

Closure

- Junaid S.A.A.

Synopsis

Closure is a story about three intertwined lives – a wife, a husband and a woman from the husband's past – told entirely through email conversations.

Closure is the '*Pati, Patni aur Woh*' conflict brought online.

A married man – Abhishek – writes to his school and college romance – Jyotsna – after nine long years. Abhishek writes with an intent to seek forgiveness and closure after their relationship had ended on a sour note. During conversations with Jyotsna, Abhishek discovers Jyotsna has become averse to the idea of marriage, has changed quite a bit from how he knew her and it would be difficult getting the kind of closure he wants with this enlightened and feisty version of her.

Abhishek and his wife – Kavitha – are going through a difficult time in their marriage. Kavitha decides to start communicating with Abhishek through email to avoid friction. To get their relationship on track and build the intimacy in their marriage, Kavitha also proposes to play a game (through emails) with Abhishek which explores if two strangers can fall in love by asking each other a series of 36 personal questions. Abhishek reluctantly agrees to the '36 questions' game and makes the effort to bring sanity to his marriage.

Jyotsna is having a hard time trying to figure out how to deal with Abhishek coming back into her life, if he has any role to play in her life at all or if she has any role to play in his – especially since Abhishek was someone who she loved with all her heart and was deeply impacted when he walked away.

While Kavitha is trying to revive her faltering marriage with Abhishek, and Abhishek is trying to seek closure from Jyotsna, Kavitha comes across and reads the entire correspondence between Abhishek and Jyotsna. Abhishek hadn't been forthcoming about his past relationships and it comes as a shocker to Kavitha that someone like a Jyotsna existed in Abhishek's life. Kavitha believes her marriage is in trouble and decides to do whatever she can to save her faltering marriage.

Closure takes the reader through the joys of love and deep relationships to the low of heartbreaks and misunderstandings while unveiling what Abhishek has to go through to get closure, what Kavitha needs to do to save her marriage and how Jyotsna handles a man who broke her heart coming back into her life.

You know what is really sexy – a real conversation.

-Anonymous

The odd thing about this form of communication is that you're more likely to talk about nothing than something. But I just want to say that all this nothing has meant more to me than so many somethings.

-Kathleen Kelly (You've Got Mail)

Jyotsna-Abhishek

From: Abhishek

Sometime in **August 2012**

Hi Jyotsna,

How are you?

I am sorry for all the hurt I have caused, for all the words left unsaid.... It's been a heavy burden I have been carrying for the past nine years.

I know this mail isn't enough.... but still.

- Abhishek

##

From: Jyotsna (*The next day*)

~~Is this a joke? Is it really you, Abhi?~~

Hi Abhi,

No need to carry this burden. I am sure we have all moved on, that was more of a growing-up phase. I wish you only the best.

Cheers,

-Jyotsna

##

From: Abhishek (*The next morning*)

Thank you for writing back. Really...

I hope nobody noticed me floating on air yesterday without all the burden of guilt and I slept well. :-)

~~I am surprised you wrote back....~~

For the longest time, I have been looking forward to having these conversations with you —~~at least this way and not in my head, like I have been doing all these years....~~

But how have you been? Where are you these days?

##

From: Jyotsna (*Late evening*)

I am doing good.

I am based out of Kolkata now. What about you?

##

From: Abhishek (*That night*)

I live in Bangalore. I work in IT like a lot of them here....

You have managed to stay off the grid. You aren't on Social Media. Nobody in our circle knows your whereabouts or what is going on with your life. You seem to have deliberately and completely cut yourself off after finishing college.

I had a really hard time finding you or your contact info....

I am not going to ask why – perhaps not right now.

Then I found your email on some art portal as an organizer of a painting exhibition...

What do you actually do?

##

From: Jyotsna (*The next morning*)

I don't think you need to ask why I cut myself off.

I am an Art Curator.

~~What do you want from me?~~

##

From: Abhishek (*Two hours and 39 minutes later*)

Tell me more – when did you get married? What does your husband do? How many kids do you have?

##

From: Jyotsna (*The next day*)

I've never been married.

~~I don't think my heart can handle such relationships.~~

##

From: Abhishek (*Eleven minutes later*)

Seriously? I thought you got married long back. You never seemed to be the 'stay single' type...

##

From: Jyotsna (*That evening*)

Ha...

People don't really change. They just become more of who they really are.

Perhaps I was always the 'stay single' type.

##

From: Abhishek (*Thirteen minutes later*)

Hmm... But why? I am still unable to believe you never married....

##

From: Jyotsna (*That evening*)

I've given up on marriage. Don't have any plans to get married.

##

From: Abhishek *(12 minutes later)*

You have no intention of getting married...!!!!

How come?

##

From: Jyotsna *(Two days later)*

I am scared. Scared of all the commitment and demands to make it work.

##

From: Abhishek *(Nine minutes later)*

You don't want to get married? Ever? Because you are scared of marriage?

This isn't how I knew you at all...

##

From: Jyotsna *(The next morning)*

Look Abhi, I am happy now. Why should I give up on my freedom for something which promises trouble, especially after what I went through with you?

##

From: Abhishek *(Eight minutes later)*

You think getting married will land you in trouble? How did you come to such a drastic conclusion...?

##

From: Jyotsna *(That evening)*

I haven't seen enough happily married people.

##

From: Abhishek (27 minutes later)

Okay.

Perhaps, your Dad knows better.... Hasn't he been insisting you should marry? I am sure he would have found someone nice to get you married to, especially since you don't have any siblings...

##

From: Jyotsna (That night)

Daddy has been trying to get me married for a long time. I have convinced him instead – I need not get married to live happily.

I have this phobia about commitment, responsibilities, losing my freedom and such.

And it's you as well.

Yes, you.

You were enough.

A hundred, thousand and million times enough.

And now, since I've been single for so long, I've started to realize how peaceful it is without all the drama of dealing with such relationships.

Anyway, what about you? ~~Are you 'happily' married?~~

##

From: Abhishek (The next day)

Yeah.... I got married about seven years ago.... Kavitha has an MBA and is into corporate recruitment at IBM.

I have a five-year-old daughter – Ritu – as well.

##

*Kavitha-Abhishek

From: Kavitha

August 2012

Hi Abhi, since we don't get to talk all that much at home, and when we do, we get into FIGHTS, I have decided to write to you. It would be great if we could communicate with each other via EMAIL. This might help us avoid arguments. ~~If the arguments continue, I think we will divorce each other soon. I know you love Ritu a lot, but I will be forced to take her away from you and I will have to bring her up all by myself—I really don't want to do this.~~ Will you find enough time to write back to me from work?

##

From: Abhishek (32 minutes later)

Yes, this is fine by me.... At least the neighbors will not get disturbed hearing our arguments. :-). I can definitely find time to reply to your mails during long meetings at work or when I have stared at graphics and marketing collateral enough.... By the way, how will you find enough time to write to me?

##

From: Kavitha (18 minutes later)

You are more worried about the NEIGHBORS? If you had so much concern for your WIFE and KID, things would have been much better at home.

I can write these emails to you from work. It would be a nice break from work for me and I could connect with you like this.

##

From: Abhishek (13 minutes later)

Oh... come on, Kavitha. ~~Don't start with all your filmy dramatics again.~~ Why do you always have to do this? I was trying to be funny, and you had to be unpleasant.

Please don't do this....

##

From: Kavitha (39 minutes later)

Okay. I will TRY.

##

Jyotsna-Abhishek

From: Jyotsna

August 2012

Why did you have to write to me after all these years, Abhi?

What do you actually want from me?

##

From: Abhishek (*Next morning*)

Hmm...

I don't want anything from you, Jo. It is about me....

I couldn't live with myself with the memory of what I put you through and what I went through for doing so.

When I look back at my life, remembering what we had and how I ended things between us fills me with utmost regret and unhappiness....

~~The things which I did not say when I walked away have been haunting me.~~

I want closure. I want peace. I want things to heal. I want the regret and unhappiness to go away....

What we had was rare, special. I miss having something that wonderful in my life since I walked away.

You trusted me. You believed in me enough when I decided to end everything. You were just standing there when I left you – you did not bat an eyelid; you did not hesitate one bit about me or my intent.

I broke your trust then, and I am unable to live with that thought....

All these years, I had done nothing about it. Doing nothing – especially about this – has been something which has been troubling me the most.

##

From: Jyotsna (*That evening*)

So, you seriously think by writing to me and by raking up what happened ten years ago will give you relief?

If only closure was all that easy, Abhi.

##

From: Abhishek (*31 minutes later*)

I owed you an apology – it is the least I can do...

But if you aren't happy writing to me and see no point in keeping in touch, I will understand.

##

From: Jyotsna (*Late next day*)

Look at you, Abhi. You think what you put yourself through was painful? Wake up!!!

Do you know how much pain and suffering I went through those days? You have no idea...

And then you think an apology mail would set things just right and give you relief and closure?

Ha...

What about me, Abhi?

What about everything I had to go through because you walked away on a whim?

What about all the humiliation and the uncertainty of those days and all these years?

You thought by writing to me, everything will go away?

You hurt me in ways I can't even describe, and you have the nerve to write to me like 'normalcy' will be restored.

In your dreams, Abhi. In your dreams.

There are some wounds which apologies can't heal, Abhishek. You've given me one of those.

##

From: Abhishek (*Early next morning*)

I told you already, Jo, I am really sorry about what I put you through.

Believe me, all these years, I have been through emotional hell living through the regret of what I did and what I put you through then....

I thought I will continue to live with the regret of walking away from you, for all the hurt I have caused, when one day Kavitha asked me- '*If you had one wish, what would it be?*'

My first thought was to use the wish on you – to set things right between us, to make the hurt go away.

Please understand, hurting you was never my intent – not then, not now...

Not ever.

##

From: Jyotsna (*The next evening*)

I had learnt to be strong.

Alone.

I was in a place where nobody could hurt me anymore.

Then you come back.

And you are the one talking about emotional hell.

~~Learning how to leave people alone and go on with your life is indeed a skill. Few people have mastered it.~~

~~Obviously, you aren't one of them.~~

##

*Kavitha-Abhishek

From: Kavitha

August 2012

Abhi!!! I came across this psychology study which explored whether two strangers can fall in love by having them ask each other a series of 36 personal questions.

INTERESTING, don't you think? This is the link.

~~I am thinking of trying this '36 questions' game with you.~~

##

From: Abhishek (29 minutes later)

Hmm... You found this interesting? The world seems to have lots of time and resources to do such studies – especially when the economy is in doldrums and hundreds and thousands are in misery.

##

From: Kavitha (42 minutes later)

When did you become such a SKEPTIC? With such negativity within you, I don't know how you will survive in this world and how I will live with you.

##

From: Abhishek (An hour and 14 minutes later)

Nothing like that – in my world, such studies are such a serious waste of time...

##

From: Kavitha (31 minutes later)

I know you are so much better than this, Abhi...

I want to try this '36 questions' game with you through these emails. I will ask you these questions once in a while – not TORTURE you every single day. ~~I will try to make it as fun as possible. Please don't say no.~~ It will hardly take you a few minutes to answer – please, please, please.

##

From: Abhishek (*An hour and 19 minutes later*)

Hmm...

Now you are putting me in a spot. I am telling you that this study sounds so unrealistic and phony and you want to try it on me?

Also, the questions are to be asked to strangers – not to your spouse who you've been married to for so long...

##

From: Kavitha (*49 minutes later*)

Look, Abhi, the way our relationship as a married couple is going, we are becoming STRANGERS day by day. Don't you think so?

Also, I will ask different ones if the questions in the list don't apply to us.

Why can't you just humor me on this? Is it such a big deal?

##

From: Abhishek (*Two hours and 14 minutes later*)

~~Look Kavi, I really don't want to play such games.... Real life is nothing like the movies – at least, not as dramatic as you want it to be. It's time you snapped out of it and stop searching for drama in everything.~~

Alright, Kavi...

If you want to try it out so badly, let's do this.

##

From: Kavitha (*The next morning*)

Okay, Abhi. Thank you :-)

Here's my first question - what would be a PERFECT day for you?

##

From: Abhishek (*An hour later*)

Hmm... ~~Sleep and binge watch TV all day long...~~ A perfect day for me would be one when I don't have any deliverables due at work, when I get to paint something inspiring, get to play a few good games of TT and spend time with Ritu and you doing all our favorite things ;-)

##

From: Kavitha (*12 minutes later*)

Doing all our FAVORITE things. Eh :-)

##

From: Abhishek (*10 minutes later*)

:-) What about you?

##

From: Kavitha (*That afternoon*)

An early morning stroll on a sunny beach, a NOURISHING breakfast, reading something ENLIGHTENING, watching an EMOTIONAL movie, teaching something valuable to Ritu and doing all our FAVORITE things ;-)

##

From: Abhishek (*45 minutes later*)

Early morning stroll on the beach, eh? But we don't have a beach here in Bangalore... But Bangalore has plenty of lakes – an early morning stroll by a lakeside would work for you?

##

From: Kavitha (*That evening*)

Yes, that's unfortunate that Bangalore has no beaches. But yes, a LAKE-SIDE STROLL would work as well. ~~Why? Are you planning to take me somewhere?~~

##

From: Abhishek (*The next morning*)

Hmm... I was thinking ... we can always try to have your perfect day at least once a month, can't we? Not doing anything else – no grocery shopping, no laundry, no cleaning and chores, nothing else except what you want to do for your perfect day.

##

From: Kavitha (*Two hours later*)

Do you REALLY want to do this? ~~I can't believe it!!~~

##

From: Abhishek (*An hour later*)

Yes, let's do it. ~~I don't see why not – it's not a big deal after all.~~ Let's try to make one Sunday a month the perfect day for you from now on...

##

From: Kavitha (*11 minutes later*)

Awesome. And let's try to make one Sunday in a month YOUR perfect day as well.

##

From: Abhishek (*39 minutes later*)

So, one Sunday in a month for me and one Sunday in a month for you.

Done... Let's make this happen.

##

From: Kavitha (*That night*)

Awesome!!! Am so looking forward to this. THANK YOU, sweetheart.

##

Jyotsna-Abhishek

From: Abhishek

August 2012

I am sorry again, Jo. I regret how I behaved.... I regret all the hurt I caused you. I look back at what we had and regret every single day I ended it.

I have wished on multiple instances to go back to a time before it was too late.

But, I hope, I can take at least some of the hurt away by writing to you...

There was a time when we could talk about anything under the sun. I miss those days...

When you are young, you believe there'll be many people you'll deeply connect with. Later in life, you realize it only happens a few times. I had one such connection – with you.

I still can't seem to connect with anyone the way I did with you.

##

From: Jyotsna (*Eight days later*)

Why? Not even with Kavitha?

##

*Kavitha-Abhishek

From: Kavitha

August 2012

Tell me this if you were BRAVER, what would you be doing with your life?

##

From: Abhishek (*The next day*)

Why this question? ~~Don't tell me you are still stuck in that 36 questions game....~~

##

From: Kavitha (*An hour and 11 minutes later*)

We are still playing the 36 questions game mister – you seem to have FORGOTTEN. So typical of you, Abhi!!!

##

From: Abhishek (*32minutes later*)

Oh, okay...

Braver personally, or professionally?

##

From: Kavitha (*12 minutes later*)

Either or both. Your CHOICE. ~~Just answer the question!!!~~

##

From: Abhishek (*28 minutes later*)

For most of my life, I have done what I've always wanted to do. ~~My whole personal life revolves around you and our relationship – I don't think I will ever be brave enough to tamper with that.~~ If I was braver, personally I would not change anything...

Professionally, I would perhaps invest more time painting. I would not give up my job just yet to take up painting full time, would continue with it until I make sure where the next paycheck is going to come from.

What about you?

##

From: Kavitha *(43 minutes later)*

It's easier for men that you don't want to change anything – you guys get to do what you always want to. Women aren't as PRIVILEGED.

I am clear about what I am going to do professionally, I would dump a flowerpot on my boss's head and quit that very moment to pursue a completely different career – like writing scripts for movies or exploring a career in interior design.

##

From: Abhishek *(42 minutes later)*

Scripts for movies!! You definitely have a talent for that – I can vouch for it. I am at the receiving end of all your filmy dialogues.

##

From: Kavitha *(22 minutes later)*

Yes, fortunately or unfortunately, you have been at the receiving end of these dialogues multiple times. Don't think it's going to stop anytime soon.

Anyway, please continue...

##

From: Abhishek *(An hour later)*

Hmm...

I avoid confrontations. I let my co-workers steamroll me into decisions which I regret later. I would not let them do that to me anymore.

##

From: Kavitha (22 minutes later)

I have never been drunk – I would like to get COMPLETELY drunk. I will then behave like all the drunks I've been seeing in movies and deliver all the famous dialogues from film exactly how a drunk delivers it while holding on to a cigarette– that would be awesome!!!

##

From: Abhishek (49 minutes later)

I can totally imagine you doing it – not that you are any less dramatic even without getting drunk.

And no cigarettes please. You had such a hard time getting rid of the habit in the first place. I don't even want a mention of that unhealthy habit even as a joke.

##

From: Kavitha (11 minutes later)

Okay... No cigarettes – won't even mention them henceforth.

Your turn. Please continue...

##

From: Abhishek (32 minutes later)

Okay...

I would dress more casually. Tired of these formal shirts and pants. Would wear a t-shirt and cargo pants every day to work – I am so much more comfortable in them...

##

From: Kavitha (19 minutes later)

I would not hold back in the company of strangers – including men. I would care a damn what they think about me.

And I would dress LESS CONSERVATIVELY – get rid of my boring salwar-kameez and get into more comfortable jeans & kurtas. ~~Maybe even try miniskirts and tank tops like Julia Roberts in Pretty Woman!!!~~

##

From: Abhishek (37 minutes later)

I've always had this activist within me. I feel terrible about how Bangalore is losing its beauty and is well on its way to becoming a concrete jungle. I would someday like to do something to stop this deterioration of Bangalore...

##

From: Kavitha (43 minutes later)

You know what, we are never given a dream without also being given the POWER to make it true.

Thinking about it, there is nothing that is stopping us from becoming a little braver than we already are... Let's see what we can do from the list of what we have been wanting to do.

This isn't OVER yet.

##

From: Abhishek (55 minutes later)

I agree, Kavi. Have to do something about it. And soon...

##

Jyotsna-Abhishek

From: Abhishek

August 2012

Somehow, I don't seem to be able to open up to Kavi as ~~I could with you~~ – though she is my wife....

We are trying, but I think we still have a long way to go to get to that degree of trust and comfort with each other.

##

From: Jyotsna (*The next day*)

But why?

##

From: Abhishek (*12 minutes later*)

I probably never forgave myself for walking away from you and I let the guilt spill over in my relationships – especially with Kavi...

Kavi is from a very traditional and conservative family. Their value system is completely different. Till date, I've never seen any woman in their family wearing anything other than sarees or salwar-kameez. And Kavi has to wear a dupatta over her head whenever she enters her parent's place.

Also, there has been a lot of stress after marriage regarding her parents' health issues. This stress has affected the two of us as well. This stress increased quite a bit since we had Ritu.

In all this, Kavi and I did not pay attention to each other – there was always something else or someone else that required our attention. All this took its toll on our relationship and we never made that right connect and resentments have built up....

I feel Kavi takes offence too easily and has a very different sense of humor.

##

From: Jyotsna (*49 minutes later*)

Ha!

You should talk it over with her ~~not with me~~.

##

From: Abhishek (29 minutes later)

Don't you think I've not tried? I feel we think at completely different wavelengths altogether.

