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BEYOND LOVE



Too Much in Love to Leave

In the dim light of a stormy evening, the first raindrop touched the window like a silent tear, and suddenly, "Ajeeb Dastan Hai Yeh" began playing in the background.

Mubaaraken tumhe ke tum
Kisike noor ho gaye
Kisike itne paas ho
Ke sabse door ho gaye

Ajeeb daastan hai yeh
Kahaan shuru kahaan khatam
Yeh manzilen hain kaun si
Na vo samajh sake na hum

The rain seemed to move with the music, telling a story of love and longing, a journey that never reached its end, just like the hearts lost in the song's melody.

Advika was exhausted after a long day of work. She decided it was finally time to take a break. She walked over to the kitchen window and looked outside, watching the raindrops fall gently on the mango leaves. The peaceful scene felt like a much-needed escape from her busy day. The gentle tapping of the rain matched the rhythm of her heart. The monsoon sky was full of deep blues and grays, and instead of feeling heavy, it brought a small smile to her face.

She stirred the warm pot of ginger chai on the stove, the smells of ginger and cardamom filling her cozy flat. The fragrance mixed with the sweet scent of jasmine from the garland she had hung earlier. Humming her favorite Bollywood song, Advika placed the freshly fried pakoras on a plate, crispy and golden. With a satisfied sigh, she sat by the window, ready to enjoy her rainy evening.

As she took a bite of a pakora, her phone buzzed with a message from her friend Priya: "Enjoying the rain? Let's catch up soon!" Advika's eyes lit up. "Yes! Missing you. Let's plan to meet," she replied, her heart warming at the thought of seeing her friend.

There was a time when she would count the minutes until Rahul came home. Even after spending the whole day together, she would find something to tell him. Sometimes she would call him during lunch just because she missed his voice. Her friends used to tease her about how much she loved him. She never denied it. She was happy, and she wanted everyone to know.

Just then, she heard the front door open. Rahul walked in, his face clouded with tension. The room's warmth seemed to dissipate instantly. "You're just sitting and eating?" he asked sharply, his eyes scanning the room critically.

Advika's smile faded. "I made chai and pakoras. Would you like some?" she offered softly, hoping to share a peaceful moment.

He shrugged dismissively. "Fine," he muttered, dropping his bag carelessly on the floor. They sat across from each other at the small table. The only sounds were the clinking of cups and the steady rhythm of the rain outside.

Trying to ease the silence, Advika ventured, "The rain is so beautiful today. It reminds me of our trip to Shimla."

Rahul looked up with a frown. "I'm not in the mood for chit-chat. I've had a long day," he snapped, irritation evident in his voice.

"I'm sorry," she whispered, lowering her gaze to her cup, her earlier joy extinguished.

She wanted to tell him something else, but decided against it. Lately, she had started thinking twice before speaking to him. Sometimes even a simple conversation ended with her apologizing, and she couldn't remember when that had become normal.

After finishing his chai, Rahul stood up without a word and moved to the living room. Moments later, the television blared, filling the flat with harsh sounds.

Advika sat alone at the table, the untouched pakoras growing cold. The aroma of ginger and cardamom that once brought her comfort now felt overwhelming.

She cleared the table and washed the dishes, her movements slow and deliberate. Memories of happier times flooded her mind: their laughter during late-night talks, the shared dreams of traveling the world, the tender moments that used to fill their days. Those memories felt like echoes from a distant past, almost as if they belonged to someone else's life.

She remembered the days when they would talk for hours, sometimes about nothing at all. She remembered waiting for his messages, smiling at her phone, and telling Priya that she couldn't imagine her life without him.

She had loved Rahul in a way she had never loved anyone before. She had imagined growing old with him, fighting over silly things, traveling together, and making a home of their own.

Sometimes, when he smiled at her the way he used to, she forgot everything that had happened between them. For a little while, she felt like she had her Rahul back. Maybe that was what made it so difficult. She wasn't only holding on to the man he had become. She was still in love with the man she remembered.

