

# THE FINAL KISS

To

Barbara Christina Cruze

&

Anuraag Moturi

without whom this book would have been

Impossible!

# 1

## WHATSAPP CHAT- 1 (19 December 2013, 10.48 pm)

Arjun: Chloe...

Chloe: Wat ?

Arjun: U busy eh?

Chloe: No...tell!

Arjun: What you wearing tomorrow? ;)

Chloe: Dress! HUH!

Arjun: Umm wear white...

Chloe: Y

Arjun: It suits you! It makes you look prettier than you already are! It brings color to your cheeks. ☺

She read and re-read the message. He had been flirty for quite some time, but this sounded formal, almost as though he meant it. She tried to brush these feelings off, after all, it was Arjun... he had refused any commitment after his last relationship. Trying to get hold of her thoughts...

Chloe: Now that you say...

Arjun: Hmm..?

Chloe: I'll make sure not to wear white! :D

Arjun: Chloe...

Chloe: Gtg...someone's at the door. Ttyl8r!

Arjun: Wait! Listen, I need to tell you something!

Arjun: I need to ask you something...

Arjun: Chloe?

Frustrated, he threw his phone, but it managed to land safely on the pillow covers. He swore loudly, before vowing that he would do it tomorrow. With a grim smile on his face, he thought, tomorrow, there shall be no running away... she will have to choose!

# 2

The doorbell rang two more times before she finally managed to run all the way down and open it.

“Hazellll! Finally...you are here. Was there traffic? What took you such a long time?”

“No traffic. I had a thing or two to take care off at home! Am sorry! So how is your prep going on, huh?”

“Prep? I haven’t done anything! Dude, I didn’t even do my nails!”

“You have to do mine too...remember!?”

“Yeah! Well...common in...it is gonna be a long night!”

“Well...I had a feeling”, she said smiling.

They made their way to her room. Her usually messy room was messier, and Hazel wondered silently if she would ever manage to clean up!

“So Shark is coming right? Don’t tell me he has come up with some shitty excuse!”

She laughed. Sean aka Shark, her boyfriend for about a year had almost an inhumane ability of coming up with excuses so apt for the situation that one would almost believe what he is saying is true.

She nodded her head sighing, “Yeah! He is coming. I managed to convince him.”

“Good for you. So before we do anything else, take a look at my wardrobe! I think we might as well have to do some late night shopping. I don’t really have a dress to wear, you know!”

“Are you shitting me? You have that pretty white frock with polka dots! And didn’t you buy that violet wrap for this event?”

“I did but...”

“No buts Chloe...wear the white one!”

“No!”

“What? Are you mad?”

“I won’t wear that, no matter what!”

“Chloe!”

“Hazel!”

“Dude!”

“No!”

“Oh god! Fine, wear the violet wrap then. It is way too plain though!”

“We could go shopping maybe!”

“Yeah! Right, all shops are open at 11 in the night! Don’t shit me!”

“Hmmm...I’ll have to do with the violet one then! So what about you? What have you bought for yourself?”

“Well...” she cleared her throat.

“You are blushing? What’s going on, huh?”

“Well, take a look yourself”

She handed over the little carry bag she was carrying. Chloe eagerly opened the bag to reveal a beautiful baby pink dress with little shimmer.

“It is sooooo pretty! Wow! Where did you buy it from?”

“Ask him!” she said smiling.

“He bought it for you? Wow! How sweet! Well he has got good taste”

“That he has” she said nodding.

“Well then Chloe; let’s get started!”

“Yeah! Why don’t you go get two cans of soda from the refrigerator while I set stuff up?”

“Sounds good” she said and made a dash to the kitchen downstairs.

Chloe and Hazel had met on the very first day of college; it had been two years since they met. They had more in common than not, and over time had grown into besties. The next day’s event was an annual fest of their engineering college. They being third years had a lot on their head. Other than voluntary work, they had the sole responsibility of organizing the entire program.

Though they thought of turning in early, their little beauty treatment turned into a gossip night with a romantic movie and tons of soda and popcorn. It was way after four when they finally managed to get their asses on the bed and doze off!

# 3

Their idea of not putting alarm turned out to be worse than they imagined. Though they had the program only at 5 in the evening, and they thus had no worries whatsoever of oversleeping, they didn't really imagine it would turn out to be this disastrous!

So when the sun started streaming in through the windows and literally burning them alive, Hazel finally stirred.

“Chloe...”

Her voice was groggy due to oversleeping. Since there was no reply from her, she somehow managed to hunt her phone from the bedside table, and power it to look at the time! At first, she thought she was dreaming, and turned the phone upside down to see if she was reading it right.

“CHLOOEE!”

