

The Compromise

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A love-story.



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It would have been just another of those dark calm nights of my life, if not for the sandstorm. I was on night duty and the streets bore a deserted look. The visibility was low, and my watch glimmered with 03:00. I was just done seeing my patients and had just entered my cabin. I felt a little tired and dull and couldn't help but yawn. I kept my stethoscope on the table and sat on my chair trying to relax. I looked out of the window for a while; I knew it was going to be a long, long night. I opened the half-read novel which was lying in the drawers for weeks now.

As soon as I was about to read, nurse Suzan came to report an emergency and that I had to be there ASAP. *What a great night!* I thought to myself. I placed the book back to where it belonged, picked up my stethoscope and ran towards the emergency ward.

There was a young girl lying unconscious on a stretcher. I ordered to shift her on bed number six in the emergency ward.

What happened to her? I asked the bearded man, I assumed was her father. He looked like he was in his fifties and was standing alongside the patient.

She had food poisoning. He replied nervously. I could smell the lie in his words.

Sir, if you want to see your girl make through this. You will have to tell me the truth. I had an idea about what he was holding back.

She consumed her mother's sleeping pills. He said with a grim face.

I rushed to provide her medical care. I had an oxygen pipe fixed on one of her nasals and a cannula inside another nasal for gastric lavage to drain toxic from inside. There was another cannula on her right wrist for the supply of Stalin water. It wasn't a good sight. She looked to be in her twenties. She must have acted on impulse, like most of the pampered girls these days do. I instructed a nurse to monitor her condition and came out of the room.

When I looked at the faces of her parents, I felt like going back and giving her a tight slap. Right then, I had no sympathy for her pale face, dried lips and lean body. Her parents had done nothing wrong to deserve this! People like these are habitual of having all their demands fulfilled and when things don't go according to their plan, they lose their balance and commit such stupidity. They should for once, think of what they are putting their parents through!

My mind was in a state of angst; part of me wanted to go to his father and console him but I went straight to my cabin to get out of the emotional web. I opened the book again, to get it all off my head, but soon the nurse came back running to me, *Doctor, her pulse rate is slowing down and so is her blood pressure!*

I again rushed towards the ward. I noticed her breathing problem. I gave her a few injections and kept sitting near her bed until her condition was stable.

I ran a quick glance at her face; she was glowing with calmness as if her soul was ready to fly away. I realized we were struggling to save a girl who didn't want to be saved; she was looking forward to finding peace in the afterlife. It seemed as if we were fighting for a lost cause. It was my first major case since I was done with studying medicine, and I wasn't going to yield easily even if the patient had given up. I consulted some of

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my seniors and read a few books on such cases.

After completing my shift I came back to my place, but her thoughts had followed me all the way home. This had happened for the first time that a patient had made such a serious impact on me. My mother couldn't help but notice my disturbed state.

She said with a smile, 'I see a preoccupied doctor has taken place of my son.'

I ate silently and went to bed. That was the first time in my life that I experienced insomnia.

The next evening, as my shift began, I went straight to her bed. Her mother was sitting beside her. She looked at me with eyes full of hope.

â Please tell me sheâd be fine. Will I be able to see her smiling again?â

That was a million dollar question, I had no answer for. â She needs your prayers for now.â I said trying to keep my tone steady. I could see her eye lashes bathing in tears after listening to my answer.

â If you donât mind, can I ask you something personal?â I asked her while handing over a tissue.

â You can trust me; I will keep it to myself.â

â Sure doctor, anything. Her life is in your hands.â she wiped the tears off her eyes.

'Why did she do this to herself?'

She paused for a moment, and then spoke, â My daughter loved a boy very much. And he got married to someone else, yesterday. She just couldnât accept that.â

â Oh! Does he know about this?â I asked.

â No, we just shifted to this city some three-four months back and she was sure that boy would come asking for her hand. They were childhood friends. She thought he loved him back but he married the girl of her parentsâ choice.

'Why didn't you try contacting him?' The questions in my mind were endless.

â We thought they were just friends until we read the note she left last nightâ her eyes were going wet again.

