

# WE WERE ALMOST SOMETHING, UNTIL...

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*For, Ms. Dixita Thakur~~~~*

*The reason this story found its voice.*

*This book exists because you believed.*



## *Prologue*

She was the kind of girl who laughed too quickly—  
As if someone might hear the silence.  
The kind whose eyes told stories her lips never dared to touch.  
There were mornings she couldn't remember.  
And nights she tried to forget.  
People called her dramatic.  
They never saw the things that didn't leave bruises.  
On the other hand, he grew up with calm hands and warm dinners.  
There were no slammed doors in his world.  
No footsteps to count before the shouting began.

But he still carried weight.  
The kind that comes from knowing something before it's time.

She wasn't searching for love.  
Not after what she'd been through.  
But sometimes, love finds you quietly—  
in a voice you weren't listening for,  
in someone who remembers you before you remember yourself.

She was standing there.  
And he walked right into her.  
They fit like pieces that didn't belong together,  
but held on anyway.

It wasn't meant to be a tragedy.  
*But heartbreak doesn't ask for permission.*

And when it came,  
*it didn't knock.*  
*It bled.*

## Chapter 1

# KATE

*I am still learning to love and appreciate those parts of me that nobody claps for.* “For people who love us are not supposed to hurt us, why is it so difficult for you to love me entirely? For every time I did my best for you, I wasn’t enough. You are always going to break my heart in one way or the other.” I shouted as I looked at him with pain and rage.

I shut the door, and I could not help but shatter down again.

“You need to open the door right now, or else I will break it,” he says.

“Break it if you wish to, that is what you do. That is what you fucking do.” I could feel the sweat on my palms..

“I can’t fucking plead in front of you all the fucking damn time.” My eyes were watery, my hands were shaking and my body was aching out of pain.

I could see myself getting hurt like nobody else.. Like I thought I would.

The pain is inevitable when you love somebody.

I was crying so hard that I wondered if he was even able to understand what I was saying or not.

“You know that I love you, Kate. Open the door, please.”  
His voice sounds peaceful but how do I bring peace within me?  
Looking at him is the last thing I want to do but...

I love him.

I have loved him in all the ways I never thought I could.

This is not the very first time when I am put in a position where I get grill everything around me, but I cannot help it either.

I ignore Mason knocking on the door because I feel so numb and all I want is to ask myself: Where did all of it go wrong after being with him all this fucking time?

After two hours, the knocking stopped. I knew he was outside waiting for me to open the door.

This time he knocked on the door very softly. His voice was low, “Please open the door Kate. We can get through this.”

*My foot.*

“The hell we can.” I shouted.

I open the door and I let him inside.

I was not ready to hear any clarifications that he had so I went in the kitchen and made myself a cup of coffee.

A cup of coffee can fix everything.

I heard his footsteps approaching me.

I knew he would come.

I screamed from a distance, “Do not even try to come near me.”



He obviously ignored that and tried to hug me.

“Leave me alone, Mason. Go away. I don’t want you near me anymore.” I was still sobbing. My eyes were red. I knew that without even looking in the mirror.

While I wanted him to go away, I also wanted to talk to him and ask him what made him fuck somebody else.

I wanted no justification but I wanted my answers.

Was I not enough?

Maybe people do become blind in love.

I was facing the kitchen window, and I could feel him looking at me, waiting for me to turn around and hear his side of the story.

I finally turn around and he holds me by my shoulders. I remove his hand and say, “Can I ask you something, Mason?”

His shoulders now look relaxed and he says, “What is it?” I sit on the shelf, his hands are on my laps, and his thumb is stroking my thigh.

“When I told you yesterday that I would be working through the night so I had to cancel our anniversary plans, you did not seem sad and you did not seem unhappy that you would not get to spend this beautiful day, our day, with me. Was it because you were ready to invite her to our place and fuck around?”

He looks at me and his face changes as if he was too scared to accept the truth but didn’t have the choice to lie either.

He didn't have anything to say, and I got my answer. I knew he wasn't good at lying. He would either argue with me for days if he were right or would remain silent if he knew he was wrong.

"How did it feel sharing our 'box of brownies' with her?" I say as a drop of tear falls on my cheek.

He had nothing to say. I had rage inside me as I shouted, "Say something, Mason!"

"I am sorry Kate. I did feel sad that our plans were dropped but..." "Stop."

I stopped him before he could finish his sentence because when you know you are wrong there are no buts. There is just a full stop.

"Don't say anything, you are going to shatter me into pieces. Again. I asked my manager to relieve me 3 hours early because I wanted to surprise you with your favourite donuts and flowers. But when I get to open the door, I see my boyfriend with some other girl—God knows who—fucking on my couch with roses that got crushed in my hands that right second."

"I am sorry baby, I will not go back to her. I will leave her, it was just a mistake." He says it like he is guilty.

"Are you stupid? It wasn't a fucking mistake. Get the hell out of my house. RIGHT NOW."

He strokes my hand and says, "I didn't intend to Kate."

"Intend to? You fucking asshole."

I stand off the shelf and push him aside. He tries to come near me and says, "Kate, I am sorry."

I look at him and hold him by his collar and say, “You have made me physically weak to even come here and talk to you. It was our two-year anniversary and you just... you. How long have you known her, Mason?”

“I just met her few weeks back.”

I already feel like I am about to puke.

“You have been keeping me in a shadow of dishonesty and I already gave you one chance the last year.”

Yeah, I caught him kissing his colleague outside our house one year back. But that was when we were just a couple of months into this relationship. I forgave him without him asking for an apology.

“Did you think it was easy for me? But I did what I could to make sure things fell into place between us, but Charlotte was right, you know how to play around. That’s it.”

And there I was, asking a 26-year-old boy to love me and to not cheat when he loves.

“I have felt the greatest pain of my entire life with you, for the days you were not able to love yourself, I loved you. I really did Mason.” I say sobbing.

While I was crying, I did not realise that Mason was just letting me go away from him, again—because he was not pleading, he was not scared of letting me go. He just needed to make peace between us. So that he didn’t have to remain in guilt.

“Kate, I am sorry.”

*I don’t need a sorry.*

*I need change.*

“For every time you hurt me and apologise and then hurt me again, you don’t realise but you lose a part of me. And this time, you lost me. You fucking did. But all you could do was just clarify your choices.” I say.

While I sit down on the floor trying to wipe my tears by myself, he grabs me from behind and hugs me, and just does not let go for a couple of minutes.

I want to push him, but his touch and comfort did feel good.

I didn’t have the power to detach.

And then I realised that his hands were around another girl just few hours ago. His hands must have done all the sins with her that he was supposed to do with me.

“Mason, I need to let go of you. I need to let go of you because I love you and because you do not love me back.”

He was not ready for this but he gets up and says, “What can I do to make this work”? He says this, in a really slow voice, which only we could hear.

I love him. But this time, my heart just doesn’t accept the damage that he has done.

“Kate, I think we are better than this.” He says holding my face.

“You have given me so much to criticize that now I question my existence. And truly, it is not working out for me; maybe it is working out for you because you get to fuck two girls around or God knows maybe even more.” I say as turn around.

He remains silent.

“I want you to pack your things and leave. I do not want to hear anything that you might have to say.” “Can I ask you a question Kate?” He asked composedly. “What else is left, Mason? Just say and get out quickly.” “Do you want me to come back for you Kate?” He asks as I take a sip of water.

“Get the fuck out, Mason. And don’t ever show me your face.” I shut the door of my room so that he could gather his stuff.

I was vulnerable, so I called my best friend to let her know that I lost Mason.

That I lost him.

That she was right about him, that he would cheat on me one day or the other.

I hear the door shut after a few minutes and I pick up my phone and dial Charlotte’s number.

“I need you. Just come and see me for once Charl...” And she cut the call without saying anything but “open the door in exactly 15 minutes.”

And I realised that all we need is a best friend. Just one best friend and that is it.

## *Chapter 2*

# CHARLOTTE

For as long as I can remember, I have spent my entire life with Kate.

She is not just my best friend but the most amazing and beautiful person in my life.

She is so beautiful inside-out.

I keep thinking how our mothers were best friends since they were 9, just like Kate and I.

Both of them got married on the same date, had a baby on the same date just 6 months apart.

It feels like yesterday when we used to play together the entire time. She is the best friend every person needs. If multiverse exists, I want every Charlotte to have a Kate.

She has never left my side in any phase of my life, and I am so grateful for that.

Now that she called me crying, I have always known that Mason would break her heart one day.

I did warn Kate a couple of times, but she was smitten, which she couldn't see obviously. I never forced her to not be with him because she had been going out with him for two years

and she would have realised this sooner or later in a much better way than she would have if I told her the same.

We are now two independent women who meet every weekend on a lunch date and her calling me on a busy Tuesday didn't seem like usual to me.

I was in a meeting, but I did pick up her call. She was sobbing and couldn't utter a word.

I left the meeting and pulled a taxi.

I wanted time to fly so I could reach her as soon as I could.

She might be in pain and this taxi driver was too slow.

About Mason, he used to be Kate's cousin's friend.

One day while she was with her cousin in a restaurant, he came with Mason and the rest his history.

She knew that Mason was a very cool guy and way out of her league but it was he who confessed to Kate.

Not that I knew him well enough to judge him, but I didn't like him at all. I had an intuition or maybe I could just read that on his face which Kate couldn't since the very first day when four of us were together.

We were having dinner, and he was simply trying to flex himself.

Kate's cousin was a good friend of mine.

We went to cooking classes together 4 years back and I had known Mason through him only.

He claimed that he was his friend but they didn't fit together.

Kate and I never spoke about this until the four of us went out for a dinner.

I told Kate to start keeping her distance from him because I knew that he would hurt her, maybe not now but someday.

I couldn't be sad for her because she is my best friend and friends are supposed to hype up everything.

So, a couple of months after that dinner, Mason confessed and they started living together after six months. She never calls me asking for help unless and until she is broken apart, ripped deep down to her soul. Kate has this habit of fixing everything by herself.

She doesn't like to ask for help.

As soon as I enter her building I start running on the staircase so that I could reach her as soon as I could.

As I step on the final stair, I could see her sitting in front of her door and the second she sees me, her bubble bursts like she needed me to see her, to be with her, to just not speak but still have a conversation with her because not everything in the heart can be said; that is why we have tears, long uninterrupted sleep, cold smiles and sometimes shivering hands.

I hug her and we go inside the apartment, it feels like she isn't able to carry the weight of her body by herself.

Her eyes were swollen, her room was a mess which is definitely unlike Kate.

We sit down and I open the box of cake I bought for her with, "*He looked like a noodle anyway*" written on the cake.



As soon as she sees it, she starts laughing with tears in her eyes.

I knew that she has always been the kind of girl who needs to laugh even when she is sad. That is how my Kate functions. And of course, blueberry cake never goes wrong for her.

I held her throughout; her apartment seemed different. It did look like somebody had moved out, a lot of displacements were visible.

During that entire hour, we ate cake, danced to our favourite Taylor Swift songs and she explained everything to me; all that happened must have hurt her a lot.

She still said that she would never give up on love just because she is terribly hurt.

She has had a rough childhood growing up but none of that made her weak on the inside. She is broken but she believes that nothing can ever be so broken that it cannot be fixed.

That is how Kate is, always valuing everything that she has or has lost, always believing that no matter how tough things get, there is always a silver lining.

She stands near the coffee machine and looks at me and says, "Thank you for coming Charlotte."

I pass her a warm smile, because I would walk a thousand miles for her.

"Do you want to eat something? "I am not hungry." She says as she hands me a cup of coffee. "Are you brownie hungry?" I place a box of brownies on the shelf and start to plate it.

“Did you bring the entire bakery with you?” “I think I did, with some chocolates and pie too.” I say while stroking her hair.

“You are the best friend somebody could ever have.” She holds my hand and plants a kiss on it.

“And you are my little girl that you always were back then.” Kate did have a wonderful mother growing up, but she was occupied in fixing her marriage and Kate always felt ignored.

She used to come at my place and tell me how loved she felt when my father kissed my mother.

I used to say that she will also witness that kind of love someday in her life. That is how our conversations looked back then.

We were twelve back then. She was sad most of the times but told me that she never wanted to get married because her father didn’t love her mother.

I never understood the story at that time—until one day, when we were sixteen and she spat everything out to me.

It still gives me goose bumps, and I still freak out imagining what her childhood must have been.

“You have your birthday tomorrow and here you are wiping my tears,” she says as she passes me a warm smile.

“I can’t be happy if you are this way, Kate. You know that,” I speak.

She adjusts her hair and says, “Do you want to see your gift then?”

“Kate, tell me you didn’t spend a lot please.”

While I sip the coffee, she pulls a magazine sort of stuff from the cabinet.

“What is it, Kate?” I ask curiously. “Open it for yourself and keep the tissues handy, you might cry.”

I don’t cry easily but she gave me a warning, so I got to play safe. She stood in front of me, I took the file in my hand with “*till eternity*” written on it.

I still couldn’t guess what it was.

I opened the first page, and it had our picture, our first picture on it.

It was clicked by my father at our playschool.

I was sitting on the ground, and Kate was looking at me with a banana in her hand. I had the most overwhelming smile on my face because this picture was supposed to be lost. We were relocating and my mom said that she had lost this picture somewhere. I had no clue how Kate got this.

“You thought that I lost this picture of us, right?” She says as he wipes a tear from her cheek.

“Oh my god Kate, where did you find this, look at us, so cute and so tiny.” I say as I wipe a tear from my own cheek.

*She did make me cry.* I wasn’t able to flap that entire file without crying my eyes out because that file was not just paper and words and pictures, it was us—Kate and Charlotte’s entire childhood that somehow got fixed in this file that had over 80 pages. It had our most cherished memories, some really embarrassing moments and some precious ones that only we could understand and get away with.

“Since when have you become this creative?” I ask.

“Since I thought I could get creative.” She laughs. “Do you want to see something else?” She brings a box of Chanel, beautifully wrapped with a white ribbon. “Kateeeeeee! Damn girl you have a lot of money, are you doing smuggling or what?” I scream with happiness.

She gifted me my favourite pieces of jewellery from their latest collection.

“You didn’t have to spend so much Kate.”

“It’s your smile that makes the money worth.” She slides a piece of donut in her mouth and says, “Your dress has already reached your place, now go. I am going to pick you tomorrow at 6 PM.”

“What did I do to have you?” I was constantly looking at that necklace and drooling over it.

“Charlotte, you know what?”

“I will choose you as my best friend in a thousand lifetimes, in a thousand worlds and in any version of reality.” Her face was red after the number of tears she has shed.

“I don’t want to have a fancy birthday Kate, you can come over at my place and we will order two large pizzas and some Chinese food.” I say.

I really don’t like parties a lot. But Kate was Kate.

Kate slides me from my back towards the door and say, “Now go and reach home safe.”

“I can stay over, Kate” I say. “I can skip everything and be with you.”

“I am fine, I am going to put on the TV and watch something anyway,” she says as he hugs me.

“Promise me that won’t cry over that stupid guy...” I say. “I promise.”

She pushes me towards the door convincing me that she would be fine. We hug and say goodbye to each other.

We didn’t talk about Mason because we didn’t want to.

I knew that Mason was the cause of this pain, and she knew that I knew.

I knew she didn’t need to spill everything. She simply needed company. That is how Kate works.

I reach home and text Kate that I love her.

She reply instantly and I go to sleep.

I switched off my phone because I do not like midnight calls, they interrupt my ‘beauty sleep’. So, I draw the curtains and go to my bed with some coffee.

## *Chapter 3*

# KATE

A best friend is all we need. She came over at my place for just a couple of hours, but it really uplifted my mood.

I didn't want to share about what happened with Mason because I just needed her company.

I was more than excited for her birthday.

She has always been so dispassionate about celebrations, and I am the opposite. She is one of kind who just wants to eat pizza and binge watch *Gilmore Girls* and on the contrary, I like a blast, I want to have attention, I have always wanted it over the top, ever since I was a child.

I am glad that she loved the scrapbook and that necklace. That is the kind of best friend she is, who deserves wonders.

I am all settled for the party that I am going to throw her tomorrow, but I just needed to make few calls.

I have already invited her parents and her close friends. Her mother won't be able to come because Charlotte's sister-in-law, Lily is just one week away from her delivery.

Charlotte's brother, Ryan has been like an elder brother to me, irrespective of the fact that he tried to kiss me a while ago, but we were young back then.

And today, we laugh about that all the time.

He got married to his long-term girlfriend just two years back and lives in Perth.

I wish Charlotte could join Lily's delivery, but she couldn't get an off from her office.

I decided to go to sleep on time as I had to get a car full of white tulips delivered at Charlotte's place tomorrow before 8 AM.

Everything felt good until everything came back. I was trying to avoid my emotions, but I couldn't.

I was staring at Mason's picture beside my bed and wondering what exactly made him do this. I feel terrible that he cheated on me but what hurt me more was that this wasn't the first time he did something like this.

I question everything as I sit on bed doing nothing.

He cheated and everything feels weird. I feel worthless and useless. Why does it feel that I have no motto? And now I doubt if his love for me was ever even real.

I was so happy when he went down on one knee, and asked me to be his girlfriend, but all of this feels shitty.

So fucking shitty.

I wonder where he might be right now, is he with that girl? Is he making love to her? Does he even miss me?

I feel jilted but I cannot help it either.

For now, I just need to finish this brownie Charlotte brought and go to sleep with a little pain in my heart, a little more than *little*.

As soon as I reach the room, I hear somebody knock on the door. I wonder if it was Mason, I wish it was him. But if it were him, what am I going to say? Has he come here to apologise? Maybe he forgot something, maybe he is here to take that back.

He isn't here for me.

I reach near the door and see through the doorknob. I only see ocean blue eyes which I am very well aware of aren't Mason's or anybody I know of. Those eyes were deep—deep enough for me to sink in, deep and fathomless, like a horizon that stretched beyond comprehension, holding secrets of the sea within them.

I didn't open the door instantly. It still scares me out to let a stranger in.

A stranger who is a *man* in?

Should I?

After giving it a second thought, I grab a knife and slide it in my back pocket.

I open the door and I see a handsome man in his late 20's, with curly brown hair who has six pack abs which I am staring at because he just has a box in his hands and boxers on him.

He stares at my boobs.

What a disgusting man!

Well, I am staring at his abs, so maybe we are equal.

“Can I come in, Madam?”



His voice was low, deep like the rumble of distant thunder, carrying a weight that demanded attention without a single word of force.

His hand was curled up around the doorknob.

I panic a little as I say, "Excuse me? Do I know you?"

"You don't Kate, but I swear I am not going to take any advantage of your breakup, I promise." He looks at me and smirks.

*He is good looking. He looks good.* But, what the fuck! He knows my name and my breakup! What the fuck!

I don't even have my phone right now.

What if he has a knife inside the box he is holding and kills me?

"I am not going to kill you, I promise," he says and smiles.

"I have a knife, so if you think of making a move without my permission then you know what's coming next."

I take a step back and he asks, "Does that mean I can come inside?" I nod.

I want him to come inside, but I am scared. But, he is so good looking.

He looks at me and bites his lower lip.

*Oh, so sexy.* I feel nervous but I don't feel unsafe.

He steps in and I look at him from behind.

*Oh, that ass.*

I reframe my thoughts because.....I just have to.

He stands near the dining table and my back is fixated on the main door.

“I let you in, but you won’t have any authority to ask me about my relationship or anything.” I speak. “Do you need anything? Like a neighbour who comes and ask for some milk or sugar?”

“I don’t like any of the things you mentioned, but I hope you know that you are too hot and beautiful to cry over a guy who cheated on you,” he says as he keeps the box on the table.

*What is in that box? A knife probably. I bet.*

“Are you here to kidnap me or do you need money?” I ask him and he laughs on that question.

What the hell is he doing here then?

*Why did I let him in?*

“Kate.” That is all he says, and my expressions soften.

Maybe you can sit down and share everything else with a stranger.

I couldn’t help but just look into his eyes, his eyes are the most beautiful eyes I have ever seen.

He is so good looking, and I wonder if he has a girlfriend. *I shouldn’t be thinking about that. That is his life. Why do I even care?*

“Don’t be scared Kate, I live just opposite to your apartment,” he says as my mouth opens out of shock.

“How the fuck do you know my name?”

Why have I never seen him if he lives just this close?

He is lying.

“I told you to not get scared, I just wonder what kind of bra you are wearing, and I have been wondering about them since a long time, not that I want to know NOW but just generally.” He says as he takes out a chair for me and sits on the other.

He directs me to sit

*He directs me to sit.*

“Did you really say that? My bra?” I place my hand on the table, and it makes a thumping sound.

He laughs and I smile back.

*Stop smiling Kate. Just stop.*

He is cute and he is funny.

“I did say that.” He says as he opens the box in front of him.

*A box of chocolate brownies.*

*No way.*

“This is for you.” He pushes the box towards me, and I smile.

He smiles back at me.

“Do you mind if I grab a plate from the kitchen?” He points towards the kitchen.

“Yes, I do mind. Just because you live across my apartment doesn’t mean you can make yourself home at my place,” I speak.

He is cute but I am *not going to talk cute.*

I had a breakup, *ugh.*

“Don’t be rude, darling,” he says, adjusting his hair.

“Don’t call me rude...darling.”

Shit.

He laughs as I grab a plate from his hand and keep it on the dining table.

We sit opposite to each other.

He seems like he has just come out of shower because his hair seems damp and the air around him was filled with the sharp, refreshing scent of his soap, like a clean breeze cutting through the heat, leaving behind the faintest trace of cologne and a touch of heat from his skin.

*Why do I even care? Stop Kate. You just had a breakup. You should be wallowing.*

He looks down at the plates opening the box and keeps two brownies on both the plates.

He licks some from his thumb and slides one plate towards me.

He is standing and I am sitting. His posture looks sturdy. His arms look sexy, the sculpted muscular arm, and veins tracing a path just beneath the surface, pulsing with intensity but not too much. Each ripple and curve of his biceps was accentuated, like the roadmap of raw power. “Kate, I will give you time to stare at me but you got to eat this brownie first.”

He is moving as he traces the edge of the table. He is now in front of me. Like, really close.

My heart is pounding. I wonder if he can hear the thump.

He rests his hip on the edge and puts a strand of my hair behind my ear and wipes my lips off with his fingers.

“I am not finding any excuse to touch you but you had some chocolate left over on your lips and if I were not a gentleman, I would rather lick those lips of yours,” he speaks.

I feel like I don’t have a voice in my throat—as if I didn’t know how to speak.

His touch felt so soft, just the opposite of his masculine body.

I couldn’t breathe. He was so close that I could hear him breathing. His eyes were fixated on my lips.

He reaches back to his place while I try to focus on the brownie.

I try and fail. I don’t even enjoy eating, I just think about his touch. “Why did you come here?” I keep the spoon on the plate, and it makes a sound in this silence.

“To cheer you up Kate.” He says that as if it is so normal for him to do that.

“Can I ask you something?” I say.

“I am all ears.” He eats the last bite of his brownie and wipes his lips with his tongue.

*You must stop paying attention to his details.*

“How did you know that I had a breakup?”

“You just forgot something, Kate.”

*My hear flutters when he says my name, because he just doesn’t say it, he sings my name.*

My confusion takes over my face as I ask him, “What now?”

“I know your best friend’s name too, Charlotte, am I right?”

He is a serial killer. Somebody sent him here to kill me.

"You are intimidating. I will not think twice before stabbing a fork on your hand if you have come here to kidnap me or worse, kill me." "I will leave you with your books for the night, see you some other time."

I don't know how to reply, I want to ask him his name but that would sound as if I were interested.

"You are not seeing me around. Bye. You can go. And... thank you for the brownie; if I die by tonight, remember that you are the last person I met, and you fed me." I say that and he laughs.

He gets up and puts both the plates in the sink and the leftover brownies in the fridge.

*Too early to move around my house.*

He comes close to my ear from behind. I feel his warm breath on my cheek. He pauses for two seconds before he says, "A black bra makes you look hotter."

*Oh my God.*

He did not. My stomach feels something it hasn't felt in a while now. I couldn't help but smile at him. I wanted to see him again, to know more about him but how do I ask? Is it too soon to ask?

*Yes, Kate it is.*

He comes from behind and lowers himself close to my ear and kisses them.

I can feel his lush lips, so soft. I can feel him creeping inside my body.

He moves and stands near the door for a second, observing me, taking me in and leaves.

I sit still for another minute. I don't think I won't be able to sleep tonight.

I think I might fly. I think I cannot feel my feet.

I don't think.

I know I can't feel anything.

I eat the leftovers and clean the kitchen with so many thoughts roaming inside my head... and many of those thoughts consisted of this man I just saw.

## Chapter 4

# NOAH

My heart was in my mouth, but what should probably be in her mouth was making me feel so much down there...

Everything was so unreal 24 hours back.

Kate has never been the girl next door, she *was* the girl next door.

All those 12 years back too.

To look at her is a dream come true. She was nervous when she saw me, like I expected her to be. I didn't tell her my name, not that she asked, because I thought she would recognize me when I told her my name. The chances are slim but one step at a time baby.

I did not want to take advantage of her breakup. But I kind of did.. I have never confessed or tried to because loving her from a distance makes my love stronger and more sentimental for me... *for us* maybe.

The look that she had in her eyes when she saw me said more than just a '*who is this guy?*'

I have been a great reader of eyes. Maybe books didn't cooperate, but with eyes, I could do wonders. I still remember how she looked me in the eye and didn't want to look away. But,



her words are still stuck inside my head, *Excuse me? Do I know you?*

Oh, hell you know me.

KNOW ME.

Sometimes I wonder how I know her more than I know myself, while sometimes I wonder how stupid Mason was to lose this kind of a girl.

When I got inside her house, I knew that it would take a lot for her to let me in but maybe my eyes got to her, *like I got hers.*

We sat just opposite to each other while she had a lot of questions in her head, and I was having *the time of my life.*

It obviously made me sad that she was in pain because of Mason; I would never hurt a girl like her.

I am aware of what happened today. While she is asleep in her bedroom, she must have taken off the black bra that made her look like a work of art.

I know she must have—while I sit on my couch and smile like a moron while writing my new book, *my very first book.*

Well, yes, I kind of read eyes and write about them. Now that I have finally gotten the chance to look at eyes that are worth writing about, there is no point of missing a chance.

I have been waiting to write, to write about Kate's eyes, her body, her soul... All of it... just for Kate.

I am glad my parents introduced me to books; I don't remember a single night not reading myself to sleep.

That is the best feeling in the world. Later, I got myself engaged in writing too. If reading is like a sword, then writing is like stabbing that sword. While I got up to make myself some coffee, I heard the front door, Kate's door shut.

It is 1 am now and she must be so tired.

*Should I go and check on her?* She will be petrified but I *need* to write about those eyes, and to write I need to know more about them.

This was all just an excuse to look at her, too see her, to talk to her... to make love to her.

*Buckle up Mr Evan.*

I left the coffee mug on the shelf and put up my white t-shirt.

I was only about to open my door when I hear a knock, *a knock on my door*. My heart skipped a beat and there was a lump in my throat. "Open the door stranger and call me *darling*."

It was Kate.

Kate was drunk.

I immediately opened my door, and I could smell vodka, *lots and lots of Vodka*.

And then there are those big brown eyes staring at my face. She is wearing an off-white mini skirt, so mini that I can slide my hand up her thigh and take that off in a second, with a sheer green top, so sheer that I can see her nipples.

And *holy god*, I could eat her.

“You didn’t tell me your name yesterday?” She says as she removes her hair from her forehead.

She looks like a goddess.

I pick her up because if she stood for a minute more, I bet she would fall.

I place her on the couch and grab her as she was about to trip. “You’re going to fuck me and then cheat on me like Mason did.” She says as she scouts out something in her Lady Dior.

Everything about her is insane, strong and sexy.

When she speaks, even when she is drunk, every word coming out of her mouth sounds like a song, a beautiful Italian song.

“Do you think I am drunk?” She asks me.

“I think that you are, darling.” I say staring at her. “Stop calling me darling.”

Aah!

All I did was go up close, put her hair behind her ear. I was inhaling her drunk breath because her mouth was just a centimetre apart from mine.

I lock the door and tell her to sleep for some time. “Why would I sleep? I just got home from my best friend’s birthday. Can you please bring my night suit from my apartment, and please tell me your name.”

I look at her while her arms are spread on the couch and her thighs are touching mine while I sit facing her.

I pull her up and say, “Noah.”

That is all I say.

She looks up and touches my forehead. She touches my hairline while her legs are around my waist. This seems like a position I always planned for her to be in with me but this feels different.

I feel so close to her. The smell of alcohol isn't obstructing my mind. I really want to taste some of that from her lips and never leave. But now isn't the right time. I don't want her to get up tomorrow and regret what she did. My first kiss with her is going to make both of us feel it. Like, this is what we were born for.

I stand up and she sits there like a kid. "Noah. I think I have heard of that name." "You haven't Kate."

*You have Kate.*

I change the topic as I say, "You can borrow my night suit if you wish to."

"Do you have a freshly washed and ironed pair of night suit?"

Kate being Kate.

She hasn't changed a bit.

"I have it ironed, but I washed it a week back. Will that work for you, Miss?"

She puts her legs on the coffee table in front of her.

