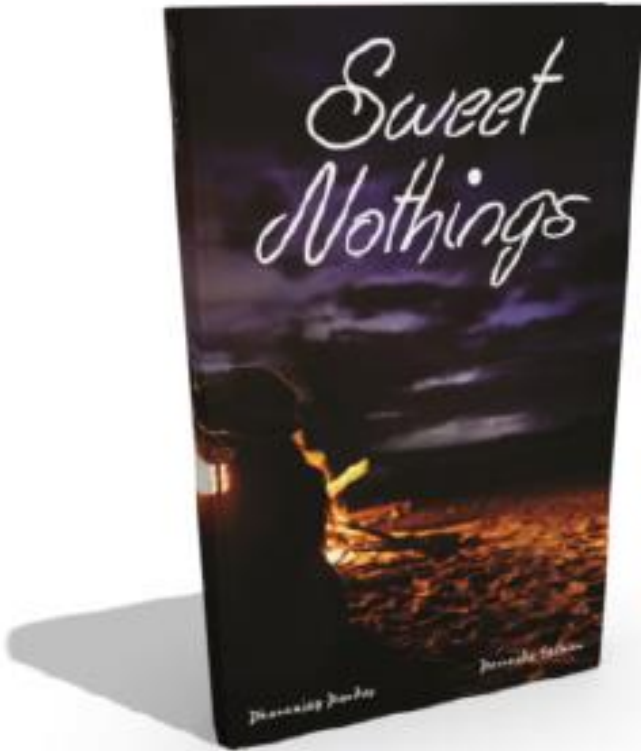


*Sweet Nothings*



A person is sitting on a beach at sunset, looking out at the ocean. The person is in silhouette, and the scene is lit by the warm, golden light of the setting sun. The sky is dark with some clouds, and the water is dark with some ripples. The overall mood is contemplative and serene.

# Sweet Nothings

*Dhananjay Pandey*

*Deerzada Salman*

*Sweet Nothings*

**Dedicated**

***To Everyone Who has Ever Been In  
love In Their Life***

## **WHY WE WROTE THIS BOOK?**

*We all have reasons for love. Believe me there's always a reason. Love has everything, reason, compassion, sacrifice and may more magnificent thing. There's only one thing that you will fail to find in true love and that is condition. Love is never done on conditions. It is just done. Love never needs to reciprocation. It doesn't need the presence of your lover in your vicinity or sometimes even in your life. You just love them and even sometimes it all starts becoming faded and love appears to a mirage but in the end true love always triumphs. That's the story of Sahil and Shikha.*

*One*

**I LOVE YOU!!  
WHY?**

**Have you ever asked anyone that “why do you Love the one you Love?” I have Always Heard People**

## *Sweet Nothings*

**Saying that there is no reason why they love somebody. They just love them. Most of the people in this world say this. But believe me! There's always a reason. Some find smiles attractive, some find behaviour stupendous and some simply fall for the face. No matter, whether it is as elegant as someone's soul that makes you fall for that person or it might be as simple or silly as a PENCIL, but there is always a reason. Yes! The reason for me to like her, that eventually turned to be love her, was a simple pencil.**

**Her hair were always mesmerising for me. Poets have always compared her open hair to many things. Sometimes they were called clouds. They were the reason for the night to happen. Sometimes their mannerism was in question as every now and then, they kept kissing her face without permission. I don't know why they were compared to snakes as for me, they have always given the elixir called life. Of course I used to be captivated in those mesmerizing locks waving from the breeze around her. Some may think that there cannot be anything that can be beautiful than her open hair but for me,**

she was at her best when she tied them. It was like that she was teaching them some manners.

She was always in a mesmerized state. Uninformed of the world around her and deep into her own thoughts, she used to walk past me. Even in that mesmerized state, she accurately used to hold all of her hairs and turn them into a beautiful Bun. There, that PENCIL came in to the picture. I never realized that a simple pencil can be such a beautiful ornament. May be it was just me who was finding that pencil that was holding her Bun attractive. May be it was her that was making that pencil as elegant as it was appearing. But that was the reason why I was falling in love with her. At some place, I was even jealous of that pencil as it was actually enjoying the place what I only thought of being. Yes, Love can take you that way also that you get jealous of a simple Pencil. But this Pencil was not simple. Because this was not just a pencil, it was a pencil in her Bun. And I feel that the pencil in her bun was also a way to depict her mood.

As the colour of that pencil changed, so did her mood. When the pencil was red, she seemed to be

larger than life with a childish smile on her face. On that day, I could also see, what I would like to call LOVE for me, in her eyes.

A yellow pencil tells me that she is happy. Whenever her bun is accompanied by a black pencil, it warns me not to say or do anything that may annoy her. And that day I have to gather all my courage to say a simple 'HI' to her. With a white pencil comes a strange peace on her face.

But for me, the most favourite colour is the Pink one. That's a colour that I want her to wear always. Because when there is a pink pencil in her bun, she automatically becomes a romantic soul. May be its just my pure perception but I have felt that romance in her when she wears a pink pencil. Her blushes on my simple talks make my heart skip a beat.

She always asks me how I understood her mood so well every time, every day. Well, her pencil was my partner in that crime but that was a secret I could never tell her.



*Sweet Nothings*

**TWO**

# *I Can't Hide You Coz I Write You*

**For me it was just another day. After posting that small piece about Pink Pencil on facebook, I got many appreciations from my friends. I was in the canteen and was looking outside from the window at the garden. It was looking renewed after the first**

## *Sweet Nothings*

rain last night. Just like our heart is renewed and lightened after crying. I was trying to enjoy that pleasant view but couldn't. May be because I didn't want to. Why? There are many answers to this why. May be because the view was not much pleasant without her. May be because of some of the battles I was fighting in my mind with my life.

Both the hands of the clock were meeting at 12 just like two lovers meet after a long day of work. This was the time when normally the canteen used to be empty. May be this was the time when the tables used to get time to talk something to chairs. I loved to enjoy these silent moments along with a cup of tea hence used to go there every day.

Suddenly I saw her coming. Although I always get mesmerized when I see her coming my way but today.....today it looked like the sunshine took a human form and is walking towards me in that yellow dress.

With the same notorious smile on her face, she waved at me and then, I don't know it was involuntary or she wanted to take my focus, but she

took her hand to her bun so that I could notice the pencil.

After ordering her tea, she sat on my table and said in a naughty way “We need to talk?” and I reacted like any man on this planet will react on this question coming from a woman. I said “what have I done?”

“What was that thing about Pink Pencil and all? When I ask you about how I am looking in my dress then you become colour blind but then you can read the colours of my pencils perfectly.”

“Oh! That? That was just.....”and there was a cold sigh of incompleteness from my side “That was a writer last night who I had to bury inside this Teacher.” I said pointing towards myself. “And see I ruined both of them”. I had a sarcastic smile on me.

“So what made you unbury that buried writer after so much time and that also on Facebook?” and then without even giving me a chance to answer she asked “you’re in love Mr. Sahil! Aren’t You?”

And this question was followed by another question  
“Are you blushing Mr. Sahir?”

“Love is just a word that was invented to sell gifts to people. It does not exist. It’s all only in the books. The truth is everyone needs everyone at some point and that’s the point that creates a mirage of love. that’s it” I gulped down the remaining tea and wanted to leave.

