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*The Criterion*



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**Chor...the word still echoes!**  
*(She called me 'Chor'...and took my heart away...)*

**Tawqeer Nasir Tak**

*Not often but at times,  
these petty things do matter a lot;  
they reserve a power to transform us from within,  
not often but at times...*

It has been a long time forbearing with my inanity; to describe you in words; I wonder how can the words carry the heft of your being that is too heavy to bear, and too frail to handle. There are no words sweeter than your appearances, no apt phrases for your adorable gestures, and no beautiful definitions for your two beautiful, almond-like eyes; no translation for your dimples even; such is the art of your Master. Could I get a chance, I would love to kiss those pale beautiful hands with those long beautiful fingers, and those evenly placed knots.

It's not a story with a moral, not even a tale with a beautiful end, it's just an act: A Promise Kept!

It was a winter morn, the sky was in its best azure, and my heart, like a crumbled paper, too worn-out to open its eyes, to look around, to fall again in love; it was as stagnant as a pool of water; but destiny, it had a different plot for me, somewhat different from what I had always thought of.

I met a girl. A girl whom I had been seeing around for a long time but not the way, I saw her that day. She waylaid my heart and ravaged it of all its riches in its one throb. I still remember the first sight as if nothing has turned into memory yet, as if every moment is still afresh; I still remember the way she held her pen in her right hand and let her left one support her specs; how artfully she sat by that table as much as a professional as an intellectual; the seriousness of her existence being inexplicable... All this rendered me vacant while I found myself reduced to a tiny speck of dust, as though I had no existence; every fire was extinguished and each flame doused while I was reduced to a mound of silently burning embers. Such was the impression, I may call it something more than what people call 'Love at first sight...' it was not love--not at all, it was something beyond the meaning these words could carry, something that had a deep connection with my inner being, and had a lot to do with my true self, the purpose of my being.

Days passed- I found no trace of the one whose impression had silenced the inferno within me, but had set a flame to my being. The restlessness grew up, multiplied, and what else not! It happened once again, we met, and this time; there was nothing to refrain me from asking for a coffee. She agreed. We walked down the alley, and found a nearby coffee shop. We stopped, took a table, sat down, and started...

There was no exchange of introductions for everything seemed as though we had known each other for years together, as if something was repeating itself: a déjà vu, may be; and I started: So what are your plans for the future? Her answer was simple

yet deep that only I could explore; it meant more than what she said. She wanted to fulfill her parents' dream, she wanted to see them happy, she wished to fulfill her brother's dream, and she wished to be his sweet sister. The answer was too simple but I looked at it the other way round: how can somebody be so cruel to himself? And get consumed in somebody else's dream; didn't she ever dream anything? These thoughts kept me awake for days together and finally I got the enlightenment: I realized everything; she had a lesson for me that no other teacher could have taught me ever. We kept sipping coffee for many days, and kept talking for hours together; after a long break of time, something had made me interested in life; her company made me happy; I always spent my twenty-three hours thinking of that one hour, and waited for its arrival desperately. As days passed by, my happiness grew, and I found myself happier than ever.

One day it happened so: our coffees turned cold, but she didn't come, I was disappointed and left the shop. I called her, she didn't answer my calls; I called again, and she turned her phone off; my heart knew no reason to feel normal, I lost my conscious ending up nowhere but a dark abyss of despair and dejection. I kept trying contacting her but she never replied; whole of my happiness turned to nothing, as nothingness pervades existence and I was left with scars that would always bring me nothing but pain. I still reminisce the day when walking down the road, she crossed me, I stopped and she faded away... the pain grew up, and I had a reason to cry for. I always tried to find her but could never. A deep silence pervaded, and soon every thing was transformed into an inexplicable grief.

It was a Friday perhaps when she called me, on my phone, and asked for some time; I didn't know, how to respond: was it a moment to be happy or was something wrong with my stars? The question bewitched me till I reached the place where we were destined to meet. As I entered, I found her sitting quiet by the table, her eyes full of as much of anger and pain, as mercy; I couldn't understand which expression was meant for whom. I took a seat, and anyhow sat down.

She lowered her head, and said: "Look! I respect you and your respect for me, but I can't be with you, anymore; I love my roots more than my fruits; I can't disappoint my parents. So please I request you: burn all the bridges that lead you to me...and we don't need to stay in touch...anymore." And what else didn't she break, when she broke her silence... I heard patiently; and even more patiently replied, "As you wish", because I could bear anything but a single frown on her face, not a single tear in her eyes, and not the slightest of her care-worn face; all I wanted to do was just see her as happy as she used to be, and this became the meaning and the goal of my life.

And thus, I found that true happiness lies in the happiness of others and in getting yourself consumed for the one's you love. Love doesn't always mean to end-up in union, rather it's something beyond the domain...and the regime of words...Perhaps she taught me the most important lesson of my life, that's what I once loved her for, and that's precisely why, I still do...

And for me, I have put my experiences down, because I had promised her that I shall write about her someday, whenever I get a chance, and today, I kept my promise thus.

*“So I’ll regret it, but lead my heart to pain  
Return if it’s just to leave me again.”*

~Agha Shahid Ali

NOTES:

Meaning “Chor”: Thief