

ONE
PRECIOUS
MOMENT

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WORD STATION

To all my family and friends
who have only
seen the good in me...

“ Life is not measured by
the number of breaths we take
but by the *precious moments* that
take our breath away. ”

Prologue

Today is the day I dread every year, December the 16th. It has been three years but it still seems like yesterday. I can still smell the flowers, the aromatic candles, the freshly baked pizza, the sizzling garlic breads, the champagne bubbling - all laid out especially for me. I can still see what had been the most 'Precious Moment' of my life turn into the most tragic one the next freaking day. I, Mira Singh, a 29-year-old fashion marketing manager have experienced both the best and the worst of life in a matter of 24 hours.

I married the most handsome, loving man there ever was, Rahul Singh. Yes, I am a widow now. We had been married for six wonderful years. And what a life it was, full of joy, love, plenty of arguments and as many if not more make-ups. Today is the day when I lost that most important person in my life. Today is the day when life taught me what losing and hurting is all about. Today is the day when I learnt that one should live life here and now. Even though three years have passed, every day I make

sure I remember the lessons life taught me. Every day I remind myself to do what I think, dream or wish. I do not let tomorrow decide my today.

I had lived in a cocoon all my life with everything sooo perfect and easy. All it took was one single moment to strip the blinders off my eyes and face the harsh realities of life. Life is as unpredictable as is our next breath. We are unaware when disaster will strike, we are never prepared for the consequences we have to face.

Three years ago, Rahul bestowed me with the most romantic, loving moment of my life, better than all others (and there were plenty more). With it a beautiful gift that will always be close to my heart, one that made life worth living. The very next second life took over and Rahul was gone forever.

As I look back on what life had been it seems like another era all together. As I sit in my car waiting for the light to turn green, I cannot help but remember and appreciate those train rides, the motor bike and the rush against traffic from years ago. It seems like nothing has changed around me but nothing is the same for me anymore. Three years have gone by, my life has taken a complete 'U' turn, bringing so many changes. Even today when I look back I can relive those 11 years as clearly as if they happened just yesterday.

One

I met Rahul 11 years ago while studying fashion management and marketing at SVT College, Mumbai. We traveled in the same local train (the most convenient mode of travel in Mumbai). He was interning at some software company near my college, having just completed his master's in computer software engineering from Pune where he lived with his family. He was 22, had no siblings, and had just arrived in Mumbai for his internship and lived in his family flat at Mahalaxmi.

His station was one before mine. I lived in Lower Parel with my parents and younger sister Aashi. I noticed Rahul on my very first day to college. He was standing with a group of some very loud, obnoxious guys but was strangely the most different among them all. He had a very silent, shy personality and even though he was standing near them he still stood apart. While the other guys were importuning the girls around and singing out loudly causing a ruckus and trying to seek their attention, Rahul went about

helping some elderly uncle or entertaining a crying baby by making faces or gurgling away, but mostly reading a book (that is if one ever got lucky to get a seat, the Mumbai locals are as bad as the fish market even on an easy day). But with him I noticed if he had to, he would stand and read as well not bothering about the crowd around, it was one of his passions.

Well, my eyes kept fluttering back to this very handsome, totally gorgeous looking man with a very different charisma. There were other gorgeous girls around me who too found him the most dynamic of all (shit!). I was 18 and had studied in a co-education school but never ever had I felt this kind of reaction and instant attraction to some guy; and there have been some really handsome guys I have seen and met. It was while I was staring at him trying to figure him out and what was it about him that attracted me so much, did I realise he had caught my stare and was staring back now (heck now that was like really embarrassing but so totally sexy). I could feel myself turn red as I looked away.

But in that one stare I had found myself looking into the softest light golden eyes which reminded me of warm melted caramel. They were full of life and laughter. There was something else too shining bright which I could not understand but it sure had my heart pounding. He was by far the most handsome guy I had ever seen. Hey, I am not saying there are no good-looking guys around, I am sure there are but he had this forever and ever kind of aura and none of the handsome guys around have ever got my heart going wild with just a look. And what, with his light stubble, sharp cheek bones that any girl would die for, short

neat hair and a perfectly toned sexy masculine body, he was a balm to sore eyes. But to top all that was his smile - warm, mysterious and so full of joy that you simply wanted to smile with him. The slight dimple on his right cheek, especially when he gave a full smile, was to die for. If I had been the drooling kind I sure would have started that very moment but however that one look had him imprinted on my heart and mind.

After that first direct look we kept eyeing each other covertly, both of us became aware of the others interest but were trying to be cautious. I sure did not want to give any wrong ideas to a handsome but a complete stranger. But at the same time I just could not help myself from looking either. I could feel a zing of excitement going through me but a slight fear of the unknown was there too. This was the very first time in my life that I had felt such an instant, strong attraction and connection to someone I did not know. I have been asked out by plenty, I have been complimented too but I have taken it in my stride and never actually bothered. I have even been called snooty to my face. I just have never been interested but this was something inexplicable. When my station came I was all ready to jump off the train as these strange feelings were making me nervous and fidgety.