Her phone buzzed again. Priya had sent an old photo of them together, laughing in the rain under a shared umbrella. "Miss these moments!" the caption read. Tears welled up in Advika's eyes.

That night, as she lay in bed beside Rahul, sleep refused to come. The ceiling fan rotated lazily above, but her mind spun with thoughts. She turned slightly and watched Rahul's peaceful sleeping face.

She turned onto her side and pulled the blanket over her arm. The faint marks near her wrist had started to fade. Earlier that morning, she had spent a little longer than usual choosing what to wear, finally settling on a full-sleeved kurta. She looked at Rahul sleeping beside her. Without thinking, she reached out to touch his hair, then stopped. She missed being close to him.

A pang of sadness hit her. How did they become so distant? She contemplated leaving, the idea both terrifying and liberating. The unknown loomed large, a vast expanse of possibilities, both good and bad. What if she couldn't manage on her own? What if things were worse elsewhere? The familiarity of her current life, even with its pain, felt safer than stepping into uncertainty.

Days blurred into weeks, each one mirroring the last.

Advika found small pockets of happiness- watering her plants, watching the sunset, reading her favorite books- but they were fleeting. The weight of her loneliness grew heavier, pressing down on her spirit. Priya called one evening, her voice filled with worry. "Advika, we haven't met in so long. Is everything okay?"

Forcing a lightness she didn't feel, Advika replied, "Just been busy with things at home. Let's catch up soon."

"Promise?" Priya pressed gently.

"Promise," Advika said.

One afternoon, she decided to visit her mother. The familiar scent of incense and homemade cooking greeted her as she entered her childhood home. Sitting at the kitchen table, her mother served her a plate of warm samosas. "You look tired, beta," her mother said softly.

Advika managed a weak smile. "Just a bit worn out."

As Advika reached for the samosas, her sleeve slipped back a little.

Her mother's eyes moved towards her wrist.

"What happened there, beta?"

Advika pulled her sleeve down.

"Nothing, Mom. It's an old mark."

Her mother looked at her for another moment but didn't ask again.

Instead, she quietly served her another samosa.

Her mother reached across the table, placing a comforting hand over hers. "Are you happy, Advika?"

The directness of the question caught her off guard. She felt a lump in her throat. "I'm... managing," she replied, her voice barely above a whisper. Her mother's eyes reflected concern and understanding. "Sometimes we stay where we are because it's familiar, even if it's not where we're meant to be," she said gently. "But remember, you deserve happiness. Don't let fear keep you from it."

Tears spilled over, tracing silent paths down Advika's cheeks. "What if... what if I make things worse?" she confessed, her vulnerability laid bare.

Her mother squeezed her hand reassuringly. "Life is full of risks, but it's also full of opportunities for joy. You'll never know what's possible unless you take that step."

That evening, back in her flat, Advika stood by the window. The rain had stopped, leaving the world outside glistening under the streetlights. She watched as droplets clung to the leaves, reflecting tiny fragments of light. A metaphor for hope, she thought, a small glow even after the storm.

Rahul entered the room, barely looking at her. "Did you sort out the bills?" he asked, his tone sharp.

"I couldn't," she said, sighing softly. "I had a lot of office work, and then I went to see Mom. I'll take care of it tomorrow."

Rahul scoffed, his expression hardening. "Of course, you didn't. Always too busy with something else, aren't you? Office work, your mom, there's always some excuse. It's not like you ever actually handle anything important," he snapped, his words biting. "Honestly, what do you even do all day? Guess I shouldn't expect much," he added, disappearing into the bedroom without waiting for a response.

Advika stood there for a while, looking towards the bedroom. She was angry with him. There were days when she couldn't bear the way he spoke to her. Days when she promised herself she wouldn't let him make her cry again. But then she would remember how he had once held her hand in a crowded street, how he knew exactly how she liked her coffee, how he had promised that whatever happened, they would always have each other.