“What the hell! Can't you let me sleep in peace?”

She had barely opened one eye and she was already telling her off for waking her up!

“It is 3'0 clock, sleeping beauty! We may not even make it to college. Get your ass outta bed!”

“What the fuck are you talking? Give me the damn phone.”

Chloe extended her arm, but her eyes were still firmly closed, and Hazel placed it in her palm. After she looked and re looked, confirming all her suspicions, she jumped out of the bed with a start.

“We are screwed!”

“Oh! That we certainly are!”

Her house was about 40 km from college and unless they raced, there wasn't any chance of reaching college in time.

“What are we going to do?” Hazel said. Wrinkles had started forming between her brows.

“Calm down Hazel. You go for a shower. I'll make us something to eat. Let's hurry.”

Though there were about 20 missed calls and about a dozen messages in her phone, she didn't bother to check them and instead rushed off to shower. She showered as quickly as she could, and put on her pink frock before rushing down for lunch. Chloe had managed to make some tea and pasta was simmering away.

“Dude, this pasta will take some time. I have timed it, so you needn't worry. Why don't you dry your hair, and stuff, I'll take shower by then and we can eat together.”

It sounded like a good plan and both of them rushed back to Chloe's room. It was almost quarter to 4 before they finally managed to extract themselves out of Chloe's room and come down for food.

As they gobbled the steaming hot pasta, they almost forgot about the tea. Just as Hazel was about to wash the dishes, she remembered.

“The tea!”

“Shit! It would have become cold by now”

“Well let's drink it anyway!”

In a hurry to pour it into cups, Chloe fumbled and a lot of it fell onto her new dress.

“Crap!”

“What hap...?”

“Shit! What are you going to do Chloe?”

Ever the optimist, Chloe, for the first time was almost on the verge of crying.

“Calm down! We'll get it dry cleaned.”

“There is no time!”

“There is darling. It is OK. We can be a little late.”

“You have to present the bouquet to the guest of honor. You go! I'll come in some time.”

“Don't be stupid Chloe. I am gonna stay right here with you, no matter how long it takes. I'll ask someone else to present the bouquet. OK?”

“No! Don't! You were so excited about the whole thing. I'll just change into a pair of jeans!”

“Pair of jeans? Put on your white frock and don't argue. I've had enough! And we are getting late!”

“But...”



“Please Chloe?”

“God! You always get your way! I’ll be back ASAP!”

When she finally managed to come down, Hazel was rooted.

“You look so pretty Chloe. Told ya...white suits you! You know, if I weren’t with Shark, I would as well have asked you out today!” she said winking.

Chloe let out a high pitched laugh.

“I’ll get my keys.”

“Your keys? We’re going in my car!”

“We’ll never reach then!”

“Chloe! Am offended! Dude, you don’t wanna spoil your dress going on your bike!”

“Hmm...point! Well we’ll go in your car...but I’ll drive!”

“Well...umm...fine! Let’s go then!”

# 4

They managed to reach college with just a minute to spare, and rushed off towards their auditorium.

“You are early, darling!”

“Early? What? Sean! Wow! You look hot...that tux...wow!”

He kissed her cheek before replying, “And you stop my heart!”

“Ahem...ahem! I am still here people! Sean, could you please explain, what the fuck is going on? Why is no one here? Have we got our date wrong or is my watch running fast?”

He laughed and added, “Neither Yang! Don’t you guys know, the event has been postponed by an hour because the guest of honor has some other arrangements to attend to!?”

Sean called Chloe, ‘Yang’ because he liked very much the character Chloe Yang of Grey’s Anatomy and found them similar in many ways.

“Seriously?”

“Shit Chloe, we should have checked our messages! Huh!”

“Hmm...yeah! So is it just the three of us then?”

“Nope! Not really, I saw some of your friends; they were at your block!”

“Alright then am heading off there, you coming Hazel?”

“Umm...”

“Go ahead darling, I have a couple of things to take care of, I’ll see you at 6 then?”

“Yeah...alright!”

She rose to her toes to give him a quick peck and then joined Chloe. As they neared the CSE block, they heard the whirring sound of a bike.

“He’s here!”

“Who?”

“Who owns the bullet around here Chloe?”

Before she could answer, the bike zoomed into view and stopped a millimeter from Chloe’s foot.

“Shit!” she muttered under her breath.

“Chloe!” Arjun said with a smile.

As fate would have it, her phone started ringing at the very moment, and she walked off without a word.

“You look pretty Hazel.”

“Thank you! You don’t look that bad yourself!”

“Was that supposed to be a compliment?”

“Kinda!” she said laughing.

When he responded with a mirthless laugh, she asked “What’s going on Tiger?”

