

UNLOVED



Arundhatee*

Maya and Arjun lived in a rented apartment in south Kolkata. They were married for 8 long years. Arjun works for a MNC and maya is a homemaker. They have 5 year old son, Aditya.

It was Monday afternoon, maya was relaxing after a busy morning...on a lazy drowsy afternoon of Kolkata...streets were tranquil except seldom honk of rickshaw. She was busy watching some recipes on you tube. Just then her phone rang up...she ignored it as she was enjoying the vlog of her friend living in Canada who was also a homemaker and a vlogger.

Her phone rang again, this time she picked it up. Hello, said the voice. Oo hello, who? Richa was there.. 'Hi Richa! how r you? how's life'...said she..sorry i was busy ..didn't picked up the phone...this is your new no...have not saved it... 'yea' said Richa. 'Actually today i was missing you, I was missing my old days ...missing myself what i used to be ...' What happened dear ,Maya said , "Vikas

...Vikas..is...things are not in harmony....so many things.....'Its a long story darling...it seems you are not free today, we will talk some other day. 'No, I am free', said Maya. You are married in such a prosperous business (affluent), your family is politically powerful too, a loving husband two beautiful kids. I have seen your europe tour pics. your life seems a fairytale every women aspire to live. Everything looks perfect ...so beautiful and lively, Maya spoke these words in a single breath. She was surprised but not shocked as during her last visit to Benarus she could feel the sadness of Richa which floated in her eyes. Tell me Richa what you wanna say, just speak it up...lighten your heart. Richa on the other side was confused where to start, her whole life was revolving in her mind. She said when you are coming to Benarus? We will meet and then will tell you the whole story. OK said Maya. Next Sunday we are coming for Annu's engagement we shall meet there, till then take care and feel free to call me. OK bye,said Richa .

It was going to be 3:30pm; time for school buses and children to return. She wore her slippers and went out to society gate to bring Adi. While she was waiting there she kept thinking what might be wrong in Richa's life and simultaneously the thoughts of what to cook for evening snacks and dinner were also coming.

Adi jumped from the bus and maid helped him crossing the road and handed him over. He was a happy child, sometimes saintly and sometimes devilish as children are! He bid goodbye to his friends and ran towards his home, followed by his mother.

The days passed and finally the next day was Sunday. Maya was going to Benares for Annu's engagement. She was not just a cousin of Maya but her childhood friend. Anamika was having a successful career as a business analyst in an MNC and was marrying a man of her choice. She was in a relationship with Jatin for last 4 years. Both worked in the same company for last 7 years. It was not going to be mere an engagement, but reunion of these three childhood friends Maya, Richa and Annu alias Anamika after many years..

She was going to Benares alone, as it was a short visit of two days. She was leaving Adi for first time so was not very happy, a feeling of something missing was always there deep within. Though Arjun told her not to worry, he would work from home and would take care but still Maya was a doubting mother when it comes to her child. She packed her Zara suit which was her last year anniversary gift; a beautiful green colour anarkali, matching jewelry, makeup kit, her high heel sandals tenderly. Her train was tonight at 8:15 from Kolkata junction. It was Sunday Eve and Arjun told Maya to get ready by 5 o'clock. Maya was ready; she was wearing blue cotton Kurta and was looking cool. It was the march of Kolkata hot and humid, though some relief from evening breeze. As they left for station Maya checked the lock twice handed the keys to Arjun with repeated set of instructions, which she was giving from last week. Arjun nodded, as a pet student nods to his teacher.

Train was on time, she secured her berth in a two tier coach; it was a side lower berth. She kissed her son, hugged him tightly and told her she will return on Wednesday. Arjun and Maya looked into each other's eyes, Arjun reassures her not to worry much about Adi and enjoy the event. Once again Arjun embraces both Adi and Maya in a close hug and said goodbye! Arjun lifted Adi in his lap and walked briskly, as Maya saw them mingling with the crowd through the train window.

It was 8:20 the train left Kolkata junction, she was seating by the train window it was dark outside she could see few yellow lights now and then. She got lost in her childhood days when Annu, Richa and Maya used to live on the different floors of the same building. They studied in the same girls school convent with two tightly made braids with red ribbons. After high school Maya and Richa went to BHU for graduation. She remembers how Anamika's parents were against her choice of getting admitted in hotel management course of Delhi University. Annu had always been a woman of choice be it her personal life or professional. She was a strong woman who would always take stand for herself.

Maya's phone was ringing, she saw it Arjuna's call. He told her that they reached home much earlier as luckily there was less traffic, Adi slept in the cab itself is and was still asleep. Both said goodnight to each Maya prepared her bed set the alarm for morning and slipped into her bed .As it was a tiring day, as slumber hugged tightly.

She woke up early before alarm, the train reached the station on time. She took a cab to reach her home Richa had arrived there on Sunday, and she was busy with Annu chatting and talking about the engagement. Jatin and his family were in hotel which was also venue of the event. As she reached there Richa and Anamika both embraced her with a cry of excitement and affection. Annu said, 'I was dying to see you dear, it has been ages since we met'. After brief meeting Maya left for her flat.

The time of engagement was 4 pm on invitation card. Maya was already late for the venue as she reached there. She saw that there was an awkward silence. People were gathered there in small groups. 'What happened ' she asked one of them. "The engagement has been called off", said the lady.

'What!?', how all this happened? Maya asked. 'No idea, we are also clueless', the lady spoke. Maya sat there on a chair, feeling blank.

It was 5:30 pm, hall was almost empty now. She got up and went to the room where Richa and Anamika were sitting side by side. She too sat there silently. Annu lit up a cigarette and inhaled it deeply and while exhaling the smoke through her nostrils had a feeble smile on her lips. 'Let's go to terrace of the hotel and order some coffee for all three of us and and talk it off all the toxins,' said Anamika. You know Maya, Richa is going through a troubled marriage'. 'Yes I know something is not ok, she called me once'. And what about yours Maya, is everything alright? Yea...they are fine! Let us come to terrace, Maya said.

As they went to terrace they saw the red horizon, the sun has already sunken into the Ganges. Anamika started speaking ,do you know Maya, Vikas regularly beats Richa, keeps her deprived of basic needs, she is going through hell, still does not have courage to come out of it. 'Do you know why I cancelled my engagement ,because I felt unloved ...the moment he told me that he is embarrassed to marry me after meeting my substandard friends and relatives, he was under parental pressure but he is not a kid, how he could feel like this for me..!! .I saw a different version of Jatin, whom I never knew, so how could I marry a person who is a stranger and so unloving. I am an independent strong women, marriage is not just a blanket for me ,I was seeking for love and respect in this relationship.

Richa was listening silently as she spoke that Vikas has broken her bit by bit, she has lost all her confidence, she is so alone and deprived of love. She lives in a big mansion, have beautiful pieces of jewelry, her children goes to best schools, have almost everything a women wishes but no respect and so unloved!! She tells Anamika that she has done right, it is better to leave alone

rather than living with a person so unknown and unloving. Richa tells that she is choaked, feels worthless and her longing for love and affection is endless, her life is an empass!

Maya took a sip from her coffee and spoke marriage is very unromantic in its character, for Maya and Arjun, it is more like a business deal ,leaving with a flat mate or room partner who share the responsibility, provides security, in between love is lost, it is scattered somewhere, coldness prevails, they both struggle to pick the scattered ,tattered love, they have to work on it. When love is not spontaneous, it is not love she too feels unloved.

As they spoke their mind, it was already dark and they could see the burning pires, on the bank of Ganges from the terrace of hotel.

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