Oh God, her legs.

This was now becoming distracting.

“Fresh means wearing it on the day you washed it. Go and bring mine please.”

She was such a baby while saying all of it. Her face looked so beautiful.

“Alright then, give me your keys,” I say.

“Check it out in my purse.”

“Are you sure?” I ask her.

“You ask so many questions Noah, I am going to take a revenge by asking you a lot of questions now. My purse is below me, you need to pick me again and I know I am heavy, but I think I am lying on my purse right now.” She looks around and then looks at me—waiting for me to pick her up.

*You? Heavy? Kate, heavy? Have you lost it, Kate?*

I pick her up and don’t put her down for two minutes, while I am glancing at her beautiful dark brown eyes. I whisper, “You are half the daily weight I do in the gym sweetheart.” She passes me a tiny smile.

I grab her purse and take out her keys and start walking out of my apartment, while she screams... “White almirah, middle shelf, second drawer, orange night suit.” She looks at me and lowers herself.

I look at her lying on the sofa and laugh as I make my way to her apartment.

I lock the door from the outside because this Kate, drunk Kate might be capable of doing anything.

It feels so weird to go inside her apartment this way.

I have, before, but this time, it's her room. Her house is squeaky clean. I enter her room and then her bedroom which is so immaculate.

It's all white with a board having pictures of Kate and Charlotte.

Her room speaks of herself. Like Kate actually is.

The plants smell of her, everything smells of *Kate*. I choose to ignore everything in her room, but her study table gets my attention.

One paper, a pen on it and full of words.

I try hard to not invade her privacy, and not read it. I simply open her almirah and... Kate is full of colours, name one colour and I can find something in that colour in her wardrobe.

I opened the drawer as explained by Kate and I see no piece of clothing that is like a night suit. All I see is a bra, a black bra, Kate's bra. This is the same one she wore yesterday.

But never mind, I open the drawer next to it and find her night suit there. I grab it, lock her apartment, and enter mine.

She is in the same position that I left her in. "You took so much time, what were you doing? Finding my bra? She gets up with some difficulty and pulls her hair in a bun.

"I think I did find your bra." I say teasingly, as I lock the door.

"What?"

"Never mind Kate. You can go and change, the bathroom is straight and then take a left.

“Could you help me change?”

*I would love that but...*

“You are drunk Kate but you can change by yourself.”

It just didn’t seem right to help her change.

“You wanted to know the colour of my bra yesterday, and who are you now? A saint? Come with me to the bathroom.” She gets up and moves ahead.

I laugh and follow her as if it were her house and I were following her footsteps. I wasn’t going to stay in the bathroom while she changes, I’d rather stand outside the door.

As soon as she entered the bathroom, I see her.

I see Kate. I see Kate undressing herself.

Fuck.

I turn around in a second and she comes near me, grabs my arm and screams, “You will do as per I say, so don’t argue or else I will grab a knife and run it down your throat. Did you get me?” She did sound intimidating.

“I don’t think that’s a good idea Kate.” I say as I distracted myself from not staring at her legs and.....everywhere else.

She puts the straps of her green top down and looks me straight in my eye and whispers, “Do you really don’t want to help me?” I feel a knot in my stomach. I feel that someone has put in butterflies inside my stomach and I am not able to move because those butterflies and just insane.

My entire body is just stuck, stuck at staring Kate.

“Kate, I think you can do that by yourself.”

“Oh, come on don’t be such a gentleman.”

She puts her right hand on my shoulder while she keeps on removing the strap of her top on the left. I see her getting naked in front of me.

Like right on front of me.

Her hand is fixated on my shoulder, and it seems as if she wants support from that.

“What are you doing, you need to help me and not stare. Noah....what is your full name Noah?”

*She is so drunk.*

I hold her hand and say, “It is Noah Evans.”

“Now help me out with this zip please Noah Evans.” She asks pleadingly.

*And I fell in love with my name, again.*

She turned around, where her hair were on my face, in my mouth and it was all a blur to me.

“Unzip it, what are you waiting for. I feel cold.” Her back is facing me. I hold her arm from the left side and put her hair in front while unzipping her top.

I didn’t have the courage to look at her naked body. I look to the right and unzip her top. I didn’t touch her body. She could be uncomfortable about it the next day.

I moved few steps back to make sure if she was comfortable.

She removes her top by herself from her head and says, “Put me in my t shirt.”



“Don’t forget that you wanted to know the colour of my bra yesterday and now when you have the opportunity for it then you are just being stupid.” I pass her a smile while she turns around, facing me.

Her legs could touch mine and her ass was too good to be felt when she came this close. It all felt unreal.

One strand of her hair got stuck in the zip of her top. I patiently untangled her hair from the top and give her the t shirt. She adjusts her t shirt and says, “Help me with the skirt. But before you do, listen to me, don’t think that I am wearing a size smaller. I wear small size but I am bloated today so you might have to put in additional effort for this.” I nod but how do I tell her? How do I? She is the most perfect girl on the Earth and keeps on clarifying things that would never even occur to me. I worship the floor she walks on.

She tells me go on my knees and I follow her command. She keeps her left foot on my thigh. I look at her and this woman is a God.

She looks like a 2-year-old wearing an oversized t shirt and her skirt makes her look totally the opposite, so opposite that if I were not such a gentleman, I’d have her on my bed this right second.

I slide my hand moving upward from her foot to her thigh. As I reached her thigh, she holds my hand.

*Kate holds my hand.*

Her hands aren’t like normal hands. Her hands are just different. “What are you doing Kate?”

“Oh, I am sorry, please unzip the skirt.”

I don't want her to leave my hand but it's just....I looked her straight in her eyes as I unzip the skirt.

She knew that I wasn't looking anywhere but in her eyes.

I hold her skirt from her waist and slide it down to her ankle.

I hand her the pyjama while she was adjusted herself.

She is facing the mirror, and I am behind her. When I see that she is done, I turn her around from her shoulders and say, "Who said you were bloated? It was too easy to get you out of the skirt darling." "Come on, you are too good Noah. Mason never.....you are too good Noah. You are too good N....."

And she falls on my chest. I did not put her on the bed immediately. I looked at her. Examined every strand of her hair. How her lips do not touch each other when she sleeps. How her hair falls on her forehead and how her hands turn into a fist when she is unconscious. Kate is just different. Kate is just Kate, nobody can be Kate. Nobody can be my Kate.

I pick her up and take her to the guest room hoping that she finds it cleaner than my bedroom and cover her with a blanket, a freshly washed blanket.

As I lay her on the bed, I wonder what is happening. How is it happening? Is it really true? Do I get to share the same air as Kate is? Am I really this lucky?

I turn off the light and settle her stuff in the room. I must get up at 6 AM tomorrow, so I move onto my bed and keep a pair of extra keys on the couch with a letter before I sleep.

*The best sleep of my life. Day 1 of breathing the same air as Kate's.*

## Chapter 5

# KATE

I don't drink because when I do, I go all out. I had a blast at Charlotte's birthday. I get up and look at the clock, its 8 AM and this doesn't seem like my apartment because of two reasons, one because it's not mine and second because the sheets smell different. They smell good but different.

I look around and start to recall last night.

Shit.

Did we.....

I look at myself, not naked and that is when I feel assured.

My head still hurts a little and my body feels sore. I look on the couch and my clothes are folded neatly with my bag on the top.

Shit.

*I think we did have sex.*

I get up from the bed instantly looking for Noah, but I don't think he is around.

*Noah.*

I remember the name if not anything else.

I move towards the kitchen, looking for some coffee and I see a note with a lily beside it on the counter.

Should I open it? I mean I should, if it weren't for me then it would not be somewhere so accessible to me.

I grab some coffee from the machine, *making myself at home*.

The house smells earthly with a mix of natural musk. His scent lingers in the house like a memory of distant summer, grounding and familiar, with a raw yet comforting presence that tells a story.

I look around one last time before I pick up the note and sit on the couch. I want to read this in comfort.

Good morning, Kate I hope you had the best sleep yesterday. There is some coffee in the pot and you can lock the apartment whenever you wish to, I will get back by 7 PM, not that you should know, but just mentioning. You must have realised all of it by now, but I don't want to keep you in any confusion. So here I go, you came in yesterday with a tiny Dior purse hanging on your wrist which is currently on the side of the couch that you must be sitting on. You asked me to fetch your nightwear from your apartment and that is what I did. While I left you alone to change your clothes, you asked me to help you. I said no a couple of times but you were drunk enough to argue and didn't listen to me, so I helped you change. I just want you to know that we didn't have sex.... just in case if you wonder. I tried to clean the bedroom as much as I possibly could and gave you a fresh pair of sheets. Your clothes are on the couch, neatly ironed for you. Have a great day ahead...look for me if you want to, I will be sitting on the same place where you are currently, I hope I don't make a fool of myself by just assuming that you are sitting on the couch.

And

*You looked beautiful yesterday. I had to leave early because I of a meeting. I still don't know why I am letting you know all of it but just bear, I have made you some pancakes that are kept on the microwave, I know your day doesn't move ahead without your chocolate pancakes and coffee. I hope I can supply you with enough coffee that can keep your hormones going for at least a couple of hours. I will leave you to your stuff now. Goodbye. I will see you soon, I mean not that I want to...but maybe I mean....we live close right. So, we could...only if you want to.*

*Bye, take care.*

I folded the letter and kept it inside my pocket. I was smiling throughout and was wondering of how I had the courage to ask an almost strange man to put me inside my nightwear yesterday. I was crumbling inside because I just fell out of love. While on the contrary people, I should be sitting on my bed, crying over a guy who cheated me. Why am I not feeling anything?

It's the feeling of falling out of love so quickly that is bothering me and not of *why* I fell out of love.

I wanted to wallow for months about Mason. I wanted to cry myself to sleep. I wanted to rant to Charlotte about how much he had hurt me over and over.

*I should be doing that instead of all of this.*

But here am I not bothered about anything, not feeling anything.

I get up after finishing the coffee and grabbing some pancakes while I lock his apartment after giving it one last look because.....*this guy is going to fuck me in this same apartment, on the same couch. I bet. Ugh.* Just a minute ago, I was wondering of why I am not sad enough and now, I am *dreaming* of this guy. I am an asshole.

I open my apartment and call the person I need the most right now, who has the answer to every question of mine. Charlotte.

“Hey Kate, what’s up?”

“Can you come over?” I say quietly.

“I am on my way.”

I wonder of how busy our lives have gotten and still we manage to....she manages to take out time for me. I reached the shelf of my kitchen and put the note and the keys to Noah’s apartment on it. While I was making some coffee for us I heard the door knock.

*Charlotte is quick because who else could it be?*

I open the door and there my lovely girl was.

“I was just around the block getting my chores done...are you still hung over?” She asks putting her bag on the kitchen shelf.

“A little but I feel better. I am just confused.”

“What is it?” She asks me as she pulls me from my arm and we sit on the couch.

“Don’t you think I should be sad because my boyfriend cheated on me? I mean we broke up and it is not even 48 hours, but I woke up at Noah apartment.”

“Noah? The black bra guy?”

“So, this is how you are going to mention him?” I laugh.

I handed her the letter and told her to read it.

After a few minutes, she smirked at my face.

“Believe me when I say this Kate, but you are soon going to get fucked by this guy. Mark my words.”

“Shut up, I didn’t call you here to tell me who is going to fuck me and who not.”

“I am stating the obvious Kate, I mean did you *read* the letter? This man is in love with you. It looks like he has been loving with you since what.....decades.”

“Open your ears wide enough to process what I am going to say now.”

She holds me with my arm and says, “What you had with Mason was just lust, lust is so inadequate, and love exhausted him. Every time he has ever yelled at you, were you not 7 years old again? You can be 7 and you can be 70, you are always going to be alone in a house that has your father and Mason in it respectively. You were never given a chance to be soft, you were never taught how to not love people. You were never taught how to be cautious when you love. Only because you are like your mother. I am not sorry of anything I said that hurt you, but you need to know that there is a difference between loving somebody and teaching them to love. You shouldn’t close your

doors for somebody who could be worth a shot just because you WANT to sulk for this asshole.” She releases my shoulders and her face softens. “You know that I hate when you are right.” I speak.

“So, stop and get up, go and take a shower and clean your closet for the 100<sup>th</sup> time in this week.” She grabs her purse and takes a sip from my coffee and tells me goodbye.

“I will see you later this week, I love you, Charlotte.”

And there she was, my soul mate, kissed me right over my head and gave me a beautiful reminder that came out of her, “You have to be lucky enough to fall out of love, *you never were in* without crying.” I smile and bid her goodbye. I knew that came from a place of pain and not love.

I close the door and sit on the bed as I wonder.

I want to be in love when I see two people madly in love with each other. When I see them glancing over each other with pure love that I didn’t get. When I see some guy moving his hands through his girlfriend’s hair. When I see a thrill of passionate love in the eyes of people who are madly in love for each other, who respect each other and can move ahead with their love that doesn’t involve their bodies. When I see one of those people reassuring each other when they know the other one is falling. The softness they hold for each other and the joy they emanate because they are in love.

With all these thoughts in my head I decide to take a nap and set the alarm for 6:40 PM only if Noah comes and rings the bell. Though, I should be the one returning him his keys and thank him for his generous behaviour for yesterday...and.....the note.



I will go and try not being nervous but how do I? His blue eyes are like a distraction for me.

I am going to tell him that I don't remember anything from yesterday and that would be a lie...a straight away lie because I remember every inch of the situation we had yesterday.

I am coy enough to admit everything because his touch was too soft and awakening enough to not pay attention.

He must have seen the scar that I have over my navel.

He has.

I saw his eyes that were set at my stomach for a while when he was removing my bottoms that I vividly remember asking him.

He looked at them wanting to know the reason behind them. For the first time, I didn't feel like hiding my stomach from a guy.

It felt real.

Real, after a really long time.

When I knocked his apartment yesterday, I wanted somebody who would not judge me, who would just carry me to my bed and not let me be alone.

The feeling that I have for Noah, not exactly a kind of *feeling* that is describable but....I grew up in a household that threatened me to walk, that made me interrogate everything I felt. So, everything that I have ever felt has claw marks in my head, over my body and in my heart. But feeling something for Noah isn't one of those feelings. Maybe, I am thinking a lot.....

## Chapter 6

# NOAH

Contemplating to see the girl of my dreams is just not worth it. I was on the last step of the staircase and to my left I saw Kate's apartment and to my right I see mine.

*Which one should I possibly knock?*

If I knock Kate's then she would think that I am a desperate psycho and if I open my apartment then after few minutes after I am done with my shower then I could see her and in that way she wouldn't even think otherwise because I am *just* going to check on her and to grab my keys.

*That is just a reason to see her.*

I kept my bag on the couch and directly went in the shower.

I come around late evening, I grab some nuts and lock my apartment.

As soon as I turned around keeping putting keys inside my pocket, I see Kate locking her door.

Was she coming to see me?

She looks fresh. I saw her and didn't mean to say a word before she interrupted my silent gazing at her.

“Were you coming at my place?” She asked shifting her coffee from left hand to right.

“Yeah, I just wanted to grab my keys and ask you how you were holding up after yesterday.”

She laughed and said, “I should be coming over and thank you instead.” *I wouldn’t mind, if it means seeing you.*

I didn’t waste a second and say, “Do you want to come inside?”

“Sure” she says.

I turn around unlocking my door and she is right behind me. Her scent is the same, she smells floral mixed with espresso.

We enter inside and she sat on the couch, and I was standing near the kitchen shelf.

“You can sit Noah, don’t get nervous. It is your apartment only.” She smiles and sips her coffee.

“I am not nervous.”

“Maybe, but you seem different than when you first came inside my apartment.”

*Of course, I feel nervous around her. All the time.*

“So, did you read the note?” I break the silence.

“Of course I did.” She smiles. “I am sorry I disturbed you at an odd hour and thank you so much.” I sit near her and drink some water.

“You don’t have to thank me, it’s nothing.” I speak.

“No, I am now in your debt. I will return you this favour in any way you want one day.” She says that jokingly.

*Can you always be mine? Do me just that favour.*

"It's nothing Kate." I repeat.

"The letter.....that was, sweet." Her eyes were gleaming.

"How many times did you have to read it to find it to be sweet?"

"Four times was enough." She speak.

I saw her glass was almost out of coffee so I offered her some more.

She looks at me with suspicion and says, "How do you know that I drink coffee more than I inhale oxygen?"

"One question at a time, for all your unanswered questions. So is this *the* question for the day?"

"Yes, I think." She says in confusion.

"Firstly, for the times when you are in hurry at 7 in the morning and get no time to make coffee for yourself, you go to the coffee shop outside the block. Every day, same time, same days. So that should clear that morning coffee is mandatory for you. Secondly, there are more than half of the times when your delivery guy from Starbucks has knocked my apartment for your espresso which manages to happen twice on weekends and once during weekdays. So that should be enough for you. A person receiving the orders of the same coffee during the same time every day is so obvious." I release a breath.

The entire time while I was answering her question, I couldn't help but look at her, into her eyes. She has magical eyes.

“You are a great observer or stalker to be precise. But how are you aware that I get coffee from down the block?”

“I leave for my office at the same time.” I laugh as I answer her question.

“So tell me more about you. Since how long you have been living in New York?”

“It has been more than 5 years now.”

“Where are you originally from?” She seems curious.

“I am from.....Texas.” I say.

*Shit.*

She looks as if she has so much more to ask.

“I have lived in the same apartment since 2 years but I have never seen you around.” She says.

“Yeah, my grandfather died 10 months ago, he left this apartment for me in his will. So, I didn’t find any reason to live on rent anymore.” “Oh, I am sorry to hear that.” She actually looks sorry.

“Thanks, it has been a while now. He was my favourite.”

“Deaths are scary.” She says as she finishes the coffee and keeps her mug on the table.

“I know, right? You can never be fully prepared for losing your loved one.”

She rubs her hand on my shoulders signalling that it is going to be alright.

“Can I ask you one personal question if you don’t mind?” I say.

“Go ahead.” She smiles.

*She doesn't just smile, she brings an entire room to an unknown power of optimistic vibe, but I also know there is so much behind that smile, behind those eyes of hers.*

“So, how did you get that scar.” I pause for a moment before I finish my sentence. “On your stomach.”

She tries adjusting her hair and tries to change the topic and then says, “I got it when I was 11, I fell from the staircase.” She says.....she lies.

“How does a staircase leave you with this kind of scar? I am sorry if I sound intrusive but I just.....”

I see that she turns pale, her hands are slightly shivering and it feels as if her brain just froze. I tried to make the situation normal by holding her hand. I held her hand firmly and I see that her face turns face to normal colour.

I don't push her. I shouldn't be doing that.

What is that she is hiding? How did she get that scar? I have so much to ask her, but I'd rather give her time than seeing her get panicked about it.

In order to ease down the situation, I rub her hand and told her to ask me something else.

“So Mr Noah, what do you do for a living?” She says this as she slowly releases her hand from mine.”

“I write.” I said.

“Really?” She seems shocked.

*You are the muse I have been looking for.*

“I love to read. I read when I get up, I read when I have my coffee, I read when I poop, I read when I sleep. So have you written anything as of now?” She laughs again.

It is so painful to see how a minute ago her body froze, her mind shut down and now she moulds herself according to the question.

I get straight to the point, “Tell me how many days it is going to take for you to be my girlfriend and that will be a clue to answer your question.” Her eyes widen up and she says, “You are going way ahead of yourself. You know that I had a breakup. So now is not the right time to answer this question. You got to wait a little.” She says rubbing her fingers.

I knew it was soon but.....

*How much do you want me to wait? I have been waiting for a decade, for you. If it is going to take more than that for you to be mine, then I will wait for eternity, for you to be mine. For Kate to be Noah's.*

“I was kidding, I say.” I pass her a smile. I see her looking at the clock and it was ten past 8.

“I think I should get going, I will see you around and thank you again. I am in your debt.” She laughs.

I walk her out and when I open the door she looks at me, she gives me a look with so much firmness in her eyes as if she has something huge to say and something is stopping her. And then she turns around and says me goodnight. As I was about to shut the door, I hear her saying “Noah wait.”

I put my hand on the knob and say, “Yes Kate.”

She passes me a smile and says “Are you free tomorrow? Maybe we could grab some coffee from the coffee shop below our block?”

My heart just burst. “I will knock your door at seven sharp then. Good night, Kate, stay hydrated.”

She smiles and leaves.

As soon as she left, I sat on the couch smiling like a nerd.

But, this feels sooooooooooooooooooooo good.



## *Chapter 7*

# KATE

There is just something about Noah which doesn't let me sleep, which makes everything overwhelming for me.

Maybe that is what attraction does in the initial days but with him it is just different.

He is still answerable for a lot of questions and maybe....so am I.

It made the old wound of mine reappear. I have been pretending that it's not there, because when I touch it, it hurts.....it hurts so bad.

I wanted to tell him of how I got those scars but just some part of my heart takes a while to rely on people. To make sure that I don't break a nerve of my heart that has been broken a while ago.....and repaired....and broken.

I got inside my room and changed. This still felt confusing. I still don't know what to feel.

While I lay on my bed, I was perplexed. They say that eyes don't lie, but why couldn't Mason read mine? Were they not clear enough for him? When I told him that I am fine, did he know that I lied? I still wonder what is worse, did he not know or did he not care.

Am I comparing my ex-boyfriend and the guy I met 2 days ago?

I don't even know if I am doing the right thing or not.

How can I un-love Mason this easy?

Was I just waiting for anything like this to happen? Was I in that relationship just for the sake of him?

Though I have never in my life felt not beautiful just because of the scars, ever. These scars are an everyday reminder of how strong I have been. These scars remind me that even though life throws shit at you, you just slay.

You know how to be strong, and I think I got that from my mother. She is the epitome of bravery for me. My mother, Mrs. Carrie Hardy or Miss Carrie.....just Carrie.

I like her name without the surname of my father, without a thought of my father. I like that she has an identity of her own, now. She is going to turn 52 in just ten days, and I have everything planned for her birthday.

She lives with her best friend, Charlotte's mother, Aunt August. I have called her my aunt since forever. Our families used to live a block away from each other.

While Charlotte's Dad died 5 years ago and my mother divorced my father just a few years back. So, both of them live together. Both these ladies are living their life like they are 20 and I love it that way.

And that is why I leave one day before my mother's birthday, and we get to celebrate both of them.

*These super-hot ladies turning 52.*

My mother got married when she was 21. My grandfather died when she was just 2 years of age and the entire responsibility shifted towards my grandmother. My Aunt Sheryl is the eldest and my mother is the middle child while my uncle is the youngest.

I think I would have left my house the minute I turned 18 but I didn't because of her, because of a fear of leaving her alone with my.....father.

Her initial years of marriage were just her adjusting and compromising the entire time. She used to take the entire workload of my dad's side of the family.

She wouldn't complain, she still doesn't, and I don't think she ever will. I still remember the first time I heard my parents fighting, I was 12 back then and I was sleeping on my bed with my brother, Mark. I was in my subconscious sleep, and I heard a voice, my father's voice.....shouting and saying "*Are you mad Carrie? You should know how to be quiet when a man in the house speaks.*" This still feels like a roar and scares me every time.

I never had the courage to open my eyes or try reaching them or to just stop the fight, I would just stand near the door and wait for the *right moment* to barge in.....but I never did. I was just 12 and I would tell my brother to go and see what is happening in their room because he was a couple years elder to me, but he too, would say quiet, in his bed and not make a noise because what if our father beats us? *But that would ultimately lead him to stop beating my mother. Right?*

This was what I use to think.

I became too old for my age. I was 15 when I was 12, I was 20 when I was 15 and I was 30 when I was 20. And now, I think I am just you know.....surviving.

The gap just increases. For every fight they have had, a piece of my heart just broke....and got never fixed.

My mother is as innocent as she was back then, and my father is as angry and frustrated and a *victim* that he was back then. My mother would never utter a word in front of him, and he would say every disrespectful thing to her. All of this had one cause...alcohol.

One word which ruined everything.

When I gained some sense.....and some courage to call out what's wrong and right, my brother too did.

I was 15 then and he was 17.

Every argument between them would have my brother and me in between. I have witnessed my father hitting my mother out of anger, gripping her neck, abusing her, abusing us.

As I grew older, my mother like every other mother made an image of my father as if he is the best.

*But she never realised that her children have spent their early teens just figuring this out and tried making a space for our father in our hearts.*

She would exaggerate one thing into two so that we would love him. I know that a mother would do that, but why? Why do women never get the courage to slap their husbands or boyfriends in return? Why do we just.....cry and remain silent hoping for something wonderful to happen. Hoping that their

husbands or boyfriends would change? *But if they wanted to, they would.* This is what I have to say to her.

My mother is the emotionally weakest yet the strongest person at the same time. Weakest because she would do anything to protect the bad side of our father in front of us and strongest because she would protect the bad side of our father in front of us.

My father would be the best human being you'd ever see when he is sober but when he is drunk, you'd just....don't want to see him. He did his best to provide his children every kind of luxury he could. He would never say no to both of us for anything. But I still wonder of why did he never value my mother? Why did he never respect her? Did he even love her ever? I think not.

As I grew older, the number of fights between them decreased but the intensity grew when one sad day my mother came to know that my father was cheating on her. I was alone when she shared it with me, my brother had no clue about it until I shared it with him.

I still feel weak in my legs when I think about it. How could she see him with somebody else that is not her? A women would do anything to keep her partner; she would tolerate anything but seeing him with somebody else would just be unbreakable.

That is how women are made, from their soul to their bodies. Every nerve will fall apart if they get to witness this.

The moment she shared it with me; I got to know that she has been hiding it since a couple of months. Her eyes felt a sense of relief as if she just needed me to know about the situation. But she would just cry day and night....CRY HERSELF to sleep

and interrogate where she was less as a partner. I have seen her in the most vulnerable position. I didn't have the courage to even share it with Mark.

I have never, since my childhood have had one night of peaceful sleep. I had questions running through my mind day and night. I have had fun with my family and friends, I would be outside but mind would just be stuck on one question, *what if my mother and father are fighting?*

The day both of them got divorced was the first day when I slept without this question and I would just hug her, tell her that I am here and sleep.

And now I wonder, she was the weakest version of herself when she found her husband cheating.

Why am I not vulnerable? She was married for years while I was dating for few but love doesn't have any time dimension and that is when it hit me.

If I didn't cry or sob every day for at least a year then it wasn't love. It was just a mere habit.

My mother spent 22 years of her life loving a man, wanting just to love from him when all he did was not value her. She just asked for the bare minimum and cry in silence on days she wanted to hide from the world and cried in my arms on the days she needed somebody to hold her. There were days when she was all in for taking a divorce but she never wanted her children to have an impact or hate her husband.

*We had to love him in order to hate him, which we never did.*

My mother tried her best to convince me and my brother that he is just not good as a husband but the best father in the

world but who will tell her that he must be the best husband in order to be a best father. He can't be one and do wrong to the other.

I still a weight in my heart when I think about all of this.

But, I just cannot sit and stare at my wound forever.

I can't ever define the pain that I have endured since so many years. It doesn't sound right, *oops, that hurt you, I am sorry*, this is not the pain I went through. I have been shattered, I have been destroyed, I have been crippled, and I have been devastated but *hurt*, no. It didn't just *hurt* me. After I entered my late teens, things improved for the better or worse, but I started seeing him more often. Irrespective of everything that I detest about him, of course I can't just ignore the good side. I have tried, but I can't.

He is the hardest working man I have seen and would never run from his responsibility.....I just think he made everything for all of us financially secure but there was never an emotional connection between the children and the father. And if today anybody asks me why am I so emotionally available for everybody, this is the reason. My father could never be, so I made a choice to just be his opposite. Now when I am in my late 20's, my mother is not with my father anymore, they live separately.

I see my mother frequently and my father.....never.

I see my mother now and she is happy. She lives for herself. She does yoga to make herself feel lively, she takes herself out on a dinner, and she keeps herself above everybody else. Now she is who I wanted her to be back then. Aunt August and her are both just.... always in the moment. That is how I like them.

I wish I could be like my mother, who knows how gain bravery out of vulnerability.....but she is just different. I feel so much for her because she has had the desire to want another wound when just couldn't repair the previous ones.

Back then, I thought that she was just a messy person. Why was it difficult for her to leave my father when all she ever saw was a compromise between them? To just be together for societal reasons. When I finally asked her this a few months back, she gave me a reply that cut me down yet made me feel peace. Her words are stuck inside my head, *"There were endless reasons for me to leave your father, but I just cling onto the one, a hope. Hope of what If he changes one day. I know it took me a while to realise that none of us deserve shit in a relationship but I also want you to know, that our heart will learn it one day or the other to how to be strong, but they don't learn how to be fragile. We are all just ready to be strong but what about being easily breakable? Nobody talks about it right? I want you to give your heart a one thousand chances, keep it fragile. If you deliberately keep it strong then how would you ever differentiate between your heart and your brain?"*

I recalled her lines and just.....cried. I wish I could go back in time, give her all those years back so that she could just be happy. But instead, I set up the alarm for 7 am and texted my mother, *I love you, you are the strongest person I know.* And she replied in a second, *I love you, I got strength from my mother, I hope you too will.* I had tears in my eyes while I smiled and went to sleep.

