

## Prologue

'Listen, do not call or text me tomorrow.'

'Why?'

'Umm... Going to meet him.'

'Oh! Even I'll be out with my friends. What if I Snap you by mistake?'

'I'll change your name over there.'

'You're going to delete all our chats, right?'

'Yes.'

'And all our photos together?'

'Yes.'

'Why am I still talking to you?'

'I am sorry.'

'You know, it's so crazy?'

'What?'

*'The things we do for love!'*

**FEELINGS | PART 1**

*What if there were no feelings?  
No heartbreaks and no worries.*

*Would we be happy it ended?  
Or just sad that we are happy?*

*If there was no time to be sad?  
And only true love all around.*

*Then how would we know it's there,  
when we've lost our feelings profound?*

18 April 2016

'I thought Kabir was just a friend,' I said.

'I don't know what to say...' Ruhani said.

'But... But why did you even tell me?'

'Because you are my...'

'Best friend?'

Ruhani put her head down, fidgeting left and right.

'Kabir is my best friend,' she murmured.

'Isn't he the boyfriend now?'

'I don't love him!' she scoffed.

'So, who am I?'

*\*Ring Ring Ring\**

It has been seven days since Ruhani dropped the bomb on me and the only thing that my heart has been demanding is an explanation. Today, I was hoping to get that, that is, until the phone call interrupted us.

Ruhani glanced at the screen and immediately signaled at me to stay mum. Naturally, I was curious, so, I peeked at her cell phone. It was Kabir.

'I told you *na* that I'll go out with Natasha,' Ruhani continued, 'Yes, she is with me, where else would she be?'

Hearing the name Natasha had caught me by surprise. I wanted to interrupt Ruhani right at that moment, but I, also,

didn't want any complications. So, I waited for her to hang up.

'Apparently, I am Natasha,' I said, staring straight at her.

She began to giggle.

'I can't tell him that I went out with a guy,' she continued, 'He'll go mad with jealousy.'

'So, the kiss! Why?'

'What do I say... It was a *spur-of-the-moment* thing,' she continued, 'He suddenly leaned on me, his hands were around my waist, and the next thing you know, we were kissing.'

The struggle was real, it wasn't easy to hide my feelings, and the pain in my heart was tearing me apart. You see, it was not the first time Ruhani had done something stupid, she had darker pasts, and I knew about almost all of them, but knowing is one thing and living through one of them – another. It was only her trust in me that kept me going all this while, but the baggage of feelings was getting heavier with each morning wake-up call and those never-ending good nights.

Yes, Ruhani and I were like human alarm clocks and every single day, we used to wake each other up. Some might say it's cheesy, some might call it love, but for us, it was something that just happened one day and we liked it so much, that we decided to continue it.

So, in the morning, when Ruhani said that she was in the mood for drinks, I absolutely had to meet her. I knew, looking at her face, those lips that had savored the taste of another man, it was going to be tough, but surprisingly, I didn't break.

'It was your first kiss! It should have meant something,' I scoffed.

'He loves me, right? It must have meant something to him,' she said.

‘And you’re okay with that?’

‘I had been wanting to try it for so long... I couldn’t control myself once he made the move,’ she whined.

And somewhere in a perfect world, integrity died a slow painful death. I paused for a second, trying to make peace with what she had just said when something hit me.

‘Umm...’

‘Yes?’

‘You said, you don’t tell Kabir when you go out with guys.’

‘Haan.’

‘But I am the only guy other than him that you go out with, right?’

She nodded.

‘And you tell me everything?’

Ruhani’s eyes turned wide. She nodded again, but I wasn’t satisfied.

‘Are you sure?’ I asked.

‘Remember, that day I told you I was going to meet my school friend,’ she continued,

*I thought about it. It was four days back. You see, we had this habit of asking each other what our plans for the day were because we liked to listen and talk about the things we were going to do. Ruhani was going to visit a friend of hers. She said that she was going for the first time and was having difficulty in finding the place. I naturally got worried and told her to text me once she reached. Later that day, when I had asked her what did they do, she was like, ‘We just sat and had a chat.’*

‘I lied. I went to Kabir’s place.’

