

CHANGING SEASONS

*"Seasons change, friends move away, and life goes on from day to day.
Flowers fade and streams go dry and many times we wonder why.
Yet we can always be assured because God tells us in His Word,
That unlike changes in the weather, love goes on and last Forever!!..."*

Part-1

I landed at the Philadelphia International Airport at 4pm. It's my first visit to the United States. I finished my immigration formalities, collected my baggage and was waiting for my colleagues to pick me up from the airport.

The airport looked very busy. Some people were rushing to the gates to catch the flights, some had come for send off, there were some couples constantly holding hands and whispering in each other's ears. The kids were looking very cute with very fair complexion, blond hair and red cheeks.

I was watching everyone when my eyes suddenly fell on one particular guy. I could easily make out he was a desi from his looks. He was wearing a faded blue Jean and a white sweat shirt. He was tall with wheatish complexion and toned body. His eyes were so attractive and he had a constant smile on his face .He was busy talking to someone on his mobile.

"Ria"- I was interrupted when someone called out my name.

A girl and a guy were standing with a friendly smile on their faces.

"Yes." I said.

"I am Meghna and this is Karthick.We have come to pick you up."

"Hi" – I smiled at them.

"Welcome to the US" – Said Karthick

They helped me with my baggage and we came out of the airport to the parking lot. We pushed two suitcases in the trunk and I had the hand luggage with me at the back seat. Meghna was sitting in the front and Karthick drove the car.

"So, how was the journey Ria?"

"It was good Meghna. Just that the connecting flight from Frankfurt was delayed by an hour. But I whiled away time roaming inside the airport."

"Oh, If it was Meghna she would have utilized that time in Shopping. You know Ria ,She is a shopping freak" –Karthick teased her.

"Oh! you know what ?even I did a little shopping"

"That's great Ria. See Karthick, we girls latest spend time in shopping. Not like you guys. watching girls all the time"

"Alright ladies. Everyone wants to do what amuses them"

We spoke for some more time and Meghna got a call. She got busy talking and Karthick was concentrating on driving. I moved myself towards the window and started looking outside.

The Autumn season had just started and It was very beautiful to look at the trees with different colors. *Autumn is a second spring where every leaf is a flower.* I have heard this many times but it was truly a wonderful experience to see and feel the autumn season. The road looked very clean. It looked so colorful as though the whole place was painted with random colors.

In about an hour the car entered into the " The Lakes" community in Allentown,PA. We parked the car in front of apartment 'A-9'.We moved the luggages in and Meghna showed the room where I was going to stay.

The apartment looked very beautiful with a big hall and two bedrooms, big kitchen and a bath room. There was a balcony at the end of the hall. I could see lots of beautiful trees around. I loved the place!

"Alright Ria, take rest. See you both at office " – Karthick left the place.

I had dinner with Meghna and came to my room. My first day in US! I missed home terribly. I was very tired because of the long journey and slept off soon.

I was standing near a beautiful stream with trees on either side. The leaves in the trees were of different colors from light yellow to bright orange and red. The water in the stream was reflecting the colors from the trees. Some leaves were falling into stream slowly.

'Ria.. I had been waiting for you for so long..I missed you a lot'...He came near me, looked into my eyes .Hugged me softly and whispered in my ears

"I love you".

The alarm rang!! I woke up with a jerk and looked at the time. It was 6 am!

Huh! ! It was a dream! And that guy..I have seen him somewhere ,,,Tall,Blue jean and white shirt..! It just struck me..Is it not the same guy I met at the airport ??

"Good morning Ria,hope you had a good sleep" – Meghna asked me.

"Yes Meghna.."

'Just that I am still not out of the dream' I said to myslef.

It was 3 days since I joined the new Project. Our office was 2 miles away from where we lived. Karthick was staying in an apartment nearby and he picked us up every day.

Meghna had a meeting that day and she left to office early.I was getting ready when I heard the door bell ring.

‘Must be Karthick ‘ – I thought and opened the door. I was surprised to see the person standing at the door. It was Him.! The one I met at the airport...!!

“Hi,I am Arjun”- He smiled at me.

Part-2

‘Arjun’ – The name suited him so much,I thought.

“Ria,right?” – He asked.

“ye..yes..” – I told him.

“Karthick is not well and is not going to work today. He had send me to pick you and Meghna. I called up Meghna and she said she has already left. So,I am here to take you with me”

I got into the car and sat next to him.

“Wear your seat belts Ria, you can’t trust my driving!” – He said and started the car.

He was wearing a formal light blue stripped shirt and grey pants. He had folded the sleeves till his fore arms. I had a close look at his face. He was definitely handsome. Deep eyes ,Sharp nose and clean shaved look.

“Where are you from Ria?” – He asked me.

“Banglore”

“oh good! Banglore is a nice place.I had been there a couple of times”

“Where are you from Arjun?”

“Pune”

We had a brief conversation until we reached office.

“Thanks Arjun.”

“Welcome Ria.Nice meeting you..have a good day!”- He said with a sweet smile.

I noticed for the first time that he gets a cute dimple in left cheek when he smiled!!

“You have a good day too Arjun”

The day started well and I was kind of excited the whole day.I could not stop thinking about Arjun.He was very simple and sweet.Very soft spoken and gentle.And that smile! Any girl would fall for it!!

“Hey Ria..! Meeting just got over. let’s go for coffee”

“Sure Meghna.”

As we entered the cafeteria, I saw Arjun sitting with a client and was explaining something from his laptop. His gestures were so professional and the client looked very impressed with him.

“Arjun is always busy, all the clients like him so much” – Said Meghna.

“hmm. He is so nice and friendly, he dropped me at work today.”

“Ya he called me. Arjun is Karthick’s room mate.Karthick had send him to pick us up”

As we were talking,Arjun closed his lap top,shook hands with the client. He saw us from a distance and came towards us.

“Hi Meghna,Hi Ria”

“Hi” – We said together.

“What Arjun, Amy Watson looks so impressed?”

“Hm.Its a new proposal.Was just giving her the high level estimates”

“ She would definitely not deny any of your prosposals.More than the proposal she looked so impressed on you”

He just smiled at her.

“Meghna, did Karthick tell you about the week end plan”

“Ya .The long drive to see fall colors.”

“Yes. Call up Karthcik and confirm the plan.”

“Sure Arjun.”

“And Ria is joining us right?” He looked at me.

“I ..” before I could complete Meghna interrupted “Yes. She will come with us.”

“That’s great. Ok got to go now. I have a 11 o clock with Lindsay”

“Oh..Please hurry up. She just can’t wait to see you” Meghna made fun of him.

He gave the same sweet smile again and left the place. I was looking at him. How can a guy be so gentle and soft spoken? No wonder everyone liked him. I could sense that something was attracting me towards him!!

Part-3

The drive through the mountains was very pleasant. The car stopped and we all got down. I was stunned to see the place.

The whole place was surrounded by colorful trees. There were some leaves on the ground and it look like a flower bed. There was a stream running between the mountains. The water was so clear and fresh. The leaves in the trees were of different colors from light yellow to bright orange and red. The water in the stream was reflecting the colors from the trees. Some leaves were falling into stream slowly!

It looked like I have already seen this place. It then striked me that it was similar to the one I saw in the dream!!

The scenes in the dream just crossed my thoughts. I smiled to myslef.

I saw Karthick and Meghna taking pictures of each other.

“Ria,come lets take some pictures?” – Meghna called me

I took few pictures with Meghna and Karthick. Arjun was not seen anywhere near.

“Megh,Where is Arjun?”

“He must be somewhere taking pictures with his camera. He is crazy about photography”

I looked around and saw Arjun busy taking pictures with his SLR camera. I went near him.

“hey Ria,doesn’t this place look lovely?” – he asked as he clicked a couple of pictures.

“Yes..it is”

“Hey... look at those birds..just wait for a second .Let me take a closer shot”

He came back in a minute, “Yes.lam done”

“Can I see the pictures Arjun?”

“Oh Sure” – he came near me and showed the pictures.

They looked as if taken by a professional photographer. I felt the fall colors looked more beautiful in the pictures than in reality!

“They are too good Arjun”

“Thanks”..

“Hey guys,we were searching for you” – Meghna and Karthick came towards us.

"This place looks awesome, lets take some pictures." - Said karthick.

We reached home by late evening. Meghna was transferring the pictures to her laptop. All the pictures were good.

"Ria, look at this. You look very pretty in this pic!"

Me and Arjun were standing next to each other. I did not know if I looked pretty, But Arjun was looking very smart, with his cute dimple smile!

Days moved on. The fall season was over and winter had started. The trees looked bare without leaves and the weather was too cold to handle. This was my first winter and was eagerly waiting for the snow!

"Ria, we have a new year celebration at Karthick's Apartment" – Said Meghna
"Oh that's nice!"

"Let's wear something ethnic"

"Hm.ok"

The Club house of the apartment had a festive look. There were many people from our office. Most of them were dressed in traditional outfits. I was wearing a sky blue with silver work designer saree. Wore matching earrings and bangles. Had applied kajal to highlight my eyes and some lip gloss to save my lips from drying. I had left my hair untied.

"You look very pretty in Saree Ria," – Whispered Meghna.

"Thanks Megh and you look pretty too " – Meghna was looking great in her green and yellow salwar.

My eyes were looking for Arjun. He was not around.

"Hey Ria" – I was startled by the voice behind me. I turned around and saw Arjun smiling at me.

"You look so beautiful"

"Thanks Arjun"

Arjun was wearing a blue jeans and Maroon kurtha. He was looking handsome as always!

There were various games organized at the Party. One of the games was "Find the partner". The game organizer announced:

"Hello everyone, these two jars contain pieces of paper that will have names of famous people or characters. The Jar on the right is for the girls and the one on the left is for the guys. Each one should pick one slip. And here is how the game goes :

I will call one from the Guy's side and ask him to read out the character from his paper. Once he reads out, the girl who has the character's Partner Should come before us and both will act as those characters.

For example, If the guy has “Mickey Mouse”, the girl who has got “Minnie Mouse” should come forward and both will do a role play..! Hope you all got it!!

The crowd cheered...and everyone picked up the paper.

I opened and looked at mine and was excited to see the character!

I asked Meghna what she has got. She showed me her paper and we both had a good laugh.

The game started. Kishore came forward and he called out his character- “Popeye – the sailor”

Kamna announced she was ‘ Olive’...they both enacted a funny role play...and the crowd cheered them.