Sometimes when she says something, she says she meant something else and I am expected to know what she 'actually' meant without her saying it.

It's been chaotic...

Love is so easy when it's with the right person.

##

From: Jyotsna (That evening)

Life would be difficult if this is the case with you then.

##

From: Abhishek (19 minutes later)

Yes, I agree...

Hopefully, someday, Kavi and I will somehow know and trust each other well enough and find a common wavelength at least to converse in and live peacefully. We have been trying.

##

From: Jyotsna (The next morning)

Someday is a dangerous word. It's really a code for 'never'.

It would be so much better for you two to find a common wavelength. Else, you will always be unhappy if just one of you is putting in all the effort.

##

From: Abhishek *(22 minutes later)*

Hmm... You are right.

##

From: Jyotsna *(That evening)*

You need to work out a way. There is no option.

She is your future.

Your future needs you to work this out.

Your past doesn't.

They say, a man without a vision for his future, always returns to his past.

Don't be that kind of a person.

##

Kavitha-Jyotsna

From: Kavitha

August 2012

Hi Jyotsna,

You perhaps do not know me. You seem to know my husband, Abhishek, well though.

Abhishek – like all careless men – left his laptop without signing off from his mail a couple of days back. I was checking some other stuff, when your mail popped up.

It was too tempting for me to resist not reading it – and the entire mail chain after. ~~I felt guilty about what I did for a couple of days.~~

I then decided perhaps we could be friends and through you, I could learn more about and understand Abhi, who is a mystery to me even after all these years of marriage.

Just so you know – Abhi has not mentioned about you to me. Ever.

And please don't let Abhi know I sent you this note.

##

*Kavitha-Abhishek

From: Kavitha

August 2012

Okay Abhi, tell me this – you must have liked someone before you met me - maybe while you were still a student? I am sure you MUST HAVE. ~~In fact, I know that you have.~~ I have asked you multiple times before, but you have always put me off and have never told me anything.

If I had known you before I got your alliance – before your family reached out with the proposal – I would have probably fallen for you anyhow.

This time I am not letting you go without a proper answer. Tell me, na!!!

##

From: Abhishek (*An hour later*)

Hold on.... Where is this coming from? I don't see such a question as a part of the set of 36 questions.

##

From: Kavitha (*46 minutes later*)

I did say I will ask you different questions from that set of 36 questions. I thought this would be a good question to ask. Please answer.

##

From: Abhishek (*An hour and 30 minutes later*)

Not fair.

Also, why do you want to know about my past love life now – after seven years of marriage? And that too in an email...

You want proof of what I am going to say, is it?

##

From: Kavitha *(Two hours and 34 minutes later)*

You have been keeping me in the dark about your past and I am still curious. With today's lifestyle, there are so many options to meet and fall in love. Options were so much lesser during our parents' generation.

Also, what will I do with proof of your past love life?

And you promised, you will HUMOUR me. Come on!

##

From: Abhishek *(53 minutes later)*

I have no idea what you could do with proof of my love life. But what will it change in our lives if you get to know? It will create needless misunderstandings... ~~I am sure you will use my past against me and there will be arguments which will be more hurtful than before.~~

##

From: Kavitha *(23 minutes later)*

There won't be any misunderstandings, Abhi. I am the person who has married you and not some lover from the past. No matter what had happened, that is the bottom line, right?

By the way, I have no problems telling you about my past if you want to listen. Not that it is all that exciting.

##

From: Abhishek *(12 minutes later)*

Okay, you go first then...

##

From: Kavitha *(19 minutes later)*

PROMISE me, you will tell me about your past after I tell you about mine.

##

From: Abhishek (44 minutes later)

Okay, I will try. Now go on...

##

From: Kavitha (The next morning)

There was this crush I had when I was in ~~seventh~~ eighth grade. He was my neighbor – he hardly used to speak to me or even acknowledge me, but I liked him a lot.

It used to hurt so bad – I remember CRYING myself to sleep because of him and wake up with puffed up eyes the next day.

##

From: Abhishek (32 minutes later)

Why did you have to cry for him when he did not even acknowledge your existence? I don't understand...

##

From: Kavitha (An hour and 11 minutes later)

Because he always treated me like a KID – he never spoke to me like someone talks to an adult.

I also knew he would go on his own way sooner or later and nothing could happen between us. That thought was very hurting.

##

From: Abhishek (21 minutes later)

Hmm... I could never fathom this perspective about girls. Never knew you girls could have such deep feelings at such a young age itself.

##

From: Kavitha (47 minutes later)

We girls are all like that. Since you don't have any siblings – especially sisters – you would not know. We MATURE much earlier you guys. It is good in a way but has its own set of unintended consequences.

##

From: Abhishek (28 minutes later)

Unintended consequences – like having crushes...?

##

From: Kavitha (31 minutes later)

Ha!!! Behaving like adults much sooner than you guys.

##

From: Abhishek (42 minutes later)

Was it the same with your sister as well?

##

From: Kavitha (An hour and 17 minutes later)

Yes, of course. She had her set of crushes, but we had to keep them a SECRET. There was no way anyone in our family could know – we could end up in big trouble even if someone would have got the slightest hint.

##

From: Abhishek (27 minutes later)

Hmm... Okay.

So, was there anyone else?

##

From: Kavitha (*Late evening*)

~~Yes, but it's your turn now.~~

Yes, there was this guy who I liked, and he liked me as well.

This was when I was in my first year of college. He was a college student as well – a couple of years senior, but from a different college – and used to live across the street. We used to often run into each other at the bus stop, the grocery store and other places around our house then.

One day, he asked me – with utmost decency – if we could have a future together. I told him there was no way we could.

After this, within a few months, he finished college, took up a job and shifted to a different part of the city. We have NEVER seen each other again.

##

From: Abhishek (*The next day*)

Why did you think you both would not work out...?

##

From: Kavitha (*47 minutes later*)

He is a Christian. I thought about my parents at that time. I owed it to them that I would not give them such a heart ache for all the trouble and sacrifice they put in to bring me up.

##

From: Abhishek (*41 minutes later*)

Are you in touch with him...?

##

From: Kavitha (*12 minutes later*)

Yes, we are in touch through Facebook. ~~His name is Nathan and is doing his PhD in Singapore. You can check him out in my friend's list on FB.~~

##

From: Abhishek (*An hour and 11 minutes later*)

Do you still think about him...?

##

From: Kavitha (*Three hours later*)

I think about him sometimes. I imagine how life could have been different if I had said yes to him then.
But I have no regrets that I made the choice to not be with him.

I found you, didn't I? My soulmate.

##

From: Abhishek (*39 minutes later*)

Ah.... :-)

Jyotsna-Abhishek

From: Jyotsna

August 2012

Just curious. Does Kavitha know about me?

##

From: Abhishek *(29 minutes later)*

No. I've not told Kavitha about you...

##

From: Jyotsna *(Two hours later)*

I am surprised. Why have you not told Kavitha about me? ~~Have I been so insignificant?~~

##

From: Abhishek *(That evening)*

It isn't about you...

I am not sure how she will take it. Marriage is very different. At least, my marriage has been very different from the beginning with all the stress about families and the chasm that has been built between Kavi and me. I do not want to bring you up and mess things up even further.

##

From: Jyotsna *(The next morning)*

Why do you think your marriage is different ~~from the hundreds and thousands of marriages around?~~

##

From: Abhishek *(That afternoon)*

Somehow, I have a very different equation with Kavi.

I can't explain it, but I don't feel confident telling her about you ~~even after all these years of marriage...~~

##

From: Jyotsna (*That evening*)

Oh. You should have been fairly confident, especially after all these years of marriage.

Anyway, I would love to meet Kavitha sometime.

##

From: Abhishek (*58 minutes later*)

Why...???

##

From: Jyotsna (*That night*)

Won't I want to meet who you married?

##

From: Abhishek (*The next day*)

~~I wouldn't have been all that enthusiastic to meet the person who you got married to – if you had got married.~~

Okay... Sure, we can plan...

##

From: Jyotsna (*An hour later*)

How is Kavitha's equation with your father? Do they get along fine?

##

From: Abhishek (*43 minutes later*)

Kavitha never got to know my father – he passed away before I married her...

##

From: Jyotsna (*An hour and 29 minutes later*)

I am so sorry to hear that, Abhi. I really am.

It must have been tough for your father to bring you up all by himself after you lost your mother.

I also know how close you were to your father. It must have been really difficult for you.

~~I wish, I would have been there for you when your father passed away.~~

##

From: Abhishek (*That night*)

Yes, it was difficult... It was only then I became truly aware of your absence in my life. I've never felt as lonely ever. And this lasted for months.

I believed, what I went through has been the right punishment for walking away from your life.

##

*Kavitha-Abhishek

From: Kavitha

September 2012

Anyway, ENOUGH about me and my crushes. It's your turn to speak up now. I want to know who my sweetheart lost his heart to... ~~You better be honest.~~

##

From: Abhishek (*Two hours later*)

Okay.... Hmm... what can I say? I could have said something like you did – if there was only one...

##

From: Kavitha (*An hour later*)

What do you mean ONLY ONE? You had multiple love affairs?

##

From: Abhishek (*12 minutes later*)

Come on... you cannot call them affairs.

##

From: Kavitha (*18 minutes later*)

Okay, okay. Tell me about the ones which you have the fondest memories of. ~~Tell me something at least.~~

##

From: Kavitha (*Three hours 48 minutes later*)

I am waiting!!! Why are you taking such a LONG time???

##

From: Abhishek (*23 minutes later*)

They say – the most dangerous heart disease is a strong memory.

I have been thinking which one I should be telling you about. ~~For your information, I have lots of such memories which I want to forget, but you want me to not just recall them but write to you about them. It's going to be hurtful....~~

##

From: Kavitha (*The next day*)

Now you are playing with me, you FRAUD... I thought you would at least tell me something this time. Not fair at all. Grrr!!!

##

From: Abhishek (*46 minutes later*)

Okay, okay. No need to get dramatic. Let me start with the one in primary school first...

6th grade, from what I remember...

Do you remember this game 'FLAMES'?

##

From: Kavitha (*31 minutes later*)

Yes, I remember. The Friendship-Love-Attraction/Affair-Marriage-Enemies-Separation game, right?

##

From: Abhishek (*57 minutes later*)

Correct...

There was this girl who took the FLAMES game real seriously.

For some reason, she got a 'Love' match only with me out of all the guys in our class, wanted me to be as enthusiastic as her about the result and pair up with her...

Not just that, she let the entire class know about the FLAMES calculation result between her and me and warned the other girls to stay away from her 'conquest'.

##

From: Kavitha (21 minutes later)

Wow. I could never think someone could get so serious over that stupid game. ~~You are not kidding with me, right?~~

What did she do then?

##

From: Abhishek (32 minutes later)

It was definitely weird she got so serious about it. But it was the 6th grade...

~~It was kind of fun at first, sharing all these vibes with this girl who you got a love match with...~~

##

From: Kavitha (14 minutes later)

Interesting. I am sure YOU must have ENJOYED all the attention and love from her.

##

From: Abhishek (An hour and 31 minutes later)

Yes, it was fun, and I did enjoy it initially.

Then it got tiring – especially after the teachers sensed something was going on and became strict with us. It took a whole year for her to realize it was just a game and it just couldn't be taken seriously...

Things slowly got back to normal though.

##

From: Kavitha (37 minutes later)

Okay. Primary school crushes. Wow.

I studied in an ONLY girl's school and college throughout – until my MBA. There was never even the slightest opportunity to interact with guys on the campus. Because of this, I was very uncomfortable even having a normal conversation with any guy until a long time.

If any of the girls had 'guy' friends, hung out with them or did manage to get a boyfriend, it was such a BIG DEAL.

##

From: Abhishek (*The next day*)

Should I feel bad for you, that you missed out on all these interactions with guys...?

#

From: Kavitha (*13 minutes later*)

No, you shouldn't. You should be happy, in fact.

##

From: Abhishek (*27 minutes later*)

Hmm... Maybe, if you had guys around while you were growing up, you would have had more experience in dealing with our kind. ~~And perhaps you would have figured out how to deal with me in a better way.~~

#

From: Kavitha (*32 minutes later*)

You had ENOUGH interactions with girls, right? What difference has it made with how you deal with girls or women – especially me?

##

From: Abhishek (*18 minutes later*)

Hmm... You are right. It hasn't made any difference in how I deal with girls or women. I am as clueless now as I was then.

##

From: Kavitha (13 minutes later)

Ha!!!

Now go on. No need to deviate from the topic.

##

From: Abhishek (The next morning)

Continuing with my stories – there was this girl in high school who had a crush on me...

#

From: Kavitha (38 minutes later)

High school too? You can't be SERIOUS!!!

##

From: Abhishek (20 minutes later)

Yeah, in high school – must be in the tenth grade... Why not?

##

From: Kavitha (31 minutes later)

Okay. Please start. How did you know it was a crush?

##

From: Abhishek (39 minutes later)

This girl who used to continuously stare at me during class. It got to such an extent that my classmates noticed it and started to tease me about it...

So, one day, I was so fed up with her and my classmates teasing me, I winked at her...

##

From: Kavitha *(Five minutes later)*

You WINKED at a girl in high school? Wow!!! ~~Are you the same passive person I have known as my husband?~~

##

From: Abhishek *(17 minutes later)*

Listen. ~~It was a desperate situation.~~ What should I have done...? Hide under the table?

##

From: Kavitha *(21 minutes later)*

If you had hid under the table, then it would have been a bigger excuse for your friends to tease you. Anyway, what happened then? Did the girl come and SLAP you?

##

From: Abhishek *(48 minutes later)*

Slap me? Hello... that girl had a crush on me. I don't think she would have even thought about slapping me. She then avoided me completely for a few months after that – did not even look at me.

##

From: Kavitha *(10 minutes later)*

Ha!!! Probably it was a good thing you did then by winking at her. But what if she had got bolder and winked back at you ~~or even gave you a flying kiss?~~

##

From: Abhishek *(22 minutes later)*

I would have done something else to put her off...

##

From: Kavitha (*Three minutes later*)

Like what?

##

From: Abhishek (*16 minutes later*)

Walk up to her and attempt to hold her hand ~~or even blow her a kiss~~, maybe...

##

From: Kavitha (*Seven minutes later*)

Ohoo!!! And you keep saying I am the filmy one. ~~I did not know you had such guts.~~

I had asked you to tell me about your crushes and you are telling me about the girls who had crushes on you.

It's all good though, sweetheart – it is nice listening about all these girls who liked my hubby. Anyway, I am sure you have more stories. So, go on...

##

From: Abhishek (*Eight minutes later*)

Some other day, Kavi. All this is too much for one day, you see... ;-)

##

From: Kavitha (*Two minutes later*)

Okay. Fair enough. But don't think I will let you get away with not telling me all the stories... ~~I know for sure there are more.~~

##

Jyotsna-Abhishek

From: Jyotsna

September 2012

So, what is Kavitha's background and how did the two of you meet?

##

From: Abhishek*(32 minutes later)*

Are you sure you want to know more about Kavi and how we met...?

##

From: Jyotsna *(An hour later)*

Why not? Is there any reason you don't want to tell me how you got married to Kavitha?

##

From: Abhishek *(That evening)*

After you, I did not want to get anywhere close to such relationships ever. I drowned myself in my work.

~~I stopped painting as well...~~

One day, I decided it's time I moved on and got in touch with Kavi's 'alliance' which everyone in my family liked. Kavi has an MBA from Christ University in Bangalore, and she has been working in recruitment.

I met Kavi a couple of times – she seemed to have lots of patience and was able to tolerate me whenever we met or spoke...

And like you, she collects quotes and is a movie buff as well.

And that's how the whole thing fell in place.

##

From: Jyotsna *(The next day)*

She collects quotes and is a movie buff as well? It's your fate, I guess...

But, I was expecting some romance; some escapades and you give me this arranged marriage crap. This isn't what I expected from you.

##

From: Abhishek *(33 minutes later)*

Yeah. Real life isn't as dramatic as the movies.

And you know I wouldn't lie to you.

##

From: Jyotsna *(An hour and 42 minutes later)*

I know you aren't the kind who would lie, but this is not what I expected.

Did you know - the worst kind of lies though are not those we tell others, but those we tell ourselves. These are the kind of lies for which we are truly punished.

##

From: Abhishek *(33 minutes later)*

I did not understand...This is one of those quotes from movies? What lies do we tell ourselves?

##

From: Jyotsna *(The next day)*

No, the quote is not from a movie.

The human mind is an incredible storyteller. Sometimes the stories which we tell – especially those which we tell ourselves – make us believe in them so much that those stories become our reality.

When you walked away from my life, I used to tell myself you will be back, and we will be happy together again. It used to be the biggest lie I used to tell myself – the one which punished me most.

##

*Kavitha-Abhishek

From: Kavitha

September 2012

Look what I found when I was searching for something in my emails – the first set of mails we exchanged.

From: Abhishek

09 Nov, 2004

Hi Kavitha,

Thank you for sharing your email ID. It is nice to get in touch with you like this before we go ahead with our alliance.

You probably know already but let me tell you a bit about my background. I have an MFA degree – which is Master's in Fine Arts – from Chitrakala Parishath in Bangalore. I love to paint and pursued my interest to get this degree. I work as a Graphic Designer in an ad Agency named M&O. You might have heard about it – been here for close to a year now. Was with a small firm 'JiveBox Private Limited' for a little more than three years before that.

Other than that, people who have met you my – grandparents/aunts – seem to think 'we' would be a good match. My Mother passed away when I was in the 5th grade and my Father passed away about three years ago – I just thought you should know about this. My grandparents and aunts are the only family I have.

Before committing to anything, it would be a good idea to be honest about what our expectations are and understand each other better. If our frequencies/ expectations match, then everything else can perhaps be worked out. Rest would be up to our families and the One up there.

Let me know what you think.

##

From: Kavitha (*Late evening*)

Hello Abhishek,

It is good to know that everybody at your place liked the idea of us being together. My parents are also looking forward to this alliance working out.

I completely agree with you about us getting to know each other before matters proceed, and the rest will follow. With God's grace, everything will be fine.

I am sorry about your parents. I was told that your parents had passed away when your alliance came to me.

You can also reach me on my cell 99XXXXXXX2 just in case – my parents are totally fine with me sharing my number with you.

##

From: Abhishek (*The next day*)

Nice to hear back from you. Am in Pune for work.

Thank you for giving me your cell number. I shall try calling you up sometime and we can discuss further.

Especially in India, it is very important to get the family's involvement and approval in such matters.

By the way, I know you have an MBA, but I don't even know what you are doing and where you are working.

##

From: Kavitha (*That evening*)

Yes, I am an MBA from Christ College. I am at IBM as a Recruitment Consultant.

Apart from work, I love watching movies. I am looking forward to Shah Rukh's *Veer-Zaara* which is releasing this Friday. I also read a lot of books. You can call me a voracious reader. This month, I finished two books – one is 'Kite Runner' by

Khaled Hosseini and the other is 'Five Point Someone' by Chetan Bhagat. Both are highly recommended. I want to read 'The Book Thief' by Markus Zusak next.

I also watch TV. The moment I come home from work I watch an English movie for a bit while having my evening tea. I love the romantic ones.

My favorite pastime is to collect all these soul stirring quotes from movies I've seen and books I've read, and to download and listen to my favorite songs.

How about you? What are your hobbies? What do u do in your free time? Lots of questions. Let me stop here.

##

From: Abhishek (*The next day*)

Other than work, I play Table Tennis for a couple of hours every day and paint when I get a chance (not as often these days). I am a movie freak as well – I don't like the mushy and dramatic Hollywood types though.