I was awestruck! Of all the things I hated, being lied upon was something, I hated the most.

Not sure what else to ask, ‘So, again kissing, eh?’ I joked.

‘Yes,’ she said.

And right at that instant, I felt my heart crying – once again.

By this time, the Uber, in which we were traveling, had driven way past our destination and in that moment, I took out all my anger on the cab driver.

‘Why did your mood go off now?’ Ruhani asked.

I had no reply. For this wasn’t seven days ago and we weren’t talking on WhatsApp, where I could fake my emotions, all over again.

*We walked a long silent walk to the bar.*

‘Hey! I have something for you!’ Ruhani exclaimed, taking out a neatly wrapped gift from her handbag.

*‘There’s a window to the left, but it’s closed, probably to ward off any prying eyes from the neighborhood. The washroom, which is just beside the window, appears to have been recently used. The television is on, but it’s on mute. And finally, in the center of everything, is the sofa, where Ruhani and Kabir are sitting, with their lips locked together, hands all over each other’s body. In between all the kissing and the heavy breathing, Ruhani murmurs something and then starts rubbing her belly. It wasn’t exactly clear but it seemed like, Ruhani was joking about getting preg....’* I thought in my head.

‘Where are you lost?’ Ruhani sighed, waving both her hands at my face.

‘Umm... Sorry, I was thinking,’ I said.

‘About what?’

I noticed that Ruhani had a gift in her hand.

‘Your gift!’ I continued, ‘Kabir gave it to you?’

‘What, no! I just said it’s for you.’

'Okay.'

'Just okay? Where's my *thank you*?' Ruhani frowned.

'But I haven't seen the gift yet.'

'Then open it *na*.'

'Can I open it after I reach home?'

Ruhani took a shot of the vodka and then firmly gripped my hands.

'Is there something wrong?' she asked.

'The cab driver lied.'

'*Hain?*'

'He said he knew where the bar was.'

'It's okay *na*,' Ruhani continued, 'It was just a few meters anyway.'

'I hate liars.'

'Wait! Are you pulling some metaphorical shit on me?'

I looked at her and smiled widely.

'*Yaar*, I thought you'd think, I have no character, but it's not like that, trust me.'

'Really?'

'This was the only time I lied, and I tell you everything, don't I?'

'I don't care.'

'Please! You know how amazing our friendship is, and without you, I am nothing. Will you judge me for just this one mistake?'

I was numb. I meant something to her and that mattered, right? Love is not just about being in a relationship, it's much

more than that. What Ruhani and I had was much more than that. And I could not let her go just because she had scars. Instead, I had to heal them. After all, what are friends for? Aren't we all broken from the inside and yet so beautiful? It just takes the right eyes to see it. And in her, I saw that beauty.

I took a long deep breath.

'I won't judge you,' I continued, 'But you have to promise me something.'

Ruhani's eyes lit up.

'I promise!' she yelled.

'You'll... Don't you want to listen to the promise first?'

'Oh, yes.'

'You'll not lie to me again.'

She smiled and hugged me tightly.

And in her smile, I saw something much more beautiful than the stars. I might have lost in love, but I think, I found a friend for life.

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*"The truth is, everyone is going to hurt you. You just got to find the ones worth suffering for." – Bob Marley*



11 April 2016

Seven days from today, when Ruhani will give me a gift, I will be surprised. I might not look surprised, but that is because, I will also be mad, and I guess, I will be much madder than I will be any other emotion. But then, I will go home and open the gift, and this time, I will be really surprised. Because, the gift will be a diary, the very same diary, I am writing in.