“Okay, will see you” and just when I was about to leave, she held my hand and pulled me on the chair.

“Oh Come on, it’s not like if you don’t take your next lecture, the students will fail. Why so serious Sahil?”

“Nothing !!!! Sometimes I just wish if I had followed my passion, then.....May be I could have made less money but does money really matters when you have that inner satisfaction? Here I am just passing my time. This is not my world. My world is where I could live my poetry. Where they wake me up in the morning. And I sleep after one of my poems have kissed my forehead.

## *Sweet Nothings*

Where I could just Imagine a girl whom I love and only I have the right to see her, touch her, and live her. No one can enjoy the feeling of a poet who explains to the world through his poetry how the girl of his dreams looks like. I miss that feeling Shikha! I miss it! And it is creating a void inside me which is getting bigger and bigger day by day. And on top of that, these family quarrels. I think I am reaching my saturation point very soon.” And I said that much in just a single take.

“Woah!!!!!!” was her reaction “That beautiful smile is hiding so much” “Don’t worry Sahil, everything will be fine. Just give time some time. Oh oh, see! you also didn’t notice that today I wore a pink pencil just for you”

That Pencil!! That damn Pencil took away all the grief, pain and negativity of that moment in just a moment and all the feelings were replaced with just a simple feeling of joy and pleasure.

“Do you realise Sahir how much effort it takes for us girls to bring your focus to us? From eyeliner to mascara, concealers, nose pin, earrings, nail paints.

## *Sweet Nothings*

Hours of shopping to choose just one shade that we hope you like. And then you lose your heart to a mere pencil. Only if we knew that, do you have any idea how much time, money and effort it could have saved?”

This time, I just looked into her eyes and told her “you know, for me there is only one girl in this world that matters? I don’t give a damn what the rest of the world is doing.”

She had a habit to change the topics at such points but this time, maybe she didn’t want to change the topic. I saw a mesmerizing smile on her face she looked down and murmured “you know you are crazy!”

The very next moment she tried to change the conversation and asked me “It’s your birthday next week? What can please his highness on his birthday?” Her tone was sarcastically romantic.

To that I replied, “I don’t need any gift from anyone. Someone has already gifted me the most beautiful gift of my life. Now I only have one wish. That I could pull that pencil out of your bun and set

these Black magicians free for some time. I just want to witness that elegance when your free hair rest on your shoulders and then when you pull them back, I am sure it will appear that the twilight moon is out from the clouds.”

It seemed like she was caught in the moment and was imagining me doing that. I am sure she also wanted me to do that. But then she exclaimed “Don’t you dare to do anything like this. It takes a lot of time to .....” Before she could complete the sentence; that pink pencil of her bun was in my hands and her hair fell on her shoulders. It was like someone got free from a prison after a long sentence. A beautiful prison.

This was not how I Imagined it but It was her with me and this was enough to make the universe beautiful than ever.

It was my time to leave but my feet refused to leave. They didn’t want me to go from there but then I had to make them understand that it was my time to leave.



## *Sweet Nothings*

**At the gate of the canteen, I turned back. She was staring at me with the cup of tea in her hand. I thanked her for the advanced Birthday Present.**

**Now the weather automatically appeared pleasant. It was spring from inside to outside. Sometimes the circumstances are unbearable and out of control. It seems that everything is going bad in life and you don't have any control on it. But then comes a person who holds your hand and supports your heart in such way that instead of playing a victim, you just gather all the courage to fight the situations and emerge as a warrior.**

*Sweet Nothings*

**Three**

**Of Course I Get  
Jealous  
I love You After All**

**Today, we accidentally met near the water point. To my surprise she was wearing two pencils today. I don't think that the second pencil was to hold her magical locks. May be this was a message to me that now she wanted to break this exile of loneliness and wanted to explore the oceans of love. The moment she saw me, she cracked a smile and said "Man, Are you stalking me? Let me tell you, my boyfriend also works here and he is not someone you should trifle with."**

**"Yeah, I am from CIA and you are the project assigned to me. My only job is to stalk you all the time. That's what I get paid for." Stalking or eve teasing are the topics that I can't bear coming from anyone. No matter who that is. I guess these things do nothing to a man but degrade him to his lowest.**

**"How rude! No wonder you are still single!" She didn't like the way I responded.**

**"Excuse me! I am not single coz I can't score someone. I am single because not every girl can afford me. If you don't believe me then ask your friends. They can vouch for this."**

Now she changed the topic as it was her turn to feel jealous. “You wanted to discuss something in the morning. What was that?”

“That?” I had a quirky smile on my face.

I just thought that shall I say everything that I wanted to say to her? That How I wanted to steal her from this world and take her to a place where no one could find two of us. Where we could spend the whole day with her wrapped in my arms. How I could see nothing when she was in front of me and even when she was not with me, her scent used to make me realise that in some way she always stayed.

Then I recollected all my thoughts and continued

“Don’t you think that we need to break the routine and meet somewhere outside as well? The walls and corridors of this college now know our story very well. Let’s make some new witnesses. Let’s explore how it feels to meet outside in the open. These meetings in pieces are not enough for me now and I am sure you also want a bit more of this. There’s a place I know you will definitely like. It suits my

taste and I am sure it will suit yours as well.” Food was another thing that made me feel closer to her. We both were foodies and also we both didn’t like crowded places.

I have never seen that expression on her face. It seemed like she was hiding her happiness in an expression of surprise. “Why I am getting a feeling that you are officially asking me out?”

I went to her ears and said in a husky voice “Why am I feeling that you are dying to say yes.....?”

I guess my husky voice took her by storm for a moment. She recollected herself and then said

“Why would I be dying to go out with you? You’re not the only who asked me out. There are many in the Que. Why should I ditch them for you? Give me a valid reason”

I just looked into her eyes and said “Did you ever felt that I want to get drowned in your eyes? No I don’t want to get lost in your eyes. I want to find myself in your oceanic eyes. And madam that’s the difference between them and me”

She didn't answer to this and just kept staring at me. I also didn't want to ruin the beauty of the moment.

“I'll pick you up at 8. Be ready and yes wear that red dress” I said and I left.

The thought of that 'date' was already filling me with goose bumps.

## Four

**You Always Enjoy  
Waiting  
For The One You Love**

**It's been a long time since I had asked someone out. You can say that I didn't find anyone that was worth waiting for. But tonight! This was a hell of a night. Everyone has gone through this at least once in their life! Finding it hard to sleep while waiting for something beautiful next day! I couldn't really**

explain the reason why I couldn't sleep that night. One reason was that I was enjoying this restless waiting for the next day. Another reason was the thoughts that were filling up my minds. The imagination of that beautiful date I am going to have with her. What would I say? How would she react? How can I leave her mesmerised and speechless? We all do that. Right? Plan it to be a perfect event. At least in our minds, we have all of it sorted.

Well, after millions of thoughts that crossed my mind, the night was at the verge of its end. At around 7 in the morning, I received a text from her wishing me Good Morning. I knew that if she is up at 7 in the morning that means she is also going through all that I am enjoying.

I swiftly replied "Good Morning Sunshine"

As soon as I sent that text, she called me. Her voice appeared to me what I would like to call a nice shot of the finest scotch on earth. "Finding it hard to sleep Sahil?"