As soon as I got off the train I stood on the side settling my nerves by taking deep breaths. It took me a couple of minutes to realise that Rahul had also got off at the same station and was walking right behind me. I stared at him for a couple of seconds before walking away. When I looked back he was still there just a few feet behind me (could I

have been wrong in my judgement about him? Was he just another typical guy? Shoot, that would be disappointing as he seemed so genuine). While these thoughts raced through my mind I convinced myself that he was stalking me, so I turned around to confront him (yup you got it, I am impulsive and strong-headed). But just then I saw him get into an auto asking to be taken to an office building near my college. It was only then I realised I was being absurd and paranoid. But even as he left, he turned to look at me directly with that X factor that I had felt during our train ride. By the time he was out of sight I realised my heart was pounding soooo hard again that I could hear it loud and clear.

After reaching my class I tried concentrating on the orientation, my lectures and making new friends. But strangely at the oddest of time my mind would wander back to the guy I saw on the train. I was called out by the teacher twice for losing track of the orientation, but I was just helpless. No one in my 18 years had got me this flustered. I was up until then sure that I was neither the mooning nor the dreamer type, but I was feeling it now.

No words had been exchanged between us. He had done nothing other than just look but still he had left an impact on me. All through the day I kept wondering about him, his name, his age, but most importantly will I get to see him again. By the time I wrapped up my day in college I was in a state of suspense and anticipation. The will I or won't I see him was running through my head faster than the train we were going to board. I left college and was looking everywhere for that one face who had had me restless and

wired-up all day. I think I have never prayed so hard ever not even for my results, like I did that day just to see him again. As luck would have it my prayers were answered. Our evening ride back home was almost at the same time. Just like the morning ride we just kept looking at each other - sometimes directly but mostly from the corner of the eye. This started our silent love affair (sounds strange I know but that's what it was). We travelled together, looking, dreaming because we both were attracted to each other but neither of us were bold enough to make the first move. We both worked at finding out as much as possible about each other without making things obvious or attracting unnecessary attention. And after a few days we succeeded in knowing the others name. I also figured that he was nearly four years older than me so that would make him 22-years-old (huh).

Now instead of the covert looks we had started staring at each other directly. So much so that our eyes would talk without needing any words at all. It is amazing how much one can talk with the eyes and simple movements like the twitch of the eyebrows, and the quivering of the lips can express emotions without words. After constantly watching and observing him, I could often read his mood quite precisely. It was these close observations that helped us to finally break the ice. Would you believe it, this itself had taken two months! Imagine how crazy could we have been?

Our feelings were so intense that I could now read his emotions just by looking at him. Our silent communications had become so clear it could beat verbal conversations any

day (trust me, you should give it a try it with someone you feel really close to, winkie wink). After these constant observations one look from him and I would understand that he liked what I was wearing or didn't approve of some dress, or a hairdo. But the fascinating thing about this silent conversation was that it was mutual. He could also read my mind as clearly. Like there was this one time he knew I had loved a particular outfit he was wearing, or that I liked it when he wore blue. To my astonishment he started wearing it or a similar colour every second or third day.

I know it sounds unrealistic, but if you really look at a person's body language day in and day out you can read their thoughts. I knew when Rahul liked my dress was because his eyes would get a glint of appreciation or gaze with admiration. And his dislike was evident by the wrinkling of his nose. Hey, it may sound silly but trust me it was not just the clothes or hairdos. That was just the beginning but with time we could even read each other's emotions and mood swings, just as well.

There was this one time when he practically missed the train (I was on tenterhooks, waiting) and when he did get on board he had so much anger in his eyes that I felt fear rush through me. I kept looking at him trying to find out what was wrong, but he continued to avoid eye contact. While still looking at him I started breathing deeply (something my mom taught me for when I get upset or angry), seeing me do this after a pause he also started. Within minutes I could see him calm down a notch. When he finally looked back directly at me he had his gorgeous smile back with a thank you shining through it. Slowly he pointed at his file letting me know it was work and his expressions said that was not his fault but he was now

paying for it.

After that day we kept looking for opportunities to get introduced just once, and the rest as they say would have been history. But it seemed everything and everyone was against our beginning. Our traveling friends (we both made a few, unfortunately not all same) were too busy in the mornings sorting their agenda for the day and discussing work and by evening they were too tired for small talk. As for us we were just lacking the confidence (it was later that I came to know I was his first and last affair ever, WOW) to make that first move even though we now could barely manage the distance between us.

Two

As they say whatever is destined to happen, happens (and what a way it did). One evening I was late from college due to some last-minute assignment. As I rushed towards the station only one emotion was running high and that was disappointment. I knew I would not be seeing Rahul that evening because he would have already left long back. But to my pleasant surprise (and shock) he was waiting outside the station. It seemed he had been waiting for a long time.

On seeing him standing there my disappointment gave way to a huge smile across my face. My feelings were so obvious that I could not hide them anymore. I felt revived, happy and excited seeing him there. What astonished me most was the reflection of my emotions with a hint of worry and anger shining on his face as well. At that moment everything around just lost meaning, the hustle bustle ceased to exist, the running crowd, the vendors shouting, people calling out to each other, some people pushing in their rush to get to their platforms, everything just vanished, for me

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