Have kept away from books mostly.

Will call you soon...

##

From: Abhishek (*56 minutes later*)

Very nice memories, Kavi. Felt really nice going through these old mails. ~~I remember I had just come back from a work assignment in Pune around then.~~

##

From: Kavitha (*48 minutes later*)

I agree, sweetheart. Love is so easy when it's with the RIGHT PERSON.

##

Kavitha-Jyotsna

From: Jyotsna

September 2012

Hi Kavitha...

I don't know what to say. ~~I don't understand what you want from me and why you wrote to me in the first place.~~

##

From: Kavitha *(That evening)*

Hi Jyotsna,

It's fine. I do not mind what is going on between the two of you.

##

From: Jyotsna *(The next day)*

Hmm... You obviously do, else you wouldn't have written to me.

~~I don't mean any trouble.~~

And there is nothing going on between us...

##

From: Kavitha *(An hour later)*

I know, Jyotsna. I know Abhishek isn't the type.

##

From: Jyotsna *(That evening)*

I am not the 'type' either, Kavitha... Did something in the conversations make you think I am?

##

From: Kavitha (*The next morning*)

No, no... Nothing like that.

I have a request – please don't tell Abhishek I wrote to you.

##

From: Jyotsna (*Two hours later*)

I do not understand. Why should Abhishek not know we are in touch? What purpose would it serve?

##

From: Kavitha (*That evening*)

He has very few friends and I am happy he has got back in touch with an old friend. I don't want to ruin it.

##

From: Jyotsna (*The next morning*)

But by writing to me, you ruined it already. ~~—don't you think?~~

##

From: Kavitha (*That evening*)

Please don't take it that way, Jyotsna. And please do continue writing to Abhi. I am requesting that you do.

Please?

##

From: Jyotsna (*The next morning*)

Okay, I will continue to write to Abhi, and I won't tell him you wrote to me and that we are in touch.

And I hope you don't misunderstand what is between Abhi and me. At one point of time, we were more than good friends. Things did not work out between us and we have all moved on.

Abhi is married to you now and I don't want to ruin it.

##

From: Kavitha (*An hour later*)

It's sorted then. I don't want to ruin his friendship with you.

##

From: Jyotsna (*Late afternoon*)

And I hope you don't misinterpret any of the mails I exchange with Abhi.

##

From: Kavitha (*That evening*)

Understood! I will not go snooping around his mails.

##

From: Jyotsna (*The next morning*)

Okay. It seems like a reasonable way forward then.

##

From: Kavitha (*An hour later*)

Agree.

##

Jyotsna-Abhishek

From: Abhishek

September 2012

I've been wanting to ask you – why aren't you on Facebook or LinkedIn? You were on Orkut back in college and then you disappeared. What happened...? ~~Is it because of me?~~

##

From: Jyotsna (*Next morning*)

I thought you had figured it out already!!

##

From: Abhishek (*53 minutes later*)

You don't wanna tell...?

##

From: Jyotsna (*52 minutes later*)

You want me to tell the obvious?

There was this guy who I needed to get away from.

##

From: Abhishek (*19 minutes later*)

Did you manage to...?

##

From: Jyotsna (*That night*)

Yeah, kind of. Until he wrote to me recently with this apology...

##

From: Abhishek (*The next day*)

Ah...

Don't you want to get on Facebook or LinkedIn or any other social media platform – at least for your work-related stuff?

##

From: Jyotsna (*That evening*)

Not really. Got used to life without it.

##

From: Abhishek (*46 minutes later*)

Okay.

Tell me this – what's a perfect day for you...?

##

From: Jyotsna (*51 minutes later*)

Hmm...

Curling up with a book and a hot cup of coffee.

##

From: Abhishek (*11 minutes later*)

You still read...?

##

From: Jyotsna (*The next day*)

Yes, quite a bit in fact. The habit has stuck – in fact, I read more these days than I've ever read before.

##

From: Abhishek (13 minutes later)

You used to read so many books those days. I remember once in the 9th grade, your marks took a real beating – you barely managed to pass...

##

From: Jyotsna (48 minutes later)

Yeah. There was a phase where I prioritized novels over academics.

##

From: Abhishek (22 minutes later)

What do you read? Sidney Sheldon? Jeffrey Archer? John Grisham...? ~~Mills & Boon?~~

##

From: Jyotsna (That evening)

Ha!! No, I moved on from them after college.

These days it is Contemporary Philosophy. Kolkata is a haven for bibliophiles – I get to read all the books I want without spending a fortune.

##

From: Abhishek (18 minutes later)

I don't understand all these philosophy books. I sometimes wonder - what is the use of reading those kinds of books? Sidneys and Jeffreys and Grishams are good entertainment. The kind which you are reading, I don't know what people get out of them.

##

From: Jyotsna (That night)

Do you think you have eaten quite a bit of food since you were born?

##

From: Abhishek *(14 minutes later)*

Yes, undoubtedly. Why do you ask?

##

From: Jyotsna *(The next morning)*

What has happened to all the food you've eaten? Most of it has been long digested and gone, right?

##

From: Abhishek *(16 minutes later)*

Yes, but the food has provided me nutrition, built up my body and made me an adult capable of holding my own today...

##

From: Jyotsna *(That night)*

Think of reading these kinds of books as the same thing for the mind.

If we would have read well, we would know we are on a rock traveling around 1 of 100 billion stars. Our species is just one over half a billion species which have ever existed. Our chances of being born are about 1 in 400 trillion.

With reading, we would have realized none of us are special, we are all plain lucky to be even alive. Other than humans, perhaps no other species would even be able to fathom what it means to be lucky or alive.

By the way, do you know who the most dangerous person is?

##

From: Abhishek *(14 minutes later)*

Is it in the context of reading books...?

##

From: Jyotsna (*The next morning*)

Yes!!

##

From: Abhishek (*19 minutes later*)

Is it the person who doesn't read books and is ignorant?

##

From: Jyotsna (*21 minutes later*)

Nope, it's the person who has read only one book.

##

From: Abhishek (*22 minutes later*)

Hmm... Got it. Agree 100%.

##

From: Jyotsna (*That evening*)

When one person suffers from a delusion, it is called insanity and that person is ostracized and locked up. When a group of people suffer from a similar delusion caused by reading this one book, it is called a cult or a more popular term – religion.

##

*Kavitha-Abhishek

From: Kavitha

September 2012

Why do you love painting so much? What MOTIVATES you to paint?

##

From: Abhishek (21 minutes later)

Ah... Back to the 36 questions?

You want the simple answer or the complicated explanation to your question...?

##

From: Kavitha (An hour and 39 minutes later)

Let's start with the simple answer first.

##

From: Abhishek (43 minutes later)

Okay... In simple terms, I paint because I don't do anything as well as painting.

##

From: Kavitha (18 minutes later)

That says a LOT, actually.

##

From: Abhishek (46 minutes later)

You don't need any complicated explanations...?

##

From: Kavitha (13 minutes later)

I am curious about your complicated explanation. Go on.

##

From: Abhishek (*The next day*)

Okay, here goes.... No matter how my day has been, when I start to paint, my mood immediately lifts. I am not at all angry or frustrated with whatever is going on – I feel true bliss when I paint. I lose myself to the extent that I don't even care about what is going on around me. I lose the sense of time & place and what I am doing with my brush becomes paramount. ~~Can you understand that kind of feeling?~~ Have you ever felt something like it in your life?

##

From: Kavitha (*39 minutes later*)

It's DEEP, Abhi. I have felt it sometimes when I sing, or when I used to dance. It must be intoxicating to feel that way, right? I can totally understand.

##

From: Abhishek (*An hour and 21 minutes later*)

Listen Kavi, if you have felt that way about dancing, why don't you start it off again? I did not realize you love dancing so much until today. ~~Dancing is not bad at all – it is not as if you are planning to get into the entertainment business with it.~~ Dancing is an awesome exercise as well. I want you to seriously think about it...

##

From: Kavitha (*Eight minutes later*)

Leave it, Abhi. I don't have the MOTIVATION to start dancing again.

But tell me this – what do you think of our TV? Don't you think it's time for us to buy a new one?

##

From: Abhishek (*Six minutes later*)

Why? What's wrong with the TV we have now? It is perfectly fine for our needs – I don't think we need to go for a new TV...

##

From: Kavitha (*An hour later*)

We are back to square one - you don't even CONSIDER any of my suggestions. ~~You make me feel like I am worth nothing in this house.~~ How will you feel if I disregard your suggestions like you put down mine?

##

From: Abhishek (*13 minutes later*)

Aah... Come on. I just wanted to know if something was wrong with the TV we have now – is it such a blunder to ask?

I still don't see anything wrong with the TV we have and don't think we need a new one.

##

From: Kavitha (*An hour later*)

No, there is nothing wrong with the TV we have. But EVERYBODY is going for big screen LCD/ LED TVs. Can't we buy one for our house as well? ~~We had bought the one we have now more than five years back.~~ Imagine how nice it will be watching TV on an LCD with a big screen.

##

From: Abhishek (*The next day*)

First of all, we had decided to discourage Ritu from watching TV. ~~I wanted to avoid TV as much as possible as well and focus on painting – the new TV will be a distraction.~~ And now you are saying we will buy a new TV?

The person who is going to benefit most out of us buying a new TV is our babysitter. She is hooked to all these *saas-bahu* serials on TV – I am sure she has the TV switched on the whole day. Forget about the babysitter – I think the TV we have now will serve our purpose. If it is discouraging us from spending time in front of it, then even better. New TV is a complete waste of money.

##

From: Kavitha (*A couple of hours later*)

Ok... We need not buy now. We can research on which is best, save up and buy whenever there are sales. Let us plan on GIFTING ourselves with a TV on our anniversary – ~~and though I do not make as much money as you,~~ I will share the costs. What do you think?

##

From: Abhishek (*31 minutes later*)

If we can spare so much money, we might as well buy an iPad.

##

From: Kavitha (*An hour later*)

Not a bad idea at all. I am sure an iPad will be very useful for Ritu as well.

##

From: Abhishek (*19 minutes later*)

~~You don't want the TV then?~~ You want to go for the iPad...?

##

From: Kavitha (*46 minutes later*)

I think an iPad is a GREAT idea. Let's go for it. Ritu will at least leave our phones alone. We cannot even feed her these days without one of our phones in her hand.

I am so excited. Let us buy it from the Apple store this weekend itself.

##

From: Abhishek (*26 minutes later*)

~~Cool down madam.~~ Let us be sure and think about it for a couple of weeks. Then we can buy.

##

From: Kavitha (21 minutes later)

Okay. I will try to find out more. But I am so excited about buying an iPad for ourselves. But on second thoughts, why buy this COSTLY iPad when there are lots of other brand tablets available?

##

From: Abhishek (An hour later)

I can't comment about you, but my whole life I have been living like a second-class citizen – always making compromises, buying something because it is cheaper – not necessarily because it is the best.... Living in this rented 2BHK – not having our own place because we can't yet afford to buy the kind of apartment in the locality we want...

At least, once in my life I do not want to make a compromise on buying something because of the price.

##

From: Kavitha (48 minutes later)

You forget you chose me sweetheart – without making any kind of COMPROMISES.

##

From: Abhishek (14 minutes later)

Ah... how can I forget? Never...

##

Jyotsna-Abhishek

From: Abhishek

September 2012

You said you are an Art Curator.... It's great you are still connected with art and have made it a profession.

By the way, what do you do as an Art Curator?

##

From: Jyotsna (*Next morning*)

I take up contracts with different art museums, exhibitions and even individuals to document and authenticate their art collection. I even apprise them of the value of their collection.

But my main work is planning and executing various art exhibitions by museums, a group of artists or even individuals.

##

From: Abhishek (*12 minutes later*)

Do you make enough?

##

From: Jyotsna (*That evening*)

The thing about money is, it gives you choices. People don't want to be rich. They want to be able to choose. The richer you are, the more choices you have. That is the freedom of money.

I make enough for the kind of choices I want to have...

##

From: Abhishek (*19 minutes later*)

It's an interesting perspective you have on money.

Do you like what you do, though? Also, if you were braver, would you be doing what you are doing today?

##

From: Jyotsna (*That evening*)

I like what I do.

If I was braver, I would have travelled more than I do right now.

What about you? Do you like what you do? And what would you do if you were braver?

##

From: Abhishek (*An hour and 34 minutes later*)

I kind of like what I do. I like to believe what I do keeps my creative juices flowing. And of course, the work I do gives me a salary using which I am able to take care of my family and keep them happy.

If I would have been braver a few years ago, we wouldn't have been writing to each other.

These days, if I would be braver, I would have spent more time painting for sure.

##

From: Jyotsna (*41 minutes later*)

Hmm... At least you the courage to write to me and apologise.

I know, you would rather be painting than doing graphics. That is the thing about salary – it is a bribe you get to give up on your dreams.

##

From: Abhishek (*21 minutes later*)

Hmm... Agree. But I haven't given up on my dreams yet. I still want to get back to painting someday.

Tell me this, other than the salary you get and the fact that you are still connected with the arts, what else is special – what do you like about being an art curator? What is exciting about that job?

##

From: Jyotsna (*11 minutes later*)

What I do as an Art Curator keeps me busy.

##

From: Abhishek (*The next morning*)

Busy? I've never thought about my work that way – if it is keeping me busy or not.

I've always seen my work as something that is either interesting or boring. Eventually, it matters to me that my work gets me a paycheck...

What do you mean when you say busy?

How busy does your job keep you?

##

From: Jyotsna (*23 minutes later*)

Busy enough to keep my mind off of you and your kind.

##

From: Abhishek (*An hour later*)

Ah... Come on!!! This was uncalled for...

##

From: Jyotsna (*That afternoon*)

Going away from my life on a whim wasn't either.

They say no one can hate you with more intensity than someone who used to love you. I hope you realize, even after all your apologies, there is still an ample amount of hate in my heart – which won't go away soon.

##

From: Abhishek (*2 hours later*)

You are right. Even today, whenever I think about that day and all the subsequent hurt, I feel like ramming my fist into the nearest wall.

Falling in love with someone when it is not forced is the most beautiful kind of love. Just a connection created on its own – I had it with you...

You were probably the last person I ever wanted to hurt but somehow, I ended up hurting you the most.

~~Just being around you, was the best thing that ever happened to me.~~

##

From: Jyotsna (*That night*)

So, why did you have to end it?

I initially thought it was a joke – a really really really bad one at that – and you had gone crazy.

Then I thought you would come around and set things right...

It turned into all these years.

I've been left wondering what really happened.

If you want to leave someone at least tell them why, because what's more painful than being abandoned is knowing you aren't worth an explanation.

##

From: Abhishek (*The next morning*)

Yes, I had gone crazy.

It was tough after we finished college. For a long time, I was without an income of any kind and it messed up my head. There were constant taunts coming from within my family about not being employed. I had become very insecure and had hit rock bottom.

I started to think you were too good for me, way out of my league. I believed you deserved someone better – at least someone who is employed and doesn't have to worry about where his next pay is coming from to be able to take good care of you....

I wanted you to be happy for the rest of your life. At that moment, I believed I wasn't that person who would be able to give you that kind of happiness.

I would have felt even worse if we had remained together, and then somewhere down the line I realized I wasn't good enough for you and we were not meant to be.

It killed me to walk away....

##

From: Jyotsna (9 hours 19 minutes later)

Because I was too good for you? Seriously???

~~I have an aunt who used to say — the only man who deserves you, is the one who thinks he doesn't.~~

You thought I deserved better and walked away without even willing, without even trying to be better for me.

You thought that the decision if we were meant to be together was entirely yours? Who gave you the right to decide for me on my happiness, Abhi?

I had made a decision. I believed my decision was in line with yours.

And then you changed the decision on your own without involving me in it – when it was not only your decision to make at all.

That is not how it works.

Dammit!!!

##

From: Abhishek (32 minutes later)

I am so sorry, Jo. I thought that was the best for us...

I agree, I made a mistake. ~~But life doesn't come with a manual full of instructions on living, right?~~

Perhaps in my next lifetime I will get this whole thing right.

##

From: Jyotsna (Late that night)

You are saying you loved me so much, you left me.

~~I'd rather have been sad with you than happy with someone else.~~

You thought you took the easy way out, and then realized that it hasn't been easy on your conscience.

Now you are back seeking 'closure'.

And you thought you would get it on a platter from me.

Not so easy, Abhi.

##

*Kavitha-Abhishek

From: Kavitha

October 2012

Hello Mister. You PROMISED me you will tell me about your past crushes. You have been putting it off for some time now.

##

From: Abhishek (*Two hours 27 minutes later*)

Ah that....

Why are you so interested in knowing about them and ruining your happiness now? Why can't we let bygones be bygones?

##

From: Kavitha (*37 minutes later*)

Look, Abhi. There is nothing wrong evoking memories from your past. What is life without all the experiences you've had which will enable you to look back and smile at?

I won't let you go so easily. You have to tell me everything. How many did you propose to or seems like in your case – how many proposed to you? How many Valentine's cards did you give, or did you get?

I will kill you otherwise.

##

From: Abhishek (*Three hours later*)

If you want to know about my past so badly – here you go... ~~You are asking for it. God help us – rather God help me.~~

Moving on to college. In the first year on the rose day, this girl walked up to me and gave me a red rose.

##

From: Kavitha (*29 minutes later*)

Don't tell me girls developed all these FEELINGS for you as soon as you stepped into college.

##

From: Abhishek *(57 minutes later)*

I am not saying they had crushes. Perhaps it was a prank. I could not figure it out. But there I was – holding a rose given by a girl on the first rose day at college...

##

From: Kavitha *(The next day)*

What happened between the two of you then? Did you accept her proposal?

##

From: Abhishek *(49 minutes later)*

No, it wasn't any proposal – it was perhaps done as a prank. She was a nice person, though and we hung out. But word got around about this incident and we started to be seen as a couple.

We did not hang out all that much in the college for fear of the lecturers. Even I wanted it to remain a secret...

##

From: Kavitha *(20 minutes later)*

Then?

##

From: Abhishek *(An hour later)*

Then we finished college and she moved to a different city...

##

From: Kavitha *(32 minutes later)*

Okay... You haven't met her after college?

##

From: Abhishek (*The next day*)

No. I haven't met her. ~~I don't even know how she looks like now~~—I haven't been able to find a single photograph of hers online...

##

From: Kavitha (*An hour later*)

I have heard there is a psychological disorder where the sufferer has DELUSIONS that another person is in love with him or her.

Don't you think you are suffering from such a condition, and that too, over multiple girls?

##

From: Abhishek (*38 minutes later*)

In all the years you have known me, do you seriously believe I could suffer from such a disorder...?

##

From: Kavitha (*An hour and 33 minutes later*)

Probably you don't suffer from anything like that, but still, I want you to be aware that such a condition exists before you start FLYING too high.

Do you have any more before or after you met me? ~~Don't lie to me!!!~~

##

From: Abhishek (*An hour and 39 minutes later*)

Definitely nobody after I met you – I couldn't even dream of it.... Nobody significant about whom I can talk about before I met you other than who I already told you about.

##

From: Kavitha (*45 minutes later*)

My God, I never knew my husband has had such a COLORFUL life.

~~I don't believe that you have told me all the stories.~~

But I don't know if I can believe all your stories. You seem to be such a different person now.

##

From: Abhishek (*The next day*)

Look sweetheart, I have told you the stories you wanted to hear. It is up to you to believe those stories I've told you – if it puts you at peace about my past life ...

##

From: Kavitha (*19 minutes later*)

What are you trying to say?