I got up before my alarm like every other day. My everyday ritual of a kick ass shower and skincare takes one hour. I get done with everything, in the process of applying my moisturiser, my phone beeps.



It is so unusual for my phone to make a sound before 11 am and if it's before that then it's from my manager but wait. I am my own manager.

This feeling still feels unreal. I got promoted just few weeks back and the feeling is unusual and sinking in. Interior designing has been my passion if I could even recall.

Now that I earn a good amount which helps in dealing with my day to day expenses. I was thinking of starting my own brand name, work on my own.

My mother gifted this apartment to me on my 25<sup>th</sup> birthday so roof isn't my stress anymore but other things are. I want to save for my wedding. I want to save for everything and yet live every day to its fullest.

When I looked down at my phone I smiled. I smiled because Noah just added me on Instagram and wait, it is 7:30, and how do people have time to do this in the morning. I laugh when I think about it.

Noah is so unpredictable. I like people who are impromptu yet not impulsive. I accepted his friend request after few seconds. The thought of adding him over social media has occurred to me so many times but it still felt too quick to add him.

And there he goes, impromptu Noah, my impromptu Noah. Too quick to add me but.....

I kept my phone aside when I see it vibrating again, it's Noah, again. And he has texted me. I open his text and smile.

Noah: Hi, Good morning.

I choose to reply to it later. Not because I didn't have time to reply but because I didn't have time to smile like a moron at his text.

I keep my phone inside my pocket, keeping my everyday necessities and open the door to lock it.

I turn around to look my door and I heard another door open. Fuck.

That is Noah.

I turn around after I am done locking the door. I want to unlock and lock it again, I want to stay in the same position forever because I don't want to see him because I won't be able to take my eyes from him. And there he calls me out, "Hey" he says with a smile.

I turn around and.....he looks so fresh in his plain black t shirt and boxers.

His eyes are magical. These are the eyes that I read about in books. "Are you staring at my legs Kate?" He laughs so hard when he says this. "No, I just.....good morning, how are you? When do you leave for work?"

I don't need to say more, it is more than evident for him to see that I am nervous.

"I am good, you must be leaving for work. I won't bother you. I will see you tonight at 7."

"Yeah, see you. Bye." I didn't even look him in the eye and ran through the stairs. Why was I shivering? It's not the first time I am talking to him. God, he looked.....hot.

I get inside the car, sit on the driver seat and stare at another text.

Noah: I have waited for you, I really have.....

I can't move, the steering wheel has stuck, and my feet are not able to move. I just feel frozen. *He has waited for me?* Nobody has ever waited for me in my classroom to save me a seat. I take a while before I respond to the text, I don't have anything appropriate answer. I don't know how I should reply, what should I.

I gather some courage and texted him.

Me: I have waited *for* a person like you, too.....

Fuckkk.

And then I ran for my life, I turned the internet off, drove full of nervousness to my office with my steering wheel being wet because of the sweat that had had on my hands throughout the drive

## Chapter 8

# NOAH

That was such a coincidence. I was going out to gather some groceries and she was leaving for her office.

I have seen Kate in her office attires before as well, but today she just looked different. Her hair was damp as if she rushed from the shower. Her hands were full, full of water bottle, lip-gloss, her phone and her wallet and her book.

Sometimes I wonder, a match like us who aren't even match is hard to find. Somebody who loves to write and somebody who is the muse, unknowingly.

Damn a *match* made in heaven. I couldn't take my eyes off of her until she was on the last staircase. Everything about her is beautiful. I have felt this way about somebody for the very first time. I have dated few girls in my college years but with her I want a relationship, I want my kids to have Kate's dark brown eyes and my sense of humour. When your heart knows it, it just does.

When I texted her, I read the same text for more than ten times.

It all feels new, special and apprehensive at the same time.

Today, we will be going out, not officially but this moment is so special for me. When I don't have to look at her from afar.

I am having work from home since a while now. Opening a library has been my long-life goal and I accomplished it as soon as I shifted to New York. The name of my library just goes well with the kind of person that I am, "heart echoes inside."

The year I moved here, I invested all my money in this library which has a coffee shop in its backyard. I earn enough to keep up with my expenses while my mother calls me almost every day to check on me by saying, "Your father earns enough my Son, you can work as long as you wish to but don't take expenses over your head." And I laugh every time she says this.

Both my parents have never pressurised me into doing something I didn't wish to do. My father wanted me to be cardiologist and my mother wanted me to be a teacher because apparently, I was a good student during my school years. I have had a very sweet family, just the three of us. When I moved back, my mother couldn't function for at least 6 months. She lives just few hours away from New York and I visit her in Texas almost every month and FaceTime her every day. And on days when I forget to do so, she taunts me about it jokingly for a week. My father on the other hand has been way too emotional when I left. I left for my further studies and my father gave me a very easy option to come back to Texas and continue working in his company, he claims this every time when he misses me, "Noah, we have enough money to feed 10 generations, you come and work beside me, it will be fun." I know that comes from a parental perspective but I want to be independent. I have seen both of my parents being that way, so being dependent on anybody has never been an option.

My life has been way too good for me and my family. My parents started dating in high school and are married for 26 years now. They can't breathe without each other, they can't eat without each other, and they can't do anything without each other. I find them mushy and cringe on days but there are days when I look into their eyes and I see a feeling, a feeling that explains the battles they have fought to reach where they are now and that makes so proud.

That is the kind of love I am hoping to find. They are an epitome of perfection for me. Both of them are very patient and calm and that is what they have inherited in me, I still remember when I was 7 or 8 maybe....they used to say "There is nothing in this word which can't be said in a lower pitch and if you think that you can shout to prove yourself right then you are the stupidest person in the world." And this has just been with me forever.

It had been a couple of hours since I have last seen Kate and she has replied to my text which made me blush. *"I have waited for a person like you, too."*

I still am not sure if we are friends or more than that or wanting to be more than that. I get a feeling of my feet not touching the ground when I am around her.

I sat on my couch, poured myself some coffee a just thought, I just looked at the clock and it was 5:55 PM and Kate must be leaving her office in few. And should be getting ready. I am just the opposite of what I am feeling right now. I have never put real effort to get ready or do I just look good effortlessly.

These thoughts were making me laugh, I have not felt this way ever. I want to tell her; I want her to ask me questions that I have been dying to answer.

I finally get up after a couple of minutes, put on my white t shirt and black joggers with a pair of shoes. I have looked in the mirror for uncountable times and now is the time to get out of my apartment and knock at hers because it is 7, just the right time.

I keep my wallet in my pocket, grabbed my phone and a letter that I wrote for her. Because I believe, the world is full of paper, choose every moment to write, to just write.

I was almost there to open my door but I hear a knock from the other side, I hope its Kate because I am not expecting anybody. I don't have anybody to expect except a few cousins who live around the corner, but they would never knock, they would thump and scream out my name.

I open the door and try to be as calm as I could.

And I see her.

I wanted the person who knocked to be Kate but I didn't expect that. Kate looks magnificent like she does every time. She is the casual version of my casual outfit; she is wearing her t shirt that covers her hip and cycling shorts with a pair of slippers. Her hair is tied up in a messy bun.

Some of her hair falls on the side of her face when she tries to put them behind her ears and fails miserably. And her legs are sexier than mine, she couldn't stop staring at mine this morning, but has she seen hers? *She hasn't, I bet.*

I want to look at her face, look into her eyes but her legs are distracting the functioning of my brain.

I have known so much about her since so long but it feels as if I know nothing. As if she has so many feelings behind that face of hers and all she wants is somebody to ask that to her, to just ask her why she carries this sense of fear and pain in her eyes.

But, one day at a time, “What are you thinking?” she says and bursts the bubble I was in.

“Nothing.....hi...umm.....do you want to come inside?”

That is the stupid question to ask because we decided to go to the coffee shop then why would she want to *come inside*?

“Or why don’t we just proceed downstairs and carry on with my questions.” she passes me a smirk.

How can a person smile like this? Her lips form a wide U when she smiles, her eyes get wrinkled up and she scrunches her nose every time she says something flirty and I like that so much about her.

As we move downstairs, she walks on my left side and her elbow is touching mine, *she knows that her elbow is touching mine* and she isn’t moving to her right to stop that from happening. None of us do.

The moment we reached inside the coffee shop, she wanted to sit on the table on the corner for two and I followed her command. I asked her for her order.

While I am a double espresso person, she is a blueberry shake with extra sugar person.



I ordered hers and mine and brought it back to the table.

She was smiling at her phone and that made me sad. Why was she smiling at her phone? We smile when we receive a text from our crush or the person we like but her reply to my text seemed as if she kind of likes me. Am I being a psycho? Probably yes, she could be texting her friend.

I can't get jealous when I don't even know anything because I don't get jealous. That is not what I get into.

I sat to her opposite side and looked at her, just looked as she looked at me.

"So tell me what is new with you Kate." I say. She keeps aside her phone and says, "I was just texting Charlotte, my mothers' birthday is around the corner and she has never missed her birthday since we moved to New York, but she might not be able to accompany me this time because of something. "Oops, that's sad. So have you planned anything for her birthday?"

She talks about her mother with so much pain yet love in her eyes, I wonder what it could be. I wonder what it could be more than what I already know.

"Yes, I don't have everything planned but I will get it done this weekend, my mother lives with her best friend and these two ladies get to celebrate two birthdays in 3 days, so it is a big ass party every year. "That is great, what else would a friend want anyway. Do tell me if you need some help."

"I think I do, if you don't mind....but you cannot mind because you offered." She sips her shake and smiles.

"Of course I *cannot* mind, tell me what it is." I say.

“Can you accompany me to find her birthday gift, only if you get some time.....tomorrow or day after?” She asks.

This is what I need.

“Of course, I will get free around 5 PM tomorrow, does that work for you?” I ask her.

“Yeah. I will get an early off tomorrow anyway, so we could meet around 5 tomorrow.”

“Great.”

“Where does your mother live Kate?”

“She lives in Texas.”

I smile at it.

“Did I say something funny?”

“No, you did not, I just.....my mother lives in Texas too.”

She seems shocked.

“Where is your family residing?”

“My family lives in Texas too, near the Oak Street.”

She laughs and says, “My mother lives there too.” *Of course I know, Kate.*

“How have I never seen you around ever?” She asks. “It is going to take me time to process, you have lived near me for the most of my life and how have we not known about each other?”

*I have known you enough for the both of us you stupid.*

That is what I want to say to her but instead I just keep quiet and smiled while she was gulping her coffee down her throat.

“So Noah, how did you know about me?”

*Thank you for asking, I have been waiting to revert back*

“What if I tell you, I have just known you since you were.....you know.....12?”

She laughs thinking that I was just pulling her leg.

“Shut up and tell me the truth.”

*Believe me, believe me for once and I will spill everything if you just ask me. And I would be an open book.*

“Do you remember 2 years back, it was raining heavily on the 16<sup>th</sup> of August?”

“I keep forgetting what I ate yesterday, and you think I’d remember this?” She laughs.

“I will tell you more, you were wearing an orange dress with black heels and your umbrella flew because of the wind and you were apparently fighting with your boyfriend and didn’t want to accompany him to the apartment where you currently live. Do you recall anything now?” I ask.

“You mentioning the fight with my boyfriend with an orange dress is enough because that was the first fight we had, that was the orange dress gifted by Mason and he wanted me to wear it as we were out on our date and he ditched me while I was waiting for him downstairs to get into his car and all he said was “*I have an urgent dinner with my colleague regarding something mandatory in our office.*” How is this not enough for me to recall that shitty day.” She says with anger in her voice.

“Do you remember you knocked on somebody’s car door and told him to drop you one block ahead?”

“I do, I actually do because as soon as Mason, shouted at me, uselessly and I didn’t want to look at him so my reflex was this, asking somebody to drop me to my office because why do I have to miss my office and get my pay cut because of that asshole for a *fucking dinner*.”

*I remember every word that you said Kate, every word.*

“So, you knocked my car’s window that day.” Her eyes open wide in shock. “How do I not remember your face then?”

“I remember yours, is that enough?” I see her turn pink as I say this.

I see her blushing and sliding her hands down her thigh as a feeling of nervousness but I chose to ignore, not her feelings but her thighs.

“I am glad you did; I needed those brownies that you offered me a couple of days ago. That could have been possible only if you had remembered my face. So that adds up.”

“I want to remind you that you fought with me too because apparently, you chose to shut down the radio and shouted, “*Can anybody play a Taylor Swift song for me?*” and I agreed because what else could I have done.”

I don’t feel like I can express or say or even elucidate what I felt the second I saw her. Everything about her has changed since she was 12 and everything about her is the same. She laughs in the exact same way, she makes her angry face like she did but she just seems less happy, of course adulthood isn’t a bed of roses all the time but her smile, irrespective of the times when she used to lose a game, lose a basketball match or get into a fight with a stranger. She has never had ache on her face. But

her face was evident for me to notice that she is just not happy. That is all I could make out. Of course she didn't recognise me back then, but I did. I did in a second, her face has changed so much obviously but I have seen her account on Facebook few years back because we had so many mutual friends, I never had the courage to add her because she would just not know me ever.

"Oh God Noah, this is surprising, why did you let me inside when you didn't even know me?"

"I did because you didn't ask me if you could come inside, you just knocked on my window, opened the door and got inside and told me to drop you somewhere around The Blue Moon resort."

"Isn't this surprising? I mean we met each other after 2 years, that too on the night of my breakup."

*Let me take some of your time from your life, everything that you'd find from next on will be surprising, I promise.*

We got done with our drinks and Kate asked if we could walk around the block because "It's just 9:10 right now Noah, we have so much time."

Then we got up, went out of the coffee shop and walked, I wish I could look at her and tell her what I see in her? She is real life miracle; she is a real life magic. She always was one.

"So do you go for a walk every day?" She asks

"I run every morning instead." I say.

"Impressive."

"Can I ask you something?"

"Sure"

“Did you mean what you wrote as a reply to my text?”

I wanted her to initiate a conversation regarding the text I sent her but she did not. I really wanted her to.

“I meant it.” That was her a reply in 3 words. And that made my world revolved in a second. She meant it, she could have just said something else but *she meant it*.

“I hope you are saying what you really feel.”

“I would never say anything unless and until it doesn’t come from my heart, know this about me.” She says that and adjusts her hair falling on her horsehead.

“I am glad.”

I see her smiling but trying hard to get it unnoticed.

“Did *you* mean what you wrote?”

I laugh as I say, “I write things that I mean, or else I just don’t.”

“The author inside you knows how to speak.” She laughs.

She laughs and looks at me, she laughs and turns around when I see her hands moving forward to mine and I want everything to stop around us and let it be our world, where just the two of us living. The air around felt warmer, it felt like everything has stopped.

She was looking at me as if she is going to kiss me....

But, she holds my hand, *Kate holds my fucking hand* and I can’t see anything else but her eyes, staring deep into mine. She holds my hand and says, “You are too generous for trying to fall in love with me, but I am fucked up Noah, I am so fucked up.”

And that is how my smile disappeared, my smile was nowhere to be found and my heart just.....ached.

Noises in my head were screaming without making a single noise, I was crying without making a noise, I was breaking down inside without making a noise.

There is a distance of around 100 meters from the area we were walking on to our respective apartments. Kate slowly left my hand and walked quietly. Her hand detaching from mine felt like somebody had stabbed me with a knife. She didn't turn around, that hold which was once there was in the air now. It's silence that follows, the weight of words that stay while the person doesn't. It's the ache of something unfinished, slipping away before I could even grasp it.

Just a "goodbye" was what she said when we reached and that was it. I didn't even get the chance to hand her the note I wrote for her.

I look at her as she disappears.....just disappears.

Then, I put my hand inside my pocket and crumble the note to throw it in the dustbin.

She must be fucked up, but how do you even say that to somebody you know who's trying.....trying for you. I feel a tear rolling down my cheek and I wipe it off and run towards my apartment. My heart feels shattered, my cheeks feel warm. I am not even able to let it out but it is so much inside.

Just so much.

She isn't blind, she does see everything. She must be vulnerable, she must be sad but.....it just breaks my heart.....so fucking much.

I roll onto my bed and cry a little.....

My night looks sad.....just so sad.



## Chapter 9

# KATE

*I am fucked up?*

What the hell.

I knew Noah was trying hard for me, everything that he felt was so fucking evident. But I just didn't want to hurt him. I tend to break peoples' heart by thinking that I deserve less or that they are doing more. Noah seemed genuine but hurting him was something that scared me so much.

So, instead of hurting him I just thought of running away.

*Well, not the right thing to do Kate.*

I chose the wrong words, *I am fucked up* ugh, and it's running all over my head.

I snapped at him for no reason. But we were supposed to go out tomorrow to buy something for my mother. How do I even knock his door and tell him that I am sorry?

I also know that Noah could be the one for me but why does my heart linger on? Why can't I just give people a chance to try?

I let this feeling of guilt sink in for an hour before I sit on the bed and chose to fix what I ruined.

I grab a pen and a notepad.

I write a big ass paragraph.

As I finish writing, I took courage to knock at his door.

As I knock, he opens the door immediately as if he was just waiting for somebody. He is wearing nothing, *as in*, just his boxers.

*Does he stay like this, always?* I will probably ask that to him some day. I couldn't help but stare at his abs, but I reminded myself that I am here for something else.

"Hey, I assumed you must be at gym." I was nervous but he looked calm as if nothing happened. The same calmness he has on his face all the time.

He starts to open the door letting me in a little by little and says, "I came back an hour ago. I will make you some coffee."

He moves towards the kitchen before I interrupt him, "Noah, I don't want to have anything and I don't want to beat around the bush but I am sorry for yesterday, umm.....take this.

I hand him the note I wrote for him.

He sat on his couch and didn't let go of my note before he made himself comfortable. While I was nervous, I didn't want to look at him.

I was one hundred percent sure that he would read it after I will be gone but..... *what the fuck*, he starts to open it. He is reading it in front of me.

No way.

Before he could say anything, I began to speak, "I know it must be tiring to read this.....right now. You can read it once I leave." He looks at me still clinging onto the page and stand up to sit beside me.

"Kate, it's from you. Even if I had climbed the Everest and would be exhausted.....I would still read this or anything, anything for you." He puts his hand on my left thigh and starts rubbing it, comforting me. I really thought he would be mad after what happened but he is just like he usually is.

And the rest is history. Everything about me, everything I hold onto is written in that letter.

*Dear Noah,*

*I am sorry about yesterday, believe me I have not slept yesterday only because I was guilty. I am unsure about so many things in my life but if there is some sense of assurance then it is for you because I know that you would never break my heart even if you do, you will fix it in a best possible way and I would forget that you even broke it. Though I hope that you don't break my heart. I have got my heart broken so many times and it has no solid pieces left that are yet to be broken. I know that you have waited for me for two years and I can't deny that I feel something for you too. I have tried running away from this feeling but I can't. The day when you asked me about my scars, I had no second thoughts in my head to share the reason behind them and that is when it hit me. I take a lot, literally a lot of time to share something so huge to somebody else. About this, nobody knows this except Charlotte. Mason has seemed my marks but never asked me.....and when you did, I could see the sense of pain and concern in your eyes. And I am not writing this because I want any sympathy or comfort from you. I am*

writing this because I want to let you know about the parts of my life where I wish I had you and you weren't there. These scars are given to me by my father, I have had a fucked-up childhood and for every girl who says that she wants a husband like her father, I disagree with them. Because I don't want a partner like him. I have slept more than half the days of my life crying myself to sleep and praying to God of why he can't punish him. I have got my heart broken by my father than I have from any other boy and that is what hurts me the most. I want to tell you, that there are parts of me that can never heal. I am just a sad soul and know that you or anybody else can't fix me. I like me more when in solitude. But, you Noah.....you are stronger than that to me. Please don't try to change how I feel or try to fix me. Trust me, I am a very happy person. I stay optimistic all the time but my soul? That is sad. It is rotted from the inside. About my father.....he isn't a bad man, he just was a bad husband, and his rage just made him a bad father, for once. Nobody has asked me ever how my day was, except my mother but she did simply because she is my mother. My aim to write this is because I want you to know that I am not an easy person to be with. I don't want you to fall for me because I might end up hurting you or, to be honest, I am scared that you might hurt me, you might just tear my heart one day and pretend like you are the one who is bleeding. But I also want you to love me to your death because it would be a privilege to get my heart broken by you. I was in love with the fact that I was with Mason, I never was in love with him. But I think you'd bear, with me. I could be just lying if I say that you just love me, because you don't just love me, you can't just love me. You are the one of a kind who would live for me. I think that I would be too messed up for a sorted person like you and I don't want to ruin you because I know that you would try to fix me, by just simply loving me like I have never been loved. But how do I explain that I am willing to make it possible with you. My scariness can't overpower the love I have for you. Just make me a

*promise and I would be all yours, and don't consider this promise as something that is meant to be broken. I know none of this is your responsibility but Noah, I know I am a storm but stay—————just stay, I promise to weather this with you.*

*Meet me where you sit with my insecurities, show me your vulnerabilities, scars that have hurt you, memories that still haunt you. Meet me at a bookstore at the corner and tell me about your childhood memories with or without trauma. Meet me in the dark so that you could share your truths and unveil mine. Meet me near the lake so that we can undress our shields, uncover our stories. Meet me at the hill so that we can scream to the stars to make our wishes come true. Let's scream so loud that stars have no choice but to fall for us the same way you fell for me. Meet me when your heart meets mine, meet me when I met myself.*

*Enough of it, Mr Noah Evans, would you like to go out on a date with me? You don't get 'no' as an option so choose thoughtfully. Kiss me if it's a 'yes' like we will die tomorrow. And if it's a 'no', then kiss me like we would live forever, with each other.*

I have never heard silence like this. I don't see Noah reacting a bit to my letter, I know that he has finished reading it. What is he possibly thinking?

And his eyes meet mine, finally. He puts the letter in front of us on the table and looks at me. He just doesn't look at me, he is looking at me as if he is going to fuck me without touching me. He turns around facing me and I tilt myself a little. Our knees touch each other. He puts his hand on my thigh and asks me, "Can I kiss you?"

I pass him a smile and say, "I asked you to kiss me, and you can't ask what I have asked."

He rubs his thumb on my thigh and whisper near my ear, "Some habits don't change."

I put my hand over his wrist and say, "Yes.....yes you can." He cradles my cheeks and puts a strand of hair behind my ears. "I have waited for you, I have just waited for you. I have waited for this very moment since forever."

As I open my mouth to converse.....his lips meet mine. And he doesn't kiss me like he has been waiting to fuck me. He kissed me as if he has just wanted my lips, to touch his. He wraps his arm around my back and mine are wrapped around his neck. We kiss each other so gently.

I don't want to take a break from this kiss ever. He slides his hands all over my back and he doesn't move an inch anywhere else. He must have sensed how much I am enjoying this kiss because my heart is fluttering and my cheeks are warm. He lowers me down on the couch and says, "It would be my pleasure to go out on a date with you Miss." I blush out so hard that I feel the warmth on my cheeks and my heart is thumping.

Is it happening?

I suddenly don't feel guilty of *FALLING OUT OF LOVE* from Mason, I just wasn't in love.....ever.

We break the kiss...none of us wanted that but we had to. We sit hold our hands as I say, "Would 6 PM work for you tomorrow?"

"Everything is supposed to work when it's with you Kate."

He looks at me so peacefully as if his life would come to an end at this moment, he wouldn't mind.

“Can I say something?” He asks

“Yeah what is it?”

“I wish I could go back and take all your tears so that you never had to feel a second of pain in your life ever. Everything that you wrote in that letter makes me feel so weak, but I see how strong you have been all your life and I am really sorry for everything you had to face. I promise to never hurt you, I promise to mend your heart like it has never been.” I didn’t know what to say. I don’t have any answer for what he just said but instead of replying, I pulled him towards me and let him know how much his words mattered to me. I have never hugged a man like I hug him. Because it is not a hug. Noah clenches his fist and pulls me so hard towards him. I start feeling suffocated when he presses my back roughly against him but I don’t pull. I was about to pull when I heard him sniffing.

*The fuck* is he crying, he is crying when he is in my arms. I was once told to not leave a hug unless and until the other person leaves it because you might just need that hug, but the other person might need more time and affection than you would.

And that is what I did.

We don’t leave each other for the next few seconds. I run my fingers all over his head when he pulls and looks at me. I can see tears in his eyes. For all my life I waited for men who are sensitive, men who are emotional, men who can cry, men who know how to cry to express what they feel.

I can still not comprehend anything. He looks at me like he has so much to share. I wipe the tear that falls on my cheek

while he wipes mine. I have no clue of why both of us are crying. Sharing tears is the purest form of warmth and affection.

What he says next just passed like a bullet through my chest. "You are still the same as you were when you were 12 Kate, just the same." He wipes the final tear on my cheek and I cover my mouth with my hands out of shock.

What the fuck did he just say, *the same*? Me? 12? *What the fuck 12*. He senses confusion on my face and says, "I have answer to every question that is running through your head now, just give me a minute."

He stands up and brings a paper handing it to me. "Please stay calm and read this. I wanted to give this to you yesterday but things really didn't go well. And I wanted to wait for few more months to share this piece of information but, live in the moment Kate, just fucking live in the moment." He smiles as he sees me opening the letter. He sits closer to me this time.

*Dear Kate.*

*I am sorry to keep this from you, but you should know that waiting for you for 2 years is not anything. You deserve somebody who would wait for an eternity. There are so many clues I want to give you to remind you that I have seen you, I have known you for 12 years. The very first time when I saw you was when you had a fight at your house and my parents heard a noise of utensils breaking from your house, your grandfather and mine were very good friends and as my grandfather said during that time to my parents "they have a little girl at their house and they still keep fighting, you should go and check on the mother and the daughter." My grandfather never mentioned your father. My parents went running to your house but you with your mother were on our*



staircase already when your mother whispers “just don’t tell anybody that we are here Mrs Evan please.” That was the first time I saw you, when you were wearing a pair of white shorts with a sky blue tank top and your hair were tied in a pony. You were very scared and hid behind your mother. I know you must be wondering of how I remember the detail because we were just 12 back then, I wonder that too. My mother didn’t say anything but just nodded to your mother. Your mother slept with mine and you were put in my bedroom and both of us slept on two single beds. The only night I have pulled an all nighter was that night. You didn’t say anything to me at all, you just took your diary with you and slept hugging it as if you are scared to death. You gave me a side eye as if you hate me but for once and I enjoyed that too. You simply turned around and slept and I kept looking at you, not you but your hair because you turned around and slept as if I was your enemy. You made a grumpy face to me all the time but that night you were scared and grumpy. I tried sleeping but simply couldn’t. The next day, after I must have taken a nap, I got up and you weren’t on the bed, of course. It was 1 PM. I am not a lazy cow I was back then, just in case you’d like to know. But Later, I saw you again. My grandfather told me to go and “look out for the mother and the daughter” again. I always wanted an excuse to go and look at you. I have asked you to come at my house and play with me but you always used to refuse. Once your mother tried compelling you to come and play with me and you threw the TV remote on the floor and since then, I never asked you to join me and your mother never compelled. And then we grew up, I always used to see you around the neighbourhood, and you have actually started at smiling me a little after a while. The fights at your home still continued and so did my grandfather’s words. Then my family moved to New York for 5 years for my father’s official work and I thought that I’d never see you again. Like literally never. My mother used to talk to yours over call almost every day but eventually they lost touch too. I moved back when I was

17 and I used to not see you around, not even a bit. I always knew there was something wrong and then my grandfather told me that you with your mother have gone to live with your maternal grandmother. I used to think that what I felt for you was an immature, childlike love because we were just kids, but if that's the case, then I still am immature and childlike. Because I haven't stop loving you, ever. I have never let my hope die. I have had girlfriends before but it has always been you at the back of my mind. One day, when I was trying to convince myself that I can't just wait for some miracle to happen and you would fall from the sky for me. And the miracle happened. Of course, you didn't fall from the sky for me but you came knocking at my door with a guy, who was your boyfriend back then and asked me, "Is there any vacant apartment on this floor, we were looking to buy an apartment." I still remember your words echoing inside my head, till date. It has been 2 years since you came and asked me that. I knew it was you when I opened the door. This is all not just a cliché coincidence Kate. In the building of over 50 apartments, why did you knock mine? Why did you come at the time where I was having a thought of rubbing you off my mind and trying reality to sink in? Believe me, it is not a coincidence. We were meant for each other. You and me Kate.....we are forever. You might still be the grumpy kid you were back then but I have now learnt how to make you smile. I came to know that it was you because, you had the same dark brown eyes. Your eyes have always been the same, deep dark brown with nerves flowing through her eye duct like thunder in the sky I mean, look at you. You are still the same. Or, If I want to be brutally honest, I have been stalking you on every social media platform for over.....I should say.....7 years. I never wanted you to break up with Mason in the first place, you guys seemed so perfect and made for each other until one day I started hearing noises from your apartment. I put my ear on your door and heard all of it. He cheated on you. I know everything because yes, I have been nosy. I never wanted you to

recognise me. Firstly, because I know you never will and secondly, there is some sort of satisfaction to look at you from a far, to love you.....from afar. I have seen Charlotte coming at your place for sleepovers, I have seen the Uber guy coming more than Charlotte ever had to deliver you your signature chocolate donuts and espresso. The number of times they have knocked my door considering it yours is uncountable. And then when you ***didn't ask*** for a lift and got in my car was a cherry on the top. I know it is a lot for you to take in right now, but it is the truth. I have waited just for you. I don't know where life is going to take us. How will I ask you out? Will anything like this ever happen? Or are you simply going to make me look at you all my life.....from afar.