Next was Karthick, He was -“ Bill Clinton”

I beckoned at Meghna. she couldn’t control her laugh...she raised her hand and said.. “ Monica”.

There was a loud applause which was interrupted by Seema.

she said “Guys I am Hillary”

The fun was doubled. The trio did a hilarious role play and everyone burst into laughter.

I was enjoying the game but couldn’t control myself looking by Arjun’s side. He was talking to a kid sitting next to him and was patiently answering all his questions. It was very sweet to watch!

It was his turn then. He came forward and read out softly from the paper with a sweet smile “ Romeo”...

My heart slipped a beat. I checked my paper again .

“JULIET”

The crowd shouted “Arjun is our Romeo..”

“Where is my Juliet?” – Arjun looked around and asked. I stood up hesitantly.

” Ooooooooo...its Ria...” – Everyone shouted.

We both were standing looking at each other.

“Hey Romeo ...why do you stand like that..do something!!” – His friends started teasing him.

Arjun looked at me and smiled. And I smiled back.

He came near me took my hands in his and said softly :

"The moment I saw you.... I fell in love
And you smiled,,,coz u knew!"

Every one cheered and applauded. I did not know what to say. I was just standing there dumbstruck!

Part-4

Work was hectic after the long week end. Had continuous meetings and offshore calls till 11 am. I called up Meghna and asked her to wait at the cafeteria.

Karthick and Arjun were already there.

"Hey Arjun, heard your release is confirmed" – Meghna asked him.

"Oh yes Meghna, Mahesh told me this morning"

"That's Nice. You have been asking for release for long time."

"Ya..waiting to go home"

"When are you leaving?"

"Probably this week end" – He looked at me when he said this.

I was trying hard not to show my disappointment.

"Ok..guys,,have a call now..got to go" – I said and left the place.

I couldn't concentrate on my work. I dint know what me feel so disappointed when I heard Arjun is going back to India. It's just few days since I met him and I have hardly spoken to him. But I should definitely agree that he was there in my thoughts- almost all the time!! I am not a girl who believes in Love at First sight but what was that strange feeling I had when I met him at the airport? Why did my heart beat so fast when he held my hand????why should I ever feel like I am going to miss someone who was known was years??...

My thoughts were interrupted by the telephone. Extension 4319 I picked up at one ring...

"Hello"

"Hi Ria..It's me Arjun"

"Hi Arjun"...

"Were you expecting my call? you picked the phone at one ring??" he laughed.

"No. I was like.. about to make a call...and .."

"Oh ok. I was just kidding"

"Thats Ok.Tell me Arjun.."

"Ria..are u free this evening?"

"Yes.. "

"Well..then be ready by 5 pm sharp.I will pick you up from your place"

"Arjun..but..."

"No excuses.Be ready.see u at 5 pm ..bye"- He hung up.

I had no idea what he is up to. But I was kind of excited. *He is taking me out!!*

The ride was very good with soft romantic music. Arjun was very good at driving. we spoke about work,family and other general stuff. It was very apparent from his talks that he was very much attached to his family and loved his sister Anjali the most.

"My parents are planning for Anjali's marriage. They have already seen the groom, In fact I am going there to meet the guy "

"Oh that's nice..so once she is married it will be your turn.."..

"Hmm..I don't think thats so easy" He said in a serious tone.

"Why Arjun,,any problem?"

"Nothing Ria..was just telling it's hard to find good groom now a days"

But I somehow felt he was hiding something .He deviated from the topic.

"You Know Ria, The first time I saw you.. I was so amazed. You looked so pretty"

"Hmm.. Even I remember the first time I saw you"

"You mean in your apartment when I came to pick you up?"

"No. I have seen you twice before that"

"Twice?"- He asked in a surprised tone.

"Yes. First I saw you in the Philly airport when I landed in US. Karthick and Meghna had come to pick me."

"Oh..ya..I remember, Karthick said he is going to airport to pick up Meghna's roommate. I was there in the airport that day to send off my cousin"

"You were busy talking to someone on the mobile. That was the first time I saw you"

"Hmm..great t! so when was the second time?"

"Second time..." I paused..

"Tell me..."

I did not know what to say.I was silent.

Just then he got a call. He was talking for some time and the car stopped in front of a biggest shopping mall .We parked the car and got down.

"So..this is the place?"-I asked.

"Yes" he said.

"What are we going to do here?"

"What else..Shopping for India"

"Shopping??" I asked in little disappointed tone.

"Yes?were you expecting something else?" he asked with a naughty smile.

"No..nothing...lets go"...

We shopped various things like branded T-shirts , handbags,watches and Perfumes for Anjali. He asked me for my suggestions and I was more than happy to help him find the good ones.

"Its almost Over Ria.Just one special gift and I am done"

"Special Gift?"

"Yes..."

"Then ..it should definitely be for someone special to you"

"Hmm...Of course" – He looked into my eyes and smiled!

He chose a beautiful bracelet made of silver with pink crystals on it.

"Do you like it?" - He asked me.

"Hmm..very Pretty"

We stopped at a coffee shop. I was waiting near a window seat and was looking at the flurries. Arjun came with the coffee and sat opposite to me.

"It's too cold rite?" – He asked as he sipped the coffee.

"Hmm..yes..but its good to see the flurries"

He looked outside " Yes..it looks so good!"

"Hey Ria, forgot to ask you.."

"What?"

"You said you met me twice. When was the second time?."

"Oh that..."

"Yes tell me" - He was looking at my face curiously.

"In my dream" – I said slowly ,looking at the coffee.

"Dream! wow that's interesting. Then?"

"What then, you just asked me where I saw you and I told you.."

I turned my face and started looking outside through the window.

"I am asking you mam, you can admire the nature later. Now please tell me what happened in the dream"

"hmmm,I actually forgot. It was too vague you know"

"Oh it was vague but you could make out it was me. common don't bluff tell me the truth"

"---"

He shifted his place and sat next to me.

"I am not going to leave you until you tell me" – He said in a mild voice.

I had no option but to tell him.

"It was like ...I was standing near a stream surrounded by trees.The trees were all colorful. The place was so nice..."

"hmmm" – he listened patiently.

"Then...I heard someone talking to me..I turned to look and it was you"

"Is that it?"

I did not reply.

"what did I say?"-he turned my face towards him and asked softly.

"you said...hmm...that u were waiting for me for long time and you missed me..and.."

"and...??"

"---"

"And..what Ria?"

"and...hugged me softly and said 'I love you ' in my ears" ..My heart beats were racing so fast when I completed.

He was sitting silently staring at me.

"You should have told about this when we went to the see fall colors"...

"Why?"

"Hmm..you remember there was a stream similar to what you said,,,"

"ya..."

"I would have made your dream come true!"

I was startled! I looked at him without saying anything.

"Lets go" – he said with a naughty smile.

He dropped me at my apartment.

"Good night Ria.Sweet dreams! " – He smiled. I somehow felt his smile was very romantic.

"How was the Date young lady?"- Meghna asked during dinner.

"Date?"

"Hmm..what else you call it?"

"Common Meghna,its not like what you think..we just went for shopping"

"Oh,just shopping??.."she sounded disappointed.

"What else did you expect my friend?"

"I thought you would gone for a romantic candle light dinner and Arjun would have proposed you.."

"Are you crazy.?Its just a month since I met him"

"Oh ,,its not the time that matters dear,it's the feel..."

I thought Meghna was Correct . *Its not the time that matters it's the Feel...!!*

Part-5

I met Arjun daily at work and we spoke for some time. We exchanged our mobile numbers. I could somehow feel some kind of intimacy growing between us.

"Ria,Iam thinking of calling Arjun home for dinner tomorrow..what say?" – Asked Meghna.

"Dinner? why?"

"why? He is going to leave US in two days. Kind of a send off. Lets invite karthick also"

'Just 2 more days and Arjun will go to India.I will not see him again!!!'

"Ria..Iam asking you"

"oh..yes..sure..we can invite them".

It was 7pm.Arjun and Karthick arrived at our apartment. They had bought some sweets with them.The dinner was simple with some North & South Indian food .

All of us were having a good time .We played cards and were discussing various on topics like movies,hobbies etc.It was fun!

Meghna got a call from home so she went inside her room.Karthick was busy with the playstation.

"Ria..." Arjun called me. He was having my lap top and was looking at pictures taken during the fall trip.I went near him and he gestured me to sit..

"What" I asked as I sat beside him.

"Look at this picture.Don't we look great together"

I smiled and said "Yes".

We were looking at all the pictures and paused at the pictures where we were together. He moved a little toward me..We were sitting so close that I could smell his perfume!

"You are really pretty Ria.The guy who is going to marry you is very lucky."

"So is the girl who is going to marry you. You are so gentle and of course very handsome!"

He gave me a sweet smile and continued "Ria..can I ask you something?"

"Yes.."

"How do want your guy to be,,,?"

"means..I did not quite understand your question"

"ok..I know every girl will have expectations of how her man should be..so,do u have something like that on your mind?"

"hmmm..yes..."

"May I know it"

"well, to start with -The guy should be tall, should have sharp eyes and sweet smile"

"ok and Is dimple an additional qualification?"

"shhh..let me complete.."

"Yes mam.pls go Ahead!"

"He should be very caring,affectionate,understanding and have good sense of humour.."

"Oh my God! Is that it? Or you still have something to add"

"Hmm..just one important thing..he should be very romantic"

"hmm..romantic enough to hold your hands and propose you in the front of everyone?? " He looked into my eyes and asked.

I did not reply. There was silence for some time.

"So..what are your expectations Mr.Romeo?" I broke the silence.

"Well,,Mam..I don't have big list like you..More over God is been very kind enough that he has put all my expectations in a sweet small package and named it RIA "

I was tossing on my bed.I couldn't sleep. What did he really mean? Does he like me? Or this jus a prank....My mobile rang.I knew it was Arjun before even I picked the call.I looked at the mobile...it was him!!

"Hi Arjun"

"Hi Ria..did I disturb your sleep?"

"No..I mean..I haven't gone for sleep yet"

"I know you wouldn't have slept"

"-----"

"Are u there Ria?"

"yes.."

"I thought you will have lots to talk to me.."

"Yes..Arjun...but I donno where to start"

"Start from where we left.."

"Arjun..did u really meant what u said this evening?"

"Yes.."

"It's not even a month since we met, we hardly spoke to each other..."

" But I feel like I have known you for years."

"Do you like me Arjun?"-.

" Yes I do..." – He told in a assured tone.

"How about you Ria?"

"I have a strange feeling for you Arjun...but not sure what it is"

"From when?"