##

From: Abhishek (*25 minutes later*)

Exactly what you wanted to hear....

##

From: Kavitha (*Nine minutes later*)

The stories were made up, then?

##

From: Abhishek (*Half an hour later*)

I am not saying anything. You asked me and I told you stories. It is totally up to you to believe those stories or decide if they were a figment of my imagination...

##

From: Kavitha (*07 minutes later*)

You... I'll GET you for this. You come home today. You are gonna have it from me... Grr... ~~Why can't you trust me with all your stories? What have I done to deserve your mistrust?~~

##

From: Abhishek (*10 minutes later*)

Don't take life so seriously, Kavi. None of us are getting out of here alive... ;-)

##

Kavitha-Jyotsna

From: Kavitha

October 2012

Since when do you know Abhishek?

##

From: Jyotsna (*Two hours 41 minutes later*)

We were classmates from 1st grade in school and college and went our ways after that – until Abhishek wrote to me.

So, I've known Abhishek since quite a while now.

##

From: Kavitha (*About 4 hours later*)

Wow. You've known him for almost his entire lifetime now. I am guessing it would take me the rest of my entire lifetime to know him as well as you do.

##

From: Jyotsna (*The next morning*)

You are married to him and spend every single day with him. You should know him well by now.

##

From: Kavitha (*That evening*)

For me, he is the most complex person around. I don't think I've ever known him at all – unlike you.

##

From: Jyotsna (*The next day*)

Ha!!

I thought I knew him, Kavitha. Until he walked away from my life.

And now, that he is back again, he is like this complex maze of a human for me....

Sometimes I am happy that he is back in my life, but most of the time, I don't know what role he has in my life now.

~~It's been the biggest dilemma I've had in recent times.~~

##

From: Kavitha (*About 4 hours later*)

You really don't know what to do with him back in your life? Come on. ~~I don't believe you.~~

##

From: Jyotsna (*The next morning*)

No. I really don't. Even if he wasn't married, I would have had a hard time deciding what his role in my life would be.

##

From: Kavitha (*2 hours and 44 minutes later*)

But you are still unmarried.

##

From: Jyotsna (*That night*)

I don't like the tone this conversation is taking. ~~I don't understand why we have to write to each other at all.~~

And look – I have chosen not to get married or get anywhere close to such commitments.

And don't forget, you were the one who is insisting I keep in touch with Abhi.

##

From: Kavitha (*The next afternoon*)

Please forgive me. I got carried away. I won't do this again.

But please, don't stop writing to Abhi.

##

From: Jyotsna (*The next morning*)

Hmm!! Okay, Kavitha.

##

Jyotsna-Abhishek

From: Abhishek

October 2012

Can I ask you something...?

##

From: Jyotsna *(32 minutes later)*

Why are you asking me if you want to ask me something? Just ask, Abhi. Don't play these games with me. ~~Don't you think we are too old for such shenanigans?~~

##

From: Abhishek *(Two hours and 11 minutes later)*

So, what is a stupid thing you've done recently...?

##

From: Jyotsna *(That afternoon)*

You mean, other than writing back to you?

Sometimes God sends an ex back into your life to see if you are still stupid or you have learnt your lesson.

##

From: Abhishek *(12 minutes later)*

Ah... Come on. Enough already...

##

From: Jyotsna *(That night)*

But what kind of a question is that? And why do you want to know?

Also, where is this line of questioning coming from?

##

From: Abhishek (21 minutes later)

If you don't do stupid things while you're young, you'll have nothing to reminisce and laugh about when you're old.

To make life interesting you have to continue doing stupid things, make mistakes.

But as you get older, you mellow down and don't do as many dumb things anymore.

##

From: Jyotsna (The next day)

Ah.... I am not 'young' anymore, Abhi.

So, what's a stupid thing you've done lately? Writing to me, I guess?

##

From: Abhishek (An hour and 42 minutes later)

I had to write to you. If not anything else, for my own peace of mind.

Anyway, forget about stupid things. Tell me, what's interesting in your life these days??

##

From: Jyotsna (An hour and 12 minutes later)

There is an interesting book – *Zen And the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance (ZAMM)* by this Author, Robert Pirsig – which I am reading.

##

From: Abhishek(32 minutes later)

Motorcycle Maintenance...? What's so interesting about motorcycle maintenance especially for someone like you? Are you into motorcycling now?

##

From: Jyotsna *(49 minutes later)*

No. I am not into motorcycling.

ZAMM is a book on philosophy. It was rejected 126 times before becoming the best-selling philosophy book of all time.

Other than that, there is nothing much going on.

##

From: Abhishek*(16 minutes later)*

Seriously – there is a philosophical book on motorcycle maintenance, and you are so interested to read it?

Come on!! You are not such a boring person.

##

From: Jyotsna *(That evening)*

It's one of the best books on contemporary philosophy and it is intellectual entertainment of the highest order.

And it isn't the first time I am reading it.

Anyway, leave it – you wouldn't understand.

##

From: Abhishek *(38 minutes later)*

Try me...

##

From: Jyotsna *(The next day)*

Okay!!

Let me ask you this – do you believe in Ghosts?

##

From: Abhishek (17 minutes later)

Hmm... Sometimes.

Why do you ask?

##

From: Jyotsna (41 minutes later)

But you do believe in science and scientific laws?

##

From: Abhishek (11 minutes later)

Of course.

##

From: Jyotsna (34 minutes later)

Would you accept if we go with the logic that Ghosts contain no matter and have no energy and therefore, according to the laws of science, do not exist except in people's minds?

##

From: Abhishek (21 minutes later)

Hmm... Yes, I accept. ~~But where is this going?~~

##

From: Jyotsna (32 minutes later)

The scientific laws which you accept, contain no matter and have no energy either and therefore do not exist except in people's minds as well.

##

From: Abhishek (21 minutes later)

Hmm... True – if you are applying the same logic.

So, what are you trying to say?

##

From: Jyotsna (48 minutes later)

What I am (or ZAMM is) recommending to you is that it's best to be completely scientific about the whole thing and refuse to believe in either ghosts or the laws of science.

That way you're safe.

That doesn't leave you very much to believe in, but that's scientific too.

##

From: Abhishek (36 minutes later)

Okay – where is this heading...?

##

From: Jyotsna (51 minutes later)

The problem – with the premise of the logic which we just agreed on – is of the mind. Mind has no matter or energy. Logic exists in the mind. Numbers exist only in the mind. Laws of nature are human inventions, like ghosts. Laws of logic, of mathematics are also human inventions, like ghosts again.

The world we live in, therefore, does not exist outside the human imagination.

What I just told you is the realest ghost story you will ever hear.

##

From: Abhishek (An hour and 49 minutes later)

What is this nonsense?

##

From: Jyotsna (*Two hours and 47 minutes later*)

That, Mr. Abhishek, is an example of what you call intellectual entertainment from the book *Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance*.

Which – as I mentioned – would be something which you might not appreciate.

##

From: Abhishek (*That night*)

Hmm... Agree. Whatever you just said flew right over my head.

So, you have started to appreciate these things? ~~I don't know if I should pity you or be happy for you.~~

##

From: Jyotsna (*The next day*)

Why? What do you mean?

##

From: Abhishek (*43 minutes later*)

"...realest ghost story you will ever hear..." – need I say more?

##

From: Jyotsna (*An hour and 33 minutes later*)

I am trying to figure out what you want and what you are hinting at from this discussion.

Are you fishing for compliments? Do you want me to say that since you are back in my life, it's become interesting? I am not gonna give that to you.

I am still in two minds about writing back to you.

##

From: Abhishek (*51 minutes later*)

Why? What have we done since I wrote back to you?

From my side, we are just catching up after all these years. I don't think I am doing anything to disturb your peace....

##

From: Jyotsna *(The next day)*

If you haven't noticed – I am very disturbed already!!!

##

From: Abhishek *(42 minutes later)*

Please Jyotsna. You weren't like this – someone so deeply hurt and spiteful. I know, to an extent I am responsible, but still.

Tell me this, what is it you really like to have? What is it you really want which is missing from your life now?

##

From: Jyotsna *(Two hours and 49 minutes later)*

It doesn't matter what we want, Abhi. Once we get it, then we will want something else...

##

From: Abhishek *(37 minutes later)*

But still... There must be something that is missing from your life which can make you happy if you get it.

#

From: Jyotsna *(The next morning)*

You know what is really sexy in the truest sense of it – a real conversation.

I've been starved of real deep meaningful conversations for a while now.

Perhaps it's me, I've been closing myself up not letting anybody get too close for even a chance to have those kinds of conversations.

##

From: Abhishek *(52 minutes later)*

Conversations? Really....!!!

Will keep that in mind.

#

From: Jyotsna *(That night)*

The only places where I am able to find these deep, soul satisfying conversations are in the books I read. It's almost as if this person sitting thousands of miles away is whispering his extraordinarily interesting story in my ears, at the time I want to hear and at the pace I am comfortable with.

There is no better way to get your mind refreshed.

There is nothing more satisfactory than curling up with a book which touches your soul. It's the most effective way for blocking out all these unnecessary distractions from your life.

##

*Kavitha-Abhishek

From: Kavitha

November 2012

Abhi – can't thank you enough for yesterday. For my PERFECT day. You really went out of your way to make this happen. I love you so much.

Next Sunday, let's make it your PERFECT day.

##

From: Abhishek (49 minutes later)

I love you too, Kavi. Glad we could make this happen.

Sure, whenever you want to. You have to put in all the work – so whenever you are up for it.

##

From: Kavitha (10 minutes later)

Done, Abhi. The Sunday of next week then.

Anyway, tell me one thing that you LIKE the most about me. Please be honest.

##

From: Abhishek (An hour and 25 minutes later)

Hmm... ~~Why do you ask such difficult questions? I feel this is dangerous territory we are getting into, now. Whatever I say, there would be trouble.~~

The one thing that I really like and admire about you is that you are a self-made woman. You got yourself an MBA and work at one of the top organizations in the world – which is indeed remarkable.

##

From: Kavitha (18 minutes later)

Hmm!! It's surprising that the one QUALITY you like about me is something which takes me away from you, Ritu and my home.

##

From: Abhishek *(25 minutes later)*

Come on – why do you have to see my answer this way? I was honest. Why can't men like and admire a strong independent woman?

Anyway, what about you? What do you like the most about me...?

##

From: Kavitha *(An hour and 48 minutes later)*

Your HUMILITY. You are so down to earth. There are so many guys who don't look even half as handsome as you do and walk around as if they have just won the 'Mr. World' competition.

##

From: Abhishek *(Two hours and 25 minutes later)*

Are you hinting that I have self-esteem issues and don't carry myself off well...?

##

From: Kavitha *(18 minutes later)*

Come on, Abhi. Why would I do that? I love your humility – I really do. That adds to your CHARM and your overall PERSONALITY. Please don't draw any other conclusion from what I said.

Anyway, *Jab Tak Hain Jaan* released. Can we go this Sunday?

##

From: Abhishek *(Next morning)*

Movie review of *Jab Tak Hain Jaan* (at this link). Looks like a waste of time. Do you still want to go to this...?

##

From: Kavitha *(18 minutes later)*

I wanted to go for SHAH RUKH. I still want to go. Can we?

##

From: Abhishek (39 minutes later)

My gut feeling says that this movie will be as stupid as his other movie *Veer Zaara*. I don't think I can sit through close to three hours of such crap. ~~After *Veer Zaara* I had sworn I will never pay for another Shah Rukh movie. Do understand.~~

##

From: Kavitha (31 minutes later)

Your gut feeling could just be indigestion, sweetheart. ;-) ;-)

This is the King Khan. The SHAH RUKH.

~~I have also bought new jeans and kurta – I do want to try it out.~~

Let's go.

##

From: Abhishek (An hour and 22 minutes later)

Ha... Calling my gut feeling – indigestion. I'll get you for this.

But trust me – the movie is going to be really bad...

I know you are a big fan of Shah Rukh but think about me. I'd rather spend the time at home with Ritu. ~~At least the ticket cost will also be saved.~~ I am sure Ritu will not like it either. She was so bored during *Veer Zaara*, that she started crying out of boredom right there in the theater. Think about it.

##

From: Kavitha (21 minutes later)

After such a long time I wanted to see a movie, and you don't want to take me. Who can I go with? My colleagues are going with their families.

Why do you do this to me?

##

From: Abhishek (37 minutes later)

I am sure it will be on TV within a month. You can see it then. Or we can buy a DVD when it comes out... I am thinking of the ruckus Ritu will create when she doesn't like the movie. And I don't want to leave her at home with the babysitter and go.

##

From: Kavitha (An hour 18 minutes later)

Seeing on our small TV with a HUNDRED advertisements is not the same as watching it in the theater. And when you wanted to watch that stupid English movie – '*Trouble with the Curve*', we went after spending so much money. Why can't we go to this one?

##

From: Abhishek (An hour 49 minutes later)

s

Hello... *Trouble with the Curve* was different. The reviews were good, at least. Also, I liked the movie – it was very different from mainstream cinema. Unfortunately, you did not like it – perhaps because you don't understand baseball as much, though I tried to explain to you as much as I could.

Here, I know that the plot of *Jab Tak Hain Jaan* is totally unrealistic and crap. And you want to watch it for Shah Rukh. What will I do?

After *Veer Zaara*, I had vowed that I would never pay to watch another Shah Rukh movie in a theater again. Please understand.

##

From: Kavitha (18 minutes later)

Katrina and Anushka are there in the movie as well. You can see them.

Plus, usually guys are EXCITED to be next to a woman in dark spaces. Won't you be? ;-)

And I cannot beg more than this for the movie!!

##

From: Abhishek (12 minutes later)

Ha... Katrina and Anushka are not tempting me enough. Though your invitation about sitting in the dark next to a woman is enticing, I'd rather spend the time at home with Ritu – your attention is gonna be focused on someone else, right?

Please understand, I just cannot bear 3 hours of torture again.

##

From: Kavitha (14 minutes later)

Not fair. I want to have some fun and I feel this is the only time I have to enjoy. Before marriage, Mom used to say – get married and have all the fun you want. Now, after marriage my husband doesn't want to. I can't even go to a movie which I want to see. ~~How long can I BOTTLE UP AND SUFFER like this?~~
Please realize that my wants are not anything out of this world. They are very small and if you can give me those, I will be happy.

##

From: Abhishek (7 minutes later)

Okay Madam. You really want to see that movie? Let's go today itself. I will get tickets on my way back from the office. Let us take the babysitter along as well....

##

From: Kavitha (18 minutes later)

FORGET IT. I do not want to see that movie anymore.

##

From: Abhishek (11 minutes later)

Don't do this after I've made up my mind.

##

From: Kavitha (*14 minutes later*)

Oh... The GREAT 'Abhishek' has made up his mind and wants to go.

You think too much of yourself, eh?

I am not interested anymore.

##

From: Abhishek (*Nine minutes later*)

Come on. Enough already. I am sorry. Let's go...

Why are you doing this? Is it because I offered to bring tickets for the babysitter as well?

##

From: Kavitha (*Seven minutes later*)

Forget it. ~~You won't understand.~~

And I will NEVER ever ask you to take me to a movie again.

##

Jyotsna-Abhishek

From: Abhishek

November 2012

With the right music, you either forget everything or you remember everything.

All the songs I used to love, and I often listen to, remind me of you...

Memories that I still treasure.

##

From: Jyotsna (*That evening*)

Every time I pass by the areas where our school and colleges are, you are among my first memories.

You were like this really fun-loving go-getter type.

One thing that I respected most about you was that you were such a perfect gentleman.

Always.

You never tried to come too close... which is why I was perhaps drawn to you in the first place.

~~I never felt unsafe with you.~~

~~There was a time when even the thought of you made it hard for me to breathe. And that used to be a good thing.~~

##

From: Abhishek (*43 minutes later*)

I still want to kick myself about things going downhill.

I was hoping writing back to you would heal at least some of the hurt...

##

From: Jyotsna (*Next morning*)

Time doesn't heal anything – the proverb is wrong. Time merely numbs us into submission. Time blurs our memories, brings us down to our knees and leaves us begging.

And you know what, the world is a hard place to be in. Life is tough – there is a lot of suffering in it. Probably it's supposed to be that way. If we didn't suffer, we wouldn't learn a thing.

But it would be a long long time before you get close to healing what you did. It would also take a while for you to get even close to being what you were for me.

All I can say, for now, don't get your hopes too high.

##

From: Abhishek (*53 minutes later*)

Looking back, I don't think I have ever been the carefree fun-loving guy again. It's been all downhill in terms of my mindset and how I've lived my life after that...

##

From: Jyotsna (*That night*)

You know what your problem is? You are clinging on to a mistake which you think is monumental by deciding to walk away from my life.

You aren't looking at the things that you have. You are only looking at the stuff you don't have and that's got you into this state of perpetual sadness.

~~Being in a perpetual state of sadness is such a waste of time. I've been there.~~

Though I am still reluctant, I am somewhat comfortable to at least write back to you – there are plenty of those who haven't heard back from me for months now.

To heal a wound, you need to stop touching it.

You need to stop looking for happiness or your peace of mind in the same place you lost it.

##

From: Abhishek (*47 minutes later*)

Hmm...

I want peace, I want to take away at least some of the hurt I caused you, but I am not really sure what is the best way.

I thought by getting back in touch with you, apologizing for what I did and talking things over was the best way.

##

From: Jyotsna (*The next day*)

I am not sure either. I think we could figure things out as we go along.

##

From: Abhishek (*25 minutes later*)

Alright...

Tell me this then... What are you listening to these days?

##

From: Jyotsna (*43 minutes later*)

They say that you can tell a lot about what a person is going through by the songs they are listening to.

I usually find comfort in old songs. I can play 'In Ankhon ki Masti mein' from *Umrao Jaan* and 'Aye dil-e-nadaan' from *Razia Sultan* in a loop.

What about you? What are you listening to these days?

##

From: Abhishek (*24 minutes later*)

You are right... You can tell a lot about someone's frame of mind by the songs they are listening to.

These recent few months, it's been *Nirvana's 'All Apologies'*.

Then there is '*Raabta (Kehte Hain Khuda)*' from *Agent Vinod* which is right up there as well.

##

From: Jyotsna (32 minutes later)

Nirvana's 'All Apologies' eh!! I am not surprised.

##

From: Abhishek (16 minutes later)

I am not either. I must have apologized to you so many times already...

##

From: Jyotsna (11 minutes later)

That you have.

##

From: Abhishek (Two minutes later)

I will do so again if you want me to – a hundred thousand times over if needed...

##

From: Jyotsna (29 minutes later)

You speak as if I get some innate pleasure in making you apologize.

Anyway, tell me this, in college when we were seen as a couple, were you embarrassed to hang out with me?

##

From: Abhishek (13 minutes later)

Never... Did you ever feel that I was?

##

From: Jyotsna (41 minutes later)

Since you were the 'Gentleman', I thought maybe you started to be a little bit embarrassed when the rest of the class started to pull your leg about me after we hung out most of the time.

##

From: Abhishek (16 minutes later)

Nope. I wasn't ever embarrassed about you...

Were you?

##

From: Jyotsna (27 minutes later)

I wasn't. The girl gang used to pull my leg about you now and then, but I was fine with that.

But I always thought you were embarrassed about 'us'.

By the way, what were you most embarrassed about during the time we knew each other?

##

From: Abhishek (23 minutes later)

Do you remember the bag I had in high school?

##

From: Jyotsna (19 minutes later)

The one with 'Feelings' written all over it?

##

From: Abhishek (An hour and 19 minutes later)

Yes. Surprised that you remembered it.