## *Chapter 10*

# **NOAH**

The look on her face is screaming what her mouth is not, like I expected.

I want her to break the silence by uttering something because I can hear my heartbeat, my hand felt cold and my breaths were fast.

“Noah?” She simply said my name, just Noah, which still gives me shivers.

I honestly don’t expect her to say more; I want her to just come at me rushing and hug me. And that is what she did.....hugs me.

She wraps her arms around my neck and her face is crumbled on my chest while I straddle her hair. The note is still in her hand which is kind of irritating my neck as it touches me while she has her hands wrapped around, but I do not mind.

I hug her so tightly and even if that note had the capacity to cut my neck into two pieces, I wouldn’t mind at all.

Her hair is all over my face and they smell like cherry.

I break the silence when I say, “I am sorry I took so fucking long to just come back to you, but I did not know the other way around.”

She moves her hand to my hair and says, “Noah, this is so shocking, I don’t know how to express what I feel right now, and I don’t know anything. But if there is one thing that I know very well is that, I am glad you did. I am glad you wrote this letter and made me read it.”

She is still clinging on me while I whisper, “I love you Kate, I love you without wanting you to say that back to me.”

I never wanted her to even say that she loves me back. Because my love is enough for both of us.

“It feels so good to be here Noah, so fucking well.” She rests her chin on my shoulder while I continue to rub her arm.

“I hope I am not suffocating you” she mutters.

“I’d die with your arms around my neck, even if you had a knife waiting to cling onto me.”

She laughs a little and says, “Keep the writer inside you alive, always. I have somebody now to ask pointless questions to.”

“I can always try to answer.” I say. She is still clinging onto me, it has been a couple of minutes.

“I think my back hurts now, she says”

“I promise to never leave a hug until you do.” I plant a kiss on her cheeks as she detaches herself from me.

We sit opposite to each other and I don’t leave her hand while she says, “I think I like you.”

I laugh when she says that, not because she didn’t say I love you but because she didn’t say I love you like every person does when they are caught in a situation probably similar to ours just

because they don't think they don't have any other choice so they say I love you like an exhausting, gloomy, dizzy person. But Kate is different.

"We can love the people we like but we cannot always like the people we love Noah, so right now, I like you. I simply, passionately like you." "You are giving me a hard competition here." I say.

"Can I ask you a question?" She says.

"Of course." "Why did you choose to be a writer?"

"I wouldn't mind my books lying inside one of my libraries." I say this with a smile because I know what's gonna come next.

"Do you, wait, do you own a library, like a real library.....one of my libraries....so you own like.....multiple?"

*And I assumed right.*

She takes a step back and says, "Why did you not tell me?"

She is in shock, she covers her mouth with her face and says, "I need to see your library please."

"Of course, the poet needs to take the poetry with him as soon as he can." I hold her from her neck and push her softly down on the sofa for a kiss. Her arms automatically wrap around my neck, again, her fingers stroll my back like a puzzle she is trying to solve while I continue to kiss her.

She interrupts the kiss by saying, "I need to make a call to Charlotte and tell her about this, about us. I am sorry I had to break the kiss but this is me." She laughs and kisses me on the cheeks. "I promise I will make it up to you Noah."

She leaves me with an almost hardened cock but.....

“You better Miss. Just say nice things about me and don’t be mean.”

She laughs and gets up and dials Charlotte’s phone number.

I get up from the couch and while I fixate my hips on the kitchen shelf pouring some coffee in the mug, I can’t help but observe how pretty she looks chirping. Her hair is continuously interfering her speech while she walks around the same section of my house laughing.

I put the mug on the shelf and I hear Kate saying to me.

“I can’t believe I am going to stare at this ass for a while now.....maybe you know....forever.” I turn around and she finally cuts the call. She said that aloud just for me to hear.

I walk towards her and pick her up. Her hair falls and touches my elbow and her forehead is rested on my chest. She laughs and mutters, “My soul will always recognise you, always.” I put her on the couch and we sit for a couple of hours chatting about our professionals and our family a little bit. And that is how I say a beautiful day looks like.

Her words cascade like a that of a gentle book that soothes my heart. Her voice is like a thunder that commands but doesn’t scare you. The sound of her laugh lingers on even when she is done laughing. Each phrase of hers is a vocal, a note of a musical show. And Kate.....Kate is like a work of art.

## Chapter 11

# KATE

I have had a long day yesterday, with Noah of course. A long, non-tiring day.

After I got done with spitting everything to Charlotte, she was of course so happy but still said, “Men tend to fuck things up when they get what they want, be safe, when am I meeting this mystery man, I need to approve him.”

While I get why Charlotte is the way she is, I listened to her advice, because not just men, people tend to screw things up when they get what they want, it is so easy to get bored.

I was super tired after today's gym. I made myself some breakfast but couldn't stop thinking about Noah. I was happy. I was so content but still a thought of Mason stabbed my mind. We had just started hanging around and feelings do take time but the whys were still bothering.

I shared it with Noah, or to be precise, he was able to make it out from my face when I was about to leave his apartment.

His words are a constant lesson my mind is reading, “You have to let your heart crib and cry about Mason every day until it doesn't anymore, you don't have to force us, you know that waiting is my forte, waiting for *you* is my forte.”



I couldn't help but hug him when he said that. He behaved so maturely and understood without me uttering a word.

I don't miss Mason, I just don't know what we had. But I let this thought slide because I couldn't think about it anymore without crying. The vision of that night is still so disturbing. My hands still go cold when I think about it. My breaths get heavy, and my forehead starts dripping from sweat. So, I try to ignore this feeling.

I was still overwhelmed by this feeling of comfort with Noah. I have been a kind of a one who lives her life without thinking about what is 'written' for us but still believes that destiny plays a major role.

I still believe Noah has more than half the parts that he has to discover about me, that I have to about him....maybe we never truly discover one person. Maybe it is a process to look at somebody and say, *"I think I know this about you."* I know that relationships are a work in progress, I mean I have a boyfriend now. It has been a fucking week since the entire thing with Mason happened.

I sometimes look at myself in the mirror while my head screams, "You are a whore, Kate."

How does one get the answers to every thought? Or some thoughts are meant to stay unanswered?

I had a good night yesterday. After we got done with our sugary bites, I got to know about his family even more and was trying to tell him about mine which of course was pointless because he knew the most of it.

We decided to see each other today. We had negotiated ample number of times to come at this choice. He wanted to see me during the evening because he thinks I should get my beauty sleep treasured because that is what Sundays are for but who's going to tell him that I am an early owl anyway. I don't get the idea of lazy Sundays. I mean, your body doesn't know which day it is so who the fuck said that you DON'T have to work out on Sundays or have to eat shitty food.

So I wake up around 7 every Sunday and go for a long walk and come back running. I try to eat healthy and read a book, or to be precise, finish a book. That is how I like my Sundays.

But we ended up choosing 12 noon to go to the nearest mall and buy my mother's gift. I was so excited to leave for Texas for the birthdays of my two favourite ladies but I don't want to leave Noah.

New relationship, new butterflies, new excitement ugh.

But, I am excited for this trip. I am going to have the best time with her and that made me recall that I still haven't told Noah about my flight tomorrow. It skipped my mind this entire time.

I have never seen his eyes shine like it does except when he talks about literature and books and me, of course and his family. It heals a part of me when he talks about his family with a genuine smile on his face and I want him to know that he should cherish forever because some people don't get to have a family they can talk about with stars in their eyes, they have the kind of families of whom they can talk about just scars in their eyes and heart and everywhere.

I am not somebody who cribs about the pain, I have found my peace in solitude. I am happy to be the most depressed yet content, sad yet the happiest person in a room full of people.....that is just who I am. I don't want to live a life without this mixed hypocrite feeling because I am so used to be living a life that that I have no idea how my life is without sadness and agony. None of this makes me question my belief in God though. I got this from my brother since childhood, learning to pray when things fall off your plate and learning to be grateful when they work as you wish to. That's the kind of brother he is. I still believe if it weren't for him, I'd have given up by now.

I can't wait my brother to meet Noah where he is going to be a protective brother like I expect him to be but he is going to like Noah a lot, that's what I am sure of.

I grabbed the keys and was about to open my door and somebody knocked from the other side. I am unsure if it's Noah because he told me that he would meet me downstairs. Who could it be? If it's Mason, then I am probably scared to open the door. I have never felt scared of him, but right now as the door has been knocked twice, my heart is in my mouth.

I grab the courage to open the door with a knife in my hand, my hands are enough to beat the shit outta someone but I kind of need to put this energetic mode off.

And the third time..... "Kate, please open the door."

*Fuck.*

Why is he here? Should I open the door or just pretend that I am not here.

“I know you’re inside, you whore, open the fucking door or else I’d....” He didn’t finish the sentence.

I froze and gathered some courage to open the door because I can’t risk him breaking the door. His anger might escalate and I might end up in a position which can get uncontrollable.

I put my hand on the doorknob to unlock the door and I heard Mason scream.

I unlock the door quickly and.....it was Noah, he didn’t stop punching Mason’s face and his eyes were fixated at me.

“Tell me this is the last time you are stepping your foot in this building” Noah said this grabbing his neck and Mason just stayed quiet.....until he said, “I need to talk to this little whore of yours, she was cheating on me too, how long have you guys been fucking each other.”

I could see blood running through Noah’s veins. I haven’t seen him like this ever. As the words of Mason sank inside me, Noah’s face hardened, and a fire seemed to ignite his eyes. Every section of his face spoke of frustration. His wrist was in a fist, I held one of his wrists and told him to not punch him anymore. With a trembling effort he let go of Mason’s neck and held the storm within.

He replied to Mason with a softer voice now, “That is none of your business and it would benefit if you kept your nose out of this.” He points at me.

“Now can you please answer my question and tell me what you would have done if she hadn’t opened the door, *or else* to be precise.”

“Leave me alone.” Mason looked at me, actually intimidated me to death while Noah did the sweetest thing he possibly could, “Can we not waste our time anymore, my love?” He grabs my hand in front of him and I could see my cheeks turning red while Noah grabbed my waist, held me up in the air and took me inside my apartment. As we were on the edge of shutting the door, Noah looked at Mason, turned his back towards him and said, “Get the fuck outta here or I can break your face and would love to see your teeth falling off one by one.”

The rest is just history.

I was shaking by what just happened but Noah brought me back to reality. He cups my face in his hands and kisses my lips. He placed me down on my kitchen shelf and does what exactly I wanted him to do.

For the first time in weeks, I didn’t feel uncomfortable around Mason.

Every time I am with Noah, there is an unsaid romantic sexual tension that appears in our mind every now and then.

He puts me on the shelf and doesn’t stop kissing me. I can’t wait to get underneath his shirt. I can’t get enough of this man. He slowly puts his hand behind my neck and tilts my face in the rhythm of his. It feels like for just happened outside, he is proving that I belong to him.

I put my hands around his back and pull him towards me harder. I want his skin camouflaged in mine. “I am sorry you had to see that asshole again.”

I smile at him and say, "it's not your fault." I don't know how he managed to come. I don't know what would have happened otherwise. I kiss him on his cheeks while his hands slid underneath my shirt. "Do you mind?" He asks as his hand rested on my waist.

I smile and give him a nod as a signal to yes.

"You need to say yes or no, nods are superficial." He laughs off and grabs my neck and kisses me hard, harder this time.

"Your lips are the best thing I have put mine on, I waited for this taste since forever."

I understand how he must be feeling. I look at the clock and give him a signal that we are running late for the gift. "I wish I could make you sit like this forever, you are going to leave me alone for 7 days. How do you think I will survive?"

"How did you know? I mean.....I forgot to tell you about my flight.

"Madam, you told me just yesterday." He says as he brushes my cheeks.

Oh shit. I do have a short-term memory loss.

"Oh, my bad."

"Tell me how to survive without you?"

"You will, we all do Noah." We move from our respective positions and head to the nearest mall.

## *Chapter 12*

# **NOAH**

Today is THE DAY.

I am ready to pick her up with her favourite flowers. Charlotte is accompanying Kate.

It feels a little nervous because I don't know how Charlotte is, I don't doubt Kate's choice but I am highly sure she's going to bully me a lot. She is going to sue me if I make one single mistake.

Kate said that she had so much fun, with four of her favourite people altogether. Now, she wants me to meet her mother.

Her mother might recall me by looking at me, I don't think my features have changed much.

Kate has shared about Mason with her mother but not about me, not yet. Of course, her mother was sad because he broke her little girl's heart. But she was content that she chose to no longer be with a man who cheats. Her mother has her history which might still affect her and seeing her daughter react opposite to her makes her feel better.

Kate hasn't met her father in 10 years....even more. She says that she doesn't want to see him at all, but maybe she is waiting for him to come look for her?

For a daughter, for Kate, she is always going to criticise her father. Well, that is a different story altogether.

I got ready and sat in my car. It was a long drive from my apartment to the airport. Her flight will arrive at 12:40 PM and I had reached there at 12 noon sharp.

With flowers in my hand and my mother on a call with me saying, "Have you eaten well or are you still filling your stomach with the thoughts of Kate?"

"I am eating well Mom, I am at the airport to pick her up I will call you later. Send my love to Dad."

"See you soon Son, we miss you."

I understand where they are coming from. It has been almost three months since I haven't seen them. I have been so occupied with my library. The construction has been very hectic, but I am going to go and visit them very soon.

I look at the clock and it was 1:15 PM, her internet is still off but she should be coming out any minute now.

I got out of my car standing exactly in front of arrivals.

And here comes my girl.....blue dress, white sling bag and two massive suitcases.

She looks at me and I stare at her. The entire airport froze. Everything around me became a blur and she was a focus that I needed.



She looks like a walking miracle and I can't wait to take her in my arms. I run towards her to hug her and..... we were interrupted by Charlotte "You better introduce yourself to me Mister."

Damn it. Kate laughed but I also knew she was dying to hug me too. She introduces us and why the fuck am I sweating. I had a fancy dress competition in 4<sup>th</sup> grade and since then I haven't sweated this much. "I have heard some good stuff about you since this week but you might not be the father of her future child but I am definitely going to be the aunt. So, you know better. Got it?" Charlotte looks bossy.

She speaks like a teacher who scolds a child for spilling water on his books.

"I laugh but manage to reply to her, "Of course. I have been warned by Kate beforehand."

She taps my shoulder and asks, "Is that your car?"

"Yeah, you guys settle down I will bring the luggage."

She smiles and says, "I know you are a gentleman but I have got this." She takes her luggage and one of Kate's and walks towards my car, leaving Kate alone with me. On her way she shouts, "Give her the flowers, kiss her and come back soon."

Kate is the one who's enjoying this the most I assume. She smiles back at Charlotte from behind my shoulder and keeps her hand on my chest, "I have missed you so much my love." She hugs me and doesn't say anything else. I hug her tight. She smells like lilies, again. Her body fits perfectly in mine. She was tailored for me. She looks at me and says, "You got me my favourite flowers, you remembered."

I couldn't help but look at into her eyes and say, "I will never forget anything that includes you. You are fixated in my head."

She smiles and clings onto me again and says, "I think we should leave because Charlotte might start shouting if we stand here for one more minute."

I laugh and hold her by her shoulder. I keep her luggage in the car and she sits on the front seat, with me.

This was actually the first time she has sat in my car, with me and Charlotte third wheeling. I don't mind that honestly. I know how important friendships are to her, I know how important Charlotte is to her.

"Are you guys literally going to look at each other every 5 seconds? "Shut up Charlotte, I have missed him." She turns her heads around and eyes her.

"You are gross too Kate. Why let the man be the only one."

I took some calm breathes because at least I am not the only one being bullied here. I dig myself into the conversation but with a change in situations, "So how was the short trip?"

"It was amazing" Kate says.

"It is always fun with the mothers together." Charlotte says.

We talked a lot in the car. Charlotte was less mean for the next 40 minutes.

She asked me about my family and showed me the pictures from the trip.

I drop her off and keep the luggage inside her house.....a mansion, to be precise. Her grandfather left this

house to her in his will, as shared by Kate. She didn't even entirely step out of the car and two men accompanied her, one took the luggage from me and one serves the three of us some juice. We bid each other goodbye and I say, "We should meet someday soon, you should know me better.....better for Kate."

She passes me a smile and says, "I am going to see you tomorrow at 7 PM anyway. That has been planned by both of us on our flight back, she will share the details."

"Like you girls want." I smile at her and she smiled back. I move around walking towards Kate.

She was looking for something in her phone but when she saw me, I see her smiling and chirping like a bird.

I hold her by her waist and she looks at me, "Noah, thank you the flowers."

I rub her cheeks and kiss them.

We sit in the car in silence for a couple of minutes before I give her box of donuts and espresso. "You must be hungry. I got two, one for you and one for Charlotte. She must be enjoying hers and now you can enjoy yours."

Her reaction was predictable; she ate and passed me a warm smile.

After grabbing everything from my hand she said, "I am so lucky to have you." Her mouth is full of a donut and espresso in one hand.

I have missed this feeling. Just looking at how happy she is at this moment. Nothing matters more than this at this moment. I start the car and we move ahead.

“So, how much did you miss me on the scale on 1 to 10.” She asks.

“Does 100 counts?”

“It does.” She blushes and she finishes the last bite. I love how she sits in the car. She is positioned towards me. As if she wants to look at me. As if she missed me in the exact same about like I did. She holds my arm and rests her the side of her face on it. Shivers run though my body.

She excites me, makes me happy and even a single touch of hers makes me want to grab her, hug her, hold her, kiss her but never leave.....

She seems low on her energy. Of course she must be tired.

After a couple more minutes, we reach the basement and I park the car and bring out her luggage.

She was on her phone when I say, “Who are you texting?”

“Too soon to be a nosy boyfriend.” I laugh at her statement.

“You are mean sometimes.” I pass her a smile and go with bringing out the luggage.

“It’s just Charlotte and my mom, I am letting them know that I have reached.” “Good work.”

I lock the car and see her again. She is standing with her hips resting on the hood of the car. I reach her from behind and hug her by keeping my arm around her neck. “I have missed this feeling.”

She turns around, keeps her cell inside the back pocket of my jeans and grabs my ass and says, “I missed this feeling too.”

She keeps her hand behind my waist and I keep mine on her nape. We don't move for a second. She looks at me straight in my eyes. I can see her eyes; I can actually see her eyes. Her eyes are dark brown with a shade of blonde in when the sun hits her eyes. I never had a favourite colour until now.

She tilts her head, and her lips falls onto mine. I have missed this feeling.....

Her hands run onto my back and I have my hands fitted on her jaw. Her tongue rushes down my throat and she scratches her nails on my back.

This isn't a side that I have seen of her.....the Kate who wants two souls to feel one, two lips submerged into one and.....I can feel my cock hardening and Kate hasn't realised what she is doing to me.

We break the kiss, and she mutters, "Take me upstairs, I think I'm not tired enough."

"Not tired enough, not yet Kate. Because the second I take you upstairs and fuck you at every corner of my house, you would only want to sleep. But, I think it's your hormones Kate. Your eyes are almost closed."

She puts her arm around my neck and scratches my nape, "I am not." I carry her in my arms and she grabs my face and kiss me again.....fucking kissing me again.

I have already kept the luggage in the lift. She gets own from my arms and says, "I will tear your clothes here or take me back to your apartment."

I kiss her and I have a good feeling about what's coming next. I take her hand and put it in mine, still.....just her hand in mine.....something that I enjoy so much.

I don't see sex as a goal here, like something we have to do.....well now....she wants it, and no man ever wants to disappoint her girl like this.

We reach inside my apartment and I put her down while she makes herself comfortable on my sofa.

Her hair is tied up in a messy ponytail with strands falling on her cheeks and her forehead. Her face simply looks magnificent.

"Is this coffee in the pot fresh?" She asks reluctantly. "I made some coffee before I left so that is 2.5 hours fresh."

"Can I make some coffee, like right now?"

She needs to be fully woken to feel what's coming next. So I pull her up from the sofa and grab her by her waist. She passes me a cheesy smile and pours herself some coffee.

She pulls herself down from my arm and adds some more coffee in her cup. "What are you doing on the cell phone?"

"Too soon to be a nosy girlfriend, Kate." She moves from her position and pushes me onto the wall. She spilled some coffee on herself. I feel so hot right now, I think I need more air. She puts the cup aside and touches me down there. "You better be nice with me." She moves her hand from my cock to my waist and slowly to my neck. I bend down a little to kiss her and she turns around.....deliberately missing a kiss. She knows how much I need to be inside her right now. How much do I want to touch her, but this woman is making it so difficult for

me? I lift her up from her ass and sets her down on the shelf. She kisses me again and says, "I am going to get fucked here soon, but just not today. Your nosy girlfriend is tired." THE FUCK. She played well.

"You are a real bitch, Kate." I like how this sexual banter is making her feel dominant.

She lowers herself and says, "Get your cock hardened for some other day. You have to masturbate yourself to sleep today."

"You Kate, you are going to regret what you did today."

"That's what I want." She moves towards the door and pass me one final kiss.

One final kiss before she leaves.

And the only thing I could imagine was Kate, naked in my arms and moaning my name. I couldn't help but masturbate myself to sleep. I needed her so fucking much but this girl.....is for real.

I drop her a final text before I turned the lights off.

ME: You have got me wet, it's my turn tomorrow. Goodnight.

KATE: Goodnight, I am making myself wet.....because you lost your opportunity today, Mister.

THE FUCK.

## *Chapter 13*

# NOAH

How do I describe the rockiest sleep of my life? Kate literally got me yesterday. I couldn't sleep after her last text.

I woke up hard as fuck and slept as hard as that.

I get out of the bed and look at the clock before I grab some coffee, it was 12 noon already and we were supposed to meet Charlotte in 2 hours for lunch.

I had already received Kate's text that we will leave at 1:30 PM. The café we were supposed to meet at is just a 15 minute drive from our place.

I got ready at 1:15 PM and locked my apartment to knock Kate's.

I move out and turn towards her door and she was already standing there.

My hand froze on the doorknob itself. She looked scintillating. She was wearing a butter yellow dress, the straps hung on her shoulder and the rim was wandering around her knees.

She had her YSL bag hung on her shoulders. Her curls fell so effortlessly on her shoulders.



She emerged, not as a figure, but as a presence, a whisper of sunlight caught in the fabric of the earth. The yellow dress she wore, soft and vivid, reached only to her knees, as though the color itself had fallen from the sky to kiss her skin. Her curls tumbled with wild abandon, each locked a story of its own, and tangled with the secrets of wind and time. There was an effortless grace to her, a quiet depth beneath the surface that spoke not in words, but in the pulse of the moment itself. In that instant, she was the breath of a forgotten memory, the warmth of a sun that had never quite set, and I knew—before I even knew—there was something in her that could unearth the deepest parts of my soul.

“Are you done staring Noah?” She laughs and touches up her lip gloss. “You look lovely Kate. I.....I just.....wow.” I couldn’t help but stare at her. She is the spark in the room.

She walks towards me and grabs my hand. “You must have slept well.” I pull her from behind her hair and go close to her lush lips and move my finger over her lower lip and whisper, “And today is the day for your best sleep. I fucking promise.” I notice a lump in her throat. She was waiting for me to kiss her but instead I hold her hand and we move ahead.

“You are a real asshole, Noah.” She says as she sits in the car.

“You started it.” I pass her a smirk and kiss her hand.

I couldn’t even concentrate on driving because her legs interrupted my vision. Bare legs brushed by the whisper of sunlight falling on her legs. The softness meets my hand as I place my hand on them and she gets goose bumps.

She grabs my hand and removes the rim of her dress from one side of her upper thigh and places my hand on them.

I would get her in the backseat if we weren't supposed to meet Charlotte in 10 minutes.

During the entire 15 minute drive, I controlled myself to not touch her everywhere, to not taste her. I couldn't control myself, so I decided to bring something up.

"Will Charlotte be nice to me?" I say as I place my hand from her laps to mine hiding something that is interrupting my sexual desires so much. Glad that she didn't notice anything and reply laughingly, "If you are nice to me, she will be nice to you and if you become bitchy with me then she can come unannounced at your apartment and murder you and she's going to behave like nothing happened." I laugh because that is all I can do. I look down and things seem a little settled.

We get out of the car and grab a seat on the table which I had reserved under my name a couple hours ago already.

The server served us some water and we see Charlotte stepping out from her car. We get up from our respective chairs and meet her. She seems less intimidated today until, "Hello Noah, your ass looks good.....Kate was right." Both of them laugh and sit opposite to each other.

"Nice to meet you too Charlotte." I laugh as I pour her some water. "So, what do you do for a living Charlotte?"

"I run my father's company Sir." She says as she sips the last pour of her water.

Kate holds my hand in the middle of the conversation making sure that I don't feel left out. But, I really enjoy Charlotte's company. She isn't that bad.

We got up after spending an hour chatting about their high school and Charlotte remembers me from Kate's childhood. She said that Kate used to tell her that there is some guy who keeps looking at her. This was the best moment from the lunch.

I got up to pay the bill and let the girls have their time. On my way coming back, I grabbed a yellow rose for Kate which matched her dress and a daisy for Charlotte.

I sat back on the chair and gave the rose to Kate. She instantly blushed and held my hand tightly. I look towards my left to look at Charlotte of how she is cringing at us so bad and then I give her the flower too. She seems surprised. As she smells the daisy, she says, "Thank you for this, you have to get through me in order to reach her." She says looking at Kate.

After a minute or so, Kate gets up to use the restroom and I was alone with Charlotte, nervous yet better than before.

"So Noah, keeping the banter aside, I am so happy that you guys are together. But, please don't break her heart." She says with tears in her eyes. She seems like she is about to cry. I give her a nod in order to assure her that Kate is safe with me. "I know Charlotte, I promise to never break her heart."

"She is not an easy girl to be with but she simply wants softness in her life. That is what she has been missing Noah."

"I hear you Charlotte, I understand where you are coming from." I say as I give her a soft look to reassure her.

“You must know of how her childhood has been but I know you’ll treat her better.” She wiped the tear that she just fell on her cheek as she saw Kate coming and changed the topic.

“So guys, shall we?” Kate says as she puts the sanitizer inside her bag. Charlotte and I get up and both of the girls bid each other goodbye by doing all the hugging and kissing. I love how happy Kate is with Charlotte.

We got up and she sat in her car and waved goodbye one last time until next time. I look at Kate smiling and looking at me.

“Thank you for the lunch, Noah, thank you for loosening the ice with my best friend.” I grab her by her shoulder and kiss her hand.

“Kate, I would do anything for you. You don’t have to thank me.”

“So, are we leaving for our home?”

“Not yet Kate.” She looks at me strangely and smiles.

“I have got a little surprise for you. I know you’ll like it.”

“No. My stomach’s going to hurt. Tell me what it is.” My *baby*.

I drove and she kept asking me on the 20 minute drive. I distracted her by caressing her hair in the middle of the drive and kissing her left hand.

## *Chapter 14*

# KATE

I COULD NOT.

What I saw was definitely unreal.

Noah

took

me

to

his

library.

It didn't look like one at all.

A labyrinth of knowledge was all I could feel. The whispers of centuries quietly reside. The books were like rivers, flowing on every shelf. Every section was alphabetically arranged. My eyes scanned the entire place. I wanted to touch every book, read every one of them. The sections were arranged according to what people here prefer. The entire "drama" section was flooded with people, the "thriller" section, where we were standing had nobody but us. I assume Noah intentionally brought me here.....maybe.

I have always wanted to look at books somewhere where it belonged to me, not exactly me but I can have some authority over it. Noah looks at me, his face shines with happiness. His eyes don't blink as he was too busy scanning mine. He knows how much this would mean to me and that is exactly what he did.

"You know what Noah?" I hold his hand, and he pulls me to him. My back touches the shelf of the book and his hand was over my head making a bridge of his arm on my left side. "What Kate?" He fixes the lip gloss on my lips with his thumb and takes a pause. I breathe heavily because there is no space for me to let the air in.

He grabs my waist and says, "What Kate, say?"

"I don't think words will help."

"They will, I am too good at reading under the lines."

I can't help but kiss him.

I wanted to tell him thank you, to tell him that this moment matters so much to me but looking at him, I didn't know how to not kiss him. His hand slides down from my neck to my waist and he puts me on the slab right behind me. His tongue is inside my mouth and my legs are wrapped around his waist. He puts his hand on my inner thigh and part my legs more, making it more comfortable for me.

His hand reaches the bottom of my panties and he doesn't make a move ahead. He carries me in his arms and move me around for one minute before we reach a dark place which looks like a storage room. He puts me on the table and doesn't stop

kissing me. I feel so horny that I want him inside me now, like right now.

“I don’t care if you don’t have protection Noah, but I need to come.” He sees the urge on my face and slides his hand inside my panties. His left hand was cupping my neck from behind while his right hand made all the moves. He finds a way through my clit and circles until I am nowhere to be seen or found. I look at the ceiling while he continues. I was about to come.....before.....he.....just.....stops.....in.....the.....middle.

THE FUCK.

