

THE SECRET MEETING AT MIDNIGHT!

Description

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(We create strong, loving bonds when our dear ones leave too early. The closeness exists beyond our imagination. Every minute their presence shows in our actions. It is the weakness of men left behind who would have to nurse their souls and learn the craft of living alone. As days drift, we find ways to cope, but a few curious imaginations would be precious indeed. Read about my fantasy â??speakingâ?• to my dear departed wife)

I lost my wife a year ago â?? she had battled the fatal grip of cancer for over three years. Having been left alone, I had a tough time adjusting to another plight to deal with. Sleeplessness got me so worn out; I tossed and turned across the bed as my ruffled mind kept me awake past midnight. So it had been, every night, a struggle with my worried eyes shouting for sleep; no matter how hard I tried, my orphaned mind denied that quick snoring comfort.

The misery starts as soon as the sun dips on the horizon, â??one more night waiting to enter that awful pestering chamber,â?• the dark circles under my eyes quivered.

â??I canâ??t go on, every night, curled on the bed, checking the clock, waiting for the dawn.â?• So getting me the comfort of a good doze, not to hate my bed, I devised a method to beat these oppressive wakeful nights.

I labored a plan. I kept the TV alive and playing, of course, muted, in my bedroom, throwing its soft blue shadows across the room. The hum of the air- conditioner and the play of blue shadows on the walls somehow worked together with an effect that lulled me to sleep, allowing me to wake up afresh the next day.

Good for me, I have gotten a few hours of shut-eye.

One night, a few weeks back, caught in the futile tussle for slumber, with thoughts jammed, my mind ran into a bizarre imagination, later tipped into a make-believe fantasy. I canâ??t explain why, but I believed this mysterious phenomenon might be true!

On that day, I checked all the doors properly shut; oversaw Bruno, my pet dog, being placed cozy for his sleep. Then, I went around the bed and adjusted the window drapes half-open to let in morning daylight.

â??Iâ??m ready for sleep,â?• I said to myself, deciding nothing else to do.

I settled beneath the bed sheets before I switched on the TV to its muted nightly shift. I waited, eyes filled with urgency to brace for a restful slumber.

Stretched and yawned, but my head reeled in an unceasing chorus of thoughts playing as the night progressed, then in a swift suddenness, a puzzling incident happened, and it seemed so curious and the solemnity of which only I can understand.

I noticed my cell phone whizzing and had come alive with its soft blue light. I pick up the phone, wondering who the rogue was seeking to disturb at this midnight hour. But for the blue emission across the screen, I found nothing but pale and empty. â??Itâ??s funny, no name, and no numberâ?• I kept swinging the phone front and back as if the action would pop up something obvious. Instead, I stare at the blank screen; I bring the phone up to my ear, hoping to hear a voice. Pressing the phone to my ear, I said â??hello,â?? it held something wary.

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A few tense moments later, a hesitant response came out. â??I listen to a thin low tone, a repeating hello, hello, and sensing something not right and I become alert to a ladyâ??s crooning voice.â?•

My heart leaped, innards trembled, and I felt a ripple of a scary rush run beneath my skin. The grip around the phone became feeble, and I sensed fear seep into my eyes. â??I could recognize the voice at once, the lilt, the accent, the intonation, the tough dictate in repeating the â??hello, hellos,â?? unmistakably, itâ??s my wifeâ??s voice.â?• my gut instinct ran overboard, it was her!

Those loud strings of hellosâ?? â?? a certain way my wife used to display impatience when her repeated pitch would not get quick attention. No matter what, she maintained an assertive voice that sent out a meaning, â??come on, listen â?? look at me,â?? and was sure it was a commanding pitch. â??Ok, Iâ??m listening; sorry, Iâ??m a little distracted.â?• I obeyed and listened to her bid.

Perhaps, quite compromising as it sounds, but what it takes to be, â??Together for thirty-four glorious years, we had zipped our lives together. Thus we had recognized, as early as we could, in our marital life the mutual need to listen to our rhythm of togetherness.â?•

A little while later, fear replaced by some flimsy boldness, not sure whatâ??s happening in that hazy night. The phone was close to my ear, and I slowly heard words floating out of the phone, â??Hello, Iâ??m waiting outside. Can you open the door and peep out?â?•

Sensing something awful would happen, sweat seemed to overwork all over my body. Though the room had enough light, I trembled to set my feet down. I dithered a bit like a rat in a hole. I clicked open the door and stepped out into the corridor. I found it shimmering in silvery shadows spread along the walls and denser on the wheelchair standing in the corner, which I see rocking, perhaps nightly breeze tossing it. I imagined.

