

A Memorable Evening

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By : Nestar

A true story of first love and loss in Nepal.



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It was a frigid January evening in the beautiful Kathmandu valley where I had spent most of my teen years. I was waiting for the six o'clock tempo (a three wheeler auto rickshaw very popular in South Asia) while fighting the ruthless gusts of wind at the Sundhara tempo stand. Those days, I was more interested in poetry and writing than in my regular passions, science and math. My mind was never void. There would always be something going on: the perplexing physics numericals, biology lab frog dissections, the imminent poetry contest, the Saturday cricket matches, the girls in the boarding school across the street, and so on.

That evening I was alone, just looking around, and so was She. She stood there, on my left, only a couple of feet away. Wandering in her own world. Kind of drifting. Lost! She was waiting for the tempo, just like me. We were complete strangers. If she was with her family or friends, I would be very hesitant to talk to her. She completely agitated the silence prevailing in my mind and ignited a spark of curiosity in me. I fell for her helplessly and could not pacify my smoldering emotions.

In contrast to the completely silent atmosphere around us, her eyes did not look so tranquil. They were constantly colliding with mine. Even though the collisions would only last for a millisecond, the effect was enormous. We soon began to stare at each other. It felt like her hypnotic eyes were emitting some kind of magical waves and intruding my innocent eyes. As if the touch was triggering all my latent emotions. She was equally active in our silent game of eye-chat. Haunted by the same feelings as me. Her gaze was seemingly inquisitive.

Dating and teenage romance were still a taboo in Nepal. However, it was not a big deal at all to go talk with a stranger of the opposite sex. I am sure that it was our strong cravings that were causing the hesitation. Our sweet little story was still limited to eyes only.

Whenever our eyes encountered each other, we would hurriedly turn them somewhere else. I think it was really awkward for both of us to keep staring at each other for long.

We could not find a tempo for a long time. After a while, one finally approached the stand. She walked towards it. I followed. As predicted, she turned around to check if I was taking the same tempo. I could fathom the depth of the curiosity in her eyes. The tempo got filled within seconds even before we got close to it. It soon disappeared into the fog.

Sundhara was a big station that harbored tempos running all over the valley. It was already getting dark, and the tempos were filling quickly. Every time we walked towards one, we had to come back without any luck. Finally, a tempo going to Malgalbazaar arrived. It was almost empty, and we hastily got in. Luckily, we got two opposite seats in the corner. This gave me some more confidence. There was enough time from Sundhara to Kupondol to break the ice.

I longed to talk to her, but words wouldn't come out of my mouth. I could not even move my lips. I couldn't figure out what to say. Should I start by asking her name? Or where she goes to school? Or pretend like I have seen her somewhere but not sure where? I could not decide! I was going to ask her what the time was, but that would be very awkward too. It would also not be a good idea to introduce myself formally. I saw that she was talking to a middle-aged man sitting beside her. I overheard that she was a

A Memorable Evening

science student, but because of the loud tempo engine, I could not hear them well. If only I could know what school she went to! I could always try to find her later. Why couldn't I ask her anything myself? I attempted to speak to her many times, but my voice was like a bone stuck in my throat that I could neither swallow nor release.

I was totally mesmerized by her beauty. She was the most beautiful girl I had ever seen. I had never craved for anything this much ever before. She was my Miss World and Miss Universe. There could be no replacement for her. Her fairly modern outfit and short shoulder-length hair had easily conquered my heart. Her gleaming fair face and shy gaze truly magnified her beauty. She had a beauty spot on her right cheek. Her entire picture is still safely captured in my mind.

It was not just her physical beauty that was so attractive to me; what really attracted me was her simplicity. Without even talking to her, I felt a strong connection between us. I thought I was seeing the image of my fantasies come alive right in front of my eyes. Like she was a princess of the fairy tales I used to read as a child, and I was taking her to the city of clouds on a flying horse.

For the first time in my life, I was describing a woman's beauty with such passion. For the first time, I was going through such intense emotions all at one time. I was feeling like a poet, reflecting her in his poems or an artist, portraying her image. I myself had become utterly poetic. Falling in love is more poetic than writing any poetry. I then understood why Chesterton had said that.

So, as I swayed in the waves of emotion, my destination was also impending. I not only had to get off the tempo but also part from her. Forever!

I got off the tempo, narrowing all my hopes and desires. My heart was bolting. I was going to lose her without ever getting her in the first place. If something is very precious to you, it is even harder to attain. Nevertheless, I thought of waving my hand from outside just to acknowledge our sweet twenty-minute story. I thought that would be very awkward though.

The tempo moved. I looked at her again and did not take my eyes off her until she disappeared into the horizon.

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