The 'Feelings' logo was from the range of VIP's ladies' undergarments. My parents had bought the bag for me and without realizing what it meant...

During that time, the VIP '*Feelings*' brand used to be advertised quite a bit. As soon as I got the bag, I recognized the logo. I was surprised that my parents hadn't.

##

From: Jyotsna (*12 minutes later*)

Did you tell them about it?

##

From: Abhishek (*The next morning*)

No way...

How could I?

I was in a dilemma. We did not discuss the brands of ladies' undergarments at home. I couldn't tell my parents what the logo on the new bag they had bought was popular for. I was too embarrassed.

And then, there was the question of the money they had spent to buy me the bag. I simply could not ask them to buy me another bag – we couldn't afford it...

I could not pretend that I did not like the bag and save myself the embarrassment of using it. My old school bag was already torn.

##

From: Jyotsna (*34 minutes later*)

So, what did you do?

##

From: Abhishek (*An hour and 17 minutes later*)

I tried my best to erase the logo using a combination of sketch pens and a razor blade, but it stayed stubborn...

I was left with no choice but to start using the bag from the very next day. I used to come to school on my bicycle with the bag having the '*Feelings*' logo etched all over it, slung on my shoulder.

If VIP ever had a door-to-door salesman for their underwear, he could not have looked better than me - with my blue school uniform, tie, polished shoes, blue socks and the bag etched with their '*Feelings*' logo...

Embarrassment is probably a smaller word in this context. It was absolutely humiliating coming to school every day with the bag.

##

From: Jyotsna (*23 minutes later*)

LoL.

I remember asking you about it.... or commenting on it, right?

##

From: Abhishek (*That evening*)

Yes, you did.

You came up to me when I was in a group and commented exactly about the '*Feelings*' logo on that bag.

At that moment, I would have been the happiest if mother earth would have just swallowed me up without leaving a trace of me or the vile bag...

Did you recognize the '*Feelings*' logo before you asked me about it in front of the whole group?

##

From: Jyotsna (*12 minutes later*)

Yes, of course I did. Not asking you about it – especially when you were in a group – was too much of a temptation. Couldn't resist it.

Sorry for embarrassing you, though.

##

From: Abhishek (*12 minutes later*)

Ha...

##

From: Jyotsna *(12 minutes later)*

You had the bag for a long time, right?

##

From: Abhishek *(The next day)*

Yes, the embarrassment and humiliation because of that wretched bag lasted for two long years. It was two whole years before I was able to show sufficient degradation in the bag to deem it unusable and convince my parents to buy me a new one...

This time around, I made sure that I went with them when they purchased a new bag. I had faced enough humiliation and embarrassment to last me a lifetime and I did not want to take any chances.

##

From: Jyotsna *(That afternoon)*

I am sure you would have.

##

From: Abhishek *(That evening)*

Yes, Jo.

And you know what, after a long time, I did not feel any tension in the emails we exchanged. Else there was always this undercurrent that you could explode at any moment.

It felt like the old times.

I am glad.

##

From: Jyotsna *(39 minutes later)*

I am glad too, Abhi.

##

###Kavitha-Jyotsna

From: Kavitha

November 2012

So, how did you and Abhi become more than good friends?

##

From: Jyotsna *(Six hours later)*

We were classmates in school. We had similar interests in art and then after school, we joined the same college for undergrad.

Lots of people saw us as more than friends.

We weren't boyfriend-girlfriend or anything like that. But we were kind of a couple.

##

From: Kavitha *(38 minutes later)*

It's absolutely fine if you were a boyfriend-girlfriend.

##

From: Jyotsna *(The next day)*

No, no. Believe me, we weren't boyfriend-girlfriend. ~~Abhi wasn't the guy who would get into such a commitment.~~

But at one point of time, he meant more to me than that adolescent title.

##

*Kavitha-Abhishek

From: Kavitha

November 2012

This is a BEAUTIFUL song. (*Saawli Si Raat ho, Barfi*)

Check it out.

##

From: Abhishek (*An hour later*)

Ah... it's beautiful. Arijit Singh has such a soothing voice. Where did you hear it?

Can I hear you humming it at home trying to put Ritu to bed?

I already told you that you should have been a singer – what are you doing in recruitment?

##

From: Kavitha (*16 minutes later*)

One of my colleagues made me hear it. I LOVED it immediately.

By the way, there are plenty of singers around. I stand nowhere in front of them.

It is enough for me if my sweetheart appreciates my singing talent. I can't ask for anything more.

##

From: Abhishek (*14 minutes later*)

I've always been a fan of your singing... When have I not appreciated it? Anyway, how come listening to songs at work? Boss isn't around?

##

From: Kavitha (*Eighteen minutes later*)

You guessed right. Boss is on leave since yesterday. He is travelling to Chennai and will be gone for the rest of the week. When he is around, there is so much STRESS for everyone. It is almost like celebration time when he is gone.

##

From: Abhishek (48 minutes later)

Ahaa... that is why I got to eat homemade *gulab-jamuns* yesterday? I have observed, you are so much happier at home when your boss is gone.

I think you are bringing some of your office stress home. ~~You can't imagine how much stress is at my office – I try to take it off my mind when I get back home so that it doesn't affect Ritu or you. I think you should do the same.~~

##

From: Kavitha (19 minutes later)

I have been planning to make those *gulab-jamuns* for a long time. Only yesterday, I really felt like making them.

You may be right – I might be carrying some of my WORK STRESS to home. I will try not to, but it is difficult when boss is around. You know, I don't have any other outlet except home and you.

##

From: Abhishek (23 minutes later)

Not asking for too much, but if you can try to leave the stress behind when you come home, it will be great.

By the way, why don't you try walking either early in the morning or evening after you come back? It is a healthy habit and a stress buster as well...

And we need to cut down on the non-veg too – we have it almost every alternate day and is making us gain weight and build cholesterol.

##

From: Kavitha (33 minutes later)

Walking is a good idea. I will start from tomorrow.

But have you learnt nothing from Cows, Buffaloes and Elephants? They are living examples that it's IMPOSSIBLE to reduce weight by eating green things and walking.

The non-veg menu stays.

##

From: Abhishek (31 minutes later)

Ha... Okay. If you want to put it that way about non-veg food.

You can also improve the health of at least five other guys in the apartment complex if you start walking :-) :-).

##

From: Kavitha (11 minutes later)

Ha!!!

Now you've made me really UNCOMFORTABLE walking on my own. Will you come with me for the walk? If you are there, it will be really nice.

##

From: Abhishek (29 minutes later)

No sweetheart, you carry on. I have to think about the five other guys as well, don't I? ;-)

Also, we had decided to become 'braver', did we not? This is a great opportunity – you need not wear salwar-kameez to walk...

There is one lady who stays upstairs who walks every day in the evening. I will take care of Ritu and you can walk for an hour with her then. What do you think?

##

From: Kavitha (26 minutes later)

You are right. It is not good if we both go walking leaving Ritu at home. I will try to walk with the lady upstairs.

Great chance to try out my NEW Capri tights and synthetic t-shirts.

##

From: Abhishek (38 minutes later)

By the way, do you realize that good health is the slowest possible rate at which one can die...?

##

From: Kavitha (22 minutes later)

That's interesting. I never thought of health that way.

And you had to say this when I was seriously considering walking to maintain my health. I don't know if you do it on purpose.

I HATE you.

##

From: Abhishek (Four minutes later)

Kavi... There is no need to get upset. You know I was just teasing you.

##

From: Kavitha (11 minutes later)

Grr....

They say that marriage is about understanding what IRRITATES your spouse and using it strategically.

Sometimes, I think that you have figured out what upsets me, and you seem to use it at every possible instance.

##

From: Abhishek (38 minutes later)

Believe me sweetheart, I am not at all as intelligent as you think.

And you know, if God is watching us, following our lives and maybe reading these mails as well, the least we can do is be entertaining...

##

From: Kavitha *(31 minutes later)*

What are you saying? You are doing all these in the name of God. You will go to HELL, Mr. Abhishek. Take it for me. I will make hell for you here on this earth and God will put you in hell in the afterlife.

##

From: Abhishek *(Seven minutes later)*

Chill, Kavi... Chill.

##

From: Kavitha *(The next morning)*

It's your Mumma's 25th death anniversary tomorrow, right?

I never asked you about your mother. How do you remember her?

##

From: Abhishek *(Later that day)*

I remember Mumma as a strong woman. Many women were satisfied with being housewives 30 years back, but Mumma wanted to work. She had a degree in Journalism and was a reporter at Times of India.

Mumma was on her way back that fateful day after covering a launch event when she was run over by a lorry full of bricks.

Relatives from my Mumma's side offered to bring me up, but my Papa was adamant that he would not let me out of his sight.

Papa did good, I think.

##

From: Kavitha *(53 minutes later)*

I am so sorry, Abhi, that you lost your mother at such a young age. And your father as well.

Sometimes I forget how blessed I am that my parents were around all through my life.

But your father did good.

##

From: Abhishek *(That night)*

Hmm...

##

Jyotsna-Abhishek

From: Jyotsna

November 2012

Tell me this – how did you decide to get married? And you went for an arranged marriage – how come?

##

From: Abhishek (37 minutes later)

Have you heard about Socrates' free advice on marriage from centuries ago...? It goes something like this – *“My advice to you is get married. If you find a good wife, you'll be happy; if not, you'll become a philosopher.”*

##

From: Jyotsna (11 minutes later)

Yes, I've come across it.

##

From: Abhishek (13 minutes later)

I took that advice seriously...

##

From: Jyotsna (19 minutes later)

Ha!!

Socrates had been going around giving people such advice, and did you know what they did to him – they poisoned him.

##

From: Abhishek (37 minutes later)

Really? I did not know that... Did not expect him to die like this.

Too late now. I am already married.

##

From: Jyotsna (*The next day*)

Another thing - Socrates is Greek and he would have advised in Greek. Therefore, I don't think anyone can be sure about what he actually meant and cannot accept any guarantees that no implied meaning would have got lost in translation.

But, taking at face value what Socrates said and implied, do you realize that becoming a philosopher is not as easy these days as it was during the times Socrates became one?

These days, if someone gets on to the path of becoming a philosopher (either voluntarily or forcefully; either after or before marriage), by the time he reads, hears, or experiences enough philosophy to get a hang of it, he would have been influenced so much by other philosophers and their philosophies that he would end up as a philosophologist rather than a philosopher.

So, don't throw all this BS at me.

Tell me why you decided to get married? And how it's like for someone like you – who ran a mile away from commitment – to be married to someone?

##

From: Abhishek (*51 minutes later*)

Okay, Madam...!!!

Despite everything that happened, there was no doubt in my mind that I would eventually want to get married. I did not have to listen to any advice to come to such a decision.

When I felt ready financially and to commit to someone, I tried to find you.

##

From: Jyotsna (*Three hours and 17 minutes later*)

You tried to find me...?

##

From: Abhishek (*That night*)

I did...

I did not have the courage to face you after what I put you through, but I still did...

You had cut yourself off from everybody – nobody knew where you were or what you were up to.

Your landline number had changed, someone else was living at your place and the neighbors did not have a clue where you all had shifted to.

Someone mentioned you all have moved abroad somewhere. Someone else declared you all would have moved to Pune as your Father got posted there.

I then fought for an assignment at Pune from my office and shifted there – I was there for four months to find you...

On not finding you after all those months, I gave up – and assumed you had moved on.

I then decided it was perhaps best for the both of us that you had moved on and I had to as well...

##

From: Jyotsna (*The next afternoon*)

Hmm. We were all in Delhi for a bit and then I moved to Kolkata after I took up a job there.

##

From: Abhishek (*The next evening*)

And I was wandering around all over Pune trying to find you!!!

The shared autos in Pune are the worst – they cram so many of us in that auto, it's an accident waiting to happen.

Then I got my bike to Pune and searched for you in every nook and corner. I hung out quite a bit in places which are hubs for books – *Appa Balwant Chowk, Fergusson College Road, JM road*– where I thought you would definitely come someday.

I found myself a place to sit in each of these three areas and made a deal with a couple of the book shops there. While I waited for you during those four months, I got books from the bookshops who I made a deal with and was able to finish reading all the books by Jeffrey Archer, Sidney Sheldon and John Grisham. I tried a couple of Ken Follet and Robert Ludlum books as well, but among all of them, Jeffrey Archer has been my favorite.

##

From: Jyotsna (*Two days later*)

Jeffrey Archer is an amazing writer. I got to see and hear him in person earlier this year when he came down for his book launch – ‘The Sins of My Father’ – I got a signed copy of that book.

I would have gone to those places multiple times for sure if I was in Pune.

I guess, us remaining apart is how it was always meant to be.

##

*****Kavitha-Nathan**

From: Nathan

November 2012

Hey Kavi,

I have some news – I finished my PhD. I am officially ‘**Dr. Nathan Jose Rebello**’ now.

The last few months have been hell. I don’t think I’ve been this busy ever.

During this, I realized there is not enough time to do everything we want to do. Most of us spend too much time on what is urgent and not enough time on what is important.

##

From: Kavitha (19 minutes later)

Hey, Dr. Nathan Jose Rebello!!!

That sounds wonderful. Congratulations. Am so happy for you.

And so good to hear from you after all these months.

How do you feel? Exhausted after all the work? ~~What about your girlfriend? How is she taking it?~~

Is the realization about time coming in because of all the time you spent doing your PhD?

##

From: Nathan (Eight minutes later)

Thank you very much....

More than anything, I feel it’s such a relief finishing up the PhD. A sobering experience. The feeling is still sinking in. Well worth it, though.

And yes, it has taken so much time to finish up my PhD that I now realize there isn’t enough time.

##

From: Kavitha (12 minutes later)

Hmm...

But good to know that you feel your PhD has been worth it. I cannot imagine what it must be to be studying for all those years. After my MBA, there is no chance I could have sat through another college classroom for further studies.

So, Mr. 'full-of-wisdom' - what's next for you?

##

From: Nathan (16 minutes later)

Getting a PhD makes me knowledgeable about one small area – doesn't necessarily make me wise. Perhaps I have been so cocooned in the university environment, that I have not gained any wisdom since I joined PhD.

This is next for me - got a Post-Doc position in University of Queensland, Australia – I am starting at the end of this month.

##

From: Kavitha (32 minutes later)

Come on!! PhD holders like you are well respected because of all the knowledge you have gained. You don't need to put yourself down like that.

But congratulations on your Post-doc offer. After all these years of lull, you are going places, eh? India to Singapore to Australia.

##

From: Nathan (22 minutes later)

Okay, if you say so.

And thank you for your wishes.

##

From: Kavitha (16 minutes later)

What about your girlfriend, she finished her PhD too? Will she be joining you there?

##

From: Nathan *(14 minutes later)*

My girlfriend will take anywhere between a year to 18 months to finish her PhD... She'll join me once she is done.

##

From: Kavitha *(18 minutes later)*

That's good. But I am sure she would have wanted you to be there for her when she is wrapping up with her thesis.

What about marriage plans? ~~I am sure she must be eager to get married to you and settle down – you must be nearing 40 now, right?~~

##

From: Nathan *(An hour and 12 minutes later)*

Yes, I wanted to be there for her as well, but I did not want to miss this opportunity at UQ. It's a highly ranked university and it's a wonderful match with my research area. My advisor at UQ seems like a wonderful person as well – I met him at one of the conferences and he was so down-to-earth and approachable. What more can I ask for?

Marriage is on the cards – right after she finishes her PhD though. Wedding will be in Singapore – since she is from here.

##

From: Kavitha *(45 minutes later)*

Will you be coming to India before starting off in Australia?

##

From: Nathan *(The next day)*

I won't be able to come to India – it would be easier if I just moved to Australia with all the luggage instead of stopping in India.

I will stop by in India only on one condition – if you treat me to your home cooked food and have a smoke with me – just like the old days.

##

From: Kavitha *(19 minutes later)*

That's unfair. You can't put me under the bus like this. It will be too much pressure for me to handle... And definitely no cigarettes.

##

From: Nathan *(43 minutes later)*

Hmm... No home cooked food – and no cigarettes. No India trip then.

Anyway, you tell me. So, how have you been? What's new with you? How is your married life going?

##

From: Kavitha *(The next morning)*

Things are more or less the same.

Like I told you, we have been having our issues. Been working on them. What's new is, we correspond through emails to cut down on arguments and misunderstandings and I think we have made some progress.

There are some other things going on though.

##

From: Nathan *(12 minutes later)*

You should have said yes to me when you had a chance. ~~You still can. You know I always have a spot for you in my heart no matter what.~~

##

From: Kavitha *(19 minutes later)*

Ha! You should stop reminding me about the chances I had.

##

From: Nathan *(42 minutes later)*

Okay. Will try.

You said there are other things going on – what are these other things?

##

From: Kavitha *(That evening)*

Hmm. I don't know how to tell this – Abhi has got back in touch with his ex. And the deal is, he's never told me about her ever.

##

From: Nathan *(15 minutes later)*

Hmm. Does Abhi know about me?

##

From: Kavitha *(11 minutes later)*

You are different. But yes, I've told him about you and that we are connected on Facebook. He did not seem to mind.

##

From: Nathan *(Three minutes later)*

So why are you worried?

##

From: Kavitha *(The next morning)*

Because he's been keeping his ex – and that they are back in touch – a secret from me.

##

From: Nathan (*Four minutes later*)

How did you find out?

##

From: Kavitha (*38 minutes later*)

I stumbled upon their mails.

He doesn't know I've seen his mails and I know about her.

I've been trying to get him to tell me about her through some subtle hints and persuasion, but he's been acting as if nothing is going on – which is so frustrating.

##

From: Nathan (*12 minutes later*)

Hang in there, Kavi. Hopefully, things will sort themselves out. Keep your chin up.

Did you know that an extra hour of sleep can help you lose weight?

##

From: Kavitha (*38 minutes later*)

Really? How come?

##

From: Nathan (*12 minutes later*)

Because your mouth stays closed, and you aren't eating anything for an extra hour ;-)

##

From: Kavitha (*12 minutes later*)

Ha... You are crazy!!! Seems like that characteristic of yours has not gone anywhere yet – even with a PhD.

##

From: Nathan (31 minutes later)

As they say '*... there is a pleasure in being mad, which none but madmen know.*' I enjoy this pleasure immensely.

##

Jyotsna-Abhishek

From: Jyotsna

November 2012

We left the discussion on “how you decided on marriage” incomplete. So, go on – what made you decide on marriage?

##

From: Abhishek (*That evening*)

Oh yeah... That thread...

As I told you already – I took Socrates’ advice seriously.

And I did want to get married some-day. I did not want to live the rest of my life all by myself.

Any chance you can change your mind on marriage?

##

From: Jyotsna (*Next morning*)

Naah...

You probably know... There are a lot of marriages in this generation which are failures and end in divorce.

Even if marriages don’t end in divorces, I believe that people make plenty of compromises and stay in a marriage for reasons other than love.

But even after witnessing numerous unhappy marriages, people still want to get married – all live with the hope they will somehow end up happy in their marriages.

If you love a person enough and want to spend the rest of your life with them, you go ahead and get the government involved by getting a marriage certificate. Then in case things don’t work out you would have to go to court and fight it out so that the same government would ‘grant’ you guys a divorce.

What a circus!!!

##

From: Abhishek (*Later that night*)

I never ever thought of marriage that way.

I always thought there is a lot of logic in the institution of marriage. There are a lot of advantages for you and – from a larger perspective – for the society from it...

Don't you think you are overthinking things? Isn't thinking too much kind of a disease?