Somewhere my mind said “I don’t want to miss even a single chance of thinking about you” But I didn’t tell her that. It would be too much too quickly for our relationship which was still in the budding state. Instead I blamed my roommate. “My roommate has suddenly developed love for early morning yoga and with his sniffing sound no one on earth can dare to sleep”

“When will you start your fitness regime fatty?”

“Excuse me ma’am, with a body mass index of 23, I guess I am pretty lean. Also I want to give a fair chance to other boys as well.”

“You and your technical responses” She giggled. And at that time, I felt like violins playing around me. Even her laughter sounded to me like one the Beethoven’s symphonies.

“Okay then. See you at 8 sharp. And don’t you dare to get late.”

Being late was something that was synonymous to my name. It was my habit of being late that made us meet on the first place. She was in HR

department of the college so she used to warn me every now and then. I don't want to brag but my charm overshadowed her warnings. Who knew that my late comings will score me girl like her.

\*\*\*\*\*

“Bro, I need your car tonight” I was almost begging to Imtiyaaz, my roommate. “Am I dreaming or something?” He was in total surprise. “Let me see, you never hang out. Every single weekend, you drown yourself in to your cell phone and laptop. Additionally, you don't even have a girlfriend!! You always advocate for the public transport. Why in the world would you need my car?” he paused for a second. “wait wait wait wait!!!! No No No no no No!!!! Are You going on a date?”

I didn't say anything just passed a smile. “okay that means unicorns are also real?” he added. He took a couple of seconds to digest this. And then He got all excited.

“See take the keys. Petrol is full. Take to a long ride and a romantic one. I had left all the hopes to see in

**your wedding suit but here you are going on a date and.....”**

**“woah, woah woah” I cut him in between “Slow down tiger. You’re going way too fast. It’s just a normal dinner with her. Don’t overthink it.”**

**“Yeah Yeah I know the casual dinners.” His tone was a bit teasing. “by the way, what does she do” he further asked.**

**“She’s a colleague” I replied.**

**“Well, she must be a special one. I have been with you since last five years. In these five years, not even a single mention of a girl was in your life. I even started doubting your sexual preferences. There’s a reason why I always sleep with my doors locked.” I broke in to laughter with that last one.**

**Now let me tell you one thing about my roommate Imtiyaaz. He is in love with his car. Not that I love my car type love. It was way beyond it. You can ask him his body parts and he will surely donate you them without even saying a word. But you never ask for his car. But here is a funny yet beautiful**

**thing about friendship. When you are in love, your friends get even more excited than you. Imtiyaz also knew that this girl must be special for me.**

**He handed over his car keys to me but also warned me. “See its rainy season. Just try to avoid seats getting wet”**

**Now the only thing I had to do was the last thing I wanted to do. Wait.**

## **Five**

*Sweet Nothings*

**When You Start Loving  
To Wait  
My friend  
You're In Love**

**That day was the slowest day of my life. Those nasty hands of watch seemed to tease me every time they moved.**

**I have been a science student from 10<sup>th</sup> Grade but this was my first practical experience of Einstein's Theory of Relativity.**

**When in love, you do things that you have never done before. I parked my car near her house at 7.45 in the evening. This was the sacrifice of my habit of late coming. My first sacrifice for love. God knows what else was in the way.**

**As the watch showed 8:00, I texted her "I am here. How much time will her highness take?"**

**She said "five Minutes"**

**That evening, all those jokes about women getting ready in five minutes, that I read on Facebook, Whats app and everywhere else, were played on me.**

**In next 50 minutes, I texted her with the same question and she replied with the same answer.**

**When you are in immense pain, then the painkillers have double, triple or even quadruple effect. That's what happened when I first saw her that evening. It is hard to define that look she had that evening.**

**Against my will, she wore a black dress instead of red dress. But a diamond never loses its spark no matter what is colour of its case.**

**Her makeup was subtle, kajal in her eyes was giving their depth another dimension. And as I expected, everything was complimented by a pencil in her bun.**

**Although I always believe that the eyes of the beholder are the real culprit but her dress appeared a bit odd to me as it was a bit revealing. I am not an orthodox but when it comes to her, I never wanted to share even her single glance with anyone in this universe.**

**I was just watching her, speechless and thinking all the beautiful things I could, and she was there. I was startled a bit. I opened the door for her.**

**“You don't have to do that!” she said.**

**“Well a little bit of chivalry never hurt anyone!” I replied with a wink. I knew she liked these small things I did for her. It is not the huge things that you do but keeping in mind the minor details that make you irresistible for people.**

**“By the way, you are looking stunning tonight” I said “thanks to all the beauty products you use”**

**“Just drive okay. You don’t want me to jump out of the car right” she replied.**

**“Of course not. I don’t want huge pits on the road.”**

**Now, let me tell you one thing. Directly or indirectly, joking or serious, never, I repeat never, call a girl fat.**

**“Excuse me? Are you calling me fat?” her tone was a bit angry.**

**I immediately realized my mistake. I couldn’t let this ruin this evening. I swiftly changed the topic. “You know how you are looking today in this dress. Just like angles have sent a diamond from heavens in black silk cover.” I know I exaggerated at that**



point but the blush on her face told me that it worked.

“How unromantic you are!!” she said suddenly with bit of excitement.

“What happened?” I didn’t have any idea of what have I done.

“The weather outside is so romantic, there is a girl with you on the front seat of your car and you have locked all the windows. How can you call yourself romantic?”

She turned off the AC and pulled the windows down. She was right. After a long hot day, the weather was really cool. Felt like it was raining nearby and I could smell the soil after first rain. She was enjoying the weather and I was enjoying looking at her.

After a long drive of one hour, we finally reached there. It was a secluded place. Far from the rush and the concrete jungle, this place was surrounded

by trees. Opposite to the city, when you come here, you never feel that you are in rush. You can spend hours here just enjoying the ambience.

You can't say that the place was isolated from the city life as you could see a que of red tail lights at a faraway distance. It was just a place where you could spend some time when you don't want to be disturbed by anything.

When you enter the door, it feels like you are going through a portal that takes you back in time of the decade of 60s and 70s. Let me tell you about the music they played. The music was like the one you want to listen when you want hug you partner and just be that way for ours. The tables and chairs had an antique look to make you feel like a maharaja or a maharani. The entire hotel was themed as a place. I am sure that the owner of this restaurant was an art lover. The walls were decorated with the copies of works by some great artists like Pablo Picasso. I knew they were fakes as there was a Mona Lisa also on one of the walls.

**The best thing about the restaurant was that the ventilation was done in such a way that it hardly needed any air conditioning. Of course the greenery played its own role.**

**Shikha was a girl who noted even the minor details. Just like a child, she was totally indulged in the ambience. I could see that look of amazement on her face. I just wanted to capture that moment in my phone and take it with me forever. But I didn't. Why? Because I was busy in capturing that moment in my mind.**

**When we arrived at our table, she complimented me.**

**“Nice Choice Sahil!! I never knew such a secluded place could exist in Delhi NCR”**

**“Well, I must say, if you are here with me, then it definitely means you are special for me. This not my usual hangout place.” I just wanted to convey how special she was for me. “This, doesn't even starts describing what I have up my sleeves for you tonight.”**

## *Sweet Nothings*

**It was raining already. The air bringing the smell of soil along with the sound of the raindrops were creating an illusion of nature creating an opera for us tonight.**

**I was here after five years and in these five years, not even a single thing was changed. The food was as delicious as it was five years ago. Today we both had all the time to talk and tease so today we didn't considered time as a constraint. By the time we had a glance at our watches; it was already half past midnight.**

**I guess we should leave now.**

**“Who's stopping you?” She didn't want to go. “You can go. I am gonna stay.”**

**That night, I couldn't disobey any of her wishes. I again sat in front of her. I don't know it was the weather, her beauty or my long thirst of love, but tonight I was feeling a long lost magic in me after a long long time. We didn't do much. We just kept looking at each other. I can't say about her, but for me, I couldn't have enough of her sight. Finally,**

after another hour spent in that magical ambience, we finally were ready to leave.