“Kate, I am not as nice of a guy as I look like.”

I don’t stop feeling his chest and I touch myself everywhere because this looks like a nightmare. I was about to experience the best orgasm of my life and Noah stopped in the middle.

Son of a bitch, no offense to his mother but.....

“You really gave me a hard time yesterday Kate, I will show you how hard tonight gets for you.” He says kisses me on my cheek when he mutters again, “I shall leave you here alone to finish what I started.” He gives a tap on my thigh and put my hand inside my skirt and disappears in the hallway.

I just sit there laughing inside my head. Noah really isn’t as good as he looks like.

I got up after.....

And saw Noah talking to a lady who looked like in her late 60’s. She poured her some coffee from the coffee machine beside her. It looked like she owns this little corner in the library. I didn’t want to interrupt them as they looked like they

were having an important conversation. I turned around and I hear somebody call me, "Hey lady, come on here."

It looked like it was me who she was calling because there was nobody else in that section other than the three of us.

I felt shy and Noah was constantly looking at me while sipping his coffee. I reached the corner and Noah pulled me in his arms. His hand covered my waist and I introduced myself to that lady, "Hey, I am Kate, nice to meet you ma'am."

"Hi, I am Layla and don't call me ma'am. I look like I am 60 but I believe that I am still 20, Kate, but you guys look lovely together. I have heard a lot about you Kate."

Of course she knows me, Noah must have shared everything.

"How long have you been working here for? I ask her.

"Oh, it's nothing like a job that I do. I just like to pour coffee, and this man right here helped me do it for free." She kisses Noah on his hand like she is indebted to him for some reason. "Come on Layla, it's nothing. The corner didn't look good empty anyway."

"My husband died 6 years back and he worked as Noah's accountant. We lost all our savings Kate but if today I have money for my food, it's solely because of him." She looks at Noah like she is about to cry. "I am so sorry to hear that."

"It's not that big of a deal Layla, you like to pour coffee and I like to drink it. It's so simple. Moreover, Marshall has been very loving and kind and I owed him so much, so I am giving that to him via you." "You are a lucky girl, Kate." She looks at Noah with so much love and shine in her eyes.



“We will take a leave now; you continue to read and stay hydrated. Don’t run on coffee.” He kisses her on the cheek and I bid her good bye. “It was so nice to meet you Layla, take care of your health. I hope to see you around here very often.

We get out of the library and both of us were silent. I was waiting for him to fuck me, and he was waiting for me to come. That was all we needed. No words, just fucking.

We reached our apartment around 10. We stood near the door, looking at each other when I held his hand and say, “I wish we lived together Noah.”

His hand moves from my fingers to my arm when he caresses my jaw. His hand feels like a cotton on my skin. Nothing in my life has made me feel more alive than he has.

He looks at me with so much softness when he says, “We can live together Kate.” He says that with hope in his eyes that just a mere yes could change his world.

My hear skips a beat, I would love to stay with him, it’s just said I don’t want us to rush. I want this to be forever.

I look at him and smile when I say, “I mean, and we can. Only if you are comfortable.” He passes me a smirk, and I pull him towards my apartment.

He puts his hand around my shoulder and spins me, and we kiss. It was a soft kiss with just pure love and warmth, of his lips on mine. The darkness and urge were totally the opposite.

We stand near the corridor when I say, “Are you sure you would handle living with me?”

“I handled not living with you, which was worse. So, this, us, is going to be wonderful.”

I wrap my arm around his neck and hug him. His hug is like a silent language of my soul, which only I can comprehend. His arms become words, the warmth becomes the whisper. It feels like a gentle pause in the world, where time bends and my heart speaks without any sound. It felt like a shelter to me. My sadness melted and joy found its home. The hug, its simplest of a gesture but holds so much.

We leave the hug and get inside. I lock the door, and he sits comfortable on the bed.

"I will get back to you after I change AND you don't make a sneak peek inside the bathroom." I tease him.

"I am going to uncover that tonight, Madam."

I get inside the bathroom and do not lock the door, intentionally. Maybe, something would happen. You never know.

I stand still near the door and text my mother. I hear Noah baking something inside the kitchen.

ME: I want you to meet somebody, we will come sometime soon on a dinner together. Bye. Love You Mom.

HER: Can't wait to meet the guy. Love you too.

I laugh at her reply because she always knows. She didn't question me about what happened with Mason, she didn't even ask me what happened. Instead, she hugged me and muttered, "You are strong enough to leave what bothered you, Kate. Thank you for making your mama proud." This is what I have always wanted from her. Simply this. She is better off without my dad; I told her this when I was 7 and I will say the same now when I am 27.

The difference is that she could have saved those precious years of her life if she had made a wise choice back then but well, maybe this is it. Just me, my mother and my brother.....and Noah....happy little world of ours.

Thinking about my brother, I forgot that I haven't replied to his text. I open his chat.

Mark: We are coming to Texas next weekend with a little baby girl in our arms. Come and no excuse would be taken. Bye. Love you."

ME: I can't wait to meet little Marie. I have a little surprise for you too.

I have told him bits and pieces about what has been happening lately. I wonder if he would recognize him, unlike me.

I reach the counter shelf while Noah put out donuts from the oven. It smells deliciously tempting. "I knew I would not die empty stomach. You are such an amazing boyfriend." He pours me some coffee and we sit together on the couch.

"Do you maybe, want to go and meet my mother next weekend?"

I could sense confusion on his face because I was blunt. "Yeah, of course. If you say so." He wraps his arm around my shoulder as I lay my head on his chest.

This feels like home, this feels like a place I have always belonged to. Noah doesn't feel like I have known him since a couple of months, though I haven't. It feels like how the reality actually is.

I wait for him to make a move, because I really want him more than just this. I need him over me, outside me, everywhere.

“Don’t you want to know the colour of my bra now? I ask him as I hide my smile by sipping some coffee.

“Don’t you think I will end up finding it by myself?” He lifts my chin and keeps the coffee mug from my hand to his side, making it shy for me. He can evidently see how conscious I feel out of this situation but he ends up making a move.

I curl my legs where my knees touch my chest and he puts his hand inside my shirt. He very patiently unhooks my bra, like he is very pro at it, which he seems to. I can already feel his cock hardened and my breaths are starting to get heavier.

“I promise to not leave you unfinished like the other day.”

He doesn’t even give me a chance to say anything as his lips find their way down to my collarbone. My legs shiver and he laid me on the couch itself. It was for this day that I invested money in a comfortable couch like this.

His hand slides from my cheeks down to my breasts when he cups my left boob and kisses me like this is the last time he can feel me. He continues to feel my nipple and I feel nothing but the urge for him to fuck me.

His hand touches my ribs, and he slightly unbutton my pants. We open our eyes at the same time when we passed a heavy unspoken desire. The world seems to blur but anticipation was all over our faces. His lips brush softly against mine. He circles his finger around my navel and doesn’t stop kissing me. The touch was tentative at first as though testing the waters, before deepening something raw and unrestrained. Heat

bloomed in my chest, and he moves his finger down and reach my panty.

I find it very difficult to even take a single breath. My hands are wrapped around his neck and my legs linger on his bare waist. He pauses for a minute and with a deliberate urge, he reached for the edge of his shirt, the motion slow, unhurried, as if savouring the moment. The fabric lifted, revealing the sharp cut of his collarbone, the lean lines of his torso catching the soft light of the lamp.

His hands moved with quiet confidence, the shirt slipping felt like a second skin. It left him bare, vulnerable on the outside yet powerful, yet the air charged with his presence.

He puts my hair behind my ear and starts to make his way towards my boobs. My top is lingering on my waist and the sleeves fell on my arm. The bra strap was loosened because it wasn't hooked anymore wanting to be thrown on the floor.

My back arched in the motion as he unbuttoned the last button of my shirt and keep it safely on the table beside. He puts his hand inside his pocket and wears the condom. He constantly kisses me and he removes my bra and.....my body wasn't mine anymore. It was his. It belonged to him. I didn't feel myself enough to own myself.

He looks at my boobs and his gaze lingered, heavy and unspoken, tracing the curve with his fingers. His eyes were drawn to my eyes and the rise of my chest gave him a signal, the correct signal.

He rushes to kiss me while his hand lingers on my boob. The rhythm of his cock inside and out makes me shiver. I

scratch his back as a need to hold something, as if I need to take a grip of something or else I will fall from the aeroplane.

It is a quiet storm inside my body, mind and soul. It was a fevered rush, a merging of desires too intense to have. A dance of his skin against mine, pleasure for us became the only thing about which we could think. It was consuming, urgent and undeniable. Every touch of his hand of my boobs, my legs, and my chest was electric. It was a shared release of so many desires. Lips on lips, hands on boobs and bodies moving in harmony. It is more than a connection, it is a surrender, a union that ignited the sense of leaving nothing untouched. The aftermath was just silence, just his arm wrapped around my chest. My back curved and his chest touching my back with softness and love. The exhilarating exchange carried a promise of deeper, uncharted territory. Our territory. Just us, in here. It was like our souls met with tactile sensations and the fire consumed with both body and mind.

I couldn't sleep for initial minutes but Noah slept instantly. My sleep was entirely gone when I heard him talking in his sleep and saying, "Please move in with me Kate, please do." He hugged me tighter when he completed this sentence and I smiled and finally slept.

Yes, I will move in with you was all I could repeat in my head.

Yes, I will.....YES.

## *Chapter 15*

# NOAH

My right arm has never been warmer. Because it has never had Kate's head on it.

Her hair was all over my arm and she was facing me. She sleeps with her mouth half opened.

A strand of her hair traced the lining of her lips and her breaths were calmer.

Disturbing her was not even the last thing I wanted to do but it was 10 AM already and I had a meeting at 12 noon with the Chief of our town about some building which shares the same wall as my library. The land, which the library is built on was inherited by my grandfather from his father and the legacy continuous so there is not argument about who owns the land and who doesn't. I have all the proofs in my favour but I still got to attend the meeting.

I try to slip my hand underneath her head trying not to bother her. In reality, I only want to wrap her around me and let the sheets cover us. We slept naked and I see that she was cold and had put a blanket on her which covers half of her body. I get up from the bed without making any noise and adjust the blanket so that it covers her entirely. I put on my clothes, grab and pen and a paper near the sofa and write her something.

*Dear Kate,*

*Please move in with me. Please. I promise to cook for you every day, I promise to keep everything around us clean, I promise to do dishes on days when you don't want to, I promise to let this be our space. I hope it doesn't get difficult for you to live.....10 feet away.*

*I am excited to meet your Mom. I had to rush for a meeting but I will see you tonight.*

*Lots of love, Noah.*

I plant a kiss on her cheeks and keep some coffee ready for her on the nightstand with the note. It doesn't feel right to leave so I stand near the door and adore her. Her stillness whispers a thousand unsaid tales that only she can feel and other can listen, where stardust sails. The curve lips brush off the sadness. The world paused, yet again. Her stillness carried everything I have been looking for.

I take one last glance and get inside my apartment. I got done with shower and reach the place ten minutes prior.

Kate hasn't call or texted so she must be asleep. I had to leave my phone on silent due to the meeting so I drop her a text before I get back to her.

"I am in a meeting, I will not be able to answer your texts for 1 hour. In case of emergency, you can call me."

The meeting went fantastic. The judgement came out to be in my favour because everything got to be proof worthy.

It has been 2 hours and Kate hasn't replied, I wonder if everything is fine.



I reach the last staircase and there is a delivery boy outside Kate's apartment. A lot of things were going on in my head. Kate is awake if she has ordered, if she is then she should text me and if she is not awake then what is the delivery boy doing outside her apartment.

"Hey man, is this order for Kate? I say as I look around.

"Yeah, it was ordered by Mason James but nobody is opening the door. Fucking James.

"Do you know her?"

"Yeah, she is my.....I am her boyfriend." I took the order of espresso and donuts from his hands and he looks relieved.

"Thank you Man, I was in a rush otherwise. You have saved me so much of time."

"Of course, take it easy." I hand him 30 bucks as his tip for waiting and he smiles back at me.

Mason motherfucking James. How dare him.

I open the door and the door and the house looks exactly how I left it. So, Kate is asleep. I put the order in the refrigerator because I WILL give it to a homeless boy. Because, under no circumstance Kate is fulfilling her stomach with this.

The minute I enter the bedroom and she is sleeping. I felt some relief in my chest.

Being around her is all that makes me feel relieved. I look at her and she looks at peace yet again, exactly the same how she was when I left her.

It is 4 PM already and this woman doesn't decide to get up, but if she doesn't then I would rather give her some company by let her sleep in my arms again.

I remove my shoes and loosen my tie and get inside the blanket. I try to make minimal movement so that I don't disturb her.

She took a breath and her eyes open slightly, she sees me and doesn't blink her eyes. I simply smile and rub her cheeks. Her eyes look swollen so of course she has had a great sleep.

"Why are you dressed?" Kate asks in a sleepy voice.

"Babe, I had a meeting at noon. Did you sleep well?"

"Wait, what time is it?" She looks above me and sits straight.

"Relax Kate, it's okay, lie down." I put my arm around her naked back and pull her down. She was undressed in the most sexual way I could imagine.

"I am sorry, I overslept. How was your meeting?" Her eyes still look puffed and her hair looks fresh, flowing like river across her temple's curve, soft as twilight resting near the brow, a gentle forest spreads, flaming cheeks. Across the scalp, the roots take hold, a dance of silk, a thread untold, meeting her skin where the shadows greet.

I take her in my arms and her naked body feels cold on my warm clothes. "Kate, you have not overslept. What do you want to have for dinner?"

"Just stay here for some more time, it feels good." She curls herself up and it is *the* best feeling. I feel more alive. My heart

feels happy and not even a single thing occurs to me when I am around her *except* now that she was asleep and hasn't read the note I kept for her.

"You were talking in your sleep yesterday." She says and smile and that leaves me with mortification.

"I hope I didn't say something stupid." I put my hand on her bare breast and she back makes an arch making her hips move closer to my cock.

My idea was not to make her horny, but I think I just did.

She faces me and I see the blanket falling off her chest and everything seems foggy except her.

She puts her hand on my stomach and says, "You didn't say anything embarrassing." She still passes me a smirk and I wonder if she is lying. She finally kisses me and leaves me strangled. She turns back and gets up from the bed, covering just the front of her divine body leaving me unhinged. Her back, calves *and* her ass is just the only vision I can look at.

"Stop staring, you have made the most of this body of mine yesterday."

"I will do that every fucking night." I stare at her as she leaves the room and turns on the shower. She doesn't close the entire sliding door of hers. A centimetre is enough for me to go inside and get wet with her.

"Do you want me to join?" I ask as the towel falls off her body. The transparent door is now translucent because of the steam. The steam inside me is hotter though.

“I would have said yes but you are dressed and I don’t want you to get your clothes wet.”

“Do you mind me making *you* wet?”

She laughs and I remove my clothes. I stand at the door for a minute before entering. “Can you pass me my towel Noah?” I pick her towel from the closet and open the door. The moment I see her, she doesn’t hide herself, she doesn’t get shocked. But she stays still.

The water from the shower is still falling on side of her body and her hair falls on her shoulders so effortlessly. Her face has drops of water which looks like a painting.

Both of us stand still before she pulls the towel *and* me.

“You can join but I am done now.” She turns off the shower and wraps herself.

“You are done but you are yet not finished Kate.” I come closer and pulls the edge of her towel and it falls to the ground.

She looks at me and holds my neck. “You get to wear your boxers, and I get to stay naked, how unfair is that.” She puts her finger inside the elastic of my boxers and pull me towards him. The best part is that she is *able* to. “Your wish is my command Ma’am.” I pull my boxers and she stares at me, just stares.”

I pick her up and we stand under the shower.

Her body feels wet on my skin. My cock feels hard under her hips and her hands are in my hair.

“It hasn’t even been 24 hours Noah.”

“Exactly Kate, it hasn’t even been 24 hours.”

I turn on the shower at a slow speed and the water falls like river on her forehead.

She tilts her head and kisses me. Her boobs press onto my chest. One arm of mine is enough to carry her weight. I want to be inside her but I don't have condom with me. But, I do have fingers.

I put my fingers inside her and she passes a soft moan scratching my back. My fingers do everything for her as I hear her breathes getting warmer on my back and her nails digging deeper. "Noah.....I....."

"What Kate?" The rhythm of our souls collides and I see her coming. Her moans are unclear as the sound of the water happens to be an interruption.

I turn off the shower and the moans are clear as ever.

She slows down and kisses me on my neck. She looks at peace. Her legs were no longer wrapped around my waist. She doesn't remove her hands from my neck and starts to kiss me again.

"If this is how I get to feel every day then living with you will never be a question."

"I would take that as a yes."

"It is a yes." She wraps herself in the towel again.

"I will get back in few." She came, now I have to.

"Do your own stuff Mister, I get that." She moves out of the shower and I stare at her, again.

Again.

## *Chapter 16*

# KATE

If this is how I get to spend every day then I would rather sell my apartment at loss and move in with Noah. Not only did I come more than thrice in less than 24 hours but I was madly in love with him.

I was simping over this stupid guy I met a couple months back.

I like how destiny finds a way out.

We planned on going out on dinner. Noah brought his clothes at my apartment, and we thought of getting ready together.

It was weird how it clicks me that my apartment would not be mine after some time, I mean it would be mine but I will be staying with Noah. I have no regrets of making that decision but I have spent so many best moments of my life here. So, it's a mixed feeling altogether.

"Are you alright?" He says as he irons my skirt.

"Yeah, I just. I don't know."

He switches off the iron and comes closer to me. He sits on the bed as I hug my knees. "Is it about moving in with me?"

“Noah, I am so excited for this move but I was also so attached to my apartment. I don’t mean that I don’t want to move in with you but I.....I don’t know.” He passes me a smile and says, “Can I move in at your apartment then? Only if you don’t mind.”

He says that in a flicker of seconds, he didn’t give that a thought. He pulls me in for a hug and says, “You don’t ever have to sacrifice anything Kate. We will do as you say. I don’t mind living in a squeaky clean house.” He laughs and pats my back.

“It’s not that, I don’t really care who moves in where, I just care about us living together. So, I will put a full stop to my overthinking.”

“I respect how you feel but, you have to come and share what you feel and you don’t have to move in with me instantly, as long it doesn’t feel entirely good and true in your heart, there is no rush. I don’t want you to regret this decision.”

I feel the urge to hug him and cry. I don’t even know if it’s exactly about moving out from my apartment that I am sad about or what. So I instead decide to kiss him and let him make me forget our worries.

Every kiss with Noah makes me go wet. He is such a great kisser that I don’t want to stop but we were running late so we get back to our respective work. He continued ironing my skirt and I was looking for the right pair of heels.

I got out of the bathroom and I see Noah adjusting his tie. He looks edible. I like how he keeps it simple every time, He is wearing a plain white t shirt with a black leather jacket and dark blue jeans with sneakers.

He turns around and looks at me, “Kate, wow.” He scanned me from head to toe as we walk towards each other.

I pull him close and kiss him for a brief second as I lock the door, step out and get inside the car.

He opens the door for me and as we sit at our respective seats,

He hands me a rose, which matches my dress and says, “For the most beautiful lady I have ever laid eyes upon.” He pulls and kisses the top of my head.

“Thank you.” I say and blush away.

We reach the restaurant after 20 minutes and settled down after a minute or so.

“How do I eat anything when I have a delicious snack in front of me?” Noah said as he held my hand under the table.

“You talk like a poet.” I say and brush his hand with my thumb.

“Well, only if you have a muse.” He said as he kisses the top of my hand.

The restaurant was so pretty, it was named as “Gilitos”, I don’t know what that means but the place was as quirky as the name. There were not many people around. Just a couple of girls carrying their respective Birkins and a group of men in Ralph and Russo.

The waitress reaches our table and greets us pleasantly. “Hey, are you Kate?” I wonder how she knew me.

“Yes, hi, nice to meet you.” I nod as she scanned my face.



“I used to work as your junior accountant 5 years back.”

I used to work at a different firm back then but I instantly recall her. She was the most intellectual girl in the entire department. Cilly, yes, Cilly.

“Cilly, right?”

She is continuously clicking the pen and stops when I say her name.

“Yes. I heard you have your own start up now and were recently promoted.”

She has not changed a bit. I didn’t know the back then and I don’t know it today, where does she get to gather all the information about me and everybody else.

“Since when have you stopped playing with numbers Cilly? That was the best you did.”

Her face turned pale and I see her eyes started getting moist. She turns the subject and looks at Noah, “Oh, I was too involved talking to her, I didn’t realise I didn’t say you hi. Hi, I am Cilly, you know that now.” She laughs as they both shake hands.

There is something wrong with her and I am too curious to figure that out. “So, what would you like to order?”

Noah looks at me waiting for me to order first and I do the same.

“We will collectively have Dom Perignon and spaghetti for me. What do you want to have Noah?” I look at him as he folds the menu and keeps it on the vacant chair beside him.

Cilly wrote everything and left with a warm smile which was evidently pretentious. She was hiding something. Was it something related to me? But that is not possible, we worked together for hardly 7 months.

“Your friend is a lost today.” Noah says as he puts the napkin on his lap.

“I don’t know, she has always been a little weird but I feel like she is hiding something that I should probably know, maybe...” My intuitions are never wrong but I feel different. I decide to stop thinking otherwise and took a glance at Noah, again.

We were in the middle of a banter when I see Cilly bringing our order. The smell reached the nostrils from a feet away.

She settled everything onto the table and started serving but stopped as Noah interrupted her. “Thank you, Cilly, we have got this. You can rest for a while, you seem tired.”

She passes him a smile and leaves the table.

Noah served us our respective dishes but carved out a slice of his pizza for me. Well, that is what a good boyfriend does.

We had good food, walked around the corner and ate ice cream holding hands.

## *Chapter 17*

# NOAH

The best sleep with the best girl in the world.

We got home around midnight after watching a movie. We decided to sleep at my place. She offered by saying that she wanted to get used to the mattress. We laughed at it, but we knew she meant it.

We are supposed to leave today for Texas. I am excited yet nervous at the same time to meet Kate's family.

I don't vividly remember anybody but Kate. I remember how Kate's mother looked like, how her brother always threw mangoes on our terrace. But, that's all the good things I remember. The rest aren't worth mentioning.

I see Kate opening her eyes a little, she looks like she wants to sleep more, like she always does.

"Good morning, babe." She turns around and holds my arm.

"Good afternoon, Miss."

"No way, I overslept." She gets out of the bed hastily and rushes to the bathroom while saying, "I need you ready in 30 minutes, we will grab dinner on our way to the airport."

“As you say.”

We do our respective tasks, and I sit on the bed once I am ready.

Kate is still in the shower.

“Hey, we are late Miss, rush a little.”

She steps out of the shower, she steps out of the shower.....naked.

I was scrolling through my phone sitting opposite to her on the couch and my phone falls to the ground.

“Are we still running late?” She says as she runs to the bathroom.

I follow her inside while she was standing in front of the mirror.

“I should have handed you the bra, you didn’t have to come outside and arouse me.” I say as I hold her from her waist and set my chin on her shoulder.

“If I would have then you wouldn’t have gotten a chance to stare at me.” She says as she hooks her bra and grabs her panty from the door hanger.

I look at her belly in front of the mirror and notice something. I have seen her naked so many times and I wonder how this has never caught my eye.

Has she got this recently? Did she hurt herself some time? I don’t know.

She turns around and lowers herself to wear her panty. The elastic of the panty isn't able to cover the scar and I can't help but stare at it constantly.

"Hey? What are you staring at? My beauty, that I know but we are actually running late."

She moves towards the room as I hold her wrist. "Kate."

"What? You okay?"

"Kate I..." I fumble as I finish my sentence. "How did you get that scar on your belly?"

I wait for her response but instead, she goes pale. Her face is white and her eyes seem watery. I take her to the bed and cover her with a blanket. She doesn't move, she froze on me asking that question.

"Kate." I say as she wipes a tear off her face.

I hold her from her arm, and we sit quietly for few minutes before she finally spoke. Her head rested on my shoulder and her fingers were intertwined with mine. Tears were flowing down her face the entire time. I choose not to ask her anything and let her speak.

"I was 13 when my father tried to stab me."

She wipes one more tear and it became unfathomable for me to comprehend. I held her face and comforted her. That is all I knew at that moment.

"My mother came back home at 10 that day, she had gone out with her friends, dad, that day, he came back home early, which is unlike of him. Somebody told my Dad that she kissed somebody on dinner that night. When she shared it with me a

decade later, I knew that was a lie. My mother would never do that but my Dad didn't trust her enough."

One more tear.

"Me and my brother were asleep before I woke up to a noise of my mother screaming. I got up from the bed and ran downstairs. My brother was still asleep.

When I reached the living room, I saw my father holding a knife against my mother's throat.

The moment my father saw me, he put his hand off her throat and walked towards me. My mother screamed "Run Kate, lock your room" Instead I ran towards her, because I wanted to save her. My father grabbed my wrist and before my mother could do something, he tried to stab me. He couldn't do that because I pushed him but that left a permanent scar. My mother then punched him in the face and took me and my brother to our neighbours, which now I know was your house apparently."

She wipes off the last tear as she looks down her belly. "You know what Noah, I have minimal chances of getting pregnant. The cut was deep enough to reduce the blood flow in my uterus, as explained by the doctors. They said that it would be a miracle if you get to deliver a baby. And back then, I didn't even know that was a thing. It was when I turned 20 and my mother shared it with me. I am over that feeling for a long time now but it still hurts sometimes, when I look down at my stomach and can't even visualise myself of producing a child of my own."

She looks at me as if she hadn't upset me. But, this wasn't even running through my mind. Her lips were moving but her entire body was frozen. I didn't feel rage for her father, all I felt was pain for the three of them.

I couldn't even imagine going through this at such an early age, how did these two kids?

I didn't think it would take this story to realise how lucky I am.

## *Chapter 18*

# KATE

The irony about these scars is that there are days I don't even remember that they exist and then there are days I can't stop thinking about them. I wonder how my mother shared every detail of what happened that night without any filter, or I should say, after keeping a filter since so long.

Noah and I sat in the same position for a couple of minutes before I decided to get up. This felt so good, to be in his arms where I could speak without fear and he would hear without judgement.

The flight was indeed tiring but I was dying to meet my family here.

"You both look so good." My mother said as she saw me and cried her eyes out in a second.

At the door, with Noah beside me and my mother and brother standing in front of me, I felt so satisfied as if nothing in this moment, with these people could go wrong.

I see my brother, Mark holding my little niece and I didn't even greet my brother but I took her in my arms.

She was so tiny I was scared she would fall. She looked exactly like my brother's wife but she had our eyes.



The beautiful big brown eyes. She was continuously smiling at me. I look behind and my mother hand Noah had already shared pleasantries and I see then bonding up a little.

My brother takes the luggage and puts it in the guest room when all of us sit on the dinner table.

It feels good to be here, with my favourite people. This feels like home. I settle my basic things while I see Noah chatting with my mother.

“I assume you guys are bitching about me.” I say as I wipe my hands.

Noah comes back from the kitchen as both of them place dinner bowls on the table.

I notice that she cooked our favourite food, spaghetti, and baked eggs and some spicy salad which instantly caught my eye.

I sat where Noah was in front of me and my brother beside him and my mom sat with her daughter in law.

A whole funny loving family. I could die with this happiness in my heart. “So you guys dating since a while now is what I have heard off.” My brother says looking at Noah.

“Of course it was Charlotte who shared it, I didn’t say anything.” My mother said poking at nobody in specific.

My brother and Charlotte shared a very special bond. He never believed that he had one sibling, it was always me and Charlotte together.

She had shared it him before I did and it doesn’t bother me per se at all. “So Noah, I remember every bit unlike Kate.”

My mother says as she puts the fork full of spaghetti inside her mouth.

“I am glad that you do. It took Kate 2 years to realise that I am *which* Noah.” He says smiling at me.

My mother had always had a good memory as she claimed to.

“So do I.” My brother said smirking at me.

“She has a long-term, short-term kind of memory loss.” My brother makes a face as he sips his wine.

“I see the banter has begun but I do agree.” Noah says elbowing my brother.

After a whole lot of funny memories and laughs we stand and put our respective plates in the kitchen.

As I was about to mention about dessert, Noah interrupted. “Do you want to play foosball bro?” Noah asks Mark.

I like how Noah is taking the effort and my brother goes along with it.

I sat with my mother with her holding the little baby and cuddling her. “I wish you could get you this tiny again.” She says as she looks at me and caresses Marie’s head.

I held her arm and kept my head on her shoulder.

“I wish I could be your mother. And I would never want you to be married and have kids. That would be so selfish of me but I really wouldn’t mom.”

Our conversations are mostly depressing and an emotional wreck. She has her baggage and I have mine. It is just one or the other initiating the conversation.

She didn't say anything but simply hugged me. "You are special and I am sorry I made you go through all that when I shouldn't have. I am simply sorry for not having the courage to leave my husband back then."

I like how she says my husband not your father because he wasn't one. I see how the Marie has slept in her arms, and she puts her in bed while I see how watery her eyes were getting.

"I don't want to make you feel guilty mom, you did the best you could. I had a mother when I was looking for a father. How fortunate was I." I say as I hold her hand as kiss them. I have missed her so much.