##

From: Jyotsna (*The next morning*)

After all these years, I believe I've actually been THINKING about things. Thinking – I mean real thinking – is the hardest thing to do, which is why not many engage in it and take the lazy way out.

Most of my life, I did things because everyone else did so, said things that everybody wanted to hear.

In fact, I am not surprised at all that not many think in these lines about marriage and life in general.

To an extent, I agree with what you say – there are benefits for an individual, and from the perspective of a society from marriage. But the world is changing. Marriage is not the same anymore. In fact, someone put it so well – *A wedding is a funeral where you smell your own flowers*. Just look at the rising divorce rates.

##

From: Abhishek (*An hour and a half later*)

That is a little extreme, don't you think? If your parents had the same conviction about marriage, you would not be here...

##

From: Jyotsna (*41 minutes later*)

My parents made their choice. I have made mine. Why should I be the one to carry the burden of creation and life on my shoulders?

Anyway, tell me how is your married life going — especially for someone who is commitment phobic like you?

##

From: Abhishek (42 minutes later)

You really want to know about my married life after you mercilessly thrashed the entire institution of marriage...

My head is reeling. Give me some time to recover from everything you've said about marriage and being married.

##

From: Jyotsna (11 minutes later)

Yes, I do want to know how your married life is.

And no, you don't get any time to recover.

Go on please.

##

From: Abhishek (Two hours 23 minutes later)

Okay.

It is interesting for sure...

New kinds of challenges every day. Have to deal with things which you never would have even thought of before.

And emotions are hard to understand.

A lot of times, I have no clue why Kavitha is upset or what she is happy about... ~~It wasn't that difficult with you.~~

##

From: Jyotsna *(That evening)*

Ha... Women are like that – we all have our own set of issues. ~~It is what makes us interesting and keeps you men interested.~~

We are also figuring things out as well, trying to understand ourselves and how we could live in and react appropriately in this world.

Then you have a daughter – how is that going?

##

From: Abhishek *(17 minutes later)*

Ritu is a sweet kid. I love her to death. Sometimes she gets caught in the crossfire between Kavitha and me. Hope she turns out to be a good person...

##

From: Jyotsna *(The next day)*

Always remember, having kids doesn't make you a father. Raising them does. Raise her well – she should turn out to be good.

Ritu is five years old, now, right?

##

From: Abhishek *(52 minutes later)*

Yes, Ritu is five.

##

From: Jyotsna *(19 minutes later)*

Tell me this – do you regret having a child?

##

From: Abhishek *(An hour and 39 minutes later)*

I personally feel parenthood is one of the most fulfilling and rewarding experiences one can have in their lives – everything else pales in comparison...

For people considering parenthood and deciding to become parents simply because they now have a choice – they do not know what they are missing out on...

##

From: Jyotsna (16 minutes later)

~~I know you mean to say 'you do not know what you are missing out on...'~~

That's good to hear from someone like you.

##

From: Abhishek (The next day)

I am not all that bad, Jo...

##

From: Jyotsna (16 minutes later)

I know you aren't, Abhi...

##

From: Abhishek (33 minutes later)

My biggest challenge is to get my daughter to become at least as good (or as bad) as I have turned out to be – and I realize that I am having a real tough time at it...

There is this quote from Seinfeld which in its own way gives me just a little extra strength and courage after the added responsibility and elevated status to Fatherhood went like this...–

All fathers are intimidating. They're intimidating because they are fathers. Once a man has children, for the rest of his life, his attitude is, 'To hell with the world, I can make my own people'.

–Seinfeld

##

From: Jyotsna (*Two hours and 14 minutes later*)

You are collecting quotes as well?

##

From: Abhishek (*19 minutes later*)

Not collecting quotes as such – some just aren't easily forgotten.

##

From: Jyotsna (*29 minutes later*)

So, now that you are happy about fatherhood, are you planning on having more kids?

##

From: Abhishek (*An hour and 31 minutes later*)

~~Do I really look like a guy with a plan...?~~

Yes. I have a daughter already and I want a son. I really do.

##

From: Jyotsna (*12 minutes later*)

Ah! The taking the family name forward kind of thing?

##

From: Abhishek (*31 minutes later*)

No, no... Nothing like that. It would be a different experience bringing up a son. It would sort of complete my family.

##

From: Jyotsna (*The next day*)

So, what's stopping you?

##

From: Abhishek *(49 minutes later)*

~~With how my marriage is going now, how can I plan on such a big step about bringing another human in this world?~~

When I look around and see what the world is coming to, I think – ‘How can I bring another child into this world? What kind of a life would I be able to give him/ her...?’

##

From: Jyotsna *(An hour and 42 minutes later)*

You know why the world has ended up like it has – it is not because of people who are evil, it is because of those who look on and do nothing.

Pity!!

##

***Kavitha-Abhishek**

From: Kavitha

November 2012

Ticket attached.

##

From: Abhishek (*Four minutes later*)

Ticket? Why are you sending me this...? What plans, Kavi - running away with someone? ~~Will you be taking Ritu as well?~~

##

From: Kavitha (*19 minutes later*)

Oh!!! Sorry. My colleague asked me to book a ticket for her. Look what I did – instead of sending it to her, I sent it to you. You seem to be so much in my THOUGHTS.

If you would have seen the name on the ticket, you would have known who the ticket was for.

Even though I am becoming absent minded, where will I run away? That too, leaving you? You thought you are gonna get lucky by getting rid of me so soon. High hopes. I am not going anywhere without you or Ritu. That is your fate :-)

##

From: Abhishek (*21 minutes later*)

Ha... I was wondering, why this ticket all of a sudden. I just reacted to you sending me a ticket and did not go to the extent of checking the name on the ticket.

You are definitely becoming absent minded, though. You sent me the ticket, which is fine. Someday, in your absentmindedness, hopefully you don't write a love letter to someone else ;-) ;-).

##

From: Kavitha (*22 minutes later*)

Do you think I will become so absent minded I will not be able to differentiate between you and someone at office? Even if I write a love letter, I will address it to you only. There will be no CONFUSION.

I made one small mistake, and you are pulling my leg so much. Don't worry, every dog has its day, and my turn will come soon. ;-)

##

From: Abhishek (11 minutes later)

I am sure you will have your chances to pull my leg, but I am making full use of this opportunity as of now...

##

From: Kavitha (25 minutes later)

Okay. Go on. I don't mind at all. Who else can you tease? If you tease someone else, they will give you a tight SLAP or unleash the harshest of insults at you.

Anyhow, it is your fate now you will have to bear with me, and I in turn will have to bear with you. It is destiny. God makes couples that way. ~~If you could not have tolerated me, or I could not have endured you, then we would have gone our separate ways a long time back.~~

##

From: Abhishek (An hour later)

Hmm... There seems to be a shortage of destined couples these days. I am sure you know happy marriages are declining and divorce rates are on the rise...

##

From: Kavitha (28 minutes later)

Ah, that. These couples get into relationships for the wrong reasons and get out easily as well. There is no other explanation.

Why are we talking so much about divorces, sweetheart? You are planning to give me one is it?

##

From: Abhishek (*Two hours and 29 minutes later*)

Do you really think the thought of divorce could even cross my mind...? But even if it did, I don't think I have even the slightest chance you will let me go, right?

##

From: Kavitha (*An hour and 37 minutes later*)

You are right. You are TRAPPED now – you have nowhere else to go. I am the one who is going to sit on your head as your wife for the rest of your life.

Anyway, back to our game – I want you to name three qualities we have in common.

##

From: Abhishek (*Three hours and 50 minutes later*)

~~Aww... The game!!! It's getting tiring, don't you think?~~

I think one common quality the two of us share is our desire to raise Ritu in the best way possible – to take care of her and give her the best life we can.

I can't think of anything more as of now... Can you pitch in? I did not know finding three things we have in common was going to be so difficult...

##

From: Kavitha (*39 minutes later*)

Okay.

I think we both are DETERMINED to stay married to each other – with what we have gone through, unless we were determined, our marriage would have been on the rocks a long time ago. Don't you agree?

##

From: Abhishek (*42 minutes later*)

Agree, Kavi... I think we should pat ourselves on our backs that we have stayed married through everything.

Another common thing between us is that we aren't those kinds of people who constantly seek out entertainment outside our home and with a huge group of friends. We are happy at home spending time with Ritu and with each other.

##

From: Kavitha (39 minutes later)

Agree, Abhi. And I am so glad we have turned out this way. Love you!!!

##

###Kavitha-Jyotsna

From: Kavitha

November 2012

Hi Jyotsna, did you happen to mention or even hint to Abhi anything about me looking at his mail or writing to you?? These days, he makes sure he doesn't leave his laptop around and when I have been accessing it, he makes sure he has signed out of his mail.

##

From: Jyotsna *(That evening)*

No. I haven't told anything to Abhi.

But you decided that you weren't going to look at his mails anyhow, right?

##

From: Kavitha *(23 minutes later)*

Yes, Jyotsna. I did decide. But since Abhi has been extra careful, I thought maybe you told him something.

Tell me this, did you love Abhi, Jyotsna?

##

From: Jyotsna *(The next morning)*

Yes, Kavitha. I did.

By loving him, I inadvertently gave him the power to be able to destroy me – which he did by walking away from my life. ~~You don't give people you don't love such power ever.~~

##

From: Kavitha *(Six hours later)*

Did Abhi confess that he was in love with you? How did you know for sure that he was?

##

From: Jyotsna *(Three hours later)*

He never confessed, but I knew. ~~Everyone knew.~~

He wasn't the type who would get all lovey-dovey showering me with flowers and cards, but he spent a lot of time and energy to be around me to ensure I was as happy as I could be – without expecting anything.

I believe that was his love for me – it was as simple as that.

##

From: Kavitha *(45minutes later)*

Did you love Abhi, Jyotsna?

##

From: Jyotsna *(The next morning)*

Yes, Kavitha. I did.

By loving him, I inadvertently gave him the power to be able to destroy me – which he did by walking away from my life. ~~You don't give people you don't love such power ever.~~

##

From: Kavitha *(An hour and 34 minutes later)*

How did you know it was love, Jyotsna? At those ages, people have all these crushes they keep falling in and out of.

##

From: Jyotsna *(Three hours later)*

It was real. It wouldn't have hurt that bad if it wasn't. ~~And all those cheesy love songs made perfect sense – almost as if they had been written for exactly what you felt.~~

##

From: Kavitha *(Two hours and 29 minutes later)*

Do you still love him?

##

From: Jyotsna *(That night)*

Maybe.

At one point of time after he walked away, I really missed him. It ached how much I missed him then. I wanted so desperately to reach out to him and tell him how much I've been missing him and that I wanted him to be back in my life. But I somehow convinced myself that he was doing just fine without me.

The thing about a heartbreak is, for the person whose heart is broken, it is like a nuclear bomb has gone off. But for the world, a broken heart is such a cliché.

But my heart has ample amounts of rage against him for what he did. He will never be the same to me ever again.

~~This time around, I haven't given him even an iota of power to destroy me anymore. I'll never let another individual trample me all over again.~~

##

Jyotsna-Abhishek

From: Jyotsna

November 2012

You talk about all the misery you had to go through for walking out of my life, but you never confessed that you were in love with me.

##

From: Abhishek *(29 minutes later)*

Jo... I gave you the valentine's card, didn't I?

##

From: Jyotsna *(43 minutes later)*

That doesn't count. It wasn't a proposal of any kind. It was more of a fun card with exaggerated, filmy and over the top statements of love.

##

From: Abhishek *(12 minutes later)*

Okay. Fair enough. But do you still have the card...?

##

From: Jyotsna *(The next day)*

What do you think?

##

From: Abhishek *(19 minutes later)*

I think you tore it up and trashed it quite some time back.

##

From: Jyotsna *(That evening)*

You are wrong, mister. I still have it somewhere. ~~Though I did think about throwing it away, I never could bring myself to do it.~~

##

From: Abhishek *(49 minutes later)*

Ha... By the way, we never talked about the card ever.

What did you think about it when I gave it to you ~~— it was the first time I gave someone a Valentine's card?~~

##

From: Jyotsna *(23 minutes later)*

Of course, I loved it.

##

From: Abhishek *(39 minutes later)*

Okay.

But I did think about confessing my love to you...

##

From: Jyotsna *(That afternoon)*

Seriously?

How?

##

From: Abhishek *(An hour and 32 minutes later)*

There is this old Raj Kapoor movie – *Jis Desh Mein Ganga Behti Hain*. In it, Raj Kapoor plays a simpleton called Raju.

Raju likes this girl – Kammo – and asks her to marry him in a very subtle way by suggesting that she become the mother of their yet unborn child.

Here is the link to the YouTube video...

##

From: Jyotsna (*That evening*)

Are you serious?

And you – in your right mind – even thought of confessing your love like that?

##

From: Abhishek(*43 minutes later*)

I thought it would be hilarious...

##

From: Jyotsna (*The next morning*)

I would have hit you on your head with whatever hard object I could find around me if you had done that.

##

From: Abhishek (*26 minutes later*)

Would that have been your way of saying a ‘yes’?

##

From: Jyotsna (*56 minutes later*)

~~It would have always been a yes, Abhi.~~ I would have been pissed that you chose such a ‘unromantic’ way to confess your love.

##

From: Abhishek (*26 minutes later*)

Really? I thought you would be laughing your heart out...

##

From: Jyotsna (56 minutes later)

Yeah... you are right. Perhaps I would even have been laughing had you 'confessed' in that way. I am like this 'running-away-from-anything-romantic' only now.

##

From: Abhishek (32 minutes later)

I juggled with multiple ideas to confess my love to you....

##

From: Jyotsna (53 minutes later)

You had more...? Anything better than this one?

##

From: Abhishek(19 minutes later)

There is one from 'When Harry Met Sally' – have you seen that movie?

##

From: Jyotsna (31 minutes later)

It's been a while. Don't remember it all that much... Which scene from that movie did you have in mind?

##

From: Abhishek (45 minutes later)

In one of the scenes, Harry says – '....when you realize that you want to spend the rest of your life with somebody, you want the rest of your life to start right away...". I loved that line and I wanted to tell that to you. This is the YouTube video link ...

##

From: Jyotsna *(20 minutes later)*

That's a really good line. I loved the movie as well. This is so much better than the 'Kammo' idea.

How did you come to the conclusion that what you felt for me was love?

##

From: Abhishek *(That afternoon)*

'We' were real, weren't we? You and me. Seems like such a long time ago...

When we used to hang out, there wasn't any pressure on me to talk. This wasn't because I did not have anything to say to you, but because I did not have to say anything.

Just sitting there next to you, not having to talk, was happiness for me – it was one of the best feelings I have ever felt...

You know then you have found someone special – when you can just sit there and share your silence with them.

I did not feel the compulsion to confess my love for you. What we felt there was magical. That was enough, more than enough...

##

From: Jyotsna *(Later that night)*

~~Love is too weak a word to describe what you meant to me.~~

I guess everyone should fall in love at least once – to know why one shouldn't.

##

***Kavitha-Abhishek**

From: Kavitha (19 minutes later)

November 2012

Tell me Abhi, why did you want to get married? As in, what made you MARRY at all?

##

From: Abhishek (42 minutes later)

You won't believe it if I told you...

##

From: Kavitha (18 minutes later)

You are back to your believing and not-believing CRAP.

Leave the believing part to me. You tell me NOW what was your reason to get hitched?

##

From: Abhishek (-- minutes later)

~~What can I say? I don't think you will like any of the reasons which I will give.~~

##

From: Kavitha (Two hours and 47 minutes later)

Grr!! Why are you taking SO LONG?

##

From: Abhishek (An hour and 42 minutes later)

Okay, okay...

There was this colleague at my previous job. We used to be together on most projects and ended up hanging out even outside of the office – movies, discotheques, long drives and all that. Things went on well for some time, but then things started falling apart. I couldn't focus on work at all because she

wanted so much attention from me. She wanted me around her all the time. She used to call me needlessly, SMS me all the time, ping me on office chat – she was turning obsessive.

At that point of time, I decided enough is enough. I changed my job, changed my number and got away from her. All that took a few months. Then I thought I should settle down. My uncle then started to circulate my profile and that is how I met you.

##

From: Kavitha *(19 minutes later)*

And you want me to BELIEVE whatever you have just told me?

This can't be true. Please tell me this isn't true. What a lame reason to get married. I can't believe it.

##

From: Abhishek *(20 minutes later)*

I told you – you will not believe what I say. And you already said I should leave the believing part to you.

And Kavi, you asked me something. I answered as well as I could. It is up to you if you want to believe me...

##

From: Kavitha *(52 minutes later)*

That is so TYPICAL of you, Abhi. Everything is a joke to you. I am saying something which is important to me and you have to make a joke out of it all. If you haven't understood me, I am the kind who mean what we say, and I expect you to do so as well.

Get serious sometimes at least, Abhishek. Life is not a joke for a lot of people, and I am not the kind of person who sees humor in everything.

##

From: Abhishek *(31 minutes later)*

Don't be pissed, Kavi. To tell you the truth, I wasn't all that seriously looking out for an alliance. There were other issues I was dealing with. My Uncle was searching for me though. I made up my mind about marriage when the entire family loved your alliance. I thought – I can never get a better girl for myself and I would be compromising if I settle for anybody else. And as they say – the rest is history...

By the way, I have been warning you since forever about me that I say a lot in jest. But did you not enjoy the short story?

##

From: Kavitha *(11 minutes later)*

I HATE you!!! Grr.

##

From: Abhishek *(29 minutes later)*

Your turn now – why did you marry?

##

From: Kavitha *(The next morning)*

You tell me, what CHOICE did I have? In today's world, it is still very difficult for a single woman to live all by herself. In fact, my entire life – ever since I was born, my parents had been preparing for my marriage – saving up, educating me, teaching me how to take care of a house, and all that. I even learnt cooking because I would get married one day and I would have to manage a house on my own.

And then they sent me your photograph.

It made my choice so much easier.

##

From: Abhishek *(14 minutes later)*

Okay....

##

From: Kavitha *(An hour and 37 minutes later)*

Another reason which made me opt for marriage...

There is an interesting perspective on the institution of marriage and why it has been set up the way it has been. It is by someone called *Kenneth Phifer* and it goes like this –

*The institution of marriage was begun that a man and a woman might learn how to love and, in loving, know joy; that a man and a woman might learn how to share pain and loneliness and, in sharing, know strength; that a man and woman might learn how to give and, in giving, know communion. The institution of marriage was begun that a man and woman might through their joy, their strength, and their communion become creators of life itself. Marriage is a high and holy state, to be held in honor among all men and women. –
Kenneth Phifer*

I think it is BEAUTIFULLY written. It gave me enough of a reason to believe in marriage and in fact, I could look forward to getting married.

##

From: Abhishek *(42 minutes later)*

It's beautiful, Kavi. Very nicely written...

By the way, don't you feel attracted to other men?

##

From: Kavitha *(Eight minutes later)*

You know how I feel about Shah Rukh.

But I've had enough of men for this ENTIRE LIFETIME, Abhi. You have been more than enough.

##

*****Kavitha-Nathan**

From: Nathan

November 2012

Hey Kavi...

I reached Brisbane safely a couple of days ago for my Post-Doc.

##

From: Kavitha (*The next morning*)

Good to hear from you and that you reached Brisbane all safe and sound. How is it there? Do you like the university? Met the advisor?

##

From: Nathan (*An hour and 34 minutes later*)

Yes, Brisbane is beautiful. The University campus even more so. Clean air, hardly any pollution, people don't bother you for what you wear or do – very different from back home.