As I turned towards the exit, she tapped on my shoulder. I turned back and said “See, I can’t stay here for more. Let’s don’t ruin the magic of this place.”

“No, No. I was just saying.....” She looked a bit tense. “If you don’t mind, I would like to pull out this pencil. I made this bun a bit tight for tonight and now it’s hurting.”

I leaned forward a little, held her with shoulders, looked into her eyes and said in same husky voice “if something hurts you, then I hate it and if something hurts you because of me, then I hate myself so.....” and I tried to pull out that pencil out of her bun. But the bun was held really very tight.

“No No. It’s not that easy. Give me two minutes.” And she proceeded to washroom.

In such a situation, you start keeping account of every damn second. She came after exact seven

## *Sweet Nothings*

minutes and thirty six seconds. Longest I ever waited for someone.

Now she was looking like Aphrodite. Smoked kajal around her eyes, untied hair. Felt like I was getting high without any drink.

Drizzling had stopped by now. We walked through the garden that was between the parking and the restaurant. I think I was getting nervous talking to her for the first time since we met. We just had some little chit chat and we reached our car.

\*\*\*\*\*

She fell asleep as soon as the car moved. You know when people used to tell me that a women looks the most beautiful when she is asleep, I used to make fun of it by saying that of course she will look as they are the rarest moments when you can find a women quite. But tonight, I realised that this was true. She was looking really an angel. She had the innocence of a child on her face when she was asleep.

After around thirty five minutes we reached the DND flyway and she woke up.

“Where are we?” the first question she asked.

“Relax, we’ll be home in next 20 minutes” I assured her.

May be god was not satisfied with my overconfidence. As soon as I assured her, the car lost its balance. Somehow I was able to manage it. I stopped the car on the road side. It was a flat tire. Everything was going just perfect but as they say ‘if everything is going perfect, beware, there is a storm around the corner.’ This was that storm. I started cursing Imtiyaaz. I opened the trunk of the car and took the stepony out. By now, she was also out of the car. I insisted Shikha to get back in to the car as it’s not safe there but as usual, she denied.

“If you are with me, I don’t need to worry about safety”

She was showing me light through her phone’s torch and I was changing the wheel. As if this was not enough, it started raining again. Even now, my

every attempt of sending her back into the car went futile. She stayed there with me. I had a mixed feeling of anger as well as admiration. This care she showed towards me was just adorable.

Somehow, I was able to get the car running again. By now, we both were wet in rain. We got back into the car. I started driving again. Say it a coincidence, that the FM station was playing an old song of Kishore Kumar “Ek Ladki Bheegi Bhagi Si” which means a girl all wet in rain, met a stranger. Very soon we were entering her society.

When we reached her building, I just realized that this wonderful night has come to its end.

It is a human tendency that when we plan something beautiful and magical in our mind, we never plan its ending. Because we don't want it to end. Ever. That's what this was that right now I was feeling. I never thought about this point of night when we both had to say goodbye to each other.



**We both got outside the car. Her hair was still wet. But they added to her sensual beauty at that point of time.**

**“So? This is it. It’s the end of our date” I said.**

**“I guess so” She had a very brief reply.**

**“Okay Then! Good Bye” Is said and as I said that phrase, each and every word of that phrase was screaming secretly “I wanna Kiss You.....I wanna Kiss You.....”**

**“By the way sahil, I must say, this was the best date I ever had in my life”**

**“yeah yeah, after all, you don’t get to change a flat tire on every date”**

**“No, Seriously! It was the best evening I have ever spent with someone other than myself. Thanks for giving me such a beautiful pearl of memory” while saying this she moved forward and hugged me tightly and then gave me a kiss on cheeks.**

**Well I was not expecting that hence I didn’t know how to react. When you don’t know how to react**

## *Sweet Nothings*

then no reaction is the best reaction. And that's what I did. Actually, it took a bit of moments for me to digest what happened to me in last 15 seconds. This was the first intimate contact between her and me.

Then she proceeded towards the gate of her building and I kept looking at her until she was completely invisible from me.

I sat in the car and then I realised something.

“Imtiyaz is gonna kill me!” I was looking at the wet seats of the car.

*Sweet Nothings*

**Six**

**Who Are You to Put  
Limits to My Love?**

When I woke up the next morning, It was 10 'o clock already. I found a note on my side table. The note was from Imtiyaz which said "Bro, Going to Pune, Urgent Official work. Will be back by Wednesday. Take care. Will talk about your date then."

After reading that I tried to get up from the bed but couldn't. From last night's events, I think I caught cold and high fever. I called to the college to call in sick. Shikha, as she was in HR, picked up the phone.

"I won't be able to come to college today. I have high fever" I told her.

"Okay, now stop teasing me and tell me, are you in the cafeteria?"

"No really Shikha, I have really high fever. I can't even move out of bed."

"Are you really sick?" she asked.

"Yes" and then I coughed heavily.

**“Give your phone to Imtiyaaz. I will tell him what to give for remedy. I know you yourself won’t do anything. Lazy ass.” She sounded much worried.**

**“Imtiyaaz is out of town for some official work” I replied.**

**“So you are sick?”**

**“Yes”**

**“Alone?”**

**“Yes”**

**“With No one to take care of you?”**

**“Yes”**

**“Okay, then listen to me carefully”**

**And then she gave a huge list of instructions of dos and don’ts. And then she hung up.**

**\*\*\*\*\***

**At around 1.00 PM, the doorbell rang. This was the time for maid to come. Somehow I managed to get out of the bed and opened the door.**

**Sometimes, people start hallucinating when in high fever. I also thought that I was hallucinating. It was Shikha on the door but I realised she was real as she had mixed reactions of anger and worry on her face. She just came in and starting investigating the apartment like an FBI agent.**

**“I knew you won’t do anything.” She said furiously.  
“That’s why I am here. To baby sit you.”**

**She came to me and touched my forehead. It was hot as hellfire. She dragged me to the bed.**

**“Let’s go to the hospital” I said.**

**“There is no need.” She Replied “I will take care of that. Hospital will give a load of medicines that are not needed. Taking unnecessary medication is also not good for health.”**

**Then she took out some paracetamol tablets and gave one to me.**

Then she went to the kitchen and started making something. I was lying on the bed wondering what she was doing in my apartment at the first place.

\*\*\*\*\*

It was six in the evening. I woke up on my bed. Thought it was dream. Then I saw her reading a magazine on the couch.

“I didn’t know you read Maxim” She said in a sarcastic tone.

“It’s Imtiyaaz’s” I replied her “It’s his hobby to watch those semi-nude models in the magazine.”

I was embarrassed a little. Maxim was not my kind of literature.