Creeps in my stomach nagged louder, and I get a feeling, â??Am I doing it right, stepping out to go after the hallucination? Doesnâ??t it sound silly,â?• but as if led by someone, still in shock? I stagger near to the railing standing two floors above, and my body, already in a weightless trance, couldnâ??t make out anything from the mass of darkness that hung hush and still.

My wife preferred this place, the open parapet, where I used to find her, in the days when she was battling cancer, perched on the wheelchair to help her mind escape, looking down at the bustling streets. She obsessed, complaining about how soon she could get back to walk and do away stranded without mobility.

It wasnâ??t unusual, and I wondered if my wife wanted to spend some quiet time she would come to this cozy corner of our house. I waited; I stood silently. I caught myself in a vacillating feeling, and a queasy idea stuck suddenly. â??Should I run inside back into my home?â?• But it was my wifeâ??s voice. Some strange mix of puzzlement, pull, and curiosity made me wait. That soft fear motivated me to abide by this delirious ordeal. I decide not to shrink away from this moment; itâ??s my wife who has called to speak. It has been over twelve months since she had left me and sought the heavenly retreat.

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And then it happened â?? a sweet release, relief. A few moments later, slashing the moonlit night, a sharp candid voice appealed close to my ear. I felt the poignant chemistry of the pulse and breathing of my wife. Straight and pleasing was her tone. â??How are you feeling? Does being left alone trouble you?â?• as precisely as I had expected, she broke the silence with her first spell. I allowed her initial bouts of concern to sink in a way her tilted voice carried the hues of her anxiety. As the whispers of her words entered my soul, I felt peaceful and relieved, and it belonged to the respect of togetherness we had shared for thirty-four years.

There was eeriness in the small steps I took. I felt my mouth sticky and tongue dry and held the parapet wall to find my balance. A little later, I attempted to give out an answer: choking inside, unable to believe what was happening to me. My emotional angst came out in a hissing rasp.

â??I know she thinks how timid Iâ??m, as always, you never change,â?• I said to myself, still struggling to hold my legs steady, wondering about the opinion she had got off me so long.

Finally, she spoke: a cultured, quiet voice â?? hiding all the pain, as she always did. Her lilt, which I hadnâ??t heard for many months, hit me like a thousand needles shower.

â??I saw Aradhya, two months back, skipping around in the corridor. Iâ??m happy to find her chubbier, prettier than when I carried her in my wheelchair a year ago.â?• the voice swirled out as if coming from depths of nowhere. And it was sorrowful.

Aradhya is my granddaughter; a year old when my wife died, but the toddler had spent some good times with her grandmother. Now she lives in the US with her mother and my daughter, Neelima.

â??Aradhya speaks about you, and she remembers you,â?• I said; I didnâ??t know where my words were directed at, as I didnâ??t make out whatever except the husky light falling from the curtained windows. It was a blanket of night that curled around.

I spoke again, breaking the fluid silence.

Yes, Aradhya is a prayer and delight in the house. But, the more you look at her, the more restrained you have to be not to fall for her innocent charms and infantile pranks. Believe me, when I say she was responsible, that filled cheer in the house in the earlier months immediately after the sorrow of your death killed our spirits.

Whenever she hopped into my study, fluttering her innocent looks, she used to ask me with her naÃ¯ve English accent, â??where did â??ammamaâ?? go.â?? Flopped before your portrait, she would answer for herself, eyes twinkling much brighter, â??she is with God.â?• Listening to such innocent banter was tough. Her naÃ¯ve words flogged deep inside, pointing at the poignant reality. And yes, I understand.

Now trapped under the heft of apprehensiveness, I couldnâ??t decipher the inquiring phenomenon playing before me, â??why is my wife here in the night at this ungodly hour? Is her soul still hovering close to our house? Is she watching the aftermath of her departure?â?• â??But let me use this weird opportunity to speak to her,â?• I said to myself, confusion still raging inside. I have to pour out a twelve-month agony of emptiness to her. Who else I should share, and I know I have none?

There went a ruffle in the air. Then, somewhere at a distance, the sky rumbled, and I took it as a hint of my wifeâ??s unmissable graceful mien, and my legs gathered nerve. I had become less anxious, my voice came out firm, and I continued my faithful narration, eager to fill in the events of the past twelve months, like a child standing before its mother, relaxed and still and speaking in a low voice.

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â??Neelima told about her pregnancy, I gather, nestling her fifth month. She is here to attend your first memorial ceremony.â?• My words quickly jumped from plain to choking.

I sat with Neelima a few days later; just a fortnight left before returning to the US.

â??Who stays with you during the delivery days?â?• I asked. She sat silently; she wasnâ??t sure how to shape her answer. Instead, she stared at the garlanded frame of yours as if she was expecting a cue from you.