For the first time in my life, I could feel someone elseâs pain as if it was my own. Her foolishness was just a consequence of her innocence. She was like a little kid who needed looking after. This case had become very personal now.

It was the fourth night now; my thoughts were all focused on that bed where she lay. My shift was over; it was really late at night. I went to check on her one last time before leaving. I noticed she was restless, still unconscious. It seemed to me as if she wanted to say something, but didnât have the words to express. I looked around; there was no one else in the room but me. I gently touched her forehead, it was a little warm. I caressed her hair trying to relax her.

There were a lot of things that I wanted to tell her. I wanted her to know that it will all be alright soon. I wanted her to feel my presence, that I had got her back now. And I wasnât going to rest until I had fixed

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everything. I gently kissed her forehead and took her hand, placing it on my heart. *See, I feel your pain too.*

She whispered something back in her sleep. Was it *stay* or was it *never leave me*? I guess I can never be sure. I remember being by her side for hours until it was morning and I heard footsteps approaching; I wiped the tears off my eyes. It was the nurse, she gave her some painkillers. After sometime she was calm again.

After spending those moments with her, who to me was better than an eternity, I could feel that I wasn't the same person anymore. I had changed, now my world revolved around her. I had only one purpose in my life now, to save her. I gave her more attention than I ever gave to any of my patients. It was only after that day, that she started showing signs of improvement. She even gained consciousness. Everyone at the hospital called it a miracle.

It was the seventh day now; I reached hospital before time as if driven by some divine force. Senior Doctor Arvind called me to make all the discharge papers ready for Alia. She was now good enough to be released. I was happy for her, but part of me was finding it hard to believe that she wouldn't be around anymore.

I rushed towards her bed; she was staring at the walls of hospital as if trying to find herself. Her face was still a bit pale and her eyes were showing her inner hollowness, but she looked way better today.

How are you feeling now, Alia? I asked her. She looked at me with annoyance, which really stung. How I had hoped she'd remember what happened that night between us and greet me with a smile. But contrary to my expectations, I was just like any other stranger. My presence was more of an intrusion to her. She went back to staring at the wall.

Her mother finally filled the dead-air, *She's better now, thanks to your efforts doctor.* She then introduced me to her, *Alia this is Dr. Danish Ali, if not for him, you wouldn't be alive today.*

I noticed a frown on her face when she heard the last words from her mother's mouth, as if I had done something really bad bringing her back to life. Her eyes were still fixed on the wall. It was all too much for me to take. I struggled to let out a smile, everything had now gone blur.

She's good to go now. But she'll have to make regular visits to the hospital. Dr. Sharma will be taking charge of the counseling. He's the best psychiatric that we've got. I handed over the discharge papers to her parents and she was released from my care.

Her absence was something really hard to get used-to with. But somehow I had managed to get past a week, thanks to the sleeping pills.

It was just another day at the office when I was working on an afternoon shift. I was walking through the corridor when my eyes met hers again. I didn't want to stop and say hello, but it wasn't like I had a choice. Her father nodded in gratitude.

So how are you doing now Alia? I said.

Good. She said, trying her best to smile.

I continued my stroll after sensing the awkwardness. As I moved on, I realized her beautiful face, her sparkling eyes, and her deep enchanting dimples was all I wanted in life. I knew I had fallen in love.

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When I told my mother that Iâd finally decided on getting married, I swear she was the happiest person on earth. And then I told her who the girl was, and the circumstances in which weâd met. She thought I had gone completely insane. For days she tried to persuade me that I had mistaken âsympathyâ for âloveâ and it was just an infatuation; that I was mixing my professional life with my personal life.

When my father came to know about it, even he couldnât find any sense in getting his son married to a girl with suicidal tendencies. âWhat if she never loves you back, son?â He tried his best too, but I was really adamant.

âItâs either Alia or no one.â I gave them my ultimatum. And finally they had to give in against my new found obstinacy.

So one fine Sunday morning we went to Aliaâs home unannounced. Our visit came as a big surprise to them, and when we explained the purpose of our visit, they didnât really know how to react. Her mother asked me to tell her the news myself, since they were really scared to do it themselves. âSheâs been through a lot lately. And in the end, itâs her decision who she wants to spend her life with.â said the father.