“Okay Okay. No need to get angry or feel embarrassed” She said with a wink. “I know what bachelor’s do. It will be our secret.”

And then she brought me some tea. The aroma of the tea was luring me to the cup. As I took the first sip, it felt like that my soul is trying to escape from every opening in my body.

**“Shikha, why are you trying to kill me?” I can imagine the look on my face after taking that sip.**

**Shikha broke in to laughter on hearing this from me. “What else do you expect?” “It is a well-known ayurvedic remedy my mom used to give me when I had fever.”**

**It was five past nine by now. We were having dinner together that she cooked.**

**“Sorry dear, you had to go through all this for me.”**

**“Mr. Sahil, if you want me to leave just say it directly but don’t utter such things.”**

**“No No Shikha, it is not that”**

**“Then keep your mouth shut and have your soup.”**

**Our dinner was done. Dishes were placed. I was also feeling very good now. Felt like, she was the only medicine I needed.**

**It was getting really late now and I was not in a position to escort her back to her apartment.**



**“Shikha, it’s getting late now. Won’t you have any problem getting back home.” I said to her.**

**“Who’s going home?” she replied in a manner that I couldn’t understand what to say.**

**“What do you mean you’re not going home?” I was a bit confused.**

**“I can’t leave you like this alone. What if the fever comes back?”**

**After that we had an argument about this for next 15 minutes and I lost in the end.**

**I lost because deep down in my heart, even I wanted her to stay.**

**She jumped on the couch and switched on the TV. No, we didn’t watch any romantic movie like titanic together. As soon as the TV screen lit up, half naked-half covered models appeared there.**

**Most of the time, Imtiyaz used to watch TV. I was not very fond of sitting in front of that idiot box unless there is an Urdu Program or any program related to literature or art is there.**

## *Sweet Nothings*

Upon seeing those models, she looked at me with a bit startled and bit questioning look.

I just closed my eyes and said with a sigh “Imtiyaaz”.

She changed the channel to cartoon network. That was unexpected. I was expecting some reality show or some music but cartoon was out of mind.

We both watched cartoons for next three hours. Every time she laughed for coyote or the road runner, it took out the small girl inside her. Her every laughter was making me fall for her even more. I don't know when I fell asleep.

At around one in the night, I suddenly woke up. She was sitting beside the bed reading something.

“Didn't you sleep?” I asked.

“That would defeat the purpose of me being here. What if you need something?”

At that point, I just wanted to hold her and kiss her.

**“I am absolutely fine now. You got to sleep otherwise I will have to nurse you tomorrow.”**

**Now the problem was that me and Imtiyaaz used to share our bed and we didn't have any other mattress or bed.**

**“You can sleep here and I will sleep on the couch.” I got up from the bed.**

**“No, you can't sleep on the couch. You are saying that you are alright but you're not. We both can share this bed.”**

**“Will you be comfortable with that?” I was hesitant while asking. We have feeling for each other but till now we didn't reached that point where we could be comfortable share the same bed.**

**“Of course Sahil! Don't you remember what I told you the other day? I feel safest when I am in your company.?”**

**She took the blanket and lied down on the other side of the bed.**

**She was so tired that she fell asleep in no time. As far as I was concerned, the girl I loved was sleeping next to me on my bed, I think my sleep had left this galaxy and went to some other galaxy.**

**Before this night, I never noticed but milky light of the night bulb in my room was giving an illusion of moonlight. In that moonlight, her face was glowing like a diamond in a coal mine.**

**I couldn't resist myself from looking at her. I kept looking at her for I don't know how much time. It is said that human brain can sense even in sleep that someone is staring at you. She suddenly woke up and turned to me.**

**“What is it that's keeping you awake Sahil?”**

**“A thought!”**

**“Thought?”**

**“You know that when you have the most precious thing in the world. You become the happiest person on the planet. And then suddenly you start doubting your destiny. You start thinking that are**

you really worthy of it. And then a fear of losing it start residing in your mind.” my voice was midnight husky. “ That’s what I have all running in my mind right now.”

“Oh my god!” she said giggling “You really are an over-thinker as doubted.”

“Don’t ruin these moments with baseless and irrelevant thoughts Sahil.”

And suddenly she came closer to me and rested her on my chest and along with her hand. At that very moment, I lost all the worries. My mind was calm as it was never before. And I tried to embrace all the aroma of her body in me for eternity.

We spent the whole night just like that.

\*\*\*\*\*

The next morning, I was feeling a bit dizzy. I guess it was the after effect of the drugs that I took last night. Or maybe it was due to the deprivation of sleep that I had to go through because I had the most beautiful dream last night with my open eyes.

Suddenly, I heard some sounds in the kitchen. Shikha was making breakfast. She brought the breakfast to the side table of the bed and then rested on the chair besides the bed. She looked a bit hurried.

“What Happened?” I asked as her hustle made me a bit worried.

“Unlike you, I am not on leave! I have to reach college.”

“But it’s 5:30 in the morning! Why so hurry?” I was surprised.

“Sahil! Just look at me! Do I look like I can go to college directly from here?” She stood up from the chair with both of her arms open in a Shah Rukh Khan pose.

Honestly speaking she was always beautiful for me but no she was not in a position to go to work directly from here.

“Oh!” I just replied to her question briefly.

*Sweet Nothings*

**We had breakfast together and then she stood up, hugged me and left.**

\*\*\*\*\*

**It was eleven in the morning. I was on my bed lost in the thoughts of what happened in that apartment since last morning till today morning.**

**Suddenly, the main door opened. Imtiyaz was there.**

**“Holy Shit!” I was shocked in surprise. “What are you doing here? I thought you were returning tomorrow.”**

**“Yeah I was! But then I got your message” as he said that, he came close to the bed. “I completed all my work a day before and left for here. After all, apart from me who will take care of you in thi.....” and he suddenly stopped.**

**His eyes widened. He swiftly reached for my pillow and started digging under it. After a couple of seconds what he had in his hand gave me a second**

shock of the morning. It was Shikha's hair pin. She might have left it in hurry.

“What's this?” He asked with a blank face.

Now, I have never lied to him. Actually I seldom lie to anyone. So I was straight forward.

“It's Shikha's” I Straightforwardly told him. “She was here yesterday to take care of me. She left this morning.”

“What?” his face appeared like he had uncovered the mystery of the murder of John F. Kennedy. By now I was standing out of my bed on the other side.

“You spent a whole day in this apartment with a woman!” as he said that he came closer to me.

“And you spent a whole night with her on this very bed! Our Bed!”

“Hey! I assure you nothing happened! We just slept together!” I said confusingly.

“Can you just listen to yourself! Your statement itself confirms that something happened in this



apartment behind my back.” By this time we were standing face to face. He was furious and I could see it in his eyes.

“So that’s what you do when I am not home” He again said furiously.

“Listen Imtiyaaz, you are getting me wrong! It was just tha.....”

In a blink of an eye, I found myself struggling for my breath. Imtiyaaz hugged me very tightly and screaming like a psycho.

“Wohoooooo! finally my boy became a man!!!” The fury in his voice suddenly turned in to a tsunami of joy coming out of his mouth. “I have been waiting for this day since so long. I am proud of you my friend. My brother.”

I never even doubted that Imtiyaaz had such a great talent of acting. If it was for me, I would have recommended him for the academy award right there at that very moment.