"From the day I met you. At first I was just attracted by your looks,after I got to know you ,that has increased or indeed increasing each day"

"-----"

"I donno how to explain Arjun, but I like talking to you, spending time with you. Your thoughts make me happy. I feel I am in a new world..very cheerful, excited, as though on cloud 9"

"Thanks Ria. This is what I wanted to hear..you know...even I have the same feeling since I met you!"

The conversation from there on was like a dream to me. I wanted to stick to that moment. Never wanting that to end. We spoke until dawn.

"Arjun, it's 6 o'clock"

"Oh yes sweetie..just forgot the time"

"Are you coming to office"

"Yes of course. today is my Last day at work!!"

"Don't remind me about that Arjun. I hate to see you leaving."

"Me too Ria. I had always wanted to go home but now I feel I should stay here for some more time"

"Can you cancel your trip?"

"No Ria. Everyting is finalized a month ago. Moreover Anjali's marriage has been fixed".

Part-6

I came home early from office the next day and helped Arjun in packing.

We were busy packing when Arjun's mobile rang. He looked at the mobile "Amy Watson" he said to me and picked up the call. He was on call for 10 minutes and came back for packing.

"Amy seems to be very fond of you Arjun" – I said .

"hmmm.yes Ria..she doesn't want me to go"

"Think she will miss you big time! I noticed at the Farewell today ...the way she hugged you"

"You saw that?"

"No one would have missed that romantic scene"

"oh...looks like you are jealous my dear.."

“oh me!No way!why should I be jealous?”

“Ya..thats correct.Why should you be ..?Amy just got to hug me once...but u are going to do it through out your life” he winked at me and gave the super romantic smile.

I couldn't stop blushing. He came near me and took my hands in his.

“Arjun..I feel like coming to India with you”

“I will be more than happy Ria...but how?”

“Hmmm...I donno but I am sure I can't stay long here without you”

“Ask for a release and come to India soon”

“Sure Arjun. But I will miss you a lot”

“I will miss you too Ria”

Meghna and Karthick had also come to the Airport. Arjun completed his check in formalities and came to us. He was talking with all of us for some time. The flight departure announcement was made and Arjun was getting ready to go. He gestured me to come near him.... and slipped a small gift box in my hands! He moved towards the gate and waved good bye!!

I came back home with a heavy heart. I couldn't really bear his absence.I decided I should go back to India as soon as possible. Just then I remembered the gift Arjun gave me. I carefully opened the box.

The pink crystals smiled at me with a note:

For The special person of my life!! – Arjun

It was almost a 15 days since Arjun reached India. We were in touch through email,chat and calls. We spoke to each other whenever we got a chance. We spoke for hours together.Almost everyday. All sweet nothings. Time variation was never a complaint. We crushed 1000 miles with our bonding.

“Hi sweetie”

“Hi Smarty”

“Just came to office...thought you would have slept Ria”

“How can I without talking to you dear?”

“hmm..hows weather there? Has the snow started?”

“No Arjun. Its only flurries”

“Don't worry..you will see it in a week”

"Its my first winter and waiting to see snow.."

"Don't you think it would be great to watch the snow together with some coffee?"

"I would love to Arjun...but you said u don't like snow.."

"Yes...that's because I can't bear too much cold...but with you nearby..I would rather feel warm"

"Then why don't you come over"?

"Sure I will..If u assure me u will keep me near you...hold me in your arms..and keep me warm always!! And I assure you the same!!"

"---"

"Ria..I know you would be blushing...how I wish I was there to see that!

"Arjun...I miss you badly..."

"So am I sweet heart...dying to see you"

Days moved on and we had become more close than what we were when Arjun was here .I spoke to my manager Mahesh about my release and was waiting for the day when I will go to India and meet him.

"Hi Ria..."

"Hi Arjun..was waiting for your call"

"Anything important dear?"

"Yes..I spoke about my release to Manager..he said it might take 3 months!"

"3 months! I can't wait till then"

"Then get a short term assignment and come here"

"Hmm..thats a good Idea..actually there is a project coming up next month.I might land there..as a surprise!!"

"Oh really!!thats great Arjun..I would love to see you"

"But not sure Ria..its just a plan."

"oh..then I will quit the Job and come to India.is that fine ? "

"Sure dear.I will give you a better offer here. A permanent position at my home "

"How about my designation and salary??"

"What designation? You will be the Queen darling!!your salary will be lots of love,affection and of course loads of hugs and kisses for life time. And if you are keen to know your role..its Mrs.Arjun,my Sweet Wife..what say?"

"When should I join sir?"

"Will let you know soon madam. Should discuss with the management."

"You mean your parents?"

"Yes.I am planning to talk to them about you after Anjali's marriage is fixed."

"Hope they accept me"

"Don't worry dear.They sure will do. My parents never go against my wish"

"Good Arjun.Expecting a good news soon"

"yes you will...but before I tell my parents I need assurance from you..."

"On what"

"Ria.Do u remember?its been more than a month since we are into this relationship..and we have never said those precious 3 words till now?"

"What??"

"what?...its I LOVE YOU..we are supposed to say this everytime we talk.."

"Ya...even I was thinking you will tell someday..."

"Oh ...why should guys say everything first...I want you to tell me..."

"You know Arjun,those are special words...and I am holding for a right occasion to tell you.."

"Every day is special for us ..."

"well I agree.I will surely tell you when I talk to you the next time"

"But I have a condition there Ria..."

"Yes please.."

"The next time you talk to me..the first words should be "I love you"...agreed??"

"Agreed".

I should have told him when he asked me.....I did not know that I would never talk to him again!!

Part-7

It was half past midnight but I did not feel sleepy. It was more than a week since I had a good sleep. I looked outside the window .It was snowing!! It looked so beautiful like pearls of different sizes were showered from the sky.

" Don't you think it would be romantic to watch the snow together with a cup of coffee! "
Arjun's voice lingered in my ears!....

I prepared a hot cup of coffee for myself, pulled a chair and sat near the window. The smell of coffee was so divine...I sipped it slowly holding the cup with both my hands,,, With every Sip, my thoughts travelled down the memory lane..!!

I was thinking everything from the moment I saw Arjun in the airport till our last conversation. He hasn't contacted for nearly 10 days. Neither did he attend my calls nor did he reply to my emails.

Whats wrong with you Arjun? Are you intentionally ignoring me? No..I know you love me a lot..something should have gone wrong....

My thoughts were interrupted when I heard Meghna calling me.I looked at the time.It was 6am.

"Hey Ria..look like you haven't slept all nite?"

I gave a faint smile.

"You are behaving so indifferently now a days...hope u r alright"

"Yes Meghna..I am"

"Don't lie...Did Arjun call you?"

"No"

"Its been 10 days Ria...he is not attending your calls too"

"Actually his number is switched off"

"Did he reply to any of your emails?"

"No..."

"Its so weird Ria..ok let's talk to Karthick today...he might know something.."

"I hope so..." I said...

I went back to the window.The snow had stopped.It was almost dawn. " *GOD! Let this day be special for me!!* " I prayed to myself.

We met Karthick as soon as we reached office

"Karthick..any news about Arjun?"- Asked Meghna.

"No Meghna.We have been trying to reach him ...but no luck. I heard he hasn't come for work for 10 days"

"Do you have his home telephone number"

"Ya..I tried calling that number too...but no one answered the call"

"I am really worried Meghna..what would be wrong with him ?"- I said in low voice.

"Don't worry Ria..nothing wrong would have happened,,Karthick can we have that number"

"Sure..I will message you".

"Thanks Karthick. Please update us if you get any information"

"Sure Ria,you don't worry too much.He will definitely get in touch with you"

"Iam hoping so".....

"Ria lets call his home number and check"- Meghna tried to call the number but I stopped her.

"I have tried it Meghna..I have his home number...as Karthick said no one answered."

Meghna was getting worried too. We went to our seats .I had no mood to work. I was pre occupied by various thoughts...Arjun hasn't come for work for 10 days!! what happened to him..Is he sick? Or someone in the family is unwell..... ??

Just then my telephone rang.I was dumbstruck to see the extension...

4319....is it not Arjun's extn?? Has he come back?

Oh yes...I remember , He said he will give a surprise visit....Wow... ! I couldn't believe my eyes.....Thank you God!!

I was about to pick up the call and I remembered...

"The next time you talk to me..the first words should be "I love you"...agreed??"

'Agreed" I said to myself and picked the call ...

"I love you...I love you....I love you with all my heart!!! You dint call me for so many days just to surprise me like this you Idiot...??.....I really love you..."

"Oh....ok.ok....I love you too Honey...but can I know your name before I love you more??"

I was startled. I knew it was not Arjun's Voice.....

"Excuse me... who is this?"

"Iam..Sid...Siddharth "

I disconnected the call. ...who is this Siddharth..what is he doing in Arjun's place...?

What the hell did I do? I said I love you to some unknown person...!!

Meghna came running to my place...

“Hey Ria...have an important news..”

“Yes...Meghna”...

“I was talking to Mahesh and he said Arjun has quit the company”

“what..when?”...I couldn't believe what I heard.

“Just a week back, more important is that he was assigned a project here for a month and he did not want to travel”

Arjun was supposed to come here..and he did not want to travel??No way...why should he ever miss this chance.... he was dying to meet me ...

“Are you Sure Meghna?...”

“Yes Ria.some one else has replaced Arjun and he has joined today.Mahesh has arranged for an meeting to introduce him”

“Do you know who he is”?

“No...he had come to US only today morning”

I looked at my computer and there was a meeting invite from Mahesh. I opened it...

Meeting Invitation:

Subject: Introduction to Siddharth Narayan

Location: Bridge water Conference hall

Time: 3pm EST

Part-8

I decided not to attend the meeting. Dropped an email to Mahesh and left office by noon.

Meghna arrived home by 5.30 Pm. I was sitting with my laptop and having coffee.

She looked excited!

“Hey Ria....you really missed the meeting today..Sid is so cool..he is very knowledgeable..full of energy,,, we were all laughing throughout the meeting...In fact Mahesh was so amazed by the way he spoke,,, “

“Oh good...”I said with a uninterested tone..

“You know he is irresistibly smart! My God,,his smile and look...any girl will definitely fall for him”..

“Looks like you have already fallen Megh”

"Oh I really wish I would....he is a darling"...

"Oh Meghna,,,its too much for a first meeting.."

"You would have not said this if u had met him today..."

"Alright ..I have a severe head ache...going to sleep for sometime.."

"Oh ok...how are you feeling now..forgot to ask"

"not good.." ..