She smiles and says, "So, how is it with Noah?" She evidently sees me blushing as I say, "It is good mom."

I don't say anything else because words will always fall short.

"I see how he removes the mushrooms from the spaghetti for you while serving without mentioning. So could he be THE ONE?" She pulls my cheek and kisses my forehead.

"I don't know mom, I am not trying to think ahead of time. It took me a while to actually get Mason out of my head so I am glad Noah and I are having fun. We share happy and sad moments together and I am happy about it."

My mother holds my hand as we walk towards the living room.

I sat and she came back from the bar with some wine.

I knew she was about to say something. I can make that out from her face.

“Kate, I wanted to say something.”

I nod while sipping some more wine.

“Could you promise me one thing?” She asks as she sits closer to me. “What mom?” I say with desperation on my face.

“You would not be in this relationship for a second more if Noah, in any way abuses. An abuse is not just a verbal one, it can be mentally, physically and emotionally and you are a grown-up woman. You don’t need a situation to happen 10 times before you decide to not be with somebody.” I could see her eye warming up.

I understand where it was coming from.

“Mom, I promise.” I hugged her and kissed the top of her head.

“It took me 2 decades to realise the difference between fear and respect, I hope you don’t take as long as I did. I had lost those years of my life which I would take back in a second if I had left your father when it was the right time. I didn’t have the courage but I know you do.” She says as she wipes of a tear.

“Mom, you are not alone and you are no less than who you wanted to be without a man. It is just a hollow pride of being a man that he had.” She cries and puts her head on my shoulders.

I am and always was a mother to my mother. I don’t know if that was a good thing or not.

There was an unbearably lonely quiet voice my mother had. It followed me everywhere without asking. Her emotions dragged me like a chain I never wanted to unlock from. Opening my mouth to tell her that I have been in pain too, and I stop every time. Not because I didn't know what to say but because I knew what to say. And I was scared she would not understand me. I was scared she would think I don't know enough, so I let her cover me in the darkness she had.

The words aligned well with my father but he wasn't a great translator either.

A house that was cursed by fake laughter and empty sadness and rage. The house spoke when both of them were silent, I always thought I was the one who suffered between them, but it was all four of us.

None of us were happy as we were, but nobody had the guts to speak of. Because, my father did. Just he did.

I see my mother closing her eyes as her head fixated on my shoulder. I was yet again in a long everlasting unknowing feeling that was unfathomable, have always been.

## *Chapter 19*

# NOAH

“Marie looks so cute.” I broke the silence when we ended the game.

“Thanks bro, she looks totally like her mother, she is gorgeous.”

I see how Mark is obsessed with his wife, Rose and her daughter, like he should be. They have been together since a while now, as shared by Kate.

“How did you meet her?” I could see his words falling from his mouth like he was waiting for somebody to ask that.

The love in his eyes was very evident, “I saw her outside my house when she used to work with Uber eats.

One day, she was drenched in rain and was shivering because of the weather. I offered to help and she offered to kiss me.” He points towards the sofa and sits down to explain further.

“She was in rush and I offered her my jacket. She is the same like she has always been Noah. And that is how I met the love of my life.”

“That is an interesting story, you must have spent so much money on Uber eats then.” We both laugh at this and he says,

“more than 10 grand in 6 months. Every penny I spent was worth it.” I see him smiling under the sip of wine he took and I sipped on my whisky.

“You guys do look incredible together.” I say.

“Thanks.”

“So, I know how Kate and you met so I would rather spare that question.”

“Yeah, you know it.” I answer with a laugh.

“Do you need more ice?” He points towards my glass.

“I think I am good.” I say.

We sit in silence for a couple more minutes before Mark calls out my name, “Noah?”

“Yeah?”

“I don’t like to interfere in my sister’s relationships at all. I have never, even when it was falling apart with Mason and there are two reasons to it. One being I know Kate has the capacity to deal with everything alone and two because, every guy who has ever broken her heart reminds me of our father and I really feel like punching them, which sadly includes *my* father too.

She has never shared her relationship stuff with me ever, but she had since you guys started dating so I assume it is she cares about the most. All I want you to know is she isn’t easy to be with. Her traumas are always going to pop up even when she is doing perfectly fine.

That is what a fucked up childhood does to a child.

I see him avoiding his own emotions because he wants to talk about Kate. I get flashbacks of everything Kate shared yesterday. It must have affected Mark as well. I just didn't think now was the right time to ask that so I carried on with his statement.

"I know where you are coming from and I can't even imagine how it must be for the three of you."

"I know we aren't the bro types yet but please don't break her heart."

I look at him and hug him and whisper in his ear, "Her heart isn't mine to break."

He hugged me back. He must have his baggage as well. It wasn't my place to interfere but all I said him was, "It is all going to get better and I don't mean it in a cliché way, I say it because that is a kind of a truth which has been said by everybody but is believed by none."

"I know what you mean." I like how there was no ice between us.

"So, do you still don't like sugar?" He asks.

I laugh at that comment because I didn't think he would remember.

"I don't, your sister is having enough for the both of us for god's sake. It is very difficult to stop her and then when you say her 'who eats donuts at 8 AM, she has the wittiest replies to it. So, it's better to let her eat.'"

"I hope you guys get married, I would like to have you as my brother in law." He says that and pats my back. "See you outside." He leaves and I get up to keep my glass on the shelf.



It is such a feeling to think about marrying Kate, to have kids with her, to make her coffee all the time.

I walked out and find Kate just a few seconds later. “Hey, where have you been?” She asks as she holds me from my waist.

“We were just catching up.” I say as I pull a strand of her hair from her lower lip.

“Catching up, I see. Do you want to see our room?” She asks as we walk towards it.

“Of course, let’s go.”

Kate’s room was exactly like her. It seems like nothing has been moved since she left Texas and moved to New York. Everything is just so immaculate.

“Your room is lovely.”

She reaches the nightstand and holds a picture of her father with Kate on his shoulders.

I hold the frame in my hand and look at her, she had always looked the same. Nothing and everything about her have changed. Just that the smile in that picture seemed more genuine and authentic.

Now, it feels like she has to force a smile because she believes that life has so much more to offer and we should be grateful, which I agree is the truth but I also know that she avoids so many emotions just because she feels like she is over it.

I see that she needs a reason to bring her father in the middle of any conversation. That doesn’t come out of love of

course, it comes out of revenge and rage, pain and despair, disappointment and agony.

“Kate, can I ask you something?” I look at her while she sits on the bed. She seems lost, she zones out in the middle of conversations really quickly.

“Yeah, what?” She adjusts her top and looks at me.

“Do you ever think about meeting your father?” She looks away and opens her wardrobe and says, “Why would you ever go back to the dead if there are only ashes left Noah?”

“Oh, is he...?” I didn’t finish the sentence before she says, “No, he is still alive and that is all I know. I don’t want to know anything beyond that.

“Do you think that you have not gotten your closure or are you simply full of rage?” I had to ask this from her one day or the other. She thinks that she is happy. That is all I know. She is dead from the inside and is simply concealed on the outside, I don’t think her inside ever got better.

“Closure for being beaten? Closure for being hated for no reason? I don’t need that closure for god’s sake.” She says as she adjusts her clothes inside her wardrobe.

“I understand where you are coming from and I respect how you are feeling but hate is only going to give you pain.”

“Noah, you don’t know anything.” I can see her getting angry but I also know that this is important for her to know.

“I know that I don’t Kate but everything that aches in your heart, your father isn’t even aware of the damage that he has done. You don’t know the present. When was the last time you saw him?”

“When I was brutally beaten.....oh...when I was 13.”

“It was a decade ago.” I say.

“Noah, you don’t have to try to fix me. I am broken and unfixable. Please don’t push me. I don’t want to ruin what we have because of something that doesn’t even belong to me anymore.” She shuts her door and rushes out of the room.

I think I got too much into this.

## *Chapter 20*

# KATE

Oh shit.

I ran straight to the kitchen after saying that to him. I don't know if seeing him would change anything or not but I don't want to. If Noah thinks I haven't thought about it, then I have since past 10 years. But all the 'what ifs' scare the fuck out of my heart.

What if he wants to come back in my mother's life? What if he says that he has changed, but the worst of all, what if he is still the same?

But what I wanted to say to Noah was, 'he could have reached out too'. What if he has remarried? What if he has some children of his own? What if he doesn't even care about us?

I don't know it felt as if Noah didn't understand me. I know he wants what's good for me.....but the good is even better than the worse that has happened.

I enter my mother's room after 20 minutes of crying and getting my shit back together.

As I enter, I see her lying on bed watching her favourite show. The second she saw me, she say, "You don't have to reach out to your father as long as it doesn't feel right to you."

“So, he told you.”

“Your brother did.”

“Are they what? Best buddies in already?” I get mad at her for no reason perhaps.

“Mark, get your ass back here, right now.” I shout.

“Why are you shouting?” He enters the room with some donuts on a plate.

“What did Noah say to you?”

“How is that your business?”

“Mom, please tell him to answer my question.” I look at mom as I see Mark laughing from my peripheral vision.

“Baby, tell her, she is upset.” My mother says.

“He told me about the argument you guys had and told me to give this to you.” He put out a letter with a bunch of sunflowers.

“Kate, you can read it alone.” My mother says. “Stop intruding Mark, come join me here.” Mark does the same as I leave the room with a heavy heart.

I open the letter as I sit on my bed with sunflowers on the nightstand.

*Dear Kate, these flowers are for you, you can give them life because that is who you are. You gave me, life, I was happy before you but with you, I know how to live. I am not with you but know that I carry you with me, inside me and around me. You are everything that surrounds me. You are found in the curve of my smile in silence, the loud beating*

of my heart. You add the colour in my rainbow, you are the fragrance of the flower in the field. You will always be the same for me because you are the love to my soul. I dive deeper into your eyes every day, unafraid of losing myself because you make me feel safe in the ways I never I needed. For what I said earlier, I know it is your family and I know that it is not my place to speak and I am sorry if I hurt you but please think about what I said. You don't have to do anything immediately and you don't have to force yourself to do or not do anything. Just know that when you hate somebody, you give them the power to treat you. You give them the power to hurt you, make you happy. You don't have to put that in somebody's else's hands because you Kate, my Kate, are the strongest person I know and this doesn't mean that you are not allowed to be weak but it simply means that you know how to keep it under control. I know you think about him every day and you can't run away from the truth. I want you to accept the truth before it is late, before you let it go beneath the layers of your body and soul and you can't find any way to remove that. No matter, how much you discuss it with your mother or anybody else, your pain is going to remain yours. Nobody except you owns that. I don't want to sugar-coat it for you by saying that I can share it with you because I can't, because nobody can. Nobody other than you know what you feel, how you feel it. Nobody but you. If this hurts you then you have to accept it that I want nothing but peace for you. Your father isn't your father anymore, he was your until he forgot about you. You can save yourself even when you feel like you are not saved. I hope you find a way out of it. You can call me anytime. I will be waiting for you.....I always have Kate. I am not going anywhere. I love you.

I fold the note and keep it in the drawer.

My hands, my t shirt and my face were drenched with tears. It was not because of the note, yes it was but this one page brought everything I have been trying to avoid.

The tears weren't stopping for the entire time I was reading the letter. Not because I knew it was true but because I Noah knew it was the truth. Every single memory of my childhood unwrapped in front of me. I didn't know what to do. I know my father gave up since he married my Mom. All I could now think was of was texting him.

Well, he hasn't changed the number so it was easier for me.

ME: When can I meet you? I need to talk about something

He replied instantly.

HIM: Hi, my dear Katie Kate. I have missed you, I hope you have forgiven me but I have now changed. I am in Texas for a couple more days. We can meet in Longhorn Cavern State Park at 4:30 PM tomorrow. Does that work for you?

*I have changed, my foot.*

ME: Okay, see you.

That is all I had to say.

I slept while hugging the letter and texted Noah.

ME: I am sorry for being rude, you are right. I am going to meet him tomorrow and I will call you once I get up. I hope you have a great time catching up with your grandparents. See you a day after. I love you.

I don't mind meeting my father but it just breaks my heart.  
It brings everything I don't want to talk about. Time had  
stretched between us, carving nothing but silence where we once  
shared laughter.



## *Chapter 21*

# KATE

I stood there frozen, the world around me froze fading into a dull hum. There he was, after all these years, after all the time that frayed between us.

Instead of warmth, which never existed, I only felt hollow and painful. His smile, his face, familiar yet distant.

Our eyes meet and silence.....

And silence

All these years had taken too much, too many unsaid words, too many missed moments. I wanted to say a lot, perhaps some reunions are just not good.....they are just reminders of how much has already been lost.

We sat on the bench quiet for 30 minutes when I interrupted the silence, “I don’t think I could ever have a story to tell my children which would make them strong if I would have forgiven you back then.”

He keeps his phone in his pocket and stands up to say while I was still seated.

“I know I messed up but if I didn’t reach out then neither did you.”

*I was his daughter, I was the child.*

I was hurt yet angry but chose to reply to him with softness in my voice.

“I was right. You haven’t changed a bit Dad. I don’t want you to project your actions and make me feel guilty about that. I choose to not give you that right.”

I could see the rage in his eyes and I could see that he is dying to either hit something or somebody.....

I stand up as I see his eyes turning red, I face him and looked him in the eye as I say, “You don’t scare me out anymore.”

I could no longer see anger in his eyes, there was nothing but confusion and failure, failure of why am I not scared.

He smiles a little and says, “I am not here to scare you Kate, you are my daughter.....” I interrupt him and say, “I was never your daughter. I was never.”

He puts his arm around my shoulders. His touch is still the same.....rough yet subtle.

“Am I really your daughter?”

“You would always be.”

“You can now stop being loving when you know you can’t be.” My voice escalated not because I don’t see him changed but because it gets annoying to even look at him.

“You lost your mind that day when you found out that I wasn’t as forgiving as my mother, you couldn’t be a good father or a good husband. You can go and have fun with your wife, I assume.”

*Yes, it was a taunt.*

He turned pale, he thought I would never come to know.

“How.....how did you know?”

“Dad, all those years I wished that my mother had met a different man, so that she could be happy for once and you know what, she still says that she had only loved you, she always has. She doesn’t date anymore. You are the one who took that from her and I really hope you don’t find love and rot in hell.”

Those were my last words before I left the park and sat in my car. I ran so that he wasn’t left with any option of even following me.

I hate him so much, nothing has changed. He is still the same shallow person he was.

I could forgive him if he was a good husband, I wouldn’t even mind him being a bad father. I wish he had treated my mother differently. He was the first man who scared me, the first man who disappointed me, the first man who made me believe that marriage sucks, that love isn’t for all, the first man who fucked up.

I wish I didn’t have his blood in me. The only thing that I wish I could take back was not to have any image, blood, anything of him inside me.

I reached home around 2pm and saw that my mother was sitting in the living room.

“MOM” I ran towards her, I could feel the tears on my skin. She was all I needed.

“Oh, Kate, come here.” She took me in her arms and let me cry.

“Was his father like that? Or was his’s? Where did it all start?”

She rubs my head and says, “You have to believe that men were taught to overpower women since ancient times, he had inherited the same. The intensity is less but it can’t go away, ever. The child either learns the same behaviour of the parent or is totally the opposite.”

I wipe my tears while I am still rested on her shoulders, I say “Do you wish you had found somebody else after you divorced him?”

Her eyes were moist, as if she had just cried or can anytime.

She pulls me up and now I am facing her, “Kate, your anger for him is it because of he wasn’t a good husband or a good father?” I remain silent, I have never known the answer to that question. I don’t think I ever will.

“Answer my question Mom.” She tried avoiding my question but failed. *I am a grown up now. I don’t fall for her tactics anymore.*

She takes a deep breath and says, “I didn’t feel like falling in love, the urge to fall in love ended when he let another woman come between us and I really wish he is keeping her well.”

“Where did you get this courage from?”

“Your grandmother and I assume she found it from hers. Not every generation is as bad as it looks like.” She laughs as I sit straight.

“I knew since day one that I would never be enough for your father. I just put you kids through it and that is what I regret. I knew that he couldn’t love but I also knew that it wasn’t my place to teach that to him. Sometimes, distance from a person can show them the acknowledgements we look for.”

And then I realise, it wasn’t my father’s closure that I needed, it was my mother’s. She wiped the tears from my cheeks and says, “I never knew my destiny would take me where I am today but KATE, believe me when I say this, I am happy without him. I wish I could have those 20 years back but I have never been happier.”

I want to hug her and I did as I say, “I could give you my life so that you can have yours, Mom.”

“I hope you went to see him because you felt like and not because you had to.”

“I just thought he could give me some answers, I still have so many unanswered questions Mom and no matter how brave I seem on the outside, they bother me.”

“I know I can’t take his place but maybe, for everything you are looking is from me and not him.” She says and I sigh, it hit me because yes, it wasn’t my dad’s clarification I needed, it was my mother’s belief and courage.

“Mom” I hugged her and thought, she is right.

“So go on, be a kid again and ask me everything.” I take a deep breath and think, I shouldn’t put her in that state again but maybe, she will also feel relieved so I go on.

“Will I always be hollow on the inside, why is there something in me that is just sad and I no longer know who I am without that feeling.”

“Sometimes, our childhood trauma doesn’t leave us right away because we try to slip it and we think that we are over it but when you are alone at night, everything creeps into the mind which gets beyond your control. You have to accept that you don’t have to forgive him in order to not feel this. You can simply accept that he wasn’t the father you wished to have and that is okay Kate. Not everybody gets everything but you have everything else that people dream of but having said that, I don’t mean that you are not allowed to feel sad. He was a father to you until he couldn’t be one.” My cheeks turn red, my eyes are swollen and I don’t need a mirror to see that. I can feel it.

“I really thought that he had changed.”

“It is okay to want that out of people but for somebody who has the ability to break your heart once, can do that again. You don’t have to force yourself to make anybody a part of your life. On that note, did you talk to Noah?”

“Yes, I have. I will see him at the airport directly tomorrow morning.”

“I am going to miss you my kid.”

“Come and join me at New York for some time Mom.” I want her to come and live with me, I miss being around her. I know she is happy with her girls here and of course Charlotte’s

mother is all she needs but I just.....miss and that is what I don't like about adulthood.....leaving your parents..... mother..... behind....hoping that she would be fine alone, hoping that she will find a way out, hoping that she will not miss you a lot or will cry herself to sleep, or maybe she doesn't share heart feelings if she gets sad.....adulthood isn't easy.

“We are planning to move in together. I am happy but it's a new feeling.”

“That makes me so happy. Make sure he feeds this little tummy of yours even when you say you are not hungry and trust me, it's going to be fine. And you know that I am always around, right?” She rubs my tummy as she says this.

“Mom, stop.” I get up from the couch and leave the room giving her a kiss on her cheek.

“Kate.....” She interrupted when I reached the corner of the door.

“Yes, Mom.”

“No matter how hard it gets, do not lose a man with a nice ass like his' and no matter how easy it gets, don't think before leaving him if he abuses you in any form.”

I pass her a smile and manage to say, “Yes mom.”

I knew where she was coming from, she has said that to me more than 10 times in one way or the other and I only feel sad because how sad her years must have been that she still fears this stuff. It feels like a crime to leave her but I had to.

## *Chapter 22*

# NOAH

Everything between us was better. If I could, I would fix everything inside her which is broken. She shared that she had met her father. I have no idea about the pain she has been going through, but all I know is hating on her father or wanting answers isn't going to help her in any way.

If her father wanted to, he could have reached out to her. But now, like Kate said he is married and happy, good for him. Not that it is any of my business but I wondered if I were Kate's father or anybody else's in a situation like this then how would I react or what I would do.

But, I could think of nothing. My mind went blank as if there are no more cognitions in it. And that is when it hit me.

You cannot feel a situation until you are in it. No matter how empathy you show but your pain is always going to be yours.

I am standing at the airport waiting for Kate. She must be reaching in a couple more minutes, according to her location.

After sitting in the lounge areas and gulping on one croissant, I look at the window and I see my lady walking towards me.

She looks tired yet fresh.



As she comes closer, I only want to hug her tightly and never let go.

“I hope I didn’t make you wait.” She says as she keeps her luggage beside mine and hugs me.

Her head rests peacefully beneath my chin as I mutter, “Every second is worth it.”

“You just saw me two days ago, you didn’t have to bring flowers again Noah.” She holds the lilies by the stem and smells them as she smiles.

“What is the point of buying flowers once in a blue moon Kate? They are supposed to be given every day.” I kiss her on the cheek as we take the luggage and settle ourselves in our flight.

I see that she is tired, it’s not on her face but I can still see it, still feel it.

I give her the aisle seat, and I sit in the middle. I think I would always do that for her.

She opens her book and starts reading.

I don’t interrupt her, I don’t ask anything. I just let her be.

“Noah.” She says as she closes the book.

“Is everything okay?” I ask.

“Can I keep my heads on your shoulder?” She asks as she plugs in her airpods.

I don’t say anything. I didn’t have to.

I take her head and puts it on my chest as I tilts a little towards her side.

She closes her eyes peacefully as she goes into deep sleep.

Again.

I wish I could take this pain away from her.

I wish.

I let her sleep.

The flight from Dallas to New York is about 3 hours. I hope she sleeps well.

I don't move an inch and constantly stare at her hair.

I texted my parents in a group that just had the three of us.

Me: I love you guys, thank you for everything.

And the plane took off.

I never really realised how lucky I was.

How lucky Kate thinks she is.....still.....how lucky.

## *Chapter 23*

# KATE

We got home and settled at my place. Kate was much more tired than I was.

She unpacked everything, like I expected out of her and went straight to the shower.

I made sure to cook something before I did the same.

She came back and smelled like Aqua musk, a blend of clean water and hint of fresh linen on her body. She looked crispy as she lathered her body with a velour essence.

Her body seemed warm, there was a sense of calmness in her. She faced the mirror and dried her hair. The air around her hums with the scent of purity, her body tangled with silk and linen.

She left a longing sigh of something clean and untouched and impossibly soft, like I would touch her and she would get dirty.

She turns and catch me looking at her, or I should rather say, staring at her.

“This is not the first time you have seen me coming out of the shower.” She laughs and gets inside the sheets. It was evident she just wanted to sleep.

“I will get back from a quick shower and I have put in some food on the nightstand.”

“You are too good Noah, I love you so much.”

She takes a pause and smiles.

I got up as she say, “Also, I forgot to tell you, Charlotte’s ex-boyfriend’s sister has her birthday coming up and both of us are invited.”

“Number one, why is.....”

“I know, that is how she is.” We both laugh at it.

Ex-boyfriend’s sister, holy shit.

“When is the birthday?”

“Umm.....tomorrow.”

“What! That is such an early notice ma’am.”

“By that, I mean that we have a party today midnight, which means we have to leave at 10 PM.”

I look at the clock and see that it was 6 PM already. Not that I need time to get ready or she does but it took time to process.

“I like when you make a baby face when you know you are a terrible informer.” Her face is now opposite to mine when she says, “But you told me you’ll love me irrespective.” She stands up and says, “Can I take a nap here?”

“This is the last time you are asking that, this is OUR house.” I pull her into a hug and her smiles underneath my chin.

“I love you, are you going to join me, after you shower?”

“Just give me 10, I am going to eat that freshly lathered body of yours.”

I head into the shower and she carried on with her espresso and book.

“Can you please pass me my curler?” I shout because we are running late, rather, I am.

Noah has been sitting on one corner of the bed and I am getting ready on the other. He hands me the curler and says, “You look illegally beautiful.” I can’t help but blush around him.

I reach the living room to grab my purse and Noah pulls me towards him and leans in for a kiss. “Can I say something?” He asks.

“Of course.”

“I am having a severe headache but your beauty takes it all away and I have had water with salt in it.” He says with a laugh.

“If the headache is not because of me then hope you feel better in a while, we can leave a couple minutes later but if it is because of me then I am worth every headache I give to a man.” I say as I put on the sling of my purse across my body.

When my back is touching his chest and his hands are wrapped around my waist with my head under his chin.

“The headache is because of sleep deprivation and my love, you are worth cracking bones for.” He leans in and kisses the side of my neck, giving me goose bumps.....like he always does.

We kiss each other and leave for the party.

The kiss was  
mandatory.

We were on time, when I see the time in my watch it was  
9:55 PM.

As we enter her house and that is a whole ass mansion. The  
entire street was crowded. I haven't seen these many people in a  
while or since high school.

"Hold my hand" Noah whispers in my ears. I look at him  
because I feel nervous surrounded by so many people.

We walk together and it feels intolerably anxious. I haven't  
felt like this since a while.....since a decade.

My hands are sweaty and I am shivering with Noah's hand  
intertwined in mine.

He looks at me and says, "Kate, we can skip going inside."  
I see the tension on his face, he seems concerned. He plants a kiss  
on my cheeks and stops a server and hands me a glass of water.

"No, it's okay." He kisses my forehead and tightens the grip  
of my hand as I take a last sip of the water and hands it to the  
server.

All I see is white warm lights and people wearing  
Schiaparelli gowns and Hermes Kelly. But, one woman who  
looks gorgeous in it is my best friend.

I see her standing near the bar, like I expected her to.

"There she is." Noah points out at the bar.

“Let’s go.” We walk towards her and I have the biggest smile on my face.

She comes running towards me even in a 5 inch heel. She hugs me and doesn’t let go.

She needs this hug more than I ever will. She looks behind me and says, “There he is, the handsome man my girl fell in love with.” Noah comes near and they chat for a couple of minutes before we reach the food station.

“Why do these people spend so much money on birthday parties?” Charlotte asks looking at the roof. Noah laughs at the comment and says, “Of course she *had* spent a lot of money.”

“We should grab something to eat, the birthday girl isn’t going to be here for another hour.”

We stand near the Lasagna counter and grab our respective bites.

Noah’s phone buzzes and he puts his plate aside and says in rush, “I have to attend the call Kate, I will see you in 10 minutes.”

It is just Charlotte and me now.

“You look flushed Kate, is everything alright?” She takes a sip of her glass and rubs my arm.

“I don’t know, I just have been nervous for no reason. I feel like something is going to happen, something very wrong. I am not able to breathe properly. I feel unknowingly anxious.” I say as I look around gasping more air.

“Do you want to go out and grab some air?” She takes my purse and holds me by my shoulder.

“Char, I will go out for a while you.....I will get back.”  
I leave her hand and move. It feels like I am about to puke.

Am I.....pregnant? Noah used protection and.....even if he didn't.....I *can't* get pregnant.

I just.....I need to get the test done, like right now. I reach the bathroom and look for stripes in my bag when somebody interrupts me.

“Do you need any help?” I turn around and see dark brown eyes running on my bare neck.

Strange.

“Um, thanks....I am good.” I say.

He makes me nervous again. He is not taking his eyes off of me. My hand is still inside my bag and my eyes are fixated at his’.

“How do people call you?” He asks as he fixes his tie.

“Excuse me...”

“Excused miss, I hope you take a minutes or more to take your eyes off of my face.” I suddenly feel embarrassed because I actually was staring at him but I shouldn't. I have a boyfriend, not that I needed that reminder but I do have one.

He puts his hand forward to shake with mine and I don't give in till 5 seconds before he moved closer to me.

I can smell his cologne. I can see his eye nerves so close. His hair is perfectly made and his Ralph Lauren shirt neatly tucked in his blue formal pants with his blazer hung on his arms.

“Hi.” We shake our hands and I am cold. I can feel that.



“Hey, you are....you are so cold. Do you need something to cover you?” “I will be better, I have to get my pregnancy test done, like right now, I will maybe.....see you around.”

He seems to think that I am kidding as he says, “Of course, you don’t look pregnant. Don’t worry and believe me, I can make that out by just a look on your face. You are just anxious. You are not pregnant.”

“I hope so, I am not ready to have a kid anyway.”

I move a little back and he says, “Bye. Nice to meet you. Maybe, I will see you around someday, again.”

“I have a boyfriend.” I regret saying that as I blurt out.

“Are you what? In high school? I respect you and your partner but.....”

He moves closer to me and holds my arm gently, “I don’t need to know your relationship to rip off this black dress off your body.” He leaves my arm and covers my bare shoulder with his blazer and leaves.

What the fuck. Noah must be looking out for me.

I suddenly feel better, better in a weirdest way possible.

“Hey, where have you been? Are you okay?” I look around and Noah looks equally stressed as I do.

“Yeah, I think....I am.....I need to go pee.” I move towards the washroom and Noah holds my hand.

Holds

my

hand

harshly

roughly

“Whose.....umm.....whose blazer is this?” He asks.

I watched as his face twisted, the muscles in his jaw clenching so tight I thought they might snap. His eyes—those eyes—turned hard, cold, like black stones, and something in me recoiled. I could feel the air thickening, charged with an energy I couldn’t quite explain, but it was dangerous. His hands balled into fists, trembling with the effort of holding back what seemed like a tidal wave of anger, and I knew it wasn’t going to stay contained for long. Every breath he took was jagged, like it hurt just to inhale, and his voice... his voice came out low at first, but then it snapped, sharp and cruel, each word cutting deeper than the last. I could see the veins in his neck, pulsing, as if his rage was pushing its way out through every inch of him. It was like watching a man unravel before my eyes, consumed by something much bigger than him. The rage was all-encompassing, drowning out everything else, leaving nothing but that wild, desperate need to destroy whatever stood in his path. And I knew, in that moment, that nothing I said would matter. He was gone—lost to the storm.