He left me and held my shoulders.

**“So How was the first time with her?”**

**“What rubbish Imtiyaaz? So cheap! I told you nothing happened!”**

**“What?” Now It was time for him to be shocked. “Okay, It will take a bit of time for me to digest the whole thing.” He was holding his head like he had five vodka shots in a row.**

**“You mean to say, that you both were in this apartment, alone, on that bed, the whole night, and nothing happened.”**

**“No!” my reply was ice cold.**

**“Not even a bit of cuddling?”**

**“No”**

**“Holy Shit”**

**He sounded like he lost a lotto draw with just one number.**

**“She was here just to take care of me.”**

**“Well! I am not shocked hearing that” he was calm and then next moment he screamed with my shoulders in his hands. “But why didn’t something happened?”**

**“Because I had high fever?” I had a sarcastic look on my face. “And what I and Shikha have is a lot more than sexual encounters and physical needs”**

**“yeah yeah yeah!” he murmured while making the gesture of blah blah blah with his hands.**

**“Well, Now I can go to my grave peacefully knowing that there is someone who can take care of you”**

**SEVEN**

**No Matter How Many  
Times You Fall In Love  
It Always Feels Like  
The First Time**

## *Sweet Nothings*

**When you are in love, you do many things that you never anticipated you would do. The first thing that you do is you stop thinking rationally. You always have a mixed feeling of happiness as well as fear in your mind and heart. Happiness, because you know that you have got the best one in this world and you can never find anyone else better than him or her. It is that feeling of happiness that gives you the courage of doing anything for your lover. You are ready to take on the world when it seems against your lover.**

**And at the same time inside that fearless warrior resides a fear. A fear of losing your lover. A fear of making them angry. Because, when you are in love, the only thing that your eyes want to see is your lover and the moments that you spend with them. It is not possible to imagine a world without them. And this mixed feeling of happiness and fear gives you a strange confidence that forces you to take the second step even before your first step has landed. And I was in an exactly same situation.**

**For me, casual relationship is big no. Either I am totally yours or I am not at all yours. It is hard for**

me to understand these casual relationships and one night stands.

It was five years back when I let someone in my life. I let her in my heart, in my mind and in my life to such a depth that one cannot penetrate further. And when that relationship fell apart, I decided that I am never going to let anyone in again in life.

Intentionally or unintentionally, I made my heart a fortress guarded by ignorance, indifference and sometimes anger.

Sometimes I wonder, for Shikha how I lowered all the guards and let her in. Although I knew that there is a possibility that this can turn my fort again into a haunted mansion.

It was Shikha who made me realise again that I was not some emotionless bastard. I needed love in my life. When I am with her I live a lifetime in every moment. The childish talks that would have made me angry and annoyed otherwise, when she says them, they sound like Beethoven's Symphonies.

She made me feel like home at work. Now I was more excited to go to the college rather than returning back home. Those late night talks and sometime just listening to each other just breathing nothing else. And it all made sense to me.

Is it really love? Really?

“Well, yes mister Sahil! You are in Louve Ma Boay!!”

I said to myself in a comic tone looking into the mirror.

\*\*\*\*\*

Even I can't remember how many times I had seen myself into the mirror that morning. Every time I wondered that is black shirt with the black Tux okay or should I go with the white one. After deciding on my important decision of the shirt under the tux, I reached out to the drawer and took out the French perfume that Imtiyaaz just bought. Once I pressed the plunger, I didn't let go. The whole room was now smelling like a perfume shop. It was enough to pull Imtiyaaz out of his room. By

now, I was done with the perfume and was putting it back where it was.

“That is injustice with the remaining perfume” Imtiyaz said from behind. “His highness should not show such cruelty. Ponder it over yourself as well.”

“You know what? Let’s go and sign your adoption papers. Then you will officially be eligible to spend all my money and also I won’t regret it.”

You remember the Joey-Chandler duo from the sitcom F.R.I.E.N.D.S? We were exactly the same and I feel no shame in saying that I was the Joey. He was in a huge IT firm with a fat salary package. Even his incentives were huge enough to make my Pay cheque feel sorry for me.

“Car is filled up! Right? ” I ignored all of his wording and just asked.

“Just don’t get the seats wet again” His tone had a serious warning.



Even Now I was more interested in the mirror than talking to him. This gave him a bit of curiosity mixed with annoyance.

“What’s that in the mirror that is not letting us have a peaceful talk?” He asked. “I didn’t see you that much nervous even on your first date.”

Now I was thinking shall I tell him why this night was so important. And then without giving it a second thought I pulled out a small box from the left pocket of the tux.

I couldn’t take the next step without letting Imtiyaz know. As far as family is concerned, he is all I got.

I opened the box and turned it towards him. First he got confused and then it appeared that there were springs in his feet. He jumped out of happiness.

“Are you going to propose Shikha?”

His voice was shivering with happiness and excitement but for me it sounded like violins in the air.

Suddenly, the excitement on his face turned in to something I would call concern.

“Don’t you think you’re going way to fast? You need to slowdown buddy!” He told holding both of my shoulders. “Proposing her in just three months of meeting is not something I would suggest.”

“Love my friend Puts your heart in such a situation that it starts giving you the signals about when it’s time to take the relationship to the next level. There is no early or late in love. It just happens automatically when the time is right. My heart can sense that.”

“Well as you wish! You can only tell what best for you.”

“Best of luck dude and now I have to look for another roommate. I can’t live alone after you leave.”

*Sweet Nothings*

**“Oh come on! It’s not like we are leaving you behind. After all we’ll need a butler.”**

**“Bastard!!”**

**Even this bastard from his mouth was coated in lots of love.**

**Now, it was time for me to leave. I was nervous. My heart was thumping so heavy that I could feel it without placing my hand on my chest.**

**Eight**

***Love Is The Only Force  
That Gives You The  
Power To Fight Storms***

## *Sweet Nothings*

From last three months, we all were busy in our works. The college was under pressure for the best performance in the university exams as it always does. All the employees of the college were dedicated to provide their 100% to make this possible. This busyness in work didn't let me and Shikha have some time to go out. Now when exams were over, we finally got time tonight to go out.

I was early this time. This time also, she took a little more than one hour to get ready. But this time, I enjoyed even that time standing outside her house, waiting for her, thinking of her and the evening that I was looking forward to. The way I planned the evening, it was going to be the most memorable evening of her life.

At last, when my wait came to end and she came. Suddenly everything around me and around her became faded. All I could see was her and all I could hear was the violins playing in the air. I became the rabbit who was stunned by a sharp light and was staring towards the source of light.

**“So? Where are we going?” She asked. But I was still staring her with admiration. She, then waived her hands in from of my eyes.**

**“Hello, Mr. Sahil, I am asking you?”**

**I just lifted my right hand a put my index finger on her lips.**

**“Shhhhh. Please don’t ruin this moment. Let me capture enough of you inside me.” Then I kept seeing her for next couple of minutes.**

**“Okay let’s go.” I said softly.**

**“Finally!” She lifted both her hands in the air. “By the way, what were looking at for so long on my face.”**

**“Actually, you have put so many layers of make-up on your face. I was just confirming that you are my Shikha or I am going with someone else.”**

**“Yeah yeah! Again Ghalib to joker! Very funny Sahil.”**

**“You put so much time to impress someone and that someone instead of applauding makes fun of you. Huh!”**

**And she turned her face towards the window. Now I knew she was really angry. I softly called her.**

**“Shikha!”**

**“Baby!”**

**“Now what Sahil?” She turned towards me and said angrily.**

**Honestly, when she was angry on me, she looked damn hot. It added to her beauty multiple times.**

**“That’s what I wanted!”**

**“What?”**

**“Well, do you know that you look a 100 times more beautiful when you are angry?” I said “It’s like a shapeless gold chunk is heated in fire and becoming a marvellous jewellery.”**

**Now she smiled a little. “You know what Sahil? Just because you know how to calm me down, you need**

not to make me angry every time we have talk.” She had expression mixed with anger and love.