You see, I have never been someone who would maintain a diary. Heck, my life isn't interesting enough, anyway. But, when you are overwhelmed with emotions, and the very person you are supposed to confide in is the cause of it, a paper and a pen can end up becoming your best friends. And thanks to my confidante's gift, I can finally let go of all the extra emotions.

'Have you reached?' I asked her over the call.

'Yes, love.' Ruhani said, in a sweet melodious tone.

'Umm?'

'I'll text you later. Okay, love?'

'Why are you going to his house, anyway?'

'We'll go to a cafe first,' she continued, 'He goes back to his hometown in the evening, so I'll give him company till then.'

'Oh, okay.'

'Love, are you jealous?'

I didn't respond.

'Aye! It's so fun teasing you,' Ruhani continued.

‘Duh!’

‘Bye love!’

‘Bye-bye l... Love.’

Today was a special day for Ruhani because she was going to meet Kabir after four long months. Kabir; her best friend, stayed in a different city, and yet, he and Ruhani had managed to stick together for almost two years now. They had planned to spend time together at his house, and I should have been jealous of that fact but somehow, I wasn't. I was so cool with it that I even called her to ask that if she had reached. That call, however, turned out to be very weird. She spoke to me so sweetly, the first time, I think. She addressing me as *love* had, somehow made my day.

In the evening, my father told me that we had been invited to a *Kirtan* (A religious gathering) at my cousin's place. I hated going to *Kirtans* but being born in a *Marwari* family, *Kirtans* were an essential part of our lives and we organized or took part in them more often than we had sex. I didn't want to go and even told my father the same, but then I looked into his raging eyes, and the discussion was over.

You see, our family was one of those ‘*Urban poor*’. We didn't own a car, but we had money to book expensive cabs and booking an Uber was always supposed to be my duty. God bless the only smartphone owner in the family.

We had traveled some distance when I received a text from Ruhani. It was a simple ‘*Hey*’, but I was delighted. I had so many questions to ask her, that I didn't know how to begin.

‘What all did u do? When did you come back? *Maza aaya toh?*’ (Did you enjoy?) I finally texted her.

‘Wait, I'll call you,’ she replied.

‘*Nooooooooooooo...*’

‘Lol, why?’

'I am in a cab with my family.'

'Oh! Where are you going?'

'To my cousins. There's a *Kirtan*.'

'You wearing traditional?'

'Nah, a shirt.'

Ruhani hated shirts, and she hated it even more that I wore so many of them. But then, I wasn't going to let her tease me. Instead, I thought, I'll use this opportunity to brag about how Tania's lips had been all over one of my shirts. Excited, I sent Ruhani an old photo of me wearing that shirt.

'Don't I look handsome?' I said.

'Yeah, right,' she continued, 'I was going to wait till I call you but...'

'Yes?'

'I just had my first smooch!' she said.

And damn, I went blank.

I kept thinking, but no combination of emoticons could justify that subtle pain in my heart. I literally didn't know how to react, but silence is a bitch, right? So, I laughed! I asked her how the kiss felt and I laughed. I asked how many times did they do it (*I still regret asking that*), and I laughed again.

'Seventeen times!' she replied.

And now that pain simply roared.

Human nature is weird. I was broken from inside, some would say shattered, yet, I was laughing. Maybe, because I never learned how to process emotions. I have always chosen laughter over other emotions because laughing is so much simpler, and I really didn't want to cry.

It was a good thing that we were texting. Texting had its own emoticons and more importantly, it did not have a heart. For if we were talking for real or even on a call, my tone would have given away my true emotions, and she surely would have understood that the laughter was delusional and that silent pain real.

All this while, I kept wishing that we reach our destination sooner so that I could use it as an excuse to stop talking, but The Almighty really didn't seem to be on my side.

The *Kirtan* was taking place on my cousin's terrace and as soon as we reached there, I looked right at the God's idol. I sat in one of the corners and folded my hands in prayer when I felt a tap on my shoulder. It was my cousin.

'Did you just sit down?' he teased.

I remained silent.