Why am I feeling nervous? I didn’t do anything wrong. I didn’t hold anybody arm, I didn’t give somebody my blazer. I didn’t say.....

“Kate? I am asking you something.” He tightens the grip around my arm and it hurts but Noah is simply asking me a question, why is it taking a lot of time for me to answer that?

Speak up Kate.

“Noah, I....” It feels like I was never taught how to speak. The look in Noah’s eyes is terrifying.

“What Kate, say something.”

“Somebody just came and gave it to me because I was feeling cold.”

I feel sweat running down my spine. My hands are shaking and all I remember is seeing everything fade away.

Everything around me starts to tilt, as if the ground is slowly slipping away beneath my feet. My head feels light, like it's filled with cotton, and the air suddenly feels too thick to breathe. I blink, trying to clear my vision, but the world is softening—edges blur, colors fade, and everything becomes distant, like I’m watching from far away. My legs feel like they’re made of jelly, unsteady, barely holding me up. My heart starts to race in my chest, a loud, thumping echo that drowns out the sounds around me. It’s harder to focus, and my body feels like it’s sinking, heavy and slow, pulling me toward the floor. I try to stay upright, to fight it, but the pressure in my head builds, and the world goes quiet, muffled like I’m underwater. Panic flickers in the back of my mind, but I can’t hold on much longer. I know if I don’t sit down soon, I’ll be lost to it completely.

## *Chapter 24*

# NOAH

She was covered in a goddamn men's blazer which wasn't mine.

She fainted.

She fainted in front of my eyes.

I saw that Kate was about to hit the ground when her eyes started to close and her body was losing the weight to carry itself. I could see that her hands were shaking. Her palm was wet.

But

I didn't catch her when she fell,

I COULD SEE THAT SHE WAS ABOUT TO FALL  
AND I LET HER FALL. I LET HER GET HURT BECAUSE  
THERE WAS A MAN'S BLAZER AROUND HER FUCKING  
SHOULDERS.

I don't know

what

to

do

I

fucked

up.....

I took her in a guest's bedroom with Charlotte.

She has asked me endless number of times of what had happened.....and again.

"Could you please tell me what has happened?" I see Charlotte getting restless. She hasn't left Kate's side for 5 hours. Charlotte doesn't want me in the room anymore. She called the security to check in with the cameras a while ago and I assume she knows what she saw.

"Call me if you need some help. I am waiting outside." I say her as I grab my phone and move out.

What the fuck did I just do? Am I a bad boyfriend? Am I

Just

like

her

*father?*

"Get the fuck out of this room and leave her phone and purse on the bed." She glares at me with anger. I see that evidently. She would have thrown a brick at my face if she wanted to.

Kate had made some slightest movements and as claimed by the doctor she had a severe concussion. She is referred for some CT scans tomorrow for any injury, if she had had any.

And I am *prohibited* to join her.

She has a tiny bruise around her eyebrow. It breaks my heart to see that. I should have, could have saved her.

Why did I not? I was so angry at myself. It felt as if the veins were cracking through my bones. The rage beneath my skin was getting warm. The pain of seeing her in pain was like a fire with no mercy, the fire licked through my body. The pain was just unbearable.

I went to the restroom and looked at myself in the mirror, or rather stared.

Nothing made sense, everything was weird, painful and terrible.....so fucking terrible.

I assume she would be staying at Charlotte's place for a couple of days.

I get out of the location keeping a track on Kate's. I tried calling a couple of times for two hours but she didn't answer.

I drove.

Drove fast enough to reach at the apartment in just 14 minutes. 60 minutes covered in 14.

The rage was enough.

I don't like getting inside my apartment which doesn't has Kate's fragrance or her hair on the sofa.

I stand at the door and look around. Nothing made sense, the home felt like a house with walls.

It was 4 AM, I wasn't even sleepy. I decided to stay awake for 3 more hours so that I could see Kate at 7AM.

Charlotte on the other hand left my texts and on seen and I assume she had blocked me from everywhere.

While I sat on the bed, I was constantly telling myself that I wasn't jealous, that I didn't deliberately hurt her.

But.

I know that

I did.

Maybe she was right

I am just like her father.

But,

I am not Kate.

I close my eyes as I wipe of a tear that hit my nose.

## *Chapter 25*

# KATE

“Char, why hasn’t Noah come to check on me yet?” All I could see, stare, at the clock in front of me since 6AM. I was at Charlotte’s apartment and I was covered with sheets and my feet feel cold, my hands are still sweating and are cold as ice.

My back still hurts, my legs are paining and my face is swollen.

I remember everything as clear as stone under crystal clear water.

“He must be on his way Kate, you are supposed to relax a little and don’t put too much pressure on your cognitions please.” She says as she places warm water and a bunch of tablets beside me.

“I am fine Char, I just need to see him.” I say as I take a sip of water.

I have no idea where my phone was, where my wallet was. But, I was at Charlotte’s.....so everything must be safe.

“Kate, you.....” Charlotte sighs “a psychologist is coming here in a couple more minutes to get your diagnosis done. I don’t want anything abruptly happening to you, so I gave you a heads up.”



“A diagnosis? A fucking diagnosis for what? Could you elaborate a little?” I say as I had so many thoughts running through my mind.

Before she could say anything I see.....somebody who I assume is my *psychologist*.....who I...say...just.....blazer.....Ralph Lauren.

My entire mind stops functioning. I am not able to look at anything but him. Everything suddenly becomes so vivid.

I want to look away. I want to disappear. My head hurts. He can't be here.

“I will be outside Kate, tell me if you need something. He is Oliver.” Charlotte says and moves out of the room after sharing niceties with.....Oliver.

“Hi Kate.” Nervousness was evident on his face, but what did he do to be nervous about? Lol.

“I am Oliver, I am a Clinical Psychologist. Your best friend's uncle is my Dad's childhood friend.”

“Oh.” That is all I could say.

“I am sorry, this was the only way I found to break the ice.”

“There is no need to break the ice.

I say and instantly feel guilty.

“Did you know that I was the client you *were* going to see?” I say suspiciously.

He didn't look like a psychologist, yesterday, when he tried to.....ugh.....my head hurts.

“I know you won’t buy it but I had no clue. Charlotte and I met just an hour ago before I.....saw.....you.....umm.....at the party.”

He was fumbling.

“Charlotte called me immediately, after you were referred to see a therapist. I am sorry I don’t want to scare you. She told me that her best friend needed a therapist and gave me the time slot to reach here because you weren’t physically strong to visit me.” He sounded convincing.....and.....maybe.....I was convinced.

I trusted Charlotte on this but.....it feels like I cheated on Noah. I still don’t know what is going on in my head. I still feel dizzy, I still have the urge to go and sleep but Oliver.....seemed genuine. Of course after I ignore what he said to me at the party yesterday.

“I believe you, thank you for coming.” I say as I pass a droopy smile at him.

“Of course, it’s my job.” He makes himself comfortable on the couch exactly in front of my bed and sips his warm water and reads something on a bunch of paper.

He looks so different from yesterday. It feels illegal to look at him this way because.....of Noah. I love him. In love him more than anything and it is just unjustified to think about another man.....sexually. He is wearing a sweatshirt and a pair of black jeans with Mexico 66.

He looks.....cute.....totally opposite of yesterday.....because yesterday.....he looked smoking hot.

“So, can we start the session?” He says as he keeps his right leg above the other.

“Yeah.” I still don’t know how a therapy session looks like but I thought of giving in.

“Have you been on any medication?” Oliver asks with a pen in his hand waiting to write everything I am saying.

“I haven’t been on medications since the last time I got flu which was a decade ago.” I laugh while sipping some water.

“Good to hear that. How do you feel right now?”

“I feel.....” I take a pause. “Confused.”

“What makes you feel like that?”

“Like I am doing something wrong by.....you know.....being here.” “What wrong is that you feel?”

“I feel like I am being dishonest to my partner.” I know what I meant, he knew what he heard. None of us said a word.

“I understand that, I want to let you know that you are in a weak condition right now to think about anybody but yourself.” He assures me.

“Yeah, I know.”

“Do you remember anything from yesterday?” He asks as he wipes the corner of his eyes.

“Oh absolutely.” I was dying to bring this up when he interrupted... “...anything that is not unethical to this setting of ours.”

The embarrassment was visible on my face.

“I do remember, I think. I fell on the ground and Noah didn’t catch me when I fell.”

He was scribbling on his diary continuously.

“Are you sure he knew that you fell?”

“100% percent, his hands tightened around my arm and I zoned out and hit the ground. I could sense that I was about to fall and I saw what was about to happen but maybe he didn’t know what to do.” “Alright, I have your blood test reports and you have to get your Saliva and today urine test done itself. Then I can provide you with some authentic results.”

“Yeah sure.” He keeps a cup which I suppose is for my urine and a palette like structure for maybe.....my saliva.

“Umm.....we have to get the saliva right now and then 3 to 4 times throughout the day to check your cortisol level.”

Is he going to take out saliva from my mouth?

He puts the paper and his cardboard aside and brings his tools close to my mouth....very close. His little finger is touching my lower lip. His left hand is covering my right cheek. “Could you open your mouth a little more?”

“mmmmm” I say as I open my mouth wide apart and he lathers some saliva on a stick like structure and cover it with a lid.

“So, Charlotte knows how to take more saliva during other hours of the day. I will take this sample with me and the rest, I will collect tomorrow with your urine sample.

“You can take the sample right now.” I say as I get up to go the bathroom.

“I could but I have to give it in the lab and it is closed today, so I will take everything collectively tomorrow.” He says.

“Okay then, thank you for coming.”

“Kate, you have to get this self-diagnosis done by today.”

“He hands me 2 pages which has several questions on it.

“You can fill these up and give it to me tomorrow.” He says with a tense faced. “I don’t have anxiety Oliver, don’t look at me like that.”

“It is just my face Kate.” He laughs it off and so does I.

“My job is to treat people and that’s it.” He packs his bag and gets up to leave the room.

“It was great meeting you Kate, see you tomorrow.” He says as he turns around.

I interrupt him as I say, “You are so professional, unlike yesterday.”

“You are not healthy right now, unlike yesterday Kate.” I could see the stretch of his lips.

“Right, you can.....umm.....thank you for your blazer but you can take it back now. Its purpose was fulfilled yesterday.”

He looks at me and then at the blazer beside me and says, “You can keep it Kate. I hope the tests come out fine and if I see you’re for the last time yesterday then you can return this blazer to me.”

I couldn't help but smile at him "Such an unethical setting Oliver. Nice to meet you too. See you tomorrow and maybe. Again."

WHAT DID I JUST SAY? I HAVE A FUYCKING BOYFRIEND.

He moves ahead to open the door when I interrupt him.

"Oli....."

"I know you have a boyfriend, Kate. I don't need to be reminded that again. And it is such an unethical setting for that conversation." He says that and laughs while moving out of the room.

I held onto his blazer and just held onto it for a while when I was interrupted by a knock. It was Charlotte with.....Noah.

Noah is my boyfriend, I should be on cloud nine to look at him but it just didn't happen.

"Kate" He smiles and walks fast towards me. "How are you, Kate?"

His expressions are full of nervousness, his eyes are watery and his face depicts how much he was dying to see me. Charlotte on the other hand is waiting for him to leave the room. I know she is mad about *that*. About Noah.....letting me fall. But I think it wasn't his mistake. He must have felt helpless and he must be angry about the.....umm.....blazer on my shoulders.

"I have been better, how long will it take for you to come and kiss me now?" I nudge and move ahead and are lips meet. The lips I have been dying to kiss. His lips are made for mine.

He doesn't let go of my lips until Charlotte interrupts us, "Noah, Kate needs some more rest and it's her time to eat. We will see you.....umm.....tomorrow."

"I just got here Charlotte, you don't get to be mad at me. I may have known her for 9 months but I have *known* her since forever."

I have seen his voice escalate for the first time and it gave me shivers all over my arms. But, he doesn't have any idea about how my best friend reacts when it includes me.

I see Charlotte's face burning, her hands were waiting to punch Noah. "You have some guts Noah. You are Kate's boyfriend and I don't want to disrespect you in any form but you would never know Kate like I do, nobody can. Don't force me to make it difficult for you." She is right, this is what I can think of.

I have literally grown up with her, nobody can discover those parts of me that Kate knows about, but it was so messed up now.

"Guys, cool down a little. It's okay, I am fine." I say and sit down. I felt weak in my legs again.

"Kate, when will you come back home?" Noah asks as he comforts my arm.

"It is going to take me a couple more days Noah."

"Can I stay here for a little while?" Noah's face looked like he hasn't slept much.

I look at Charlotte because it's her house and she doesn't say anything except, "Call me if you need something, I will be

in my room.” She says that and leaves the room after giving me a flying kiss. I am such a lucky friend. I pass her a smile and it is just Noah and me now. He sits beside me and touches my thigh and says, “I don’t want to bother you with anything again but I really got confused and jealous when I saw that blazer on your shoulders and upon asking you didn’t say anything to defend yourself.”

*Defend myself?*

“Noah, defend myself for what?”

“Kate, I know I overreacted but...”

“What but? This is so sad to hear it from you. I was going to the bathroom to get the pregnancy test done because I felt unwell, twice that day and I met Oli.....that man.” I corrected. “I met him, and he offered to help because everybody else could see that I was cold and dizzy except.....you apparently.” I take a pause “You didn’t even try to hold me when I hit the ground, Noah.” It didn’t bother me but now it does. His reason to be jealous whatsoever was unreasonable. I didn’t feel like bringing up the issue of how tightly he held my arm upon asking.

I could make an issue out of it but I just.....

“Listen up Kate, I am sorry for what happened but my reflex didn’t work at that time. Please don’t get mad about it. I promise to make it up to you.” He says and kisses my hand.

I just feel nothing.

Making up for what was done is never justified was what I wanted to say but instead I said, “No, don’t apologise. We are good.” He kisses the top of my head and rubs my hand. His comfort felt like nobody else.



“And, about Charlotte, don’t mind her.....she.....  
umm.....gets a little possessive about me.”

She is right for being sad and mad about the respective things but I don’t know to feel about any of them.

Noah takes out a sunflower from his pocket and keeps it on my chest, “You will recover soon and shine again Kate.”

“I always shine Noah.” I say and close my eyes. We didn’t leave our hands.

It felt good.

We held onto that position and didn’t realise it was 12 noon already. I see that Noah has slept beside me. His legs were lingering on the side of the bed. I softly put the flower aside trying not to wake him up.

I put my arm on his chest and we fell asleep, again.

It does feel good Kate.

You love Noah.

I reminded that to myself and closed my eyes again.

## Chapter 26

# KATE

Noah looked so peaceful holding my boob, his hands slipped down from my neck to my boobs. His presence made me feel better, maybe.

I got up to pee in the sample box. Oliver must be coming in a couple more hours. I stand at the door and look at Noah. I interrogated myself so much. Was I being overdramatic? Did he really hold me tight? If he did, then isn't it okay? He didn't hit me. He just got jealous.

"Hey. You are up early."

*Every thought disappeared.*

"Yeah, you can sleep more. I need to pee."

I smile at him and he goes back to the same position sleeping.

I come back and see Charlotte in the living room. She looked a little tensed. The moment she saw me, her expression changed as if she needs nothing but to look at me.

"Hey, do you feel any better?" She motions her hands on the couch and I sit.



I hear her coffee mug hitting the ground out of shock and she hugs me where I can't breathe.

"I didn't say that I am pregnant Charlotte."

*Not that I wasn't but how did she guess it.*

"Oh stop lying. I know you, I know you are." She stands up and dances in the living room screaming "I am going to be an aunt."

"Charlotte, I don't think I want this child. I mean, I do want the baby, but I....." Her expression changed instantly.

"So, you think Noah wouldn't want him, right?"

"Yeah, I don't think we are ready."

Noah doesn't even know that I am pregnant.

"Can I ask you something Kate?" She seems calmer on the outside but on the inside I know she feels different.

"Are you thinking about if Noah would want it or what is it?"

She is right, it's Noah, I didn't think of having a kid now but I also never wanted to abort the child or the fear about raising him or her never struck my head.

But, I know Noah isn't ready. He is so career driven and I don't know. "Maybe, I will never tell this to him Charlotte and I will abort the child. There is nothing I can do. I don't want to put him in a position to not choose the kid because that would make him feel guilty." I say.

"Kate, are you out of your head? This is your decision to make first, do you want the child or not? You don't have to think

about Noah now. Please take your time.” She runs her hand through my hair and touches my belly and kisses it.

“We are going to the doctor tomorrow and Oliver might be coming in here soon, so get ready please.” I don’t know how to tell Charlotte about Oliver. There is nothing as such to tell but I just don’t know. It’s a weird, confusion going on. Maybe, it is nothing.....maybe it is there because I am pregnant, these are just my hormones.

“Yeah, I will change in few.”

“Of course, abort the baby if you don’t want to have it but of you are thinking about Noah then it is wrong to the baby Kate. You know it.”

I know she is right; I hate when she is right. But, it’s just a different feeling altogether.

“I will think about....” I smile at her and say.... “My baby” She feels my stomach again and the door opens, two doors simultaneously open.

On my right, Noah is getting out of the bedroom and on my left, Oliver enters with his bag in his hand and some flowers.

*These flowers shouldn’t be for me. These flowers shouldn’t be for me. Why would he bring something for me? This should be a professional setting. He is my fucking therapist.*

Their eyes fixated on each other and my heart is thumping, my body is producing heat and I want this to end. I look at Charlotte and she looks at Oliver and share the niceties with him and the air eases up a little.

Noah is waiting for me to look back at him but I AM looking at Oliver.....I am looking at the flowers in his hand and he is looking at me and not Charlotte.

This weird tension is making Noah walk towards me angrily. I look at the ceiling and move towards Noah.

“Kate.....” He whispers in my ears.

I swallow my spit and say, “Yeah....Noah, how did you sleep?”

“I slept really well, can we go inside and talk?” I nod and we move inside the room.

“Is he.....umm.....Charlotte’s boyfriend?” That was the first thing he ask me. We were not even *in* the room exactly by then.

What if I say no? How would he react?

“Yeah, they just started going out.”

FUCK. I didn’t have to.

I know I don’t have to lie but when I look at Noah and the way he asks me about a man, makes me nervous and sweaty.

He kisses my cheeks and says, “How long do you have to stay here, I can take care of you Kate and you do seem well.”

I feel better but I don’t feel like going back. I miss Noah but I miss my *Noah*.

“I will come back home tomorrow evening, I promise. I miss you a lot.” “Do you Kate?” There is silence in the room. We just look at each other and say nothing.

He moves beyond me and picks his bag and leaves without looking back.

My heart sinks. I know I lied, he knows that I lied.

I am totally unaware of this feeling I am having.

I reach the door to see Charlotte and Oliver.....my therapist..... to be precise.

Charlotte looks at Oliver and says, "I'll leave you with your client. Give me a call if you need something Kate." She moves towards her room with a bunch of files in her hand.

"Of course." I pass her a kiss and Oliver follows me in the room. There is silence for a couple of minutes before he finally speaks, "So, how did yesterday go?"

"Yeah, it was good. My boyf.....umm Noah came to see me and it was good."

"Kate?" He sits down on the couch and looks at me very seriously. I am still seated opposite to him with my hands crossed and his are on his laps. His fingers are fidgeting and his mouth is dying to speak.

"I know it is none of my business and I don't have any right to invade in your personal life but," His voice is so calm. His eyes are starting to get watery, his face is red. "I was wrong about you not being pregnant that night. This has happened the very first time that I am wrong but some people are not destined to have a child, if you were given one.....don't abort it. Keep it. You never know if you get to have another baby or not." I don't know where it was coming from. He must have overheard Charlotte and me talking.

"Did you hear us talking about it?"

“I didn’t intent to, of course but yeah, I was entering the apartment and Charlotte said, “Do you want to abort the child because of Noah?”

He looks concerned. I want to ask him what made me say that to me. But instead, I say confirm him, “Yeah, I will think about it. Thank you for the concern.”

“So, your reports are fine, and I will take the urine sample today itself and I will share you the reports online.”

*We are exchanging numbers.*

*Or I am being stupid, mails work fine too.*

“Sure.”

“Did you fill that form I gave you?” He asks.

“It was boring but I did it.”

“The psychologist in me is hurt.” He laughs as I hand over the form to him.

“I will share the interpretation with you over call by today.”

*We are exchanging numbers. We should not. You should not Kate.*

“You are saying this so casually as if it is so normal for you to have the numbers of your clients.”

“It is Kate.”

“Oh, I am sorry. I didn’t know it was normal in your *professional* setting.” I smile a little as I say that.

“I would not need an excuse to ask you for your number, if I wanted to I would.....even if we weren’t in a *professional* setting.” I can see him smirk and I cannot help but smile.



"I believe issues are concerned with you are pregnancy but to make it clear, do you mind answering some of the questions?"

"Sure."

"You can choose to not answer if you feel triggered."

"I have come a long way Oliver, I can face this."

"I am glad." He smiles and moves ahead on the couch. His back isn't slouching anymore, he is close, and his knees are touching mine. "When was the last time you were angry?" I didn't have to think twice before I answered, "When I met my father a few days back." I say instantly.

"Alright, have you ever thought about self-harm?"

"Umm, I have. That was decade ago but I haven't since then." I say as I get flashbacks.

"Good, do you experience fear in your daily routine?"

"I don't think so."

He asked me around 10 more questions and it was totally different than the questionnaire he gave me earlier. That was personal, this was general.

"I think we are done for today, so you can write your number on the top of your questionnaire, and I will share the details."

I write my number without giving it a second thought and he got up. "Have a good day Kate, I hope you keep the baby." He smiles and looks down at my belly. I smile back at him, and he stops for a moment before he turns around. I am standing

on the edge of the bed, and he comes closer and says, “I would be the stupidest man ever if I miss this chance to taste you Kate, I know you have a boyfriend but I am not sorry.”

I don’t even comprehend what he said after the *taste you Kate*. He keeps his bag on the couch, puts his hands on my waist and pull me slightly, slight enough to not harm me and harsh enough to make me feel something down there.

His right hand touched the strap of my bra, and his left hand was on my jaw.

The air between our mouths felt warm. He looked into my eyes as if he was about to drown but didn’t mind dying. He looks back and forth between my eyes and my lips.

He parts his lips and I feel him exhale.

I part my lips. I look at his lips and he notices me doing that.

He looks at me and says, “Kate.”

That is all he says and he kisses me.

And I kiss him backkkkkkkkkkkkkkkkk.

*I kiss him back* is all of which I can think. I devourer his lips and they taste like mine, peachy yet strong.

He puts his hand on my hips and squeezes them hard. His hands move all over my ass before he takes a back and looks me in the eyes as if he wants to know what is inside my fucking eyeball.

I was speechless, I didn’t know at to say.

What did I just do? Noah.....oh my god.

“Tell Noah you had the best kiss of your life and if you think I am wrong then let’s fix that mistake.”

He moves his hand from my ass to my neck and touches my cheek. “Oliver, I.....you should go. I can’t do this with you.”

He doesn’t even look at me again and leaves the door open.

I can’t think.

I sit on the couch and look at my hands. What just happened? I picked my phone and there was a text from an unknown number saying— “I didn’t regret kissing you but I would have regretted not kissing you.”

I chose to ignore that text and look for Charlotte.

She is in the kitchen making some donuts when I interrupt her, “Charlotte, I think I kissed Oliver.” The spatula fell off the shelf and she is still for a minute before she moves towards me and says, “Is it the pregnant woman hormones or more than that?” She is laughing when she says that. Does she think I am joking?

“I am not kidding Charlotte.”

“I know you are not.” She says.

“Don’t you want to judge me a little?”

“That’s not what I do.” She says that and keeps her apron aside and hugs me.

I don’t know how to react.

“I came in here for some suggestion and ted talk.”

“Would you share what you did with your Mom?”

“Never.” I say with my eyes wide open.

“Why?”

“Because she *would* give me a ted talk.”

“That’s why Kate, I wouldn’t.” I hug her tighter and say, “You are the friend everybody needs.”

“Tell me about the kiss now.” She needs the tea but I am freaking out. “It’s not funny, I am scared. We didn’t intent to. He just came close to me and ugh, I don’t know what to do.”

“You can pretend this never happened.”

“What! I can’t. I can’t cheat Noah.”

“Woah, it was just a kiss Kate, shut up and eat something now.”

“He asked me for my number for some reports he has to send me.” “Does he not have a mail id? Of course he does. He is into you.” She says and moves near the shelf to put the donuts in the oven.

“I actually ran into him the day at the party and you know what he said?”

*Now this is the tea.*

“What?”

*“I don’t need to know your relationship to rip off this black dress off your body.”*

“Holy shit, he did not.” Curiosity was all over her face.

“I didn’t know he was *that* man when I first saw him here of course.” “Yeah, he is the son of my father’s friend and Kate,

he really is a good guy.” She says as if I am into him.....as if.....I am.....

“I am in love with Noah, Charlotte, what are you even saying.”

“I didn’t say you don’t love Noah, it’s you who said that.” She cleans up the kitchen and moves on the couch handling me some warm milk with berries.

“I don’t know Charlotte, it feels weird. I know you think differently about Noah but he really loves me a lot.” She puts her coffee on the table and held my hand. “Kate, I never doubted Noah’s love for you. I saw the clip from what happened during that party. I didn’t recognize Oliver at that second because I was focused on what had happened after that when Noah came. Just a jacket on your body can make him go mad and angry. Do you have any justification for that?”

“I know, I was going in the bathroom to get the pregnancy test done. I thought I was nervous and wanted to puke maybe because I was pregnant and that turned out to be the cause as Oliver explained it to me. He gave me his jacket because I was cold and I agree I found him cute and I could have even told Noah that some guy gave that to me but looking at his face when he asked me about it freaked me out.

I could see the anger on his face and I was scared and the next thing I remember is blacking out.”

She seems in pain. Her eyes are starting to get watery.

“I don’t know if you want to keep that child or not but don’t make him or her have a father you don’t find a good as a husband.”

“But he didn’t hit me or abuse me or said anything Charlotte.”

“He didn’t have to, his face was enough. He gripped your hand and for god’s sake you still have a mark on. You think wearing full sleeves clothes will not make me think about it?”

*She knew.*

“I changed your clothes when you got here and I thought the marks are just like the other bruises you have because you are clumsy but then I saw the clip that night and the position was the same.

Same arm, same direction.”

“It was just.....”

“Stop Kate, you are not your mother and you know that.”

“He didn’t exactly hit me, Charlotte.”

“Neither did your father the first time with your mother, correct me if I am wrong.”

“You are right, but he is different.” I say defending him.

“I hope he is nothing like your father.”

“Yeah, loves me a lot.”

“Love isn’t enough Kate. You don’t get to make decisions for yourself now, you have a baby inside you. You didn’t even think that you were physically able to have a baby.

This is a good news but whatever you decide to do it would be for the both of you now. I will always support you no matter what but your decision should not affect your child in any way.

I know your mother loved you a lot, more than anything. But, somebody, maybe you this time has to break this cycle. I know he didn't hit you exactly but it all starts from anger. I am not saying anger is bad, but if anger makes you grab something and hurt that, even if it is as slight as possible. IT IS WRONG." She says the last three words loudly.

I remain silent.

"The baby doesn't choose the parents Kate. But you can think about it. It's always a small bruise for the first time Kate." Everything she said is right but Noah is not like my father, he can never be.

"I know you are worried Charlotte, but I know him." She doesn't say anything except, "Just be safe." She isn't convinced. She thinks Noh is a bad guy but he didn't intentionally make this mistake.....it isn't a mistake.

I got up and told Charlotte that I am going to rest for a while. I was still unsure about if I wanted to keep the baby or not. How would I tell this to Noah? I didn't think a lot and switched off my cell phone and went to sleep.

The previous days were very long, and I just needed some rest, both physically and mentally.

## *Chapter 27*

# KATE

### **3 months later:**

Everything yet nothing is all what I have been feeling for 3 months.

I have had no contact with Oliver after we had.....whatever.

I don't feel like feeling anything. I feel nothing but guilt and regret.

Oliver just shared the details the reports which came out to be normal. Our call was sweet and short, we didn't talk about the kiss at all because nothing could happen between us.

About Noah though, things have been better, but they could have gone worse. I haven't told him about my pregnancy but I have to do it today because I am going to start showing in a couple more weeks, maybe days.

We haven't made love for three months. He still gets me fresh flowers every day, we still go out for a coffee every day, we still kiss each other goodbye before we leave for work and we still watching movies on weekends but there is silence all around. It is like both of us want to say something but none of us knows what that is.



Since the day I came here, it has been like that. He doesn't like when I overwork, so he makes me warm milk with donuts. He is just the same he was one year back, but now.....it all feels different.

We don't talk about my illness, we don't talk about the *blazer* he saw on my shoulder that night and he doesn't have any idea about the bruise.

That is how we are coping. By being stupid.

I still have a tiny mark left but he doesn't know that it was because of his hold. I don't like to mention it because he didn't do anything intentionally. I don't how I feel, I know that I want to keep the baby and today might be the day to do all of it.

It's our one-year anniversary and he is taking me out to our favourite café.