I couldn't sleep.My thoughts were all about Arjun...What would have happened to him...?

I called his mobile number and land line....no answer...!

How happy the day would have been if Arjun had come here.I suddenly remembered the phone conversation today...

"I love you too Honey,,,,," ...

How dare he say that? he would definitely know I did not intend to tell him,...but why did he respond that way...first of all why did he call me??Does he know me already? I was so confused!! God , Is this the way you make the day special for me ??

"Ria..dinner is ready"- Meghna called me.

"No Megh..Iam not hungry.."I answered without getting up from the bed. She came inside the room and switched on the lights.

"Ria...I know you are upset ..but starving is not a solution"

I did not answer.

"Its been days since I saw you smiling....you always look worried...please come out of this Ria....."

"I am not able to Meghna...I am not able to concentrate on anything...Its jus Arjun that's in my mind...I donno what might have happen to him..."

"May be he is doing all this wantedly Ria"

"You mean to say he is trying to avoid me?"

"I am afraid he is"

"No Way Meghna..the last time we spoke..I could feel how much he missed me...he said he was dying to meet me..."

"Then why is he doing this?... If he had true feelings for you he could have contacted you through any means and told you what is wrong."

"I know his feelings are true....there something that's stopping him...he will definitely get back to me"

"Ok..if you trust him so much...then wait...but now please eat something..."

She got the dinner to my room and we started eating...

"Now..don't look so dull ..its Friday..get into the week end mood"

"Ok Maam.."..I smiled at her.

"Hey I forgot to tell you Ria..we have planned to go to for skiing tomorrow"

"Oh I am not interested Megh,,"

"I know you will say like this..but you are coming..all plans are made"

"But Meghna..."

"No excuses..you are coming....Karthick will come and pick us at 9 am.

Blue Mountain , a ski resort located near Palmerton, Pennsylvania.
The place looked so heavenly.Tall mountains and slopes covered fully with snow.There were trees on either sides, dipped in snow! It was white all around.

Skiing looked very scary for me but I could see people of all age groups sliding with the ski boards.Especially the kids,they could slide through the longest slope with ease. I was amazed by the way they had mastered the sport.

I was standing carefully with the heavy boots and the ski board attached below the boots. There were poles on each hand for support. I somehow managed to get to the top of a small slope and looked down.I wasn't sure if I would reach down safely.When I was about to start,I saw a a pretty girl around 7 years sliding down from a higher slope and was coming straight towards me. Before she could reach where I was standing she slipped and fell down .I went near and extended my hand to help her.She pulled my hand forcibly and I lost my balance and fell down.I did not know what to do. I wasn't able to stand as the boots were too heavy. The girl looked at me and gave a sorry look. We were looking at each other helpless!

"Excuse me sweeties...looks like you need some help" – I heard a voice and looked up.

A guy was standing with his skies. He pulled the little girl and helped her to stand. He pacified her and helped her to slide again. The little girl thanked him and kissed him on his cheeks and slid down the slope.

He came near me "Please hold my hands and try to get up"..He said with a friendly smile.

He was wearing a black jerk in and goggles. I looked around there was no one to help .I held his hand tightly and tried to pull myself up .When I was about to stand, I lost my

balance and fell on him. He somehow balanced and we both were saved from falling down.

I was still not out of the shock. I couldn't imagine what would have happen if both of us had fallen down.

"Are you okay"?

I was back to senses only when he asked me.

"Ya..yes..I am o ok..Thanks a lot!!"

"That's okay..."..he smiled.

Just then I realized was standing holding him with both my hands pressing against his body .I immediately pulled myself away from him.

He came close and whispered in my ears.

"You know I dint believe when you said I love you.....but this hug proves it"

I was taken aback. "U are Sid ..Siddharth?" I asked

"Yes dear.I am Sid..!Nice meeting you" He winked and smiled.

I was very embarrassed. I could not look at him anymore .I turned my face and hurried to leave the place.

"Hey careful..I can't see you fall again!!"

I did not listen to him and started sliding swiftly...I heard him shout
"Love you Honey....Take care"...

Part-9

I was so wild and started sliding down faster. In 15 seconds I toppled and fell down. Meghna and Karthick came running.They helped me remove my boots and struggled to stand on my foot.

"Oh Ria..you should have been more careful" Meghna said in a worried tone.

By then other friends had gathered and started inquiring what had happened.I told them I lost my balance and fell down.

"I Think your friend got scared of something Meghna" – A voice interrupted.

It was him...Siddharth..

"Hey Sid. When did u come?" Meghna looked so excited seeing him

.

"I came with Sam.I saw this girl falling down from the slope. Are you hurt?" – he asked as he looked at me.

"Meghna..I am alright..let's go "- I said in irritated tone.

"Hey Ria...its not even an hour since we came...lets be around for some more time"

"No Meghna..my legs are paining...lets leave"

"Ria..some more time please..you sit here and take rest...I will be back soon"

"Do you want me to drop you home ?"- It was Siddharth

"No Thanks.Meghnna I will wait here.Come fast".

I sat in on the bench and was fuming about the incident that had happened.
I was cursing Siddharth.

'How dare he ...what does he think of himself...Is this a way he talk to a girl...and hey..how did he know it was me who spoke over the phone? '

"Ria..want to have some coffee?" Karthick asked me.

"Oh Yes Karthick. I am so tired.."

"Sure Ria,,," he turned and called " Sid..one more coffee"..

"Sure Buddy..in a minute"...

SID...Oh not again!

Siddharth came with the coffee...I could not say no to the coffee as I asked for it.

I took a cup and started drinking .

"Hey Sid..This is Ria"..Karthick Introduced me to Him.

'Oh Karthick,,why on earth do u want to introduce me this guy..and that too at this moment'... I thought to myslef

"Oh Ya...we already got introduced ...but just that she did not say her name..." he looked at me a but turned my face and looked somewhere.

"Ria...the name is as sweet as you"...He said...

I did not reply. Karthick could sense something was wrong with me and he continued talking to Sid.

"Its damn cold Sid...I am not able to stand it".

"Oh..It isn't that bad for me....I am in fact enjoying"

“are you Joking?...its -13 F dude”

“hm....I know Karthick ...I Just helped a girl from falling down..and I have been feeling warm since then.Its kind of magic u know”..

I gulped the coffee and moved away from that place.

Karthick and Sid were talking for some time and Meghna joined them. I did not want to call her and was waiting for her to come.

“Lets Go Ria”...Meghna said.

“Oh.I had been waiting Megh..lets hurry”

We went near Karthick’s car and was shocked to see Siddharth in the driver seat.

“Come in ladies” he smiled at us.

“Megh...why is he coming in this car?” I whispered to Meghna.

“Oh Sam will take some more time..he is dropping Kishore and Seema.So Sid is coming with us.”

We got inside the car.And the three of them were busy chatting. I was in no mood to listen to them. I looked out of the window and dozed off unknowingly.

I woke up only when we reached our apartment.

“Good nite Ria..Sleep well..you look very tired.” Siddharth said in a concerned voice.

I did not reply.I just thanked Karthick and came inside.

Meghna was talking to them for some time and she came in.

“why dint you tell me that he is coming for skiing...??”I shouted at Meghna..

“Who..what..I don’t get u?”

“He..that stupid Siddharth..I would have not come if I had known before”

“Common Ria..I myself did not know that...he had come with his friends...it was a coincidence...”

“hmm..whatever,,but I hate to see him”

Meghna understood that something was wrong .

“Why are you so angry on him Ria?”

“oh, nothing Megh, not angry and all...why should I get angry on some stranger?”

“Don’t Lie Ria..something is wrong...you are not comfortable with Sid..tell me what happened”

I thought telling Meghna of whatever happened will make me feel good.I narrated everything from the phone conversation till how he helped me during skiing..

“WOW...that’s interesting”... She exclaimed!

“Interesting...are u nuts?? I am really wild about what he did..”

“Hey wait wait..I don’t see anything wrong from his side..”

“What do u say Megh,,,how can he talk such nonsense to me?”

“Mam,,,It was you who told I love you...and even today he just helped you ...do you say these are his mistakes?

“You don’t understand Meghna... why should he say I love you too when I spoke to him.. and all the carp when he helped me..?”

“Oh Common ...he is a very jovial person Ria. May be this is just one of his pranks”

“Whatever..but I don’t like it...”

“Listen Ria. He is a very good guy....very friendly and cool...he should have done this to jus make fun...”

“You always support him Megh...I know you have a soft corner for him”

“You think what ever,,but he is good and that’s the fact. You will get to know about him sometime”

Part-10

I was in deep sleep and was awake when the door bell rang. Looked at the time and it was 1 pm. I was too tired to even get up from the bed. My legs were paining so much after the skiing the day before. I called out for Meghna. She wasn’t around. I walked slowly and opened the door.

“Hey Honey..how are u today?”- Sid was smiling. He had a bunch of flowers in his hand.

“What do u want...?why did u come here”.

“Don’t be so rude Ria.. let me get in first” he pushed me slowly and came inside.

“...You know I couldn’t sleep the whole night ...every time I closed my eyes.I hear you say ‘I love you so much ‘ and I could feel you stand so close to me holding me in your arms...so I thought first thing I do today is to meet you and make one thing clear.....”

“what?”

He fell on his knees and offered the flowers to me ...

"I love you Ria..Lets Get married ! So that you don't disturb me in the sleep" He said with a wink and smile..

"What..don't talk nonsense and jut leave the place"

"No dear..can't go without you.."

Meghna came out hearing the quarrel...Sid stood up quickly and gave the flowers to Meghna..

"Beautiful flowers for beautiful girl...Have a nice day Megh"

Meghna was so happy...."Thank you so much Sid...you got these for me..so nice of you...."

"Yes Meghna..I wanted to give to this to you and your friend did not let me inside the house.She is too rude..."

Meghna could make out what had happened...she smiled at me...

"Oh leave her Sid..she is like that..."

Just then Karthick came inside with some food parcels.

" I was too tired to cook Ria.So called up Karthick to buy some food for us"

I called Meghna near me ..

"What is Sid doing here?"

"Oh ,you dint know? Sid is staying with Karthick now"

I did not like to eat with them but I had no options. I was very hungry. We opened the parcel..

"Pasta"!! – Exclaimed Meghna..

"Why ..u don't like pastas?"- Karthick asked her.

"I like it..but Ria...she doesn't like Pastas Karthick"

"Oh that's ok Megh..I can manage with some bread" I said and took the bread and went inside my room.