'Do you really plan on listening to the *Bhajans*?' (Folksongs) he continued.

I looked at him and nodded.

'I just bought a bottle. Come down... We'll have our own little party,' he said.

*Dukhi toh main pehle se tha, daaru ko kaise mana kar sakta tha?*  
(With an already shattered soul, how could I say no to alcohol?)

'I'll join you guys in a while,' I said.

A famous man once said that '*In a battle between the heart and the mind, the liver suffers.*' and he was so very right. I drank a lot. I wanted all my pain to go away, but even after five peps of *Teacher's Choice*, the pain in my heart was intact and so was that laughter on my face. The singer for the night was not at all good nor were the *Bhajans* that he sang, any special, but '*Maa kasam, aaj tak kirtan mein mujhe itna mazaa kabhi nahi aaya.*' (I had never really enjoyed my traditional culture so much as I did today). It

was as if the *Bhajans* fell perfectly in place, the tunes were beautifully soothing, and the lyrics just right.

ΔΔΔ

*“It's only when the heart cries, that people turn to religion.” –  
Raunak Agarwal*

20 May 2016

Do you know that feeling when you think someone's your world, but for them, you are just a choice? Well, I did. I never liked having numerous pointless conversations with people, we proudly call our acquaintances. If I had just one person to talk to, I would gladly share my world with them and that was the little pot of honey, I was content with. So basically, for me, Ruhani was my only choice. A choice I considered my world.

It had been a very busy month, I had my exams, and between talking to Ruhani and making time for studying, I could hardly manage the latter. That's what attachment does to you, it isolates you from anything that falls outside that social circle and draws you into a certain sweetness that will only cause harm in the future. I have always been someone who gets attached easily and with her, things were on a completely different level. After all, I had feelings for her, right?

A few days ago, I had asked her, if she had seen the film '*Pretty Woman*'. I've always liked watching classics and this was one of them. A rare gem from 1999, this movie had sparked the career of *Julia Roberts*, the girl with the golden smile. Ruhani had no idea who Julia was nor had she heard about the movie, but if I was suggesting her something, she was going to watch it.

\*Ring Ring Ring\*

'I saw that film... *Pretty Woman*,' Ruhani said.

'Oh, liked it?' I asked.

'I am meeting Kabir today,' she continued, 'And I'll make it clear to him that I don't love him.'

I was delighted. When I suggested her that movie, all I had in mind was to bring some senses into her, but I didn't know she'll be so quick to act upon it.

'That's my girl,' I cheered.

'I am sorry, I gave in to temptation.'

'Aye! It's in the past now.'

'No, I was wrong,' she continued, 'I am also going to tell him all about you.'

Did I just hear that? This was going down as one of the best days of our friendship and I could not have thanked Julia enough. Her movie was the ultimate savior, but why? Well, she portrayed a prostitute in the movie and had only one rule; she would never kiss her clients on the mouth because to her; a prostitute, it was too personal. Well, isn't it? Even I considered kissing as the most intimate thing two lovers could share and it should have been something very special and not just worth a casual flick.

'So, no more *Natasha*?' I asked.

'Yes,' she said.

And all I could do now, was hope, after all, it was completely her battle to fight. It was the last exam tomorrow, so I had been with my books the entire day and from page 121 of *Financial Planning & Auditing* to page 122, I had learned it all. Such was my condition as I went into another of my flashbacks about how things had ended with Tania almost two years back.

PS: *Tania is Rudra's childhood love!*

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It was around six pm. I was in my room, listening to some music when the doorbell rang. My father, who was sitting outside, on the sofa, attended to it, and this should have been the end of that otherwise normal day. But, instead of the usual

milkman who used to come at that time, this voice was different. I couldn't make much of it, and I naturally got curious, so I stood up and came outside. I swear, I had peed only a few minutes ago, otherwise, I would have literally peed my pants.

It was Tania's father; standing there in all his might with her cell phone in his hand. He gave the phone to my father and started shouting angrily.