He is going to pick me in a couple more minutes and I will share that I am pregnant.

I dressed up because of him. He has always found me pretty, but I have looked chubby, and I feel less hot.

I open the door and he has kept my favourite flowers on the seat. He stretches out his hand and helps me sit and says, "You look lovely Kate." "Thank you, for the flowers too. I love these." I look at him and he looks gorgeous. Better and fresh than the last time I saw him.

We sit quietly in the car for our 20 minute drive and we have 15 more minutes to go.

It feels different. A not very good kind of different.

He holds my hand sometimes and changes the song on the radio simply because he doesn't know what to do, like I don't.

I think I should break the silence by saying that I am pregnant. If I think about it a lot then I won't be able to do that.

"Noah, can you park the car for a couple of minutes?" He looks at me and I think that I am physically unwell maybe.

"Of course, are you okay? Do you need something?" He asks stressfully.

"No, I am totally fine. Don't worry." He pulls up at the corner and holds my hand. "Tell me this isn't the moment where you break up with me." "What, shut up, we are going to the grave together." He laughs and kisses my hand.

"I think this is the most we have spoken for 3 months."

He is right. I have missed him so much.

I don't think of anything and blurt out, "I am pregnant Noah."

His expression is unreadable. I don't know if he is happy or angry. I just split that out in a second.

I look at him and he is crying, by crying I mean really CRYING. His tears are all over his cheeks and he simply hugs me tight, keeping his hand on my belly and the other on my head.

"Kate, I am.....so happy Kate." I hear him sniffing beneath my shoulders.

"Are you?" I ask.

“What? That is not even a question. When did you find out?” It would be so unfair to tell him that it was 3 months ago.

“When I was at Charlotte’s place. I wanted to tell you since so long but I never got the right moment.”

“There is never a right moment Kate, you just pick a moment and make it right.”

“I am glad you want the child.”

“I want you and I want everything that comes from you Kate. How far you?”

“The first trimester is over.” I say. His hand is still on my belly.

“I don’t know what to say Kate, I am so happy. We are going to have a baby, our baby.” He holds my hand and doesn’t leave it for a minute.

“I haven’t told my mom and brother yet, I wanted to confirm with you once.”

“No way Kate, spread the good word. This is the best day of my life. I hope I have a mini you.” Noah and his love for daughters....

“It is going to be a very beautiful version of both of us Noah.” I say.

“My heart feels so light.” I laugh and my phone rings.

“Ugh, who is interrupting our moment? Don’t pick it up if it’s not urgent please.”

I pull out the phone from my bag and it is.....Oliver. Why the fuck is he calling me?

“Who is it?” Noah asks, as I swallow my spit.

*It feels.....weird.*

“It’s Oli.....my therapist.” His face goes expressionless for a moment. “Isn’t that very unprofessional for a therapist to call you at 9 PM?”

“He wanted to check in maybe.” I say as I look down at my phone.

*Shit.*

“Maybe, Kate. You can pick the call and keep it on speaker.”

This side of Noah freaks me out so much. What if he mentions something about the kiss? What if he.....

“Pick the call Kate.”

I slide to answer the call.

“Hey” Oliver says.

“Hi.” I say anxiously.

“Are you okay?” His voice seems like he is concerned.

“Yeah, thank you for checking in.” Noah’s face is facing the window and his hand is on my lap. His fingers are covering my entire thigh.

“Kate, you never reverted back to my text.” I lowered the volume of my phone and Noah looks back at my face with confusion.

“I think you shared enough of the details over the call during our previous session Oliver.” I say.

“Kate, I am talking about.....” He takes a pause before he speaks again, “Can you meet me someday? Just to return me my blazer maybe?”

*What the fuck just happened.*

I cut the call, and Noah is staring at my face. I don’t know anything. My body is shivering, and my face is sweating. I feel the warmth of my cheeks on my skin.

I keep the phone aside and Noah looks at me with anger in his eyes. The same eyes that were watery a minute ago are now filled with anger. His voice is softer and his hand on my lap is tighter, “Kate, was it Oliver’s blazer on your shoulders that night? Just a yes or no.” He turns red.

“Noah, you are.....”

“A yes or a no?”

“Ye...yes but.....” He starts the car and takes a U turn.

“We are going on the wrong side Noah, we might get hit. NOAH, STOP. NOAH.”

He only accelerates the car. There are three people in the car, I have a fucking baby inside me.

“NOAAAAHHHH!” I scream.

He doesn’t listen to me. His eyes are roaring, and I am simple keeping my hand on my belly because it scares me out.

I can’t lose the baby. What if something happenshappening?

“Noah, stop the fucking car.”

His grip on the steering wheel tightens up.

“SHUT THE FUCK UP KATE. JUST SHUT THE FUCK UP.” He screams on my face.

*He was so different just a minute ago.*

*He loved me a minute ago.*

*He wanted to have a mini me a minute ago.....*

*But, that was not anymore.*

It felt as if his eyes were saying that to me. He isn't looking in the front anymore, he is looking at me and screaming, I don't hear a word he says. I can only think one thing.

*This is how I am going to die, this is how my baby is going to die.*  
*This is it.*

We are screaming at each other, his voice is inaudible, and I am only screaming, “LOOK AT THE FRONT. LOOK AT THE FRONT.”

Noah is not.....

Noah did not.

Noah did not

look

In

the

Front.

## Chapter 28

# KATE

I lay on the hospital bed, all I remember is hearing the sound of ambulances, yes, ambulance in plural.

The other sounds that I recall are

*Noah, stop.*

*Kate, shut the fuck up.*

*Stop the fucking car.*

That is all I can think of.

It has been three days since.....

Since the smell of the hospital overpowers the smell of soup I have been consuming.

Since my mother hasn't slept well.

Since Charlotte hasn't left my side for a single second.

And since my brother has been paying constantly for one thing or the other.

I have oxygen mask on my mouth and face, I can see my mother crying in the room with Charlotte.

Noah is standing on the door. He has some scratches on his arm and face, his forehead has been taped because of the injury, I assume. His hand is on his mouth, and he is constantly crying.

I can hear everything, I can see everything but.....I can't speak anything.

I am not able to move my head.

Three of my ribs are broken, my left arm is fractured, and my spinal cord is still under observation.

This is what I could make out from past 3 days.

I remember every detail but I am not able to tell that or write that to somebody.

Noah was mad because he thought something happened between Oliver and me, something did, of course but.....

His anger put me in this condition.

Nobody has said anything about the baby yet and I assume he or she is dead before even being born.

I haven't asked and nobody shared.

The baby must be dead. My baby is dead.

I am the reason, Noah is the cause.

The sadness will never end.

The baby was lucky enough to not have Noah as the father.

I just.....

Silence.



## *Chapter 29*

# **NOAH**

It still feels like a nightmare, I am the reason for this condition of Kate's, she is in pain because of me and my anger.....I am the reason for the loss of this baby. I assume that she knows.

I am the villain at this moment, I should be.

Kate was shouting at me to stop the car.

Neither did I think about her nor about our baby.

I fucking ruined it for everybody.

I am dying to hear her voice. It feels like she is the one speaking but I am not able to hear anything.

I feel so broken.

Charlotte hasn't looked at me for 3 days, her brother passes me coffee two times a day and we sit on the bench near her room in silence.

Kate's mother.....I don't know how she feels about me.

None of them knows what exactly happened, but I think they know bits and pieces.

The police must have reported them the details, I had minor scratches and was kept under observation for just 3 hours.

I was standing near the door waiting for my turn to go and meet Kate. That is when the nurse calls my name, "Noah, you can now come." "Ma'am you guys have to leave." She says to Charlotte and Kate's mother.

I open the door and Kate's mom looks at me with peace, I think she doesn't hate me like everybody does.....like Kate does.

I sit beside Kate and her eyes are wide open.

I hold her and kiss them. "I am sorry Kate, I am the cause for this pain you are going through." I can't stop tears falling on my face. I feel weak, but looking at her, I feel weaker. My body hurts.

I wait for the doctors to say something, but they don't. They have a look of pity on their face.

The doctors mouth me that they want me to visit them after a while.

I hope they have good things to say.

I tighten my grip around my hand.

I can't stop crying. Her tears start to fall on the bed and I wipe them off with my thumb.

"I am sorry Kate. I can't undo what has happened. You can.....I made a huge mistake Kate. I hope you come to your senses soon. I want to hear your voice. I want you to shout at me and tell me that you don't want to be with me because I

made your life a mess. I am the one to blame. You don't deserve this. I told you that I will keep you safe and the only thing I have done is hurt you. I am sorry Kate." I take her hand and touch it on my face, her fingers feel the same.

"I know you want to speak Kate, please say something." Her tears are all over her face and t shirt.

She is hurt because I hurt her. She is in pain because I gave her pain.

Her stomach area is covered with sheets, and she has stitches all over her belly area.

I gave her a scar for life. I am totally like her father, I gave her what she feared having.

I fucked it up for her. Her left foot is broken, she can't move her foot. She is advised to bed rest for 6 months. And if she doesn't speak for the next couple of days she can't leave the hospital for at least a month. She had a concussion for 2 days and after full body check-ups, the doctors found out that her body is damaged on the inside. She has chances to survive but it's less.

Nobody talks about it but I can see it. The doctors want to share that, but I am scared.

I can't run away from the truth.

"Noah, your time is up. Come tomorrow now."

I don't look away from Kate and my final words to her for the day were, "I know you will survive Kate. I can hear you. You don't have to speak to tell me that you are strong and you can bear this. I am sorry Kate. I am sorry."

I kiss her hand and her face and leave her.

She doesn't leave my hand for the next few seconds, and I stare at her hand wishing I could be with her forever.

The doctors are waiting for me outside. Everybody else is at the end of the lane and they can't see us.

Luckily the doctor who was treating her was my father's good friend.

He looks at me anxiously and says, "I don't think Kate can survive."

Shiver ran down my body. My palms went sweaty and my legs started to shiver.

He doesn't mean that. He is not the best doctor; I will find somebody else for her.

"Noah." The doctor pats me on the shoulder and tears start to fall on my face again.

"Doctor, I will take her somewhere else if you don't have enough knowledge about her treatment. I would take her to some different continent if I had to."

"That is your call Noah I shared this with you only because I have good relations with your father. I am scared her brother and mother will freak out more, I don't know how they will take this.

We are trying our best but her CT scans didn't give us good results....." He pauses for a second and continues, "There are clots in her brain and she is not physically fit for the surgery either. The damage of losing the baby has made her weak both on the outside and on the inside.

I am sorry Noah.” He says that and walks away.

I was not able to move a step. Every word that he came out of his mouth felt like a terrible joke. A joke that made no fucking body laugh.

I wipe tears from my face and turn around, seeing Kate’s mother staring at the wall.

As I walk towards her, Kate’s mother stops me in the hallway.

She looks around to check if we are alone.

“Can we sit and talk Noah?”

“Yeah, sure.”

“I want to hear what happened from you. I don’t want to make assumptions like Charlotte and Mark has made.”

“What if those assumptions are correct? Would you hate me then?” I hold myself together and we sit on the chair.

“I never hated Kate’s father, do you think I have the power to hate you?” Kate is just like her. She had the darkest childhood and still looked for the good in people. But how do I tell her mother that I am the bad guy here, I am the one who fucked up.

“I am sorry ma’am, I am sorry if Kate.....” I don’t think she understands what I speak because my tears aren’t stopping.

“She will survive Noah. I promise you. I know the condition is critical but she has seen much worse.” She hides her tears but I know she is crumbling on the inside.

“I made her lose the child we made.” I said.

“Noah, I know you feel guilty and I know you think that the child isn’t alive because of you and I know that you kind of fucked up but you aren’t that person. There was a lot going on. Charlotte told me about the blazer and stuff.”

How is she able to look for the good in me? How now?

“Yeah, she is right. Charlotte warned Kate about me. She was right. I don’t deserve Kate.”

“Please don’t cry Noah. That is Kate’s decision to make not yours or mine. She knows the parts of you that maybe.....nobody ever will.” “But what if she would not want to be with me?” I say as she hugs me from my shoulders.

“Noah, don’t put a lot of pressure on yourself. I know you are sad.” “How are you so calm?” She looks at me and smile for a second, “I am worried about her but can it change anything? The least I can do is hope for the best. If I lose it then who will get it altogether Noah? I don’t have anybody to tell me that it’s going be fine except myself. So that is how it is.”

“I am sorry ma’am, I am really sorry.” I cry and cry. There was nothing I could change.

Everybody knows that Kate is critical but hopes that she will survive. But, I know the truth, the truth which I want to be a lie.

“Don’t be Noah.” She hugs me and kisses my forehead.

She is the only one who doesn’t hate me, the only one who doesn’t.....I assume.”

I don’t know how to react to Kate’s mother. She is optimistic but I cannot be one.

At this moment, I can't be one.

I wish I could go back in time and change everything but I can't.

I am the worst boyfriend.....person.....in the world.

## *Chapter 30*

# **NOAH**

I sit down at a table in front of Kate.

She looked the same like she did 5 hours ago. It is 2 AM and the hospital is silent.

Kate's mother has slept on the bed beside her daughter. Her brother is sitting beside me scrolling his phone mindlessly.

I have seen him crying in silence, when nobody is around. His eyes, everybody's as a matter of fact is swollen, nobody has cried in front of each other, pretending that they are strong, but on the inside.....I know everybody is broken.

I stare at Kate, she is staring at me. Her lips don't move an inch but I can feel her breathing, I hope she is. This is what I am reminding myself. The doctors are giving her some very strong medicines hoping that something could work on her clots, but we all know that surgery is the only option left.

It has been four days and Kate hasn't made a single movement.

Everything feels unreal. I blame myself for everything, if I could, I would have given her my ribs, my foot, my spinal cord.....everything to live. But, she asked for love.....and I couldn't give that to her.



“Noah.” Mark says as he fidgets with keys.

I look at him and don’t say anything.

“I.....” He doesn’t say anything and pauses.

“I am sorry Mark, I know you hate me.” I am not even able to look at him in the eye.

“Noah, I.....I know you are suffering too, but.....I never knew you could...” He says that and enters Kate’s room.

I sit there wiping one more tear.....and then one more.

## *Chapter 31*

# KATE

I still feel sore on some nights.

I am on bed since 7 days, 22 hours, and 22 minutes... to be exact.

I notice everything... that is what I have been doing all this time.

This has been terrible.

I can hear everything but I can't utter a word, the nurse comes and injects something or the other every three hours, I want to scream out of pain but I am not even able to part my lips. The smell of medicine doesn't feel different, they don't make me uncomfortable. It feels like this is where I belong. I sleep, just sleep. The food, the liquid, to be precise that I consume is transferred via some tube that runs down my nose to my stomach.

It hurts but it doesn't hurt anymore.

I know everything that is there in the room. As I think of speaking something or to make a move, I am taken a back because it pains to do so.

I see Noah sitting on the couch. We are staring at each other. Noah, like everybody cries every time they look at me and

I don't make a single movement. They fear that I am going to die, I mean I fear that too but I have to live for my mother. Who is going to be there for her if not me? Not that Mark or Charlotte or Noah for that matter aren't going to be there but I know she would always need me. She wouldn't accept or say, but I know.

Noah sips his coffee and makes no expression. Charlotte sits on the bed beside me and my brother is discussing something with the doctor. My mother is nowhere to be found. I assume she is crying in silence and making sure nobody sees her.

I don't know how I feel, I don't even know if I am able to feel anything.

I lost the baby because of Noah, my mind can't even think of anything other than this.

He apologised, held my hand wanting me to speak like all these three people.

He comes and sits for hours, spills his heart and cries. I cry too. He ends up wiping my tears but I am not able to wipe his.

My mother on the other hand, ends up crying and I pretend like I don't see her tears because she wants to hide that, I know.

I can't cry in front of her. I control my tears because I know she will break more. So, I have to be strong, strong for her.

That is my forte anyway, no regrets carried.

My brother, I haven't seen any expression on his face all these days. He comes and looks me deep in the eyes, I see that he is on the verge of falling apart. I know he is trying to look

strong but he doesn't know that I will always find his ways. I always will.

He is the first man who made me believe in love, the first man whom I will always think of whenever somebody mentions the word 'love'.

Charlotte, she smiles in front of me all the time and teases me that I will be fine, that I have to survive because I have to attend her wedding. Well, I can't laugh on that because my cheeks will hurt.

She doesn't let a single tear fall from her eyes, but I am sure she cries like a baby when she is not around me.

How grateful am I to have these people around me all the time, who simply love me unconditionally!

I feel so guilty that I put these favourite people of mine through such a hard time.

My eyes start to get watery as I move my finger a little and Noah notices that. He runs towards me and holds my hand softly.

I have missed him so much, I want to hug him and kiss him all over but here I am—not able to move an inch without aches.

“Kate. Do you need anything?”

I see a hope in his eyes. This is the first motion I have made since I have been in the ICU.

I motion towards him and he understands well.

He adjusts a pen between my fingers and keeps the notepad under my pen. I try to write, it feels difficult, very difficult. I am

not able to see what I am writing but I know it seems like I have dysgraphia.

It sucks to be dead but breathing at the same time.

## Chapter 32

# NOAH

### 3 MONTHS LATER:

If you would ask me to kill myself and save her, I would do that.

At this moment, I would do anything you would ask me to do.

*Anyfuckingthing.*

Everything has been monotonous. Kate hasn't spoken a single word yet. She has been in the ICU for 3.5 months now.

She is only able to point at things and move her fingers slightly.

Nothing yet everything has changed.

No fracture in her body has improved except her foot, and that's all. No other recovery. The doctors say that it is a miracle how she is able to survive even for months till now.

But, I don't think it is a miracle, I think it's the choice she holds for herself and the people she loves. She wants to live for her mother more than she wants to live for anybody else.

Her eyes show better movement and her hands move a little more.

I want to hold her and hug her tight but I can't even hold her hands for more than 30 seconds, as she can get infection instantly. The doctors are not giving up either but what is that for if Kate isn't showing any improvements?

Neither Charlotte nor her brother seems to change their opinion about me. They haven't uttered a single word since the night of the accident. Her mother greets me and passes me coffee though.

Everybody is the same as they were a couple months back. I feel guilty, I don't know what I feel but I feel something that doesn't make sense to anybody, not even me. he faces have turned pale and the hunger is no more. Nobody wants to eat or drink, we just look at Kate hoping that she would make a movement and we could tell the doctors about it.

It's the hope we cling onto... just the hope.

Kate looks at as and wants to smile and cry and she isn't able to do either. She can't smile because it hurts, and she can't cry because she wants to be strong.

As we sit on the couch, the doctors call me.

Charlotte's expressions change, nobody here likes that the doctors update me about most of the things and not them, well, not initially. But, it is solely because I know them personally.

I move out of the room with Kate's doctor and panic and nervousness could be seen all over his face.

"Noah, I am sorry..."

That is all he says and I can feel the sweat running down my spine.

“We are doing everything we can, but as the clots accumulate in the brain, they can increase intracranial pressure, the pressure inside the skull. The brain is a very sensitive organ, Noah, and when ICP becomes too high, it can reduce blood flow to the brain, leading to ischemia, where there is negligible oxygen flow in her brain... ” He takes a pause as he sees tears rolling down my cheeks.

“Doctor, I am taking her somewhere else, please discharge her,” I say as I wipe my eyes. I am not letting her die in any case. She has to live.

“Noah that is totally your call. She isn’t even in any state of movement, any kind of rush can damage her more.”

“SHE IS GOING TO DIE. DO YOU HEAR ME DOCTOR?” I shout as he keeps his hand on my shoulder.

“Noah, her heart rate is slowing, this is the body's attempt to balance the pressure in the skull and ensure the brain receives enough oxygen and nutrients. I am sorry but the rest is your call.” He nods and leaves.

I am left there standing not knowing what to do.

The entire hospital feel too small, too suffocating, as if the very air had thickened with the weight of the truth. My hands, trembling slightly, grip the edge of the chair beside me, and for a fleeting moment, I think that I might slip right through it—disappear into the floor. But I stay. I stay because the world has become a thing that could no longer be ignored, no matter how much I wanted to turn away from it.



The doctor's voice had faded into the background, and though the words still kept echoing in my ears, they make no sense. I couldn't make sense of them.

*There's nothing more we can do.*

Those words were so simple, yet they shattered the silence that had once been a comfort.

My gaze fell on the pale, fragile form of the one I loved—so still, so impossibly still.

In that moment, time fractured. The seconds seemed to stretch, pulling me into a space where the world outside no longer mattered.

The soft beeping of the machines inside the room were becoming very audible.

She is not going to die just now, she will die in few.

Everybody is inside, waiting for her to make a move, but little do they know...I get a hold of myself and go inside the room.

Everybody was quiet, three pairs of eyes were fixated at her.

Kate looked surprisingly better, her face wasn't pale anymore, her eyes were half open and her fingers were slightly moving.

3 doctors were around her...

*Waiting for her to die...*

I look at Kate and she looks at me, the distance of two meters feeling like a thousand meters, I walk towards her calmly. She tries to move her lips, as if she knows that the doctors called

me outside to tell me that she is going to die... but Kate... it seems like she already knew that.

I sit on the edge, I hold her fingers and she softly grips my thumb.

I don't know how to deal with this moment.

The machine beside her starts to beep slowly, this is the moment I doesn't want to come.

Please save her God, please.

She holds my hand and motions towards some paper behind her pillow.

As I move to grab that, she stops me, very softly, this soft wasn't a pretty soft, it was because she didn't have the energy to do otherwise.

She motions her finger into a circle, telling me to grab that paper after... after. I swallow a lump and tears start to fall again.

"Kate, please don't leave me." This feels like a secret that I assume just we know.

She motions towards her mother and her tears start falling. The pillow under her was now wet.

I can't even imagine what she is feeling.

The doctors stand still.

I look at her and she looks at me.

I place my head on her chest and she keeps her hand on my head.

I feel her chest growing as she takes a deep breath, as if she is trying to say something.

I grab her hand tightly and both of us continue to sob silently. We faced the side opposite Charlotte and everybody.

“I don’t mind dying like this.” Kate says. Her tone was not clear,.....but I understood her.

*I understood her.*

I don’t say anything in return instead I hold her from her arm and continue to cry.

I don’t even have anything to say.

My head feels heavy, my heart feels heavy. I want Kate’s mother to look at her one last time, I think that is important.

As I remove my head from her chest.....

My

World

Stopped.

Yes.

My world,

Kate

Stopped.

.....

All I heard was that one last beep until it stopped. Kate’s eyes were not open anymore. Her hair was scattered all over the pillow and her hand was still in mine, the only difference was that it there was no grip form her.

“Kate.” I say as I tap her cheeks.

It seemed as if I still thought she would get up.

I wish.

My palms were sweaty, nobody knew until I got up and her hand couldn't carry the weight of herself.

I moved back a little and stopped near her mother.

She looks at me.

She looks at Kate and she falls to the ground.

Charlotte tried holding her but as she sees me, she doesn't move.

The doctors rush towards Kate's mother and give her first aid.

She had a shock, we all did.

Mark moves towards her and hugs her, he doesn't leave her. He was constantly saying something, he was.....his fist was tighter around Kate's belly. His arm was wrapped around Kate's head.

Charlotte ran from the other side and put her head on Kate's chest.

Kate was in the middle.

I took a daughter from a mother, a sister from a brother and Charlotte's best friend.

I stand at a distance and stare at them. I won't be able to live with that guilt.

All I could now hear were loud sobs.

I couldn't hear mine because I was numb, I didn't make a single sound but tears didn't stop either.

This is the moment that broke all the unkept promises, this is the moment where all my dreams were shattered.

Haunted by guilt and shame, my letters were just words on paper.

I was never meant to make it to the last?

An irreversible loss, unbearable pain.

Not with my hands, not with my words, but with the choice that I made. Kate's name sits heavy on my tongue, she has now become a prayer that I am not able to recite.

The air feels empty with thick ghosts. The all what ifs and what I could have done.

I try to apologize in my head but who do you apologize when the person who deserves to hear is nothing more than a memory.

So, I live. If you can call this living. I breathe because my punishment is to exist in a world where she doesn't.

And that is a fate worse than death.

## *Epilogue*

*The air grew thick, as twilight bled its last,  
A soft whisper brushed the earth, slow and vast.*

*In the quiet, time stilled its breath—  
the pulse of life faded with the light of death.*

*The shadows bowed as silence crept,  
a world once bustling now softly slept.*

*Eyes, once alight with untold dreams,  
now closed like petals, drifting on streams.*

*A tremor of air, a final sigh,  
the sky, painted with dusk, asked why.  
The heart, once full of song and grace,  
Now lay still, in its hollowed place.*

*The stars began their mournful rise,  
Soft as tears that fall from the skies.*

*In the stillness, a soul took flight,  
Vanishing into the velvet night.*

*Dear Noah,*

*I have to now leave, my time has come. Please don't blame yourself for anything. I have been in so much pain all this time.*

*I have hated you a lot in these 4 months but Noah, you are a part of me. Our journey was very short, we made so many mistakes but maybe this is how it was supposed to be for us. You will always be a part of me I would never want to lose.*

*Right now, I am wearing a black bra, just in case you wonder.*

*You are sitting outside. I can see you from the glass wiping your tears.*

*I am sorry for my handwriting but this was the best I could do.*

*I have really loved you Noah,*

*I made a mistake too.*

*Please take care of yourself and I hope you find love. I hope you love her like you love.*

*Don't feel guilty.*

*I am going but I promise to haunt you in your dreams.  
Lol.*

*Find love until it finds you.*

*Please take care of my mother Noah, she can't be alone  
while I am gone. Mark will say that he is fine but he  
won't be. I know him.*

*Please tell Charlotte that this life wouldn't be possible  
without having her as my best friend.*

*I chose to write this to you because I know Charlotte and  
Mark must hate you, but I don't.*

*I miss your touch so much, I think I have forgotten how  
soft you feel.*

*My mother won't hate you ever...she can't hate  
anybody.*

*Take care of yourself.*

*Yours,*

*Kate*

*Thank you for everything you have given me.*



*You were the best I had, and  
you were never like my father.  
Never.*

I fold the letter and keep it on the nightstand. It looked old.....well it was.

I read it every now and then and all those feelings of guilt and pain and despair come back.

It has been 4 years.

*4 years since my Kate died.*

The sobs, the tears, the pain....is the same. Nothing has changed.

Kate's mother died two days after Kate out of shock.

Mark and Charlotte, I haven't seen them since the cremation ceremony.

## *Epilogue*

*I was supposed to love you from a far only Kate, everything was better like that. Maybe, someday I will again bring up coffee and donuts into your apartment and act like a stranger who wants to know the colour of your bra. I am sorry Kate. Until we meet after my death, I will love you.....from a far.....like I always have.*

*Please don't hate me there.*

*Yours, always and forever.*

*Even if you couldn't be mine, I will always be yours.*

*Noah.*

*I close the.....my book and sleep.*

*I just sleep because that was all I was capable of.*

*Sleep.*

## Acknowledgments

This book was my dream. I never thought I could write but I had so many people believing in me that it pushed me to do better.

For that, I will always be grateful.

-The reason this book got to its end because my teacher, Ms. Dixita Thakur, believed that I could write. She randomly read an essay in my Sociology class one day and said, "*Mehak, you can write better....this essay is not upto your capabilities.*" And that is when it hit me.

She saw what I couldn't.

She is the motivator that I needed; she is the push that I required.

-My deepest gratitude to my God, Hanuman Ji. For the strength and patience and for carrying me through the days when I doubted every word.

-My dearest, Vansh Mathur, who was the first one to read this book and never thought that I couldn't write.

At one point, I erased the entire draft after getting more than halfway through it. The regret hit me hard afterward. But he kept saying, "*You wrote it once—you can write it again.*"

And somehow, those words were enough.

I am sorry for cancelling out to see you most of the times just because I was writing but you have been nothing but supportive.

- My mother was stunned to discover that her daughter could be a writer. She had once dreamt of becoming a singer, but never pursued it. So when I told her I was writing a book, she looked me in the eye and said, "*Never lose this enthusiasm.*"

Just her presence has made the entire journey feel so much easier.

-My brother, Jatin Kukreja, who doesn't like romance novels but I hope you love mine. You are the Mark to my Kate. You are my soul. You belong with me. You always will because, it's just you and me till we are grey and old.

-Lastly, my father, who always said "*Your eye sight will get weak by sitting in front of the screen*", but, I know he is proud. He won't say but I know he is.

## *Note From the Author*

*This is my first book.*

*And if you have made it this far, thank you – truly.*

*I hope somewhere between these pages, you laughed. I hope you cried. I hope your heart ached with Kate's.*

*Maybe, you felt what Noah did.*

*Maybe, you were Mark, Mason or Charlotte or maybe you were Carrie.*

*Whoever you are or were- I hope you felt something real.*

*Because now, this story is no longer mine.*

*It belongs to you.*

*Thank you for picking this book.*

*Thank you for reading the words of a writer of whom you have never heard.*

*Thank you for trusting me with your time, heart and imagination.*

*I will see you in the next one.*

*With more love, heartaches, more silence, more storms and despair.*

*And remember:*

*Love is the ache that kisses back.*

If love has never hurt you,  
then maybe it wasn't love at all.

Bleeding- but *in cursive*, that is love.