“Am I invisible to her?”

“Hmm...well she has had a bad day...easy Tiger...you are gonna ask her, aren’t you?”

“Woa! How did you...”

“It is pretty apparent! Good luck buddy!”

“You think...”

“I think nothing” she said cutting him off.

Before he could say anything more, Chloe walked in.

“You look better than you usually do!”

“You look like a princess...”

“But this isn’t a fairy tale Arjun. We better go up and find our friends.”

Hazel wondered why Chloe didn’t reply in kind. She could smell trouble boiling, but decided not to comment lest everything turned messy.

Their walk to their classroom was short. In spite of it being a Sunday evening, the place was noisy and filled with people.

Even before Chloe and Hazel could enter the classroom, they were greeted by Divya, Anam and Sebina. Arjun had to again remove himself and walk off to talk to the guys.

“You all look so pretty people!”

“And you look the prettiest Chloe. White suits you!” said Sebina.

“Jeez! Any of you tell that one more time and I swear to God that am gonna pour something over this dress so that it changes its color!”

“Is something wrong?”

“Don’t worry Sebina; Chloe is on a dropping spree since morning!”

“You needn’t tell everything now Hazel. Let it rest in peace.”

“Hmm...”

“So Hazel, we need to be there near the stage, we have to look after a couple of things.”

“OK Anam, let’s go then. Later people!”

As Anam and Hazel walked off, the other three walked over to meet the guys.

As the time neared 6, people started vacating the room. Arjun waited patiently so that he could get Chloe alone. He thought and re thought his proposal, he was tensed, yet excited. He realized he hadn’t felt that before, he thought with grim satisfaction the surprise that he would inflict on her. He knew, despite everything, she would accept him. They had become very close after his breakup. She had helped him cope, and he was grateful, and realized, there couldn’t be anything better than pure unadulterated love that he could give her in return.

“Arjun?”

Snapping back to reality, he saw he was surrounded by Divya and Sebina and they had completely blocked his view of Chloe.

“Yeah”, he said warily.

“You need to come with us.” said Sebina.

“Now?”

“Yep! We don’t have time to waste.” said Divya

“But, I am a little busy right now. I’ll join you guys in sometime.”

“Dude! It is almost 6 by now. We need to be there. No arguments! Let’s leave!”

Arjun knew it was pointless arguing with Sebina. So he got up resignedly, and peeked a look at Chloe. She was merrily chatting away with Sameer. He sighed and followed Sebina and Divya.

# 5

“You look mesmerizing babe!”

Chloe let out a laugh before saying, “Thank you Sameer, I better go now, it’s getting late. Everyone must have already reached the auditorium.”

“What’s the hurry darling. No one will notice even if you are a couple of minutes late.”

“I am leaving!” she said ignoring his last comment.

She wondered why he was acting so weirdly. She silently wished that she could escape from the place before things got out of hand. She quickly spun around and made her way to the door, but just before she could turn the handle, Sameer caught her hand and spun her, locking her from any movement.

“Jeez! What are you doing? Get off me!”

He didn’t give her an ear and bent down and kissed her forcefully. The impact was so powerful that Chloe was breathless. She felt so dizzy when he finally let her go that she stumbled backwards.

“You son of a…”

“Goodbye Chloe.”

He shoved her inside the room and firmly locked it before making his way to the auditorium. Her screams were muffled by the closed doors. There wasn’t a single soul to listen to her cries. She pound and kicked the door but in vain.

Finally resigning herself to her fate and trying to calm herself down, she sat down on the floor crossing her legs and putting her head in her hands.

As Sameer neared the auditorium, he smiled inwardly. The evening was turning out to be better than he expected. He smiled thinking of everyone’s reactions…especially Arjun’s!

# 6

“Sameer! Where have you been? I hunted the whole place for you. We need a little help with the ...”

“Sebina”

“What? See I don’t have time for...”

“I asked Chloe out.”

“Whaaaaaat?”

“She said yes. We shared a kiss you know? It was the best thing ever.”

“But...I thought...”

“What?”

“Never mind! I am so happy for you guys. Congo! Where is she by the way?”

“Well she really didn’t feel like coming down here. Am gonna go back to her. You’ll take care of stuff, won’t you?”

“Umm...yeah. I’ll manage!”

If there was one thing Sebina practically couldn’t do, was to keep such exciting news to herself. So she raced off to meet Hazel.

“Dude! You won’t believe...”

“What?”

“Wait; let me call Anam and Divya as well!”

“What’s going on Sebina?”

“It took about two minutes for all of them to get together.