*'Dekhiye kya kar raha hai aapka beta, kaise kaise messages bhejta hai meri beti ko!'* (Look, what your son is up to and the kind of messages he sends to my daughter) he said.

This was like bullets to my ears. I was still at a bit of a distance from the scene, and my brain instantly knew that I shouldn't be walking anymore. But, just like any lunatic would do, on towards the incident, I walked.

Tania's father then turned towards me. His eyes were blazing with fury. Frightened, I turned my head towards my father, who was now reading those texts. My father's face looked angrier. I tried taking a step back, but my legs froze. Helpless, I turned my face back towards Tania's father.

*'Tujhe kya laga? Mujhe pata nahi chalega... Hum ek hi building me rehte hain, kya main tere ghar aake teri khabar nahi le sakta?'* (Did you really think that I wouldn't find out? We live in the same building for god's sake!) Tania's father shouted again.

And I knew I was in trouble because the next thing I remember was my father playing march-past on my cheeks. \*Left-Left-Right-Left\*

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This had taken place during my class twelve boards and now again, Cupid had knocked me at the wrong time, so it was even more emotional. I remember Tania's father had called me a loafer; someone who wasn't worth being in a respectable society. So, when my board results came out, and I secured a ninety-five,



the loafer inside of me had the last laugh.

I had just snapped out of my flashback when my cell phone rang. It was Ruhani. With a lot of excitement, I picked up the call, but she hung up. This was weird. *Was there something wrong? Had Kabir done something to her?* A lot of thoughts were crossing my mind and there was no way, I was going to be able to deal with the suspense, so I called back.

‘Listen, my boyfriend found out everything about us, and he has asked me to cut-off all connections with you. Don’t try contacting me anymore, okay?’ she said and hung up on me again.

There are moments when what the other person says or does has no impact on you because the wound cuts so deep that it doesn't even give you any time to convey emotions. It just hurts. You carry on with your usual self as if nothing ever happened, but deep within you, it hurts, it hurts like hell. This was one of those moments. Because as soon as the call disconnected, I kept my phone aside and...

*Audit is an independent examination of financial statements of an entity whether profit-making or not irrespective of its size or legal structure where such an examination is conducted to express a view thereupon.*

... I studied.

Almost an hour later, Ruhani called back.

‘I was lying *baba*... I had to! Did it not look all mugged-up? I thought you'll hear it and have a laugh,’ she gasped.

Really? Laugh? I was speechless. What happened to all her plans about standing up for herself? Were they all an elaborate lie? This was totally messed up, and I was dying to know everything that happened between them. So, I calmed down, took a deep breath and asked her to narrate everything that happened.

‘We met at this cafe, and the first thing he wanted to do was

check my phone,' Ruhani cried.

'Umm... Why?' I asked.

'He thought I was cheating on him,' she continued, 'But I kind of knew this was going to happen and had already deleted all our texts.'

'Hmm.'

'But ah! I forgot to delete our Instagram chats, and he ended up reading them,' she murmured.

Her voice seemed low.

This was not good news because the last time we had texted on Instagram, every single word in our chat oozed of a deeper shade of grey. Even though she had never mentioned my name to Kabir, but I always knew that he had quite some idea about me. After all, how much can a person hide in a world dominated by social media? Ruhani and I used to tag each other in numerous memes, all throughout the day, but when she had stopped doing the same a couple of weeks back, I knew something was fishy. These texts could have been the perfect leverage for Kabir to use against me, and I didn't need that.

Of all the things I was hoping, and of all the things she was hoping, she had fucked up big time.

'Shit! Then?' I exclaimed.

'Kabir freaked out seeing those texts and started crying, and before I could muster-up even an ounce of courage to speak anything at all, he went all bossy on me.'

'What did he do?'

'Doesn't matter,' she continued, 'I am sorry, I couldn't, and now I don't think that I ever will.'

'Yaar...'