Sid is staying with karthick – Like Arjun!!- I thought to myself.

I did not feel like eating the bread.I just lay down on the bed and dozed off. I woke up when I heard when someone knocked the door.I opened it and I saw Sid with a plate..

"Ria...please eat this"

There was Chapati and dhal.

"I don't want it..please take it away.."

"Please Ria..don't say that... eat this..I know u haven't eaten anything from last night..."

"Please don't compel me..I am not hungry"

"Ria.. I was actually playing with you..don't take it seriously....you know I took all pains to prepare this for you"

"U made it?"

"Yes Ria...please eat it..."

For the first time I felt pity for him.I remembered what Meghna told me.May be I misunderstood him.I took the plate and started eating.It was so delicious.The rotis were so soft.I finished eating and went to the kitchen to drop the plates.

Sid was standing in the balcony and talking over the mobile.I went near him and waited until he was done with the call.

"Sid....Thanks for the food"

"Thats ok Ria..did u like them?"

"Yes Sid..they were so good...I am sure I cannot make Chapattis like this"

"Oh that's so simple Ria, I can tell you how to make them"

"oh good..how ?"

"Come here and show me your hands"

I was confused but showed my hands.He took my hands and looked at it for some time.

"Hmm...Ria,,I am afraid if you can make good food"

"Why?"

"Girls with such beautiful and soft hands cannot become good cook..You better marry someone who cooks for you"..he smiled and said

"You..you will never change,,," I stared at him and was about to leave.

"Ria....are u angry?"

I turned around and said "Yes.."

"Oh good..I want you to be angry when I tell you this..."

“What now?”

“You look so hot in the night dress” he winked ..

“Go to Hell”

“Sure dear..will go and hold a place for you..”

I couldn't stop smiling when I heard it.

“Ria..you look good when you smile...be like this always”

Karthick and Sid left home after lunch.I saw a piece of paper near the door and opened it ..It was a restaurant bill for the Chapatis and Dhal!

Part-11

The Winter was at peak. It wasn't enjoyable as I thought. The cold was too much to bear.It was snowing continuously and everyone was waiting for spring.

I was waiting in the bus stop to go to office.Meghna had gone to office early as she had some meeting.I saw Karthick's car passing through my stop and waved hand. But it was Sid who was in the driver's seat.

“Hey Ria..want a ride to office”

“Hmm..ya..thought it was Karthick”

“Why..you won't come with me..I am a good driver too” he smiled.

“hey nothing like that Sid..” I got into the car...

“hey same sweet Ria...”

Just then I noticed both were dressed in black and White...

He was talking throughout the journey and I couldn't control my laughter. He was very humorous.

“Are you from the North Ria” – he asked me..

“No. I am from Bangalore. Where are you from Sid?” – I asked him.

“Chennai”

“Oh..chennai is a hot place...”

“ya..and the girls are hot too!” – He said with a naughty smile.

“hey Sid..wanted to ask you something”

“Sure sweetie”

“How did you know it was me who spoke on the phone”

“Oh that was so simple Ria...I tried to call Karthick and it landed to your extension...I immediately checked in the contact information from the project share and found out the name..”

“Hmm..”

“I know it was some girl named Ria..was waiting to see how you look ...I thought I could meet you in the introduction meeting..but you weren't there”

“Ya..I wasn't feeling well and I left early..”

“The next day in skiing ,Sam told me it was you...I wanted to just come and talk to you...but never imagined our first meeting would be so romantic”

“Hey..common Sid..don't make fun”

“Hey I am serious Ria...I tell you what ...I agree I was kidding when u said I love you over the phone..but when I saw in the Blue mountains..I really liked you...”

“Sid..please stop this. First understand that the phone conversation was not for you..I spoke to you that way thinking you were someone else”

“Ya..I know..you thought I was Arjun”

I was shocked but imagined that Karthick or Meghna would have told him my story.

“Yes..I am sorry..it was just a mistake...” – I said so that it would make things clear between us.

“Oh that's ok Ria.I can understand.”

We spoke until we reached office.Sid seems to be very friendly and cool.He looked like he will not take things seriously..he was down to earth and fun loving.

‘Meghna was right..he is nice a nice guy’..I thought to myself....

I was in a cheerful mood when I entered office.

“You look so happy Ria..good to see you like this dear...”

Days passed by. There was no communication from Arjun. Meghna consoled me and bring me back to normal whenever I was upset. Sid used to visit us often with Karthick and every one tried their best to keep me happy.Thank you God for giving me good friends!

Sid was very friendly but he did not stop calling me Honey,sweet heart ,dear and whatever. I could not stop him. I was ok until it did not hurt both of us. He knew I had some one in my mind. And I was sure he will not be serious with me.

He dropped me at office as usual..."Ok Sid.....meet u at cafeteria for lunch"

"Ok sweet heart...I have the chappati and dhal especially made for you"

"From the same restaurant?- I smiled..

"Ria..keep smiling like this...Whatever comes by your way...I will always be by your side..." he said in a concerned voice.

"What sir ? you sound so serious"

"Nothing dear,just felt like saying have a nice day!" He drove away.

I did not understand why he said that....I thought it was one his usual talks .
'*This guy can never be serious*' - I thought to myself and opened my system.

I was dumbstruck to see an email from Arjun.It was from his personal id.I was really excited. Opened the mail with mixed emotions but was shocked to read the subject

The subject read : **Wedding Bells!**

Part-12

I read the mail with racing heart beats.

Hi,

I am happy to announce that my marriage is fixed with Neha on 21st March 2010.The wedding invitation is attached with this email. Please consider this as my personal invite and make it to the wedding.

*Regards,
Arjun.*

I couldn't believe my eyes!! Arjun is getting married!! I was just staring at the email...I did not know how to react...

Meghna came running to my place...she could see I had read the email.

"Ria..."

I did not reply...

"Ria...Please be relaxed...I am very scared to see you like this"

"I donno know how to console you..but be brave Ria...I don't know why he did this to you. You worried about him day and night and he is happily getting married...heartless guy"

"Don't scold him Meghna..."

"I can't be like you Ria... he is a cheat ..good that he left you.."

"Please Meghna..leave me alone..."

I was fighting to control my tears. I ran inside the wash room.And cried my heart out..

'Why did you do this to me Arjun...what did I do to you....I loved you so much,,,,'.. I cried and cried....

'My Arjun will never forget me...something is wrong,,,I need to find out'

I took a coffee and came back to my seat. Read the email again.

I opened the attached invitation. It was a very beautiful invitation in Maroon and golden color. I looked at the venue for marriage.

Mumbai. I looked if there are any contact numbers.

There was one landline number.I looked at the time. It was 9 AM. Then it should be 10.30 PM in India. I thought it was a little but I decided to call that number.

I connected to India through calling card and dialed that number. The line was busy.

I had a hope that I could talk to someone. I waited for 5 minutes and dialed again. After 3 rings someone picked the call.

"Hello.."..It was a girl's voice.

"Hello...Can I talk to Arjun?". I asked her..

"May I know who is this?"

"Iam Ria...his friend"

"Ria from..?"

"Iam calling from US.Just got his wedding invite..thought of wishing him..."

"Oh ok..but Ria,Arjun is not here."

"May I know where he is ?"

"He is in Canada..he left India two days ago,,"

"May I have his number..?"

"No..I don't have any..he said he would call once he gets settled.."

"oh ok..May I know whom I am talking to"

"Iam Neha"

Neha...I remembered the name on the invitation..She is Arjun's Fiancé.

"Thanks Neha.can you please tell him that I called him"

"Sure Ria.."

I disconnected the call. Arjun has come to Canada...and I don't have his number.I was do desperate to talk to him....I wasn't sure if Neha would tell him that called..or even she said..I had no idea if Arjun would call me....

I came home early and waited for Arjun's call..I did not get any call from him.I was very disappointed.Meghna came home in the evening.Sid had come along with her.

"Hey sweetie..its so bad to see to like this...cheer up darling"

"Sid..I am really upset..please don't talk to me"

Meghna gestured him not to disturb me.I did not come out of my room till night.

"Excuse me..may I come in" it was Sid.

"No..."

"Sorry dear...I didn't hear that!"...he had some food with him..

"Eat this Ria...crying and fasting is not a solution for anything"

"I know that..."

"Then please eat...see I prepared this for you honey"

"Sid..I am in no mood for your pranks..just take this and leave the room"

"No Ria..you should definitely eat this.. infact I burned my fingers preparing this for you..."

He forced and turned my face towards him to make me eat.

I got so wild and slapped him!

He looked at me for a second and left the room without saying anything..

"Why did you do that Ria..I was watching all this"

"Megh,,now don't come for his support..I am really frustrated..I don't want to see any of you..leave me alone.." I shouted.

I slammed the door and stayed inside. I was crying till midnight.

I came out of the room to take some water. Sid was lying on the couch. I felt sorry for him. I should have not behaved that way!! I was looking at him and noticed a scar on his fingers. I went near him... ..it was a big scar..looked like he had burnt his fingers...

"you should definitely eat this..in infact I burned my fingers preparing this for you" I remembered him saying...

I touched his hands and he woke up. Looked at me silently..

"I am really sorry Sid..I dint mean to hurt you..but..."

"That's Ok Ria..I dint take it seriously..."

"Sid..I donno why I am behaving like this..I am really hurt ..."

"I know..Meghna told me...."

"Why all this is happening to Me? you know how much I love Arjun...I donno what went wrong...why should he leave me and get married....I am so broken Sid.." I could not control myself and started crying.

"Ria.." he called me holding my face ...*"I love you....will you marry me?"*

I couldn't react.I did not want to stand there anymore...I was about to leave....

He caught my hand. "I know what you are thinking Ria..I have told this to you many times....every time I told you..I meant what I said..but u took it lightly....but today I am serious.....I am in love with you...and want to marry you...."

"What you want me to say Sid?do you know what I am going through .I want someone to console and pacify me...but you are taking advantage of the situation Sid..I did not expect this from you.." I pulled my hands away.

He followed me and came inside my room.

"...I understand your situation Ria.....I just felt like saying and I told you.... I am sorry...I know you are hurt..."

"Yes I am..why does everyone want to hurt me like this..? "

"Ria please...don't cry..I can't see you crying .."

"Then please leave ..I don't want to see anyone...I know what I should do with my life...."

He left the room. In a minute I could hear his car speeding away.

Part-13

I was not even out of the shock that Arjun is getting married and Sid shocked me more by saying he wanted to marry me. Guys are guys, they don't understand girl's feeling.