I did meet my advisor as well. He was glad I made it and I was starting off with my post-doc.

##

From: Kavitha (*41 minutes later*)

Glad you like it there. Did you make any friends?

##

From: Nathan (*12 minutes later*)

Met a few *desis* at an event organized by the local Indian Students Association. Most Indians are here for their undergrad or masters. I feel old among them.

##

From: Kavitha (*The next afternoon*)

Hope you like it there.

##

From: Nathan *(12 minutes later)*

Yes, I do. You would have loved it here, though – you have always wanted this kind of freedom and opportunity.

Do you want to come over?

##

From: Kavitha *(The next afternoon)*

You should really stop saying such things, Nathan. I cannot even think in those lines – even in jest. Please!!! You are one true friend and the only one I can talk to about the dilemma I am in and you are saying such things. Don't put me through this.

##

From: Nathan *(12 minutes later)*

Hmm... okay, Kavi. I'm sorry – I understand the dilemma you are in. That was just a weak attempt to cheer you up.

Is your hubby still in touch with his ex?

##

From: Kavitha *(32 minutes later)*

Yes. And I don't know what to do. I wrote to his ex to figure out what the deal was and how to address this situation, but I am lost.

I think my marriage is in big trouble. Using different contexts, I keep telling my husband that there is no chance that I will let him go from my life.

Anyway, you tell me – when are you starting off with your research?

##

From: Nathan *(49 minutes later)*

We have a quarter system here instead of the traditional semester system. The next quarter starts in January which gives me sufficient time to settle down.

How does Abhi's ex sound? ~~Is she a bitch?~~ She has no business getting into a married man's life.

I don't understand why you have to write to her in the first place. What do you want from her?

##

From: Kavitha (*Two hours and 29 minutes later*)

Her name is Jyotsna. Jyotsna and Abhi have been classmates since school and they both seem to know each other quite well. She is very grounded, actually, and that is what makes this situation difficult to handle.

Have you heard of '*Keep your friends close and your enemies closer*'? That is exactly what I am trying to do with Jyotsna.

##

From: Nathan (*49 minutes later*)

~~I don't think writing to this Jyotsna is such a good idea.~~

Your marriage should be fine – maybe you are over-reacting.

##

From: Kavitha (*An hour and 21 minutes later*)

You really think I am the kind who overreacts?

~~I'll try meeting her to get a better handle on things.~~

I am trying to get Abhi to open up to me through the emails we've been writing to each other. But somehow, I am unable to get him to trust me enough to tell me about Jyotsna. He keeps talking in riddles and teeters on the edge of 'believe me' and 'not believe me'.

No matter what, I am not going down without a fight.

##

From: Nathan *(12 minutes later)*

That's the Kavitha I know. You go girl!

By the way, did you know that a different version of you exists in the mind of everyone that has ever met you and it's very different from what you think about yourself.

The person you think you are... does not even exist outside your mind.

##

From: Kavitha *(17 minutes later)*

Pleasure of being 'madmen' eh!!

You are seriously crazy...

##

Jyotsna-Abhishek

From: Jyotsna

November 2012

I will be travelling this Saturday – back after ten days. Will have limited or no access to mail.

##

From: Abhishek (19 minutes later)

Thank you for letting me know. ~~I would have been wondering about unanswered emails from you otherwise....~~

Travelling for work?

##

From: Jyotsna (Later that night)

Nope – taking a break. Visiting Cambodia.

I will be there for a few days away from everything.

##

From: Abhishek (43 minutes later)

Going with a group of friends...?

##

From: Jyotsna (Next morning)

Nope. I don't prefer any baggage around me.

I will be on my own.

##

From: Abhishek (53 minutes later)

All by yourself? ~~And you don't seem worried at all...~~

##

From: Jyotsna (14 minutes later)

I've done this quite a few times. Most in my circle are married and with kids, and I am usually the only single one. I've been traveling alone for the past five years.

I like doing this a lot, actually.

##

From: Abhishek (2 hours later)

You like traveling alone? Isn't it a torture....?

##

From: Jyotsna (14 minutes later)

There is this quote – *'Of all the books in this world, the best stories are found between the pages of a passport.'*

I've taken the quote seriously.

Someday when I die, my life will flash before my eyes. I want to make sure it's worth watching.

##

From: Abhishek (21 minutes later)

You really love to travel, eh...?

##

From: Jyotsna (58 minutes later)

Yes. There was a time after you left, on most days I used to feel really low. The only time I used to feel better was when I was planning to travel and when I subsequently travelled – either with parents, extended family or on my own.

Now that habit has stuck, and I love to travel whenever I can – even when I can't take my parents along. It's one of the few things that brightens me up.

##

From: Abhishek *(17 minutes later)*

Good to know, Jyotsna. Really happy for you. Have a great trip.

##

From: Jyotsna *(The next afternoon)*

Thank you.

When I travel, visiting all these different places in India and abroad, I realize however sad or imperfect my life may be, it has never failed to be beautiful.

##

***Kavitha-Abhishek**

From: Kavitha

November 2012

In all these years I've known you, I see this deep sadness within you. I can see it in your eyes. I strongly feel it's not about you losing your parents, it's about something else.

Tell me this sweetheart, what is standing between you and your happiness? What is stopping you from being genuinely happy? When was the last time you were genuinely happy?

##

From: Abhishek (41 minutes later)

Hmm... Is this one of those 36 questions?

##

From: Kavitha (30 minutes later)

Yes, of course. Are you constantly checking?

##

From: Abhishek (41 minutes later)

No, but still...

Anyway, the last time I was 'over-the-moon' happy was when Ritu was born.

##

From: Kavitha (30 minutes later)

That was a good five years ago.

##

From: Abhishek (22 minutes later)

Yes, nothing comes close to the moment when Ritu came into our lives...

##

From: Kavitha (*Eight minutes later*)

Don't tell me until we have another child, you won't be so happy again?

##

From: Abhishek (*The next day*)

Nothing like that. But I understand what you are trying to say...

Maybe I am one of those who are simply too afraid to be happy. Perhaps I have already passed the happiest point in my life and I did not even realize it.

##

From: Kavitha (*An hour and 37 minutes later*)

So, what if you have passed the happiest point in your life? It doesn't mean you have to live in sadness until you die.

Did you know there is a name for ~~people like you~~ those who feel this way about happiness and are afraid to be happy – Cherophobia. People with this condition are afraid of being happy because they think something tragic is going to happen soon.

##

From: Abhishek (*54 minutes later*)

Hmm... When we were kids, it was ingrained within us that we should not laugh too much. If we did so, we will exhaust the quota of our happiness and we will end up crying soon. Perhaps my present state is its fallout.

##

From: Kavitha (*49 minutes later*)

Yes, seems like it. But what you were told about laughing too much and happiness isn't true. You know now, don't you? You should let yourself be happy now.

##

From: Abhishek *(33 minutes later)*

I agree. Because it has been conditioned so much, it is difficult to break this habit.

##

From: Kavitha *(11 minutes later)*

You should try, Abhi.

##

From: Abhishek *(10 minutes later)*

Yes, I will, Kavi. I will...

##

From: Kavitha *(42 minutes later)*

By the way, I don't see you wearing formals to the office these days – I see you mostly in t-shirts and cargos. You look good in them.

Getting braver, eh!!

##

From: Abhishek *(An hour and 12 minutes later)*

You noticed :-) My boss gives me the evil eye, but I think he should not mind it all that much as long as I deliver what he wants on time.

And I see you wearing jeans and kurtas a lot more than you wearing salwar-kameez these days. The first set of steps for the both of us to get braver.

##

From: Kavitha *(30 minutes later)*

Yes, Abhi. Baby steps. Glad we are headed that way.

##

From: Abhishek (*49 minutes later*)

So, when do you want to get 'completely' drunk? Should I organize a booze party with friends I know who drink?

##

From: Kavitha (*Four minutes later*)

No way. I am not so brave yet. Even if I want to get drunk, it will be in your company only – I don't want anyone else around, especially someone from your friend's circle.

Drop that idea. Let's continue with these baby steps for now.

##

Kavitha-Jyotsna

From: Kavitha

November 2012

Hi Jyotsna,

Do you want to meet? Just the two of us...

##

From: Jyotsna (*That evening*)

I live in Kolkata – and you guys live in Bangalore. It would be difficult to meet anyhow.

But why do you want to meet me, Kavitha? ~~I really don't see a point – we hardly have anything to say over these emails and there is constant friction between us. I don't see the benefit of the two of us meeting.~~

##

From: Kavitha (*Next morning*)

Why not? We could just catch up – and you wanted to meet me.

##

From: Jyotsna (*Three hours later*)

Ah, that. I wanted to meet the both of you.

I am not sure if it is a good idea if just the two of us meet I don't think Abhi will be comfortable with just the two of us meeting up. ~~Not just Abhi, I am not comfortable either.~~

##

From: Kavitha (*13 minutes later*)

Abhi need not know. I could come down to Kolkata and we could hang out for a day.

##

From: Jyotsna (*That night*)

Abhi will know somehow, someday. And it will hurt him.

##

From: Kavitha (21 minutes later)

Abhi doesn't get hurt that easily. We should meet up.

##

From: Jyotsna (Next morning)

He does, Kavitha. He just doesn't show it at all. He used to be such a baby in school bawling, screaming and shouting at the slightest pain, especially around the time his mother passed away. But by the time he got to college, he became a pro at hiding hurt.

Pretending that it doesn't hurt is even more painful than the hurt itself. Let us not put Abhi through this.

And, believe me, the two of us meeting would unnecessarily complicate things. He would think that we are playing him behind his back. It would be terrible especially since we are writing to each other without him knowing about it.

##

From: Kavitha (17 minutes later)

Aww!! It's nice you still are so concerned about him.

But come on, be a sport. Let's plan and meet up.

##

From: Jyotsna (An hour later)

~~I am surprised at your indifference to Abhi on this, Kavitha.~~

I am not at all comfortable with this idea. Let's drop it.

##

From: Kavitha (45 minutes later)

Okay, Jyotsna.

Tell me this though – how did Abhi cope with his mother passing away? It must have been very difficult. I can't even imagine what he must have gone through.

##

From: Jyotsna (*That evening*)

Yes, Kavitha. Losing a mother at such a young age is a tragedy. And Abhi is an only child – he was very attached to his mother.

It was around that time he got interested in art. It became an outlet for him to express himself amidst all that he was going through.

That way, I must appreciate Abhi's father stepping up. He did not remarry and brought Abhi up on his own – and did a great job at that.

##

From: Kavitha (*Two hours and 10 minutes later*)

Agree.

~~As you had said,~~ Having kids doesn't make someone a father. Raising them does.

##

Jyotsna-Abhishek

From: Abhishek

November 2012

My heart seems heavy almost all the time. There is this feeling of sadness within me that doesn't seem to go away - even though I am married, with a kid and I have connected with you again after all these years...

Looking back at my life, sometimes I feel like I have messed up big time somewhere. That I am living this version of my life – a life which has turned into something which I never intended – and am struggling to get it back on track...

And the pivotal moment was when I walked away from you.

##

From: Jyotsna (*The next day*)

You did what you thought was right then. I don't think you should put the entire blame of your life not being where you want it to be, to the moment when you walked away from me.

You are not the only one who feels deep sadness as you grow older. Most people don't grow up. They settle down in mediocre jobs, get married, have children, pay bills, and call that maturity.

All that is – is just aging.

That is the source of all unhappiness in people.

And, like you, they all die wondering maybe if I had done this or that, life would have been different.

Many are stuck in this rut and see no way out. Most don't even realize they are stuck and if they are not careful, they can get stuck there forever.

##

From: Abhishek (*An hour 46 minutes later*)

Hmm... I seem to be one of those who are stuck.

Sometimes I see someone or even a group of people laughing away – I think, 'I haven't done that in a really long time'.

I don't seem to connect with most people around me these days.

##

From: Jyotsna (*That night*)

That you do not feel like laughing as much anymore is the most telling sign you are getting older.

Life humbles you deeply as you grow older and you don't even feel like wasting your time on all the trivialities and the nonsense going around you.

##

From: Abhishek (*49 minutes later*)

Hmm... Interesting perspective.

Is that where you think you are now?

##

From: Jyotsna (*The next morning*)

I am getting there.

I got used to your absence over all these years, like I had got used to your presence while growing up.

I tried to close all those doors which don't mean anything to me anymore. And then you appear and open one up which I have been trying so hard to close for a really long time.

##

***Kavitha-Abhishek**

From: Kavitha

December 2012

Abhi, as I grow older, I realize there are very few people who understand me – you are among those selected few who do. And you know, you seem to be the only friend I have these days. There is nobody else I can talk to as freely as I can with you.

##

From: Abhishek (21 minutes later)

Is that so, Kavi? I thought you connected well with your colleagues at work...

##

From: Kavitha (19 minutes later)

No, I don't connect with my colleagues all that much.

Especially after we started to write emails to each other, it is with only you I connect the most.

When I was younger, I believed that there'll be many people I'll connect deeply with. Later in life, I realized it only happens rarely. You are that connection for me.

##

From: Abhishek (21 minutes later)

Yes, Kavi, I agree. We seem to connect better through these emails...

##

From: Kavitha (19 minutes later)

Yes, life has been a lot smoother.

##

From: Abhishek (24 minutes later)

Agree. And the neighbors are at peace as well. ;-) ;-)

##

From: Kavitha (*An hour and 37 minutes later*)

You are worried about neighbors again. Grr!!

##

From: Abhishek (*24 minutes later*)

Ha...

So, are we done with the 36 Questions?

##

From: Kavitha (*An hour and 37 minutes later*)

No, Abhi. We are probably about HALFWAY through them. I am surprised that you thought they were done. ~~I am not letting you off the hook until I get all the answers.~~

##

From: Abhishek (*24 minutes later*)

Just halfway? I thought you had asked me enough questions already...

##

From: Kavitha (*An hour and 37 minutes later*)

No way. I still have questions – and importantly, I don't have all the ANSWERS yet.

Tell me this – what is something you are most proud of?

##

From: Abhishek (*The next day*)

Hmm...

If you haven't noticed it already, I am proud of you and what you have achieved so far.

I am proud of Ritu and how we are putting in the effort to bring her up right.

I also take pride in the work I deliver at office. If I didn't, I would probably have lost my job by now.

I am proud of some of the paintings I have done.

Your turn now. What is it that you are proud of?

##

From: Kavitha (*An hour and 51 minutes later*)

Of all the things I am proud of, I am most proud of us – about how we are trying to work around the difficult times in our marriage.

About how we are bringing up Ritu.

About how we accommodate each other as working professionals.

And I am also proud of myself – for finding someone like you to be a part of my life.

##

From: Abhishek (*49 minutes later*)

Hmm... Sometimes I don't know if you are saying the truth or just pulling my leg.

##

From: Kavitha (*33 minutes later*)

You thought only you could say things in jest? ;-)

##

From: Abhishek (*31 minutes later*)

Ha....

##

*****Kavitha-Nathan**

From: Kavitha

December 2012

I wanted to meet Jyotsna. She lives in Kolkata. I even offered to fly down and meet her – she wasn't willing to meet up.

She seems sensible – perhaps even more than me.

##

From: Nathan *(18 minutes later)*

I don't think you would have flown to Kolkata even if Jyotsna had agreed. You would have realized it would have been a futile trip.

We can conclude Jyotsna is not a threat to your marriage, though.

~~And I do really think you should stop writing to this Jyotsna. Just let her go. It sounds really sad that you are writing to your husband's ex.~~

##

From: Kavitha *(39 minutes later)*

Yes, you are right. I would not have actually flown down to Kolkata.

And you know what – I do believe that Jyotsna is sane enough to not get involved with a married man.

What I've been fretting about is my husband and how our relationship is going is.

##

From: Nathan *(An hour and 41 minutes)*

Don't think you need to worry about Abhi too much. If Jyotsna is sane enough, he will stay put as well.

What exactly are you worried about?

##

From: Kavitha *(14 minutes later)*

I cannot bear my husband spending time writing to another woman more than he has been speaking with me and having all these conversations about everything and anything under the sun.

I am just unable to accept such a thing happening in my marriage and more than that, I am unable to just things be and not do anything.

##

From: Nathan *(38 minutes later)*

Hmm...

But has Abhi been opening up to you? Any signs you are making progress?

##

From: Kavitha *(The next morning)*

Yes, Abhi is opening up but I am not sure what to believe. He has talked about his crushes from the past – rather about the crushes which girls had on him.

But he is not admitting he got serious or was in any kind of relationship with any girl which I know about from his emails to Jyotsna.

I honestly don't know what else I could do to get his trust. I don't remember doing anything drastic that he lost confidence in me in the first place.

##

From: Nathan *(That evening)*

~~Maybe it's just your personality or maybe you would have done something unconsciously or perhaps that's how the circumstances in your marriage have been which have created this divide.~~

It's probably him, Kavi. Perhaps he has this deeply ingrained perception about marriage – that husbands need to behave a certain way; and that they aren't supposed to talk about their past relationships with their wives.

##

From: Kavitha (*That night*)

That might be a reason. But I've been trying really hard to be as honest with him as possible. I've told him everything about my past – not that there was anything significant, but still.

This Jyotsna episode has been getting on my nerves.

How he hasn't told me yet about such a significant relationship from his past which is still affecting him, is beyond me.

##

From: Nathan (*The next afternoon*)

I understand. Keep at it. Be honest. I am sure things will fall in place.

Sometimes, you can do everything right, and yet things will still go wrong. It's not your fault. Don't blame yourself. But the key here is to never stop doing what is right.

I am here – in case you want to talk more.

##

From: Kavitha (*27 minutes later*)

Agree... Thanks for being there, Nathan...

##

From: Nathan (*35 minutes later*)

You are welcome.

But why don't you write to Jyotsna directly and ask her to get out of your lives?

##

From: Kavitha (*The next morning*)

That's probably the best way forward, I guess.

##

From: Nathan (*The next afternoon*)

You will thank me for it.

By the way, do you know what the three stages of life are? No Googling...!!!

##

From: Kavitha (*27 minutes later*)

Hmm... Childhood, Adulthood and Old age...

##

From: Nathan (*The next afternoon*)

Wrong. They are...

1. Birth
2. What the hell is going on!?!?
3. Death

##

Jyotsna-Abhishek

From: Abhishek

December 2012

Happy birthday, Jo...

##

From: Jyotsna (*An hour and 11 minutes later*)

Thank you for your wishes, Abhi.

##

From: Abhishek (*41 minutes later*)

Both of us are about the same age. You are thirty-six now... How does it feel?

##

From: Jyotsna (*Two hours and 19 minutes later*)

You are just a few months older – so yes, the both of us are thirty-six now.

Age has become just a number now for me, though.

##

From: Abhishek (*16 minutes later*)

Do you realize, we are younger now on this day than we will ever possibly be?

We have just a little more time left on this earth. It is running out quicker than it ever did and there is nothing we can do to stop it...

##

From: Jyotsna (*The next day*)

Let me ask you this – have you ever seen any other creature show any concern towards time? Birds, animals, fishes – none of them seem to worry about time.

It is only man who has this terrible fear no other creature on this earth has – the fear of their time running out.

##

From: Abhishek *(58 minutes later)*

Hmm... I never thought about time this way.

##

From: Jyotsna *(45 minutes later)*

Think about it, almost every single action of a human being seems to be driven by this worry about time running out.

Though we are destined to be in this universe for a mere uneventful fraction of a time, we seem to be always in a hurry.

And we make all this fuss around birthdays.

