the rain-soaked garden.

Yash, usually the epitome of mischief and playfulness among his close friends, especially the boys, found himself embracing his inner child wholeheartedly around Misa. He hoisted her up on his back, spinning her around playfully, both of them lost in the innocent delight of the moment.

Yash couldn't help but notice how effortless it felt to be himself around Misa. There was no need for pretense or inhibition; with her, he could simply be.

As the rain gradually slowed to a stop, Misa pouted playfully, her eyes still fixed on the now-clearing sky. "Oh, I need more," she exclaimed with a hint of disappointment.

Yash smiled at her infectious energy, feeling a warmth spread through him. "I too," he replied, his gaze lingering on her for a moment before he glanced around. "But I think it's time to head home now."

They stood there for a moment longer, still hand in hand, the quiet intimacy of the moment enveloping them.

As they reached near the mess, both wet but elated, Yash couldn't shake off the slight disappointment that the moment had come to an end. He wanted nothing more than to prolong their time together.

With a nervous twinge, Yash turned to Misa, "Um, since our route is the same, can we walk together from now on?" He felt a flush creeping up his cheeks, hoping she would agree.

Misa glanced around before nodding with a smile, "Yeah, sure! And thanks for playing with me. Rain holds a special place in my heart, and it was nice enjoying it with you. Sorry for getting you all wet too."

Yash waved off her apology, his smile widening, "No need to apologize. I enjoyed every moment of it." He couldn't help but add, almost bashfully, "I'd love to do it again sometime."

With a cheerful wave, Misa darted off towards her hostel, leaving Yash with a sense of warmth and anticipation for their next meeting.

As Misa disappeared from view, Yash couldn't contain the bubbling joy within him. He felt like jumping for joy as he made his way towards the hostel. However, as he walked, he couldn't shake the lingering sensation of her hand in his and the warmth it brought to him.

Stopping in his tracks, Yash looked down at his hands, a small smile tugging at his lips as he recalled the moment they had held hands. But then, a wave of uncertainty washed over him. "What's happening to me?" he mused aloud, his voice barely above a whisper. "Why am I feeling so elated about something so simple?"

He shook his head, as if trying to dispel the confusing thoughts. "No, it was nothing," he told himself firmly, looking up at the sky for reassurance. "She was just being friendly, just playing around. If it wasn't me, it would have been someone else. There's nothing special about it, Yash. Just let it go."

With a determined nod, he continued on his way to his room, pushing aside the swirling emotions in his mind.