“What is it Sebina?” said Anam

“Yeah! What is it? You sounded excited!” said Divya

“Guys! Sameer and Chloe are seeing each other. He asked her out today! They even managed to share a kiss! IMAGINE!!!”

“What the fuck! Don’t shit me. That cannot be true!” said Hazel.

“It is! Isn’t that awesome?”

“Awesome? It is super awesome Sebina! Wow! I never really thought she would you know hook up with some one! Good for her anyway!” Anam said smiling.

Divya was way too shocked to say anything. She always had a thing for Sameer. She staggered, and caught Hazel’s arm. Then without uttering a word, she marched off to her workplace.

Hazel was more surprised than sad. She immediately started trying Chloe, but her phone was switched off.

“Hazel... I heard...”

“Arjun, I think there was a misunderstanding. It cannot be true ok? I’ll find out, but I don’t know...”

“It is true...!”

She could see his voice falter, and before she could say anything else, he walked off.

“Arjun... wait! Listen...”

But he didn’t give her an ear and continued walking until he reached the green room, and finally collapsed. Over her lifetime of 18 years, she had seen people cry, but never with so much passion or emotion. It was as though a part of him had been taken away, it was agony flowing out. After his last breakup when his love had left him for another person, he had almost sworn that he would never see another girl again. It had taken Chloe over a year to carefully remove all those shells of pain. This outcome had never been thought of!

“Arjun...”

When he didn’t respond, she managed to take off her stilettos and seat herself beside him.

“Hey...” All she could see was tears blocking his vision, he couldn’t speak.

“Come here”

They hugged till his tears reduced to sobs, and till he finally managed to speak something.

“She couldn’t have done that...”

“I know... Go home Arjun... get yourself some rest. You need it.”

“But I need to speak to her”

“You know you can’t! You won’t be able to. Go home now. I’ll cover up for you. Go!”

He managed to stand up finally and pulled her up as well, trying to give a smile, he walked off towards the swinging doors of the auditorium.

# 7

Just as Arjun stepped outside, he encountered Sameer. Trying to get away from him, he moved to the sidewalk.

“Hey Arjun... maybe you could lend us a room at your place... you know?” Sameer called out with a grin.

“That is enough! You are getting nothing. Get outta my way!”

“I already got her” he said smiling.

“Look Arjun... you can't run away from facts!” he continued.

“Fuck off Sameer!”

“You dare...”

“Yes I dare!”

As Sameer closed in on Arjun, Arjun said, “Back off... or be prepared for the worst.”

Sameer gave a sarcastic laugh before hitting Arjun right across his face. Sameer being bigger and stronger than Arjun made him stagger backwards. After he regained control, he managed to kick him above the abdomen before sucker punching him.

The commotion, called in the attention of few other students, who immediately went in and called a couple of volunteers for help. The fight was getting dirty, with a high chance of one of them getting seriously injured.

Vinay, Krish and Karan came into the situation just in time. While Vinay struggled to keep Sameer from hitting Arjun, Karan and Krish forcefully pulled Arjun away from the scene and managed to take him till the nearest waiting hall. News spread quickly enough and soon people started pouring in to see if the two were ok.

When Divya got to know about the incident, she immediately rushed to the scene.

“Vinay! Where's Sameer?”

With a lot of effort, Vinay and some others had finally managed to get him into the refreshment area of the auditorium.



“Divya, you better not meet him. He is not cool yet.”

“I can try to calm him...”

“No! Don’t. Go meet Arjun instead. He’s in the waiting hall.”

“Hmm...well, if you say. Tell me if things get out of hand.”

“I will.”

As Divya rushed off to the waiting hall, her mind went back to the moment when Sebina told her about Sameer and Chloe. She had tried to shrug it off, but couldn’t. She knew how much he meant to her, and still couldn’t believe that such a thing actually happened. Anger simmered in her as she finally opened the door of the waiting hall.

Arjun didn’t bother to look up. She quickly told Krish and Karan that she would stay with him and that they could go back to the auditorium.

Soon after they left, Divya went and patted Arjun.

She said, "Hey! You ok?"

“Yeah!”

As she took his hand, she realized it was covered with thick blood. Shocked she suddenly stood up.

“You are hurt! Your...”

“I am fine Divya!”

“Let me take a look...”

“No! I am fine.”

She refused to oblige and forcefully removed his hand. There was about an inch long wound on his head and his nose looked almost broken with blood still oozing out. The head wound looked almost as if the blood had clotted, so she immediately took a kerchief and wiped off the blood near his nose, and ordered him to hold on till the bleeding stopped.

“I don’t need...”

“Shut up and stay put!”

A while passed before he bleeding finally stopped.

“I am gonna kill him! He can’t take what’s mine. He can’t. I’ll kill him tonight!”

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