It was a week end and Meghna was also at home. I didn't speak to her properly for 2 days. I felt sorry. I went inside her room.. she was reading a book..

"Meghna.." I called her

"Hey Ria... come in.."

I sat next to her and lie on her shoulders...

"I am Sorry Megh... I was harsh to you"

"Hey I know about you Ria... I can understand how you feel ...don't cry dear,, you have cried enough"

I wiped my eyes and sat straight.

"why are all guys like this Meghna?"

"All guys?"

"Ya.. u know what, Sid proposed me ...he says he wants to marry me.... Can't he understand in what situation I am... I was really hurt.."

"I know Ria.. he told me already... he is in love with you from the day he met you"

..

"You know this Megh? never told me.."

"Sid told me this just 2 days back,, when we were discussing about Arjun's email"

"Why did Arjun do this Megh,, what did I do to him?"

"Nothing Ria.. just that he doesn't deserve you... leave him..."

"But how can I.. I love him so much.. and I know he loves me too"

"There is no use of this love now... he never loved you... if not he would have not accepted to get married.."

"Megh.. he is in Canada now,,,"

"How did u know?"

"I called up a number from the invitation and spoke to Neha"

"Neha.. you mean Arjun's fiancé"

"Yes..she told me he left India 3 days ago and is in Canada now..I asked to inform him that I called to wish him.."

"You thought he will call up and talk to u.."

"Yes Megh,,but he never called me..."

"What are you going to do now.."

"I donno I am confused...I just want to know why Arjun did this...Want to talk to him once.."

Meghna got a call...

"Hey Karthick,,,tell me"

"---"

"Oh ok...alright I will come there in 30 min.."

She disconnected the call.

"What happened Megh?"

"Sid is not feeling well.iam going to meet him."

"I will come with you"

We reached their apartment in 30 minutes. Karthick informed Sid was upset for something.He had high temperature and refused to eat.

We went inside his room. He was lying on his bed and looked very sick and tired. He opened his eyes and saw us

"Hey Megh and Ria..when did u guys come"

"Just Now Sid..how are you?What happened"? asked Meghna..

"Hey Nothing serious Megh...these guys got me drunk last night..its just the hang over" he managed to smile...

"Karthick said you did not eat anything"

"Oh ya..I wasn't hungry then...but I feel like eating now.."

Karthick got the food..Sid sat on his bed and started to eat.I noticed that he was not able to pick the food because his fingers were burnt.

"Get a spoon Karthick"I said.Karthick got the spoon and gave it to me.

I took the plate and spoon and helped Sid to eat.. Karthick and Meghna gestured at each other and were about to leave the room but Sid stopped them...

"Guys..you don't have to go out..its just Symapathy that she has on me...so please.."

"You are very smart Sid.how did you know?" I asked him...

"I could it see it from your eyes Ria...its just sympathy nothing more than that," he said.

Months passed and I was finding it difficult to forget Arjun. Everytime I think about him I tried to deviate myself. Sid would come now and then and make me laugh with his crazy acts.Sometimes he would seriously express his love.

"Why don't you consider Sid, Ria?" – Meghna asked me

"Megh...Iam still not out of what has happened...I cannot think of anything now..."

"I understand.But why do you want to waste your life of someone who doesn't even bother to think about you"

"I donno Megh.But I somehow feel Arjun will come back to me some day."

"Are you crazy? He is getting married next week. Dont even dream he will come back to you"

I did not reply.

Meghna came close to me.She touched my shoulders..

"You are a nice girl Ria..I don't want to see you like this.just forget all this and be yourself..."

"Yes Megh..I will try".

Part-14

Spring! Its nature's way of saying ' Its Party time'. The ground was no more white.It was all green and colorful everywhere.Flowers had started blooming and butterflies were flying around happily .

"I did not believe spring has started until I saw you girls! You both look so dashing" – Sid said as we came out of the apartment.

"Girls its already late. get in..lets start" – Karthick was tired of waiting.

We got into the car.Meghna sat in the front with Karthick.I sat with Sid at the back seat.

"Wow..thats a sweet smell Ria.....isn't that CK -Secret obsession? " – Sid asked me.

"Yes..but how did you know ? – I asked him in a surprised tone.

"Well ,I guessed it. You know this smell is making me feel so romantic" He moved towards me and sat closely.

"Sid...can you please give me some place ..move and sit"

"Oh ..its kind of magnetic attraction that's pulling me towards you.Cant Help"

"How long is the drive to Washington Karthick?"

"It will take about 3 hours Ria"

"Oh,then I think I have to change my places with Meghna " I said looking at Sid.

"OK and I will exchange mine with Karthick" – he said.

"You won't let me be in peace right?"

"Sure I will.Just say you will marry me..".

We reached Washington DC at noon. The cherry blossoms were so beautiful to look at. There was a lake at the middle and was fully surrounded by Cherry trees. I was sitting on a bench and was looking around.

"Ria,look this side" – I turned around and Sid clicked a picture with his camera.

"Hmm...I could not differentiate the back ground and you,You look like one of those flowers " – he said looking at the picture.

"Do you talk like this to all the girls,Sid?"

"Hmm..No..only to some girls"- He smiled.

"But if you don't like me talking like this,I will stop" – He paused.. "After our marriage"

"Oh,do you still have plans like that?"

"Yes for sure.Why?"

"Don't waste your time Sid.Look for some one else"

"Mam.You don't have to give me a choice. I know what to do.." He said in a firm voice.

We did not talk for some time.

"Ria,I want to ask you something"

"Yes"

"Are you going to be like this forever?"

“Like what?”

“Not getting involved in another relationship.”

“Donno”

“Are you still thinking about Arjun and have the same feeling for him?”

“What if I say Yes”

“Then I can just say ‘ He stood up from the bench and said... “ Get lost’ “

I stared at him. Moved myself from the bench and started walking around the lake.

“Hello ...are you angry?”

I did not answer.

“Okay Honey.I was just kidding.You know I was wild at the way you answered.”

“ .. ”

“Now, think practically. Its almost 1 month after Arjun got married.Do you think he will have time to think about you. No way! He would have started his new life with Neha...who knows he will still not be out of his Honey moon mood”

I did not reply.I was facing at the lake and looking at the small ship that was standing there.He came in front of me.

“Okay.if you are still not convinced.There is only one thing I can do for you” He said in a serious tone.

I looked at him as though asking what..

“Hmm..I will let you keep our first child’s name as Arjun.What say”

I couldn’t control my laughter.’How can this guy think like this?’ – I thought to myself.

“Ok with it Ria?”

“Sir,first of all,Iam not ok with marriage itself”

“Oh marriage is just optional sweet heart.” He smiled

“But kids are mandatory..you know I want 5 kids in 2 deliveries”

I looked at him confused .

“Twins and triplets!” – he winked.

I smiled at him.”You are crazy”

"Its so hard to make you smile darling".

Part-15

The day at work was busy as usual. I was lost in my work when my telephone rang. It was from Mahesh's extension.

"Hi Mahesh,Good Morning!"

"Good Morning Ria,have a news for you"

"Yes Mahesh"

"Remember you had been asking for release to go back to India.."

"Yes.."

"We have planned to release you on by this month end"

I really did not expect this at this moment.

"Mahesh ,is it confirmed,,,?"

"Why Ria,,I requested the client as you have been asking me for some days now"

"Yes Mahesh,but now I feel I will be here for some more time. Can you give me some time to decide..."

"Sure Ria..I will keep it on hold until you get back..."

"Thanks Mahesh. I will decide and tell you in a week"

"Sure Ria..Take your time"

What should I do now? Go back to India or spend some time here. I could not decide.

"Hello Madam..looks like you are lost in thoughts"

"Hey Meghna..nothing.Got a call from Mahesh"

"oh what did he say?"

"Its about my release.He said he can release me by this month end"

"Do you want to go back Ria?"

"I donno.I am confused of what to do.I have asked him for some time to decide.""

"Good.Think well and take a good decision"

“hmmm”.

I was lying on my bed and was thinking about what I should do. Going back to India was good in one way. I can be with my family and it will definitely give me some peace of mind. But Mom will start talking about my marriage. She had already spoken to me about a couple of alliances.

I heard a beep in my mobile. I looked at it. It was a message from Sid. I opened the message:

“Happy birthday Dear”.

I looked at the date. May 15. It was not my birthday.

I called up Sid. He picked up in one ring.

“Hi Honey”

“Hey whats this message? Its not my Birthday today”

“What message?”

“Happy Birthday”

“Is that what I send. Read the full message”

I opened the message and read again.

“Happy Birth day Dear.”

“Thanks Sweet heart!”

“What? “

“Yes Honey. I know its not your birthday today.”

“Then”...I thought for a minute and it struck me...

“You stupid, its your birthday?”

“Yes. And I want you to be the first person to wish me.”

“hey Sid... You should have told me before know.”

“Oh, what would have you done then?”

“Hmm... may be I would have met you in person and wished you”

“Well, then please open the door”.

I opened the door and Sid was standing there.

“Crazy fellow.What are you doing here at this time?”

“First let me come in.And please disconnect the call.”

“Many happy returns of the day Sid”

“Thanks Ria.” He smiled and gave me a box of chocolates.

“So nice of you.tell me what you want for your Birthday?”

“Hmm..what else will I ask for? Your love...”

I stared at him...

“Ok ok..dont look at me like that.....if not love,I can even manage with a hug and kiss”

“I am leaving you just because its your birthday”

“Alright Madam.You are so kind.Can you do me just one thing”

“what?”

“Iam planning to go the Pittsburgh temple tomorrow and I want you to come with me”

“hey I have work tomorrow Sid.”

“That’s ok.Take an off and come with me.”

“But Sid...”

“Ria..Its my Birthday. Don’t disappoint the birthday baby”

Part-16

This was my first visit to temple after I came to US. The temple was very peaceful. I waiting inside the temple as Sid was talking to the priest. He came to me after 10 minutes.

“Is he your friend?” – I asked

“No Why”

“You were talking to him for such a long time”

“Oh that...I was just enquiring if today was auspicious day?”

“For what?”

“For our marriage “

“_”

“He said it’s a very auspicious day and people who get married on this day will definitely be blessed with twins and triplets”

“Sid...”

“Ok.Cool...I was just asking him about the pooja timings”

“hmmm”

“ Ria.Lets come to this temple after our marriage is fixed.what do you say..?”

“Don’t make me scold you on your birthday”

“Let’s see honey, a day will come when you hug me tight and say ‘I love you Sid..will you marry me?’ ..”