That silence between us wailed helplessly. It was subtle, and it was hurting.

â??I donâ??t know, and I canâ??t stay here. I have little time now,â?• she concluded. Her face looked drained, imagining the prospects of welcoming her second child and not having her mother at her side. It would be a difficult recourse for any daughter.

â??Donâ??t worry, daddy; my in-laws assured me they will be there with me.â?• She nodded her head and smiled it off. But her confidence didnâ??t offer any relief from my fears about how she would handle the childbirth with neither of the parents waiting around comforting her.

She will probably have to walk to the delivery room without her mother beside her anguished me. Acting on that impulsive beat, I have decided to convey the woes to my wife right now. In the fluid darkness, the internal dialogues started jumping, eager to cry out as my eyes sought to locate the guise of my wife among the shadowy veils outside the house.

I wanted to show her the deep scars I have gathered for the past twelve months and how I dealt with keeping the right balance to cope with my loneliness.

Thus I poured out saying something â?? the manner I have been biding the hard way:

â??For me, living alone has become a terrifying marathon, squeezing me with pressure to be in pain every minute of the day. Pain is like an angry tiger on the prowl â?? fast and maddening, and it can strike at any time, with uncontrolled force. You know staying alone is heavy emotional baggage, and it punched too bluntly mauling you with each passing day.â?•

For the next few moments, the stillness seems dangling as if someone commanded to behave so, and I get a hint that my wife must be in great distress hearing such depressive reproof. I know how she had cared for our children and me for over three decades, where she gently played the role of the wife and a mother: a perfect companion, the warm hands to hold.

It is a kind of curious stalemate, this brief episode, which may rarely come again in my life â?? the chance to impress the soul and spirit of my wife. So strange it may seem to happen, but I have no more any reason I should debate that she is there right before me, in the empty hallway, filling the silvery night, coaxing me to unwind my haunting mind.

Once again, I became attentive, waiting for my wife to speak in those frozen seconds, and then her voice rolled out again in an appealing flow. â??I know I have left a lot of bitterness behind me. But Iâ??m worried about Aditya.â?• I could almost hear my wife calling my name.

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Kaushal is our grandson who arrived five months after you left us. Our son, Adityaâ??s marriage, had been a hurried affair, and those were the tiring times where you became immobile and buckled into the wheelchair.

â??You finish your sonâ??s marriage as quickly as possible,â?• my doctor friend advised me. â??The prognosis of your wife is not showing any better signs; she may fight and persist for a month or two,â?• the friendâ??s whose opinion I always sought on decisive matters had caught me on a woeful dichotomous urgency.

Can I beat the two demands that seem to blink in red flashes? Can I handle caring for my wife on the one hand and look for a bride and plan for my sonâ??s marriage on the other? I suddenly felt at crossroads leading to my crucifixion. I prayed for an answer. â??Even up to this point, I was anxious about your wellbeing, your terminal illness consuming every minute you lay on the bed. Yet, somehow, you and me, even though handling your medical procedures had been risky, had solemnized and blessed Aditya and his bride.â?•

â??Had you been strong enough, sometimes, I imagined on impulse, had you been fierce enough to fight back the disease just for four more months, just poured yourselves a dose of mortality for a quarter of a year, we would have had together enjoyed Kaushal.â?• How refreshing, of course, I replay this, even years later, my forlorn blink of imagination.

He is bound to run, scream, and delightfully chatter, but you were never there to enjoy every step of his joy. So would he ever be able to learn a great teacher was not there for him, sit face to face, having no loving grandmaâ??s hand to hold and never able to see the glorious expressions of yours?

His innocent antics his infantine smile seem as if tapping me, â??cheer up, grandpa, Iâ??m there for you, play with me â?? Iâ??m your healer, Iâ??m your angel.â?•

Iâ??m the reincarnation of what you have lostâ?•.

See, I said to my wife, â??how Kaushalâ??s nearness is soothing for now and in the days to come.â?•

Here is our nine-month-old grandson.

For a few moments, I inhaled a long lull. Minutes later, I felt a burst of the cool breeze brushing past me; I was momentarily startled, believing the nearness of my wife. It was a bizarre drift, a sensation that her sari hangs brushed past me! perhaps silly, a sort of imagination, but I felt all so real, as if I had walked miles along with her musing over memories of the past and tidings of the present. Walking back into my house, into my world, was painful. I kept the window open, wishing she might breeze in again.

I lay on the bed, staring at the white ceiling buried in profound silence. Dazed, I didnâ??t know what I had to do next, but Iâ??m sure my brief â??secret meeting at midnightâ?• with my wife has ended!

Category

1. Uncategorized

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