“Now tell me where are we going or I will again stop talking”

“Calm down girl! It’s a surprise. Rest assured, tonight I will give you the most precious gem to fit in your bouquet of memories. ”

\*\*\*\*\*

‘The Solitude’ is a secluded and serene restaurant on the Delhi-Hapur highway on the bank of stream coming out of Ganga. This place was especially designed and equipped for couples who wanted to add some extra romanticism to their night. Although the place had a waiting period for at least 3 month but I had a friend employed in that restaurant and this was the time he repaid his friendship.

The USP of that restaurant was its dining hall. There was an artificial lake inside the restaurant lit by dim orange lights. With those lights, the management was able to bring the majestic sunset



down to the lake. This made this place a dream place for those who wanted to give their lover a memorable evening.

Around that lake, there was an arrangement of 20 tables only. These tables cater only couples. Above those twenty couples, is a glass roof so thin and transparent that it hardly feels there. The dining hall had three sided glass walls that gave us a complete view of the garden outside which was lit with small yet beautiful lights.

Our table had a small bulb in shape of a candle which gave enough light which allowed us to see each other. When we got to our table, I realised that this place was actually designed for proposals only. The place provided a perfect ambience and all the arrangements that assured that every proposal made at that place have a 'YES' in their reply.

As soon as we settled, the waiter came and stood beside our table. After taking a long look on the menu, I ordered the dinner along with a bottle of Semillon Sauvignon Blanc. This was the best French wine I knew and luckily they served that.

**Shikha gave a very strange look to me as she knew that I don't drink.**

**“For you” I assured learning the puzzled look on her face “I don't want you to change your preferences because of me”**

**“By the way! If I may, Why don't you drink?” She asked.**

**“Because my love” My voice became husky and heavy as I leaned towards her. “No liquor can give me the high that I get by just looking into your eyes”. By this time I was deeply looking into her eyes from a distance of around six inches. She blushed started looking down.**

**The golden reflection of the lake when blended with the blush on her face made her look like an angel shining like 24 carat gold.**

**She liked the food as well as the place.**

**Every ten seconds, my hand automatically reached the right pocket of my trousers to check the ring. Now, I felt the time was perfect to take the ring out.**

**I reached for the ring and suddenly she said “Sahil, I wanted to tell you something very Important. I have been dying to share it with someone and I want you to be the first one to know about this”**

**Till now, the ring was inside my pocket. “Yeah Yeah! Go ahead. I am all ears.”**

**“I told you na that I have applied for Post Doctrate in many universities?” She had excitement in her tone.**

**“Yes you did.”**

**“Well, Yesterday, I got the letter of acceptance from Ludwig Maximillian University of Munich. I am going to Germany.” Her entire face was covered with same excitement that was wrapped in her voice as well as tone.**

**At that very moment, I couldn’t understand how should I react.**

**Have you ever felt like you are lying on your bed and somebody is trying to stab you with a knife and you are not able to walk, run or even scream about**

it? Or you are drowning in deep water but your hand are tied and you can't do anything?

Well, at that moment I was feeling the same. I wanted to scream but couldn't.

“Aren't you Happy Sahil?”

“What?” I somehow recollected myself “If you get closer to your success, no one can get happier than me my love.”

Then she started talking about all the formalities and work to be done before she left. But now my complete focus was on her finger where, by now, there should be ring and that ring in the box in my pocket.

And then the waiter came with her favourite chocolate lava cake with written on it “*Thank you Shikha For Choosing Me For Life*” and started waiting for my signal. I made an eye contact with the waiter and instructed him to turn around. Luckily he was at her backside and she didn't see him.

*Sweet Nothings*

**Suddenly, the lights were further dimmed. The lake was covered with electronic floor which further turned into a dance floor. A romantic melody was playing. I extended my hand to her and asked “May I have this dance?”**

**With a pleasantly surprised look on her face she also responded with the same gesture. While we were dancing, I was feeling closer to her. She rested her face on my chest and murmured “I going to miss you Sahil.”**

**“Me too Love”**

\*\*\*\*\*

*Sweet Nothings*

**Nine**

**Towns Are Most Silent  
After A Huge Storm**

That night I didn't go home. After dropping her at her apartment, I came to Nizamuddin railway station. There is a tea stall just outside the station. This was the place where I came when no place on earth could give me peace. Even Imtiyaz didn't know about this place. I came here after eight long years. But nothing was changed. Same old chacha and his chhotu serving to every wrecked soul that was seeking solitude at that small tea stall. "Chacha, Ek Chai" I told chacha. That night I drank around 15 cups of tea one after another. But this time, even this place failed to provide me what I was seeking. peace.

Next morning I returned home at around 10. Imtiyaz has left for the office. May be he booked Uber as I took his car.

I went to my room, put the light off and sat there the whole day. I didn't realise that I was sitting in the same position that even Imtiyaz was home.

"Sahil! Are you home?" he enquired the first as soon as he entered the apartment.

"I am here!" I shouted.

**“What I was saying is” He starting talking from outside “that when you and Shikha will move in here, then there will be a privacy issue because of me. So I was thinking that we should rent the opposite flat as well. This way we will be together without ruining your privacy. What do you say?”**

**“wait a minute! Why are you sitting in dark? What’s the matter?”**

**This was special about him. No matter I tell him or not, if there is something wrong with him, he will sense it.**

**I didn’t feel like responding so he expressed his presumption.**

**“Did she say no?”**

**“No, I didn’t propose!”**

**“What!!! Why?” he was almost shouting.**

**“Shikha has yet to achieve a lot in her life. I don’t want her to stop her voyage to success and bury her ambitions just because I want her in my life desperately.”**



**“I don’t understand!!” He was getting irritated with every word that came out of my mouth.**

**“She is going to Munich for her Post Doctorate”**

**“What? Wait a minute” He was little confused “She is not just Shikha, She is Dr. Shikha. She completed her PHD and that also in such a young age. What else she wants to become.”**

**“Why Germany? There are many great universities here in India”**

**“She will get a scholarship there. And the money is good. Way better than what she is making here. Additionally, that is one of the best universities in the world.”**

**“Okay! I agree that she is going but you should have told her what you feel about her.”**

**“Bro! right now she is in a state of delusion. She won’t be able to make the right decision. If I confess my proposal to her and even if she stays, I don’t want her to regret this decision later in life.”**

**“Oh come on! Just propose her and let her go for studies. When she returns, you two get married. Simple!”**

**“It’s not that simple” I defended. “Every relation has a different kind of expectations and believe me, the long distance relationship is not that much easy as it seems in movies.”**