“Oh..that will happen only in your dreams sir”

“Oh then Iam going to sleep right away”.

We both laughed.

We reached home by evening. Meghna had come back from office.

“Happy birthday Sid”

“Thanks Megh”

“How was the day?”

“Oh..not like what I expected it be...” He said looking me..

“But it was good”

“That’s Nice.By the way,wheres the birthday treat?”

“Oh Sure.can we go out for dinner?”

“I am in..” – Said Meghna.

“Ok.Lets call Karthick also”

We all went to the near by Indian restaurant. On our way back Karthick asked me about my release.

“Ria, heard Mahesh spoke to you about your release”

“Yes Karthick.I had been asking for it “

"So you are going back?"

"Not decided Karthick"

I could see Sid was getting upset. He dropped us at home and did not say anything. I got a call from him at night.

"Yes Sid"

"Why didn't you tell me about your release?"

"Mahesh told me yesterday only. I somehow forgot "

"What are you going to do Ria?"

"I donno. I am confused"

"You want to go Home?"

"I feel so..."

"Stay back Ria. I don't want you to go"

"But what am I going to do here? At least I will be happy with my family"

"I will not be happy without you"

"Sid... try to understand"

"You try to understand Ria.. I have been telling you this for months now. And in case it hasn't reached your brains.. let me tell you again.. I love you.. and I want to marry you. And I am damn serious about it"

"Sid.. but I don't have that kind of feeling for you.. I just..."

"Stop it Ria. I know you don't have any feelings for me.. and I don't want that ..."

" .."

"All that I want to know is can you marry me or not?"

"Sid..."

"See Ria, Arjun is no more in your life. I am sure if you go back home, your parents will want you to get married to someone. How long can you stop them? One day or other you will definitely marry someone.. and why not that someone be me?"

" ..."

“Don’t tell me you still love Arjun and will live for him through out your life.Even he loved you but he got married to some one...so do you say he did not love you at all?

“No.I know he loved me and his love was true”

“The same applies for you also right..your love for Arjun will not go away if you get married to someone..”

“ ... ”

“If you love Arjun for his love..then I assure you I will love you more than that”

I did not respond.There was silence for few minutes.

“Alright Ria.I don’t have anything more to say.” He disconnected the call.

Part-17

Karthick came to our apartment to pick us up in the morning.

“Is Sid not coming?” – I asked him

“No. He said he will come a little late”

I reached office and tried to call him from my mobile. He did not pick up the call. I did not see him the whole day. Neither did he come for coffee nor for lunch. Karthick said he was held up with some work. He never called me even once.

In the evening, I was waiting to go home and saw Karthick’s car.He stopped near me

“Get in Ria , Where is Meghna?”

“She left home early Karthick.”

I saw Sid sitting in the car. I smiled at him but he did not respond.

“Looks like you were very busy today?” – I asked him.

“Yes. I was” – He said without turning back.

I could make out he was angry. I wanted to make him smile.

“Sid,u look smart when you are silent “

He did not respond.

“Why don’t you turn around and look at me ..” I touched his shoulders. He pushed my hands away.

I looked at Karthick through the rear view mirror and gestured ‘whats wrong with him?’

He gestured back saying ‘ I don’t know”

I tried to make him talk but he did not talk to me until we reached our apartment..

“Why don’t you guys come in for Tea” – I asked them as I got down.

“Sure Ria..” Karthick said and was about to get down..

“Karthick I need to go home. Can you please start the car?” – Sid said in an irritated tone

I looked at him and he turned his face.

“Karthick if he wants to go,let him go.you come in and have some tea”

“Karthick get down now or start the car.I want to go”

Karthick was helpless.“Sorry Ria.Will come in some other time”

“That’s Ok Karthick.Dont feel sorry .it’s not your fault”..

I stared at Sid.He looked like he wasn’t bothered at all. Karthick started the car and moved away.

I came inside the apartment and threw my hand bag on my bed.

“What does he think of himself? What did I do to him..he is doing too much..Idiot.”

Meghna came to my room.

“Whats wrong Ria.Whom are you talking to?”

“Nothing Megh..just feel irritated “

“Because of Sid?”

“How do you know?”

“Oh..only he can irritate you like this. So what did he say today?The same old ‘I love you honey ‘ and ‘please marry me’?”

I did not reply.

“Tell me Ria”

“Nothing Megh.he did not talk to me at all”

“Oh really?Sid dint talk to you..thats so surprising..”

“I know..even when we came back from office,I tried so much to talk him but he avoided me,he did not even come inside when I called him..”

"Whats wrong with him?He was ok till last night. Even during dinner he was making fun of all of us. He is so crazy. Don't worry he will talk to you tomorrow." She moved into the kitchen .

She was right. Sid was in his usual mood until he dropped us home last night. May be the phone conversation we had have made him upset. I sat on my bed and closed my eyes.

'If you love Arjun for his love..then I assure you I will love you more than that'

Sid did not talk to me for the next two days. It was very apparent that he was avoiding me wantedly. Even If I go to him he turned his face and moved away.

I could not sleep that night. Its all because of Sid. He irritates me at times with his talks but his silence was more disturbing. What did I do to him? I just told him what I felt. I treated him as a good friend. He was by my side when I was going through a bad phase of my life.

Why should keep thinking to myself. I decided to talk to him.

I picked up my mobile to call him and my mobile rang.

It was Sid!

I picked up the call. But did not talk.

"Hello..." I heard his voice.

'...'

"Ria....u there?"

"Hmm"

"What are you doing?"

"Nothing. Why did you call me now? When you can stay without talking to me for 3 days be like that for ever. What did you think? That I will be upset and thinking about you without sleeping? I don't have to bother about people who doesn't bother about me. Don't talk to me anymore .Bye"

I disconnected the call. I did not know why I spoke him that way. In fact I was about to call him and talk to him. I could feel my behavior was strange.

'I should go to India. Only then I can escape from this entire trauma. I should talk to Mahesh about this tomorrow.' I Thought to myself .

I heard the door bell . I went near the door

"Who is that?" I asked without opening the door.

"Its me..open the door." – It was Sid's voice.

"Me means? Don't you have a name?"

"Siddharth"

Part-18

I opened the door and went into my door without looking at him. He followed me and came inside.

"Why did you come here?" – I asked him without looking his face.

"Just like that"

"I told you I am not interested to talk to you or see you"

"Meghna told me you were upset for something" – He came in front of me and looked at my face.

"I am not upset for anything. I am in fact very happy and cheerful" – I turned my face again.

"Oh, then why didn't you eat properly for two days. She said you always look dull and behave as though..." he paused..

I looked at him – "as though what?"

"As though you were missing someone.." – He smiled at me.

I did not reply. I came out of my room and switched on the TV.

He sat next to me on the couch.

"You didn't answer my question"

"I did not miss anyone or anything" – I answered looking at the TV.

I could feel he was looking at me. I kept on changing the channels and he pulled the remote from me. I was about to get up. He caught my hand and made me sit.

"I am sorry"

"....."

"I was very hurt by the way you spoke to me the other day Ria. I tried my best to convince you but you did not respond at all. So I thought I was just disturbing you and wanted to stay away."

"Did you think my feelings will change if you avoid me?"

"Ya..I thought you will start hating me."

At looked at him confused.

"I felt hatred as a feeling is better than having no feeling at all. Remember you said you have no feelings for me.."

"I did not mean it that way Sid. You how much I was hurt when you avoided me? I was very much disturbed without talking to you"

"I know Ria. And You did not know how much I struggled to stay away from you. Everytime you come near me, I thought I should talk to you..but I controlled myself"

"If you know you cannot stay away why did you try?"

"Thought it will be good for both of us.."

"Was it good?"

"Not at all."

I looked at him and smiled.

"I am so stupid Ria.I should have not done this. I am really sorry for hurting you"

"That's ok Sid"

"I promise I will not do it again. you know why?"

"Why"

"Coz I love you soo much Honey! can't stay even for a minute without talking to you"

"Oh My God! you will never change. You know I was planning to talk to Mahesh about my release tomorrow"

"You have decided to go to India"

"What do you think?"

"I think" He paused. I looked at him.

"You can't leave me and go", he said.

"But What if I have decided to go" ..

"Then,,," he held my hand tightly and said..."I won't let you go"

"Crazy" ...I said smiling at him..

He looked into my eyes.

"What are you looking?"

"Hmm..I could see something more than sympathy"

“Really ?”

“Yes dear...”

“What?”

“Hmm...may be some kind of liking but..”

“but...?”

“Not LOVE”

“You are always smart Sid. You read my mind!”

“Like and Love are not too far dear..I am sure I will see it in your eyes soon” .

The next day at office I called up Mahesh and informed him that I wanted to stay back.

“Hey Ria..I am so happy. I thought you will go back to India” – Meghna hugged me.

“I thought I should, but something stopped me”

“Is it something or someone?” – She asked with a naughty smile.

“You come with me now. Karthick is waiting in the cafeteria. He wanted to talk to us.” – I pulled her and went to the cafeteria.

Karthick and Sid were having coffee. We went and sat with them. I sat opposite to Sid.

“Guys,I wanted to talk about our Niagara plan? Can we go this week end?” – Karthick asked us.

“Yes. Summer is the right time to go to Niagara. Lets go” – Meghna said

“Why don’t we go for the long week end – July 4th,,I have heard the fireworks would be great to look at”. - I suggested.

“Ya.. thats a good idea Ria. We can wait for one more week and go on the Independence day week end”- Said Karthick.

“Are you with us Sid” – Meghna asked him.

“Yes Very much.”

“I thought you were busy admiring someone”

“But my ears are with you Megh,” He smiled at her and continued “I have a suggestion”

“What?”

"Lets go Canada. I heard the Canadian View is more beautiful than the one we see from New York."

"Yes..thats a great idea. We can get the Canada visa and go" - Meghna and Karthick were excited about the idea.

"Are you ok with the plan Ria?" – Sid asked me.

'Canada' I thought for a minute and said "Yes".

Part-19

Niagara Falls is one of the most wonderful places on earth. It had 3 main falls out of which The American falls and Horseshoe falls ,was best seen from the Canadian side. There were thousands of tourists and most of them were Indians.

"Isn't the place beautiful?" – Sid asked me was we were watching the falls from the observation deck.

"Just Beautiful.? I don't have words to explain Sid..its ..its just breathtaking!"

He came a little closer and said "You know Niagara is the Honey moon capital of the world?"

"So?"

"So,we might have to come here again"

"Sid..."