‘When we came out of the cafe, I did try again, but he kept walking, completely ignoring me. So, I took a cab and left for home.’

Ruhani’s voice seemed rushed. She paused for a few seconds for breath.

‘Once I left, he started calling me repeatedly. So, I asked him to meet me near my home. That’s when he asked me to call you and say those words,’ she said.

‘And you agreed?’

‘It felt like I should do it, anything that would calm him down.’

‘Okay, it’s okay... I guess.’

‘No, it’s not.’

‘Umm?’

‘Rudra,’ she cried, ‘He asked me to choose, either you or him!’

*Ruhani! Ruhani! Ruhani! Why do you hate my heart? I know that we both love drinking and are probably going to die soon, but do you really have to speed up the process?*

‘I don’t know what to say,’ I murmured.

*‘Hamare woh chats yaar. Usne bola ki itti ghatiya tarike se kaun baat karta hai... and woh nahi dekh sekta ki uske hote hue main tumhare se aisi batein karun,’* (Our chats... They were so cheap and he couldn’t bear seeing me talk with someone else like that.) she whined.

‘Those chats sure were stupid.’

‘I don’t want to leave you, but Kabir has been a part of my life much before you and my heart says that I need to stay with him,’ she continued, ‘You know... I’ll unfriend you from all social media. We’ll stay in touch over calls.’

Damn! I knew it was her emotions trying to make peace out of this messed up situation, and I should have done something, but even I was human. And what do we humans do in such cases? We get angry.

I was literally furious. She had hurt my self-respect, and I was not going to tolerate it. Was I some toy to be played around with? I had already forgiven her once and to do it again, seemed stupid. I kept yelling at her and we kept arguing. Sometimes angry, sometimes disheartened, and otherwise asking her to choose me, this was simply too much for me.

Love is a funny thing because, at that moment, I felt none of it. Ruhani had made it clear that she wasn't going to change her decision as her *'Heart said so.'* and I was not going to compromise with my self-respect, my respect mattered. She had hurt my ego and, in this situation, my ego mattered too. Remember, the first person you get attached to should always be you and no one else, because the world does not owe you shit, only you do.

'This conversation is over,' I yelled and hung up on her.

In an attempt to calm the silent screams of my heart, that was now suffocating with each passing breath, I blocked Ruhani from everywhere. She and I were finally done.

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*"How happy is the blameless vestal's lot! The world forgetting, by the world, forgot. Eternal sunshine of the spotless mind! Each prayer accepted, and each wish resigned."* – Alexander Pope

**BOOK DESCRIPTION:**

*Love is not just about being in a relationship, it's much more than that...*

What would you do if you were caught up in a love triangle, but without the love? What if this love that you keep seek-ing, never really left?

Rudra, who thinks that he has started developing feelings for Ruhani, is aghast when she chooses her best friend over him – simply because her best friend is jealous. Set out on a task to bring Ruhani to her senses, he decides to go all in for the only girl in his life.

But, when things go too far, and he finally gets a choice, will Rudra continue to be Ruhani's savior? Or will he find his own happy ending?

Narrated by Rudra, *The Things We Do for Love*, dramatizes his quest for companionship. With a foray of jealousy, multiple second chances, and, bad and uninformed choices, this love-story by Raunak Agarwal is as relatable as his poetry.

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## **PRAISE FOR THIS BOOK**

*Raunak is best at portraying characters and bringing them to life with his words and amazing narration.*

– Rutuja Ramteke

*I had to read it in one go because every chapter ended on a note that made me go to the next one.*

– Shikha Jamwal

*This book is a brilliant example of how social media affects people and has a pivotal role in modern relationships.*

– Gayatri Saikia

*The narrative part of the book is creatively written and the writing skills of the author is impressive.*

– Prajwal S

*This book has all the potential of a quirky web series.*

– Swati Jena

*I loved the various twists and turns in the story. The cover is just so pleasing.*

– Siddharth Sharma

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