She wondered if he remembered those things too. Sometimes she wished she could stop loving him. Maybe leaving would have been easier then.

She realized that in her efforts to keep the peace, she had lost pieces of herself along the way. Summoning courage, she picked up her phone and sent a message to Priya: "Can we meet tomorrow?"

Priya's response was immediate: "Absolutely. Anytime you need."

A small flicker of determination ignited within her. Perhaps opening up to someone was the first step she needed to take. That night, as she prepared for bed, Advika caught her reflection in the mirror. The woman staring back looked weary but also held a glint of something new: resolve.

Climbing into bed, she felt a mix of fear and hope. Change was daunting, but the thought of remaining in this endless loop was even more so. As she closed her eyes, she allowed herself to imagine a different life- a life where she felt valued and happy. The next morning, the sun broke through the clouds, casting a warm glow into the flat. Advika took it as a sign of a new day, a new beginning. She got dressed and headed out to meet Priya, each step lighter than the last.

Walking through the busy streets, she felt the city's energy infusing her with strength. The familiar sights and sounds reminded her of who she used to be: a woman full of dreams and laughter.

When she saw Priya waiting at the cafe, arms open wide, Advika felt an overwhelming sense of relief. As they embraced, the weight on her shoulders began to lift.

"Tell me everything," Priya said, her eyes filled with concern and affection.

Advika took a deep breath. "I think I'm ready to make a change," she began.

As they talked, Advika realized that sharing her fears made them seem smaller. With each word, she felt like she was getting a part of herself back.

That evening, when she returned home, she found Rahul glued to his phone as usual. For the first time, she didn't feel the usual anxiety. Instead, she imagined confronting him, telling him how unhappy she had been for so long.

In her mind, she could hear herself saying, "Rahul, we need to talk," in a firm voice. She imagined him looking up, surprised, and her calmly telling him, "I'm going to stay with my mother for a while." She thought about how she'd feel packing her things, walking out the door, and finally being free.

But none of that happened.

Instead, when Rahul finally looked up, he said sharply, "You've been out all day again. How about making dinner instead of roaming around?" Advika stayed quiet, swallowing the words she wished she could say. She didn't have the strength to argue, and the courage she had felt earlier slipped away. She just nodded and walked into the kitchen.

She had imagined leaving him so many times. But whenever she pictured a life without Rahul, she remembered the life she had once wanted with him.

She didn't know how to let go of one without losing the other.

The weight of the day pressed down on her once more. Though she couldn't do it today, she now knew that one day, she might be ready to finally speak up and take that step forward. This might not be the happy ending you're looking for, but hey, who am I to end this story? Only Advika can decide when and how her story continues.

Many people might wonder why Advika didn't leave. She had her mother, a friend who cared about her, and a life she could build for herself. But leaving someone you once loved with all your heart isn't always easy.

Sometimes, you're not waiting for a better person to come along. You're waiting for the same person to become who they used to be.

You remember the little things. The late-night conversations, the silly fights, the promises, the way they once looked at you. And even when those moments become rare, you hold on to them. You keep hoping tomorrow will be different. People often say, "If you're unhappy, just leave." Maybe they're right. Maybe Advika knows that too. But knowing what you should do and actually doing it are two very different things.

Love can make us stay longer than we should. Not because we don't see what's happening, but because a part of us still hopes things will go back to how they were. And sometimes, the hardest part isn't leaving someone. It's accepting that the person you fell in love with may never come back. You can love someone with all your heart and still deserve a life that doesn't hurt you.

Society and culture can also pressure people to stay. Often, movies and stories promote a version of love where enduring all hardships is seen as noble. They show characters who tolerate mistreatment and overcome endless obstacles to make a relationship work, all in the name of love. This "stupid movie culture" can make people think that suffering is a part of true love and that they must tolerate everything to keep the relationship alive. It glorifies the idea of fixing everything no matter how much pain it causes, which can trap people in unhealthy situations.

**"You deserve a love that fills you with joy.
True love doesn't demand that you sacrifice
your happiness"**