"Shh. Don't talk something and spoil my mood now"

I just kept quiet and looked at the falls again. There was a rainbow across the falls and it made it look even more beautiful.

"Ria, Take your time and see all the places now itself. We might not have time for all this next time"

"I am going to kill you"

"You are already doing it baby."

I saw Karthick and Meghna at a distance. They were standing close to each other and were talking something and laughing.

"Sid,did you see that?"

He looked at them..

"hmm..Lucky Karthick, Megh is not unromantic like you"

"Did you know about this before Sid?"

"Hmm,.I know Karthick is interested in Meghna, but he hasn't told me anything "

"Even Meghna did not say anything.. ...Hey Sid, come lets go and get them red handed now"

"No Ria.I cannot do that. Disturbing a romantic pair is a Sin. Already my love life is screwed up and I don't want to make more mistakes.."

"Shut up and come with me now" I pulled him by his hands.

We were standing a few feet away from them and we could hear them talk. Meghna was lying on Karthick's shoulders and he was holding her hands.

"Megh,Isnt this place beautiful"

"Yes Karthick,looks more beautiful when you are with me"

"We should come here again for our Honey moon"

"Hmm...should we wait for another time Karthick?" – She said as she winked at him...

"WOW..Meghna that's so romantic," – Shouted Sid. Meghna and Karthick were startled and looked around.

"I would have reconsidered my option if I had known you were so romantic Megh, Iam just wasting my time here" – he looked at me and said.

Meghna was blushing and came near me.

"Megh, whats going on. You never told me dear" – I asked her

"Ria..I was actually waiting for a right time to tell you"

"Oh,When? After what you were discussing got over?"

"No I Was like...."

"Leave her Ria. Why do you embarrass her. Megh you please continue from where you left. And you ...you come with me right now."

Sid pulled my hands.

"That's ok Sid. We were about to come with you" – Karthick said.

We all went to the food court. Me and Meghna were waiting, while Sid and Karthick went to buy the food.

"Iam so happy for you Megh. Karthick is a good choice"

"Thanks Ria. Did you feel bad that I dint tell you before?"

"Not at all Megh"

I saw Sid and Karthick talking to each other. I could make out Sid was making fun of him and Karthick was smiling.

"Ria.." – Meghna called me.

"What have you decided about Sid?"

I did not reply.

"Sid is a very nice person Ria. He loves you so much. I am sure he will be very understanding and take good care of you."

" I know"

"Then what is stopping you? Your Mom has already started looking for alliances and she wants you get married soon.."

I was silent for sometime.

"Are you still thinking about Arjun...?"

"No Megh.I know its too stupid to think about someone who is married...but I just want to talk to him once .Want to know why he left me.."

"Common Ria.What can you achieve by talking to him?He is no more in your life now.Just forget everything and move on with your life.Why don't you think about someone who is concerned about you all the time?"

"I am thinking about that Megh." I paused...."Infact I have decided."

"What?"

"To marry Sid"

Meghna was surprised. " Did I hear it right Ria?you mean..my God,,,you started loving him?"

"No Megh.Its not because I love him.Its for his love for me. Practically speaking,I will someday get married to someone,and why not that someone be Sid.He knows me better and I am sure my life will be happy with him"

"So its just because he loves you and you don't love him at all"

"No..not at this moment..but it might happen sometime Megh..and I don't want to lose him then"

Meghna was so happy. She hugged me and kissed my forehead. "I am so happy for you Ria. You have taken a good decision.. have to tell this to Sid?"

"Not yet"

"Not yet? You know how happy he will be to know this. He was waiting for months to hear this Ria.. don't make him wait more"

"Yes Megh. I am planning to tell him before we leave Niagara."

Karthick and Sid came with the food. They sat opposite to us.

"Looks like you girls had good time chatting. Megh did you give her tips on how to be romantic?" – Sid asked her.

"Why will I teach her When you are here.. Sid..?" – She looked at me smiled.

I gestured her to be silent.

"Hmm... I am always ready. But your friend doesn't seem to be interested.."

As he was talking Meghna pressed my hands. I looked at her and she pointed towards the juice counter.

"Hello girls, whom are you looking at when two smart guys are sitting in front of you..." Sid turned towards the direction we were looking.

"Hmm.. is that the guy with Red Tees? Well... he is looking smarter than me."

He turned towards us and asked..."who is he?"

"Arjun" I said without taking my eyes away from him.

Part-20

The Niagara falls looked more beautiful at night with all the lightings. People were gathered around the falls to see the fireworks.

Siddharth was standing in a corner and looking seriously at the falls. I went near him and stood next to him.

"Oh, you are back..." He turned towards me "So, what did your hero say?"

I leaned over and looked at the falls without saying anything.

"Hope his married life is smooth and happy ... did he tell you why he ditched you? . You were so eager to know right... What did he say? His parents did not agree for the marriage or he was already engaged to Neha any other stories like our Indian movies?"

I did not reply. He came near me and touched my shoulders.

“Ria, I am not making fun. This is reality dear. You should learn to live with it and move on with your life. Now don't look so dull, You wanted to meet him and talk to him. It's all over. Forget it”

I looked at him and took his hands from my shoulders.

“Arjun is not married”

He was shocked to hear it. He moved away from me and looked at me unbelievably.

“Even I was shocked as you are Sid. I could not believe my ears when Arjun told me this”

I paused for a minute and continued as he looked at me silently.

“Arjun accepted the marriage because of his sister Anjali. Anjali was supposed to marry Rahul, Neha's brother and Rahul was keen in getting Neha married to Arjun. Arjun could not deny because he knew Anjali loved Rahul so much.”

“ So he was ready to sacrifice you for his sister?..”

“Yes he was. Because Anjali is everything for him. But Somehow Anjali came to know this just before the marriage and she convinced Neha and Rahul”.

“If the marriage was stopped why didn't he come to meet you for so long? He could have at least called you or emailed you”

“He wanted to meet me but was feeling very guilty it seems..he did not know what to say if I asked him why he accepted for the marriage. But he was very sure that I will wait for him...and will definitely meet me one day and tell me what happened.”

“What would have he done, if he hadn't met you today?”

“I don't know that Sid. But I am happy that I met him and spoke to him. It's all because of you.”

He stared at me.

“Yes Sid. It was you who wanted to come to Canada. And luckily I got my Arjun back. Thank you so much Sid.”

He did not reply. He turned his face and started looking at the falls.

“I might have to go to India as planned before. I should talk to Mahesh again. After going to India I will quit my job.”

He did not respond.

“Sid ,I know what you are thinking. Be Practical Sid, I know you love me so much, but this is reality. Learn to live with it and move on with your life...” I said in a concerned voice.

“...”

“You have done so much for me and there is only one thing I can do for you Sid,,,,”

He turned and looked at me.

“I can ask Arjun to keep our first child’s name as Siddharth.”

“Shut up Ria. I don’t want to hear anything from you. Move away from here....”

I did not go.I was just standing next to him.He was silent for some time.

“Ria,Iam so sorry.I know how happy you will be now. You worried about Arjun day and night. And your love for him was true Ria...that’s why you got him back...” his voice was very broken.

I turned his face with my hands and I saw tears coming from his eyes,

“May be I should have loved you more Ria.I did not know I will miss you.....” .

I was shocked to see him cry.I did not expect he will react like this.I hurriedly wiped his tears...

“Sid...you still haven’t missed me” – I said looking into his eyes.

He looked at me confused.

“Yes Sid.I did not meet Arjun at all. I wanted to talk to him but something stopped me. For some reasons,Arjun has decided not to meet me or interfere in my life anymore. May be its for our good,,,what if meeting him make both our lives more complicated? So even I decided to stay away from him .”

He just looked at me without saying anything.

“Sid..I just wanted to make fun..but I did not know you will take it so seriously.“

I took his hands in mine “I am really sorry Sid.I dint mean to hurt you”

He pulled his hands from me...and started walking away.I followed him

“Sid..please wait..I told you I am sorry.I just wanted to see how you react..”

I came in front of him so that he could not walk ahead.

“Are you still angry?...”

"Yes I am, What else do you want me to do. Just laugh at every damn thing you do. Don't you think I have a heart." – He sounded very rude. This was the first time I hear him talking so rudely to me.

"Sid..this is just for fun...." I was nearly in tears.

"Just Shut up Ria. For Fun? What if this had happened in reality...? what if Arjun comes back saying he is not married?...won't you go behind him leaving everything....?"

I could not control my tears. I turned my face and walked away from him. He pulled my hands and turned me towards him..

"Tell me...will you go with him if he comes back?"

I did not reply. I looked down with tears running down my eyes.

He lifted my face. Wiped my tears...

"And even if he comes do you think I will let you go ?" he looked into my eyes...I looked at him.

"You are all I ever wanted in my life Ria. I can't miss you for anything." He pulled me near him and hugged me tightly.

"I love you Ria...and no matter what, I will continue to love you throughout my life!!..."

I could feel the depth of his love in his hug. It gave me a secured feeling. A feeling I thought I would definitely need all through my life. I did not feel like moving away.

He moved a little away and took my face in his hands and looked at me. For the first time I felt I could not meet his eyes directly. He kept looking at me...

"Ria..." – he called me in a very soft voice.

"Hmm"

"Tell me"

"What?"

"What I see in your eyes now!"

I was astonished. How can he so easily make out what is running on my mind.

"If you are thinking how to start. I can help you..." – He said with a sweet smile.

I was silent.

"Alright. May be I guessed it wrong this time.." – He pulled himself away from me.

I immediately pulled him towards me and hugged him.

"Sweetie,Iam so dumb..I don't understand gestures. Tell me...I want to hear you say that,,,"

".."

"Can't wait more Ria..please,,,I am dying to hear it from you"

I came close to his ears " I love you Sid,,,I love you a lot...Will you marry me?"....

"My God!! Hope I am not dreaming " ...

"No Sid..You are not"

He hugged me more tightly.Kissed my forehead and cheeks and came near my lips...

Just then we heard the sound of the crackers with bright lights flashing on our faces. The fireworks had started!

I moved myself away from him "Sid..come lets go and watch the fireworks"

"That's ok Ria. Even if we miss it this time...we can see it again. They have firework every Sunday."

"But Sid,,I don't think we will have time for all this next time " – I winked at him..

We were on our way back. Sid was driving the car and I was sitting next to him. He was holding my hands with one hand and driving with other hand.

"So..Whats the next outing plan guys? Where are we going?" – Karthick asked as Meghna was lying on his shoulders.

"India" – Sid and I said together.