I was on my way to her room; I could hear someone playing a melancholic tune on a piano. It was sad but mesmerizing, I just stood right outside her room. Waiting for her to finish and then knocked her door. She opened it, stunned to see me. âYour father sent me here; I got something to talk about.â I said trying to sound confident.

She let me in, there was a sofa lying in the corner. I sat on it, I donât remember being so nervous ever before in my life. I looked around; the walls had amazing sketches and paintings. âSo you are a painter too.â I said with a smile.

She paused for a moment and then spoke, âLook Mr. Danish, I really appreciate everything youâve done for me and with all due respect you got paid for your care. I donât think I can marry you.â Her tone was harsh and hurting.

âHow do you know for sure that Iâm here to ask you for marriage?â She had caught me off guard.

âThen why else would you be here? Iâve told pa that I donât want to marry anyone, why doesnât he ever give up?â She looked angry and hurt, but this was my only chance.

âLook, itâs not him, itâs me. I fell in love with you, the very first time I saw you. I just didnât realize it until you were gone. I know it might be hard for you to believe, but I have never felt so strongly for someone. Yes, I want to marry you, because I love you.â I opened my heart without a second thought.

âI donât need your sympathy Mr. Danish and I have no love left to give. I think it will be best if you leave now.â She was as cold as snow on arctic would be; I didnât have anything else to say. I stood up and left.

That was a long, long drive back home. I didnât tell anything to my mom and dad about my conversation with Alia. But they had an idea. Days turned into weeks and weeks turned into months and months into a year. I knew she was never going to say âyesâ to my proposal. But every now and then Iâd torture myself with hope that maybe sheâll remember what had happened that night in the hospital my tender emotions, my honest love and selfless care and come running to me, which never happened.

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One day I was back home late after work, my mom called me saying she had something to talk about. I knew it would be about marrying a girl of her choice.

My mother was sitting with photographs of a girl. She said, "Son, your father and I have chosen a girl for you. We are sure you would like her." She said "I interrupted her."

"You know my answer. I love Alia, and I know she would come back to me one day. It's just a matter of time." Her insensitive attitude annoyed me.

"There comes a time when you have to move on. Everybody does that. I can't see you living like this anymore. I care for your happiness." She was getting all sentimental again.

"I can't move on." I said, starting to leave for my room.

"Perhaps you should. In fact, she has." Her tone was sharp now.

"What do you mean?" I turned back.

"She got married last week. Her father had invited us, but we didn't tell you. We knew it would have hurt you a lot." Her words didn't make any sense. That wasn't just possible!

"Who is the guy?" I was perplexed.

"Some U.S based engineer, she didn't even bother to meet before saying yes." She said.

"What? How can that be?" It was all very hard to accept.

"It's true. We have been in constant touch with the family. We didn't want this to happen. But there was nothing we could have possibly done."

I wasn't ready to accept the facts; I just lost my temper. "Why didn't you tell me? I would have done something, anything! How could you do this to your own son?" That was the first time I had ever shouted at my mom. She wept and I went back to my room, trying to shut myself from the reality. I apologized to her the next day and reassured her that I would be considering marrying the girl she had chosen. "I just need some time", I told her.

Ten years have passed and now I am a well known surgeon in one of the private hospitals. I moved to a different city and devoted myself to the service towards mankind and only live to serve my patients. I know my parents are unhappy that I haven't gotten married yet. They have tried really hard, I would give them that. Today is the day I tell my mother about the big decision that I have taken. I dial her number, "Hello mom! I want to marry the girl of your choice."

I could sense the joy in her voice. "Really? So when are you coming to home? I would arrange a meeting of you two!"

"There's no need for that; I totally trust your choice. I am coming next month and you can decide any date you like." I can sense the relief in her tone. I am just doing what Alia had done, marrying a stranger. Now I understand her idea of compromise; it doesn't really matter whether you see or meet the person you are going to marry. It will be a compromise, nevertheless.

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Iâ€™m just following her footsteps and thereâ€™s nothing wrong in it as long as this union brings a smile upon my parentsâ€™ faces.



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