**“BC! This is the problem with you. You always fall for girls who have their ambitions, and then you are the victimized by those ambitions. Why can’t you love a girl who has failed her senior secondary exams and is desperately looking for an averagely plump yet handsome boy.”**

**I broke into laughter with his last sentence. But yes, he was right. I always fell for the girls who were ambitious. I admire the strength of women who fight against the odds and make a place for them in the society.**

**By Now Imtiyaaz was way too irritated and frustrated and he left the room. I knew I was walking the right path.**

*Sweet Nothings*

# Ten

**Time flies and especially when you don't want it to be fast. It flies. Days and weeks passed so fast and finally that day also came when Shikha had to leave. By now, Imtiyaz had tried to convince me a million times that I should propose her but all he got every time was defeat.**

**I reached Shikha's house early in the morning. All the packing was done a day prior to the departure. But still I made a check list so that she won't forget anything.**

**The love of my life was going away from me and I was letting her go. What else can I do? What else can anyone do? Shall I tell her all that I wanted to and put her in a state of dilemma? What sort of a knight in shining armour I would be if I become the person who jeopardized his love's whole life. I knew that even right now, if I wanted her to stay, she will but that will, instead of strengthening our bond of love, put it in jeopardy. I didn't want her to regret staying with me after 10 years. Also, I knew she was not going to Germany forever. She will return after**

**three years and I will be here waiting for her and then I will embrace her completely in my life and never let her go.**

**I was devastated from inside but I was trying my level best to look normal. One thing I was avoiding was eye contact with Shikha. I knew If she looked into my eyes, she will know and that's the last thing I wanted to happen. Although I was checking all the things she had to take with her but my focus was completely on her. She was saying nothing, doing nothing. She just kept staring at me like a crazy girl.**

**\*\*\*\*\***

**Uber was on time. We booked it for an earlier time as I knew how the traffic in Delhi on the way to the airport was.**

**In the cab, she was holding my hand very tightly. I could hear her hands saying to me “I will never let you go away from me.” Her head was resting on my shoulder.**

Getting admission in the Ludwig University was her biggest dream taking shape but then, she was not looking happy like a person who was going to live his or her dream. Today, she was looking entirely different from what she looked until yesterday. There was no Kajal. Hair was left untied.

“What happened Shikha? No Bun? No Pencil?”

“Nothing happened. I just didn’t feel like doing them.” Her voice was so cold.

As soon as I wanted to say something, my phone rang. It was Imtiyaaz on the other side.

“I have reached the airport.” He informed. “when are you guys reaching?”

“What in the world are you doing on the airport?”

“I was wondering if they let me fly their plane. What do say, shall I try?” He said in a sarcastic way. “To see off Shikha you moron!!”

“Ha ha, We’ll just be there.”

**I felt a bit relaxed knowing that Imtiyaaz was there. I thought it was impossible for me to return back home after seeing off Shikha.**

**\*\*\*\*\***

**“Okay, So you are Imtiyaaz! Well Sahil talks a lot about you.”**

**“And you are Shikha! In last three months, I have heard only about you. From the same source of course.”**

**“I am happy that you came.”**

**“Well, I had to come. you are ultra-special for me Shikha!”**

**“What do you mean ultra-special for you?” She had a confused expression on her face.**

**“See Sahil is the most special person for me. And you are the most special person for Sahil so you automatically become ultra-special for me.”**

**I know when a girl genuinely loves she, she will always want that not only you but all those matter**

to you also give her respect and affection and at that moment she realized that how much special she was for me.

Right now, that very moment, I wanted to die. The two most important people of my life were with me. I wanted to die with that moment in my eyes, my heart, my soul. I wanted time to freeze right there.

“I’ll just complete all the formalities.” Shikha said.

As Shikha moved a bit far, I said to Imtiyaz “Thanks yaar. Shikha is so happy.”

“I am not here for her. I am here for you.” He reached to his pockets. “See! I brought the ring also, in case you have last minutes mood swings.”

“I told you dude, I am not gonna do this. She is going and when she returns, I will have all the time.”

“What if she found someone else there?”

Although this was the first time, that he told me this directly, my heart sunk to the bottom. This was a fear that I had locked in my heart’s deepest spots.



**“Look bro, I trust my love more than anything. I know that I have built a fortress in her heart that cannot be conquered. And if it happens, then I would think that it was my love that was weak that’s why she needed the presence of someone else in her life. In both the case, a ring is not required.”**

**Although he didn’t like my answer but he didn’t have any further argument.**

**Then I diverted the talk towards some more casual thinks.**

**“So? How was the merger you were working on?”**

**Fifteen minutes passed. Shikha returned after completing all her formalities. And now she had her hair tied in a bun with a pink pencil in it. Imtiyaz was an intelligent man. He pretended that he had to make a call and left two of us.**

**As soon as he left, Shikha spoke.**

**“I am going Sahil! I am going! I don’t want to go. Please stop me Sahil. Please stop me!” and she started crying like a small baby.**

I was avoiding eye contact with her all morning but now it was not possible. I held her in my arms and started patting her back.

“What are you saying babe? You have worked so hard to get here. Now you can’t give up. I cannot let this happen to you. Moreover, I can’t let this happen to our love. If my love drags you back from your success then this will be biggest insult of my love and I don’t want that. I am sure you also don’t want that. This is matter of three years. With you in my eyes, my heart, my soul, three years would be nothing and when you will return, you will find me right here, with a huge bouquet of white lilies and your favourite dark chocolates.”

Meanwhile, Imtiyaaz was waving ring in the air but I disagreed. I turned around in anger.

“Babe! But there will be a problem when you will return. With all that English food, you will be a fatty in three years. I will have to hire a truck to take you home.”

Now she smiles a little and starting punching my chest.

**“Hello mister, I am not fat and I will never get fat. But you are fat. You are just happy that I am going. Now you can openly flirt with Sonia”**

**Sonia was one of our colleagues who made Shikha a bit jealous when I talked to her.**

**I held her face in my hands and assured her “It will take millions of Sonias to turn in to a single Shikha. Even millions of glass pieces together cannot compete with a diamond.”**

**She smiled and said “I love you Sahil!”**

**“I love you more love!”**

**The final call from the airlines was made. She held her trolley bag and proceeded towards the security check. Suddenly, I called her “Shikha!”**

**She turned “what?”**

**“I forgot something”**

**“What is it?”**


**I got closer to her, and pulled the pencil out of her bun. Her hair, those black magicians were free**

again kissing her cheeks and resting on her shoulders.

I was holding that pencil, that *GULABI PENCIL* in my hand above my head as a trophy. I was walking backwards facing her. I had a calm smile on my face. As she was getting far the smile on my face was also getting faded. When she was just about to enter the gates, she turned for the last time and waved bye. I returned the gesture. She was gone now.

Imtiyaz put his hand on the back of my shoulder. I just turned around, hugged him and started crying like a baby.

\*\*\*\*\*



Sahil, an average boy from the city of Mujaffarnagar, is a teacher in an engineering college. He is a person who has given up on love in his life and leads a disciplined life. On the other hand, Shikha is a lively girl from a small town of Himachal Pradesh who is in the HR department of the same college. She is a kind of person who can't be charmed in an ease. This story is about how life surprises Sahil by bringing Shikha in his life. Despite of all the fences and fortresses he had built around his heart, how Shikha is able to breach that line of defence and takes a hold of his heart.