##

From: Abhishek *(18 minutes later)*

What are you saying – that we should stop celebrating such landmarks and stop wishing each other? Those are small moments of happiness, and I am those who make a special effort to remember these birthdays. Thanks to Facebook reminders, I don't have to memorize them...

I used to maintain a list of birthdays of people close to me – have hardly referred to it.

##

From: Jyotsna *(An hour and 19 minutes later)*

All I am saying is, all these birthdays aren't such a big deal and there shouldn't be all that pressure on us to remember and celebrate them.

By the way, how do you find the time to write back to me? The email frequency between us has definitely increased.

##

From: Abhishek (22 minutes later)

I work out of home once or twice a week, at least. In Bangalore, letting employees work at home once a week has become a norm at most companies. I save more than two hours on commute and because of this, I get plenty of time not just to complete my work but to write to you as well.

Even otherwise, I do take a break once in a while when working out of office and write back to you. I can't stare at graphics, icons and logos all the time...

##

From: Jyotsna (12 minutes later)

Okay. Seems like you are working from home today as well.

##

From: Abhishek (13 minutes later)

Yes, I am. Not just me, my entire team has chosen to work from home today.

But how did your birthday go, though? Phone flooded with birthday messages...?

##

From: Jyotsna (23 minutes later)

Ha. Back to square one then...

Yes, got a few messages from extended family and some acquaintances at work.

##

From: Abhishek (19 minutes later)

If you had to wish for one problem to go away, what would it be?

##

From: Jyotsna (32 minutes later)

You, probably.

##

From: Abhishek *(19 minutes later)*

~~Why do you make me even more miserable than I already am?~~

I asked 'what', not 'who'.

I should have expected your answer, though...

Did you at least like how your birthday went?

##

From: Jyotsna *(That evening)*

It was peaceful and uneventful – just how I like it.

##

From: Abhishek *(16 minutes later)*

Okay....

I just hope you will stop being pissed at me.

##

From: Jyotsna *(Late that night)*

It was you who put me there, remember?

##

From: Abhishek *(The next morning)*

Which is what I am trying to do – stop you from being pissed at me and the rest of the world.

Please, for God's sake, don't carry this hurt in your heart. Not for anyone else, but do this for God's sake...

There is so much more to your life.

##

From: Jyotsna (*That afternoon*)

Why God's sake, Abhi? Why do you want to involve God in this?

##

From: Abhishek (*13 minutes later*)

Why not? I thought at least in 'His' name, you will change for the better. 'For old times' sake' did not have any effect on you.

Don't tell me you have turned into an atheist now...

##

From: Jyotsna (*21 minutes later*)

No, it's nothing like I've turned into an atheist. How I perceive 'Him' has changed.

##

From: Abhishek (*15 minutes later*)

What do you mean? You don't pray or worship any longer...?

##

From: Jyotsna (*That night*)

That's the perspective that is different now.

Most of us choose to believe in a God who somehow needs something – especially from us.

We have been taught all our lives God has to be feared, for He is a vengeful God. We have to live in fear of God's wrath and should be obedient to God's commands. We need to pray to Him, please Him and demonstrate our submissiveness in different ways. Or else...

It is ingrained within us if He doesn't get what He expects from us, then His feelings would be hurt and He would punish those who did not give Him what he expected.

##

From: Abhishek *(19 minutes later)*

Agree to an extent. There are a lot of times I have prayed in fear, so God doesn't let anything bad happen to me or my family's well-being... I also pray for my peace of mind.

##

From: Jyotsna *(That afternoon)*

Think about it!! Why should you even feel compelled to pray for your peace of mind?

Why would God want your worship? Why would He need your obedience? Why would He need you to serve Him? What iota of benefit would God get from your worship, your obedience or your subservience to Him?

##

From: Abhishek *(19 minutes later)*

Hmm... You have a point there.

If you were in front of me, Jyotsna, you would have seen me shaking my head in utter disbelief – disbelief about how much I thought I knew you and how much you aren't that person anymore.

##

***Kavitha-Abhishek**

From: Kavitha

December 2012

So how is it working from home today? Has the maid come?

##

From: Abhishek (23 minutes later)

Are these questions part of your set of 36? ;-) ;-)

Yes, the maid came early today. She wanted money for some groceries, so I gave it to her.

I miss interacting with colleagues while working from home, but it is okay considering I don't have to spend more than two hours in traffic and pollution.

##

From: Kavitha (33 minutes later)

Come on – how can questions about working from home and the maid be a part of the set of 36?

When you work from home, I have such a hard time dragging myself to work – I WISH I could stay back home with you and keep you company. Would I be too much of a distraction?

##

From: Abhishek (21 minutes later)

Kavi, there is no chance you cannot be a distraction.

But maybe you should work at home too sometimes....

##

From: Kavitha (16 minutes later)

Hmm '...maybe', 'sometimes'....? Looks like you aren't enthusiastic at all about wanting me to wfh.

But tell me this – God forbid, if this were the last day of your life, would you want to do what you are about to do today?

##

From: Abhishek (*The next morning*)

Hmm... Back to the '36 questions'....

If I knew for sure this were the last day of my life, then I would – of course – not do what I was about to do. I would spend the day with you guys – as they say, 'to set the house in order' and for goodbyes.

But I have – in a way – made peace with life. I am trying to resolve the conflicts in my life and undoing some of the regrets I am living with.

~~Perhaps God just put us here on this earth for his entertainment. And on the last day of my life, I would wonder if I entertained him enough...~~

If my last day comes along, at least I will die with the thought I tried.

What about you?

##

From: Kavitha (*48 minutes later*)

I never knew you thought so deeply, Abhi.

Yes, as you said, if it was guaranteed today was the last day of my life, I would spend it with you guys – no doubts about it – and say my goodbyes.

On some days, I think about the purpose of life and why we are all here if we have to die someday.

##

From: Abhishek (*33 minutes later*)

Consider this, you still watch a movie even though you know it will end, right? Why do you do it..?

##

From: Kavitha (*15 minutes later*)

I get it. But watching a three-hour movie is not the same as experiencing life, right?

##

From: Abhishek (40 minutes later)

Agree, but like a movie ends, our life ends too. And like every movie, every life is different. Each one of us goes through and lives the experience of our own life.

We need to realize – through this question – if we are living like we want to.

##

From: Kavitha (39 minutes later)

I understand now.

On some days, I detest going to work. I absolutely hate looking at my Boss's face and taking instructions from him.

I like what I do, but my boss is making my life miserable.

I have been feeling this for quite some time now and thanks to this discussion, I think it is time that I do something about it.

What about you?

##

From: Abhishek (47 minutes later)

As of now, there isn't much I like to change about my life.

Perhaps I would like to spend more time with Ritu than I do now, play TT much more often, paint more than what I do now...

But most of the time, I am trying to do what I like and what I want to do.

I wish for a good life, Kavi, not necessarily long. I want to live, not just survive.

##

From: Kavitha (51 minutes later)

That's good, Abhi.

Am happy for you that you are able to do what you want to. I hope to I get to where you are someday.

##

*****Nathan-Kavitha**

From: Nathan

December 2012

Hey Kavi...

You know, you hold a special place in my heart. You always have.

At any point in your life, if you feel you don't want to suffer anymore because of the condition your marriage is in, just know that you and Ritu can come to me.

The three of us can make a fresh start here in Australia.

You don't have to reply to this mail.

I wanted you to know you and Ritu have an option – that is all.

##

Kavitha-Jyotsna

From: Kavitha

December 2012

Hi Jyotsna... Do you remember Abhi as being a cheerful guy? Did you understand his humor?

##

From: Jyotsna (*That evening*)

He was cheerful enough. I do remember Abhi having a very different sense of humor.

What about you? Does he make you laugh?

##

From: Kavitha (*Three hours and 39 minutes later*)

He tries. He honestly does.

Our wavelengths are a little off. Even after all these years of marriage, he is still figuring out what kind of humor makes me laugh and what kind pisses me off. He pisses me off a lot more times, though.

##

From: Jyotsna (*An hour and 21 minutes later*)

After a while, you just want to be with the one who makes you laugh – or at least with someone who tries to, in Abhi's case.

Research shows women like men who make them laugh. Women have evolved to find intelligence attractive because clever guys are better at providing for their families. Men who can make women laugh seem smarter than the ones who can't.

##

From: Kavitha (*The next day*)

Hmm...

By the way, I think I've figured out Abhi just a little more.

He's been searching for you in me. He expects to connect with me in the same way he did with you and is saddened when he isn't able to.

He goes around with this invisible mask which never lets me get through to him.

As long as he tries to find you in me, he can never get through to me.

The tragedy of my life.

##

Jyotsna-Abhishek

From: Abhishek

December 2012

Since when did you start thinking all this differently?

Does a specific time come to your mind when you realized that there is this transformation in the way you think...?

##

From: Jyotsna (*An hour and 23 minutes later*)

After you went away, I was left brooding for quite a while. I waited for you for a really long time. It is surprising how much of our lives are spent waiting for people to come back to us.

But around the time I entered my thirties, it has been a sea of change in how I've started to think.

There are always these battles being fought – one fought between us and the outside world and then there are those which fought within us, between our hearts and our heads. These battles which are fought within us are the toughest of all.

It's only after I turned thirty, I began to let my head win these battles.

##

From: Abhishek (*10 minutes later*)

Thirties... Hmm.

##

From: Jyotsna (*Two hours and 32 minutes later*)

Yep...

The thirties – at least in my case – have been a lot about realization.

Twenties were all about hope.

Hope is a dangerous thing. Hope can drive anyone insane. One of the things I hoped for – with all my heart – was for you to come back and somehow, we would be together and happy again.

Once I hit my thirties, I realized how dumb it was to hope and I've been so so so stupid all along.

##

*Kavitha-Abhishek

From: Abhishek

December 2012

Do you realize you are gonna turn thirty-five soon...?

##

From: Kavitha (27 minutes later)

Yes, Abhi. Thirty-five years. Time is just going by.

Remember people used to ask us what we wanted to be when we grew up? We used to have all these dreams of becoming Doctors or Engineers or Pilots.

I think we have 'grown up' now and need to evaluate if what we are happy with what we have become.

##

From: Abhishek (An hour and 51 minutes later)

Hmm... You are right.

I have no problems with what I have become. I have accepted that this is perhaps the best I could be, under the circumstances I have been through and the choices I had.

##

From: Kavitha (25 minutes later)

Really??? A Graphic Designer at an Ad Agency is the best you could have become? Come on – you are a painter – and not a bad one at that. You are better than this.

##

From: Abhishek (26 minutes later)

The dream of becoming a worthwhile artist is still alive, though.... Still working on it.

##

From: Kavitha (An hour and 13 minutes later)

But we are running out of time, Abhi. Something needs to be done. And soon.

Your lack of dedication is an absolute INSULT to those who believe in you.

##

From: Abhishek (*Two hours and 11 minutes later*)

Okay.... I agree that I do need to do something, but all this thing about insult and belief is too scary. I can't paint or live life with such a weight on my head.

##

From: Kavitha (*25 minutes later*)

Don't give me all that. Do what you have to do.

##

From: Abhishek (*An hour and 17 minutes later*)

Why have I suddenly become the focus of attention here? It's your birthday coming up, right? Let us not think about these things right now.

Let us do something fun this weekend for your birthday...

##

From: Kavitha (*25 minutes later*)

Alright.

Do you know Abhi, lying is the most fun a girl can have without taking her clothes off. ;-)

##

From: Abhishek (*21 minutes later*)

Lying – as in telling lies?

##

From: Kavitha *(Four minutes later)*

Yes!!

##

From: Abhishek *(26 minutes later)*

So, do you have fun lying...?

##

From: Kavitha *(The next morning)*

You know me Abhi. I am not into that kind of 'fun' ;-)

In this world though, I don't think people can get by with absolute honesty in every single situation.

But, can you guess, what is the BIGGEST punishment a habitual liar can get?

##

From: Abhishek *(27 minutes later)*

I don't know.... He should be punished in a way he doesn't forget and subsequently stops lying?

##

From: Kavitha *(44 minutes later)*

Nah!! The worst punishment for a liar is self-inflicted.

A liar cannot believe anyone else.

If a liar habitually lies, he thinks that he is being lied to on a regular basis as well. That is a liar's worst punishment.

It would be such a torture to live with the feeling that you cannot believe what anyone else says.

##

From: Abhishek *(14 minutes later)*

Agree... Life would become a living hell for someone who isn't able to trust anybody.

##

From: Kavitha (19 minutes later)

I feel happy, though, to hear from all my old friends on my birthday.

##

From: Abhishek (1 hour 9 minutes later)

Same here. I still look forward to the wishes because they are now the few occasions, I get to hear from people who know me like I originally was....

People now do not seem to know the real me – I have a mask of seriousness and maturity which I need to lean on, to lead a life. I am scared of taking this mask off – of letting my guard down – lest I be hurt.

##

From: Kavitha (11 minutes later)

Is that the mask I see every single day?

##

From: Abhishek (15 minutes later)

The mask is what I need on me every single day at home to maintain peace ~~and not show the stress I am going through every day.~~

#

From: Kavitha (11 minutes later)

Don't you know what is even more painful than the hurt – it's putting on a mask and pretending it doesn't hurt. A person suffers so much more in silence.

Not just that, if you bottle yourself up like that, then people will completely misunderstand you and make the wrong assumptions.

We have been together all these years and I've no idea what you are going through.

I am your wife, but I don't think I've ever known the REAL YOU ever.

##

From: Abhishek (13 minutes later)

The mask comes on, on its own, Kavi. I can't help it.

##

From: Kavitha (11 minutes later)

Would I ever see you without it? At least for some days in this lifetime?

##

From: Abhishek (24 minutes later)

I don't know. Maybe someday – can't be sure when. I'll try. I promise, I will.

These emails have been helping for sure. We'll get there.

What about you? Do you wear such masks?

##

From: Kavitha (Four minutes later)

Not with you... Never with you.

##

***Kavitha-Nathan

From: Nathan

December 2012

I've been wondering, wouldn't it be great if we start referring to 'age' as 'levels'?

"I am at level 38" sounds more badass than just being an old person.

##

From: Kavitha (*That afternoon*)

Right... It would be so much more awesome for you saying you completed PhD at the 38th level.

~~And that you are still single at the 38th level — that doesn't sound good at all.~~

##

From: Nathan (*32 minutes later*)

Anyway, what do Abhi and Jyotsna talk about in their emails? Those emails are still on, right?

##

From: Kavitha (*That night*)

Yes, the emails are still on. It bothers me that Abhi feels like talking to Jyotsna so much and not with me.

##

From: Nathan (*An hour later*)

That's a natural reaction. If it did not bother you, then I would have thought something is wrong with you.

##

From: Nathan (*That evening*)

You are still writing to Jyotsna?

##

From: Kavitha *(30 minutes later)*

Yes, I am writing to her.

##

From: Nathan *(The next morning)*

I really don't see a point why you have to write to Jyotsna. I would recommend that you stop writing to her. Don't give her undue importance. ~~Your marriage is not at risk from what you have told me — so stop being paranoid about it.~~

##

From: Kavitha *(30 minutes later)*

Hmm... You may be right.

But I feel if I can somehow connect to Jyotsna and she sees me as another human being – and a woman like her – not just as 'Abhi's wife', then she will not do anything drastic like breaking up a marriage.

I have to do something about my marriage.

##

From: Nathan *(The next morning)*

Hmm... Okay, Kavi. If that is how you feel about this.

Love makes things so complicated.

##

From: Kavitha *(30 minutes later)*

Yes, love makes life so complicated.

##

From: Nathan *(That afternoon)*

Do you want to guess why this complication could actually be good about love and everything that revolves around it?

##

From: Kavitha (*That night*)

Hmm... Love should be simple right? I don't see any good if it gets to be complicated.

##

From: Nathan (*The next morning*)

Because if love is too simple, there is no thrill and people have no reason to fall in love.

And if you have no reason to try, you don't.

##

Kavitha-Jyotsna

From: Kavitha

December 2012

Hi Jyotsna,

The two of you know each other from school, right?

Abhi told me there was this girl in 6th grade who got really serious about having matched 'Love' on the FLAMES game with him. And she wanted him to take it seriously.

Is this true?

##

From: Jyotsna (*The next day*)

Yes, there was this girl who went overboard on matching 'Love' with Abhi on that stupid game.

##

From: Kavitha (*An hour and 19 minutes later*)

Abhi wasn't making it up then?

##

From: Jyotsna (*34 minutes later*)

No, he wasn't... It's indeed true.

##

From: Kavitha (*Two hours and 34 minutes later*)

What about the incident from high school where this girl (supposedly) had a huge crush on Abhi, used to continuously stare at him and he had to wink at her to keep her away?

##

From: Jyotsna (*That night*)

Yes, I know the girl.

Everybody in the class knew she had a crush on Abhi, and she used to stare at him ALL THE TIME.

There were stories he did wink at her with the intent it would stop her from staring at him.

##

From: Kavitha (*The next morning*)

Seriously? When Abhi told me about it, I simply could not believe he could wink at someone. It is so unlike him, don't you think?

##

From: Jyotsna (*45 minutes later*)

Yes, winking at someone is so unlike him. But the rumors that he winked at the girl are true then.

##

From: Kavitha (*An hour and 40 minutes later*)

Seems like it.

##

From: Jyotsna (*37 minutes later*)

Who else did Abhi admit to you about?

##

From: Kavitha (*Later that evening*)

He was mentioning about some girl giving him a red rose on rose day during the first year of college.

##

From: Jyotsna (*That night*)

Ah... He admitted to that one, too? Yes, it's true.

##

From: Kavitha (*The next morning*)

What are you telling me? Some girl in college thought Abhi was so worthwhile that she gave him a red rose on rose day?

I could not believe him and am simply unable to believe what you are saying.

##

From: Jyotsna (*42 minutes later*)

Don't tell him this – the girl was ragged by the seniors into giving a rose to him. The seniors had dared her to give a rose to some guy in the college. He suspects something like this could have happened, but he isn't sure.

##

From: Kavitha (*31 minutes later*)

But why did the girl pick Abhi for the bet?

##

From: Jyotsna (*That afternoon*)

Do you have any doubts that a girl could have picked Abhi to give a rose to? Even without a bet?

##

From: Kavitha (*21 minutes later*)

You are right. I can only imagine how popular Abhi might have been in college.

Abhi has always been so unassuming about how handsome he is and that adds to his overall charm.

I am very surprised though he never mentioned you, especially since the two of you have known each other since school days.

##

From: Jyotsna (*Two hours and 45 minutes later*)

I've asked Abhi about it. He said his marriage is very different and that he did not want to ruin things between the two of you.

By the way, did he tell you about anybody else?

##

From: Kavitha (*33 minutes later*)

Abhi was mentioning about a girl at work who he hung out with – went to movies, disco, long drives. She then became so obsessive about him, he had to change his job and his number. Once he got her off his back, he agreed to an arranged marriage and settled down when my alliance came through.

##

From: Jyotsna (*The next morning*)

Wow... What a story!!!

I don't know how much truth is in this because I had moved to Kolkata by then.

But if this story is true, then it is very unlike the Abhi I know.

He would not awaken another woman's love without the intention of loving her.

Especially after what he went through with me.

##

Jyotsna-Abhishek

From: Jyotsna

December 2012

Tell me this, after all these years of marriage, do you still find Kavitha beautiful?

##

From: Abhishek (48 minutes later)

Yes, I do.

Age and childbirth have had their side-effects, but she is indeed beautiful.

~~She is the re-incarnation of 'Goddess Kali' though when she is angry, is fighting with and screaming at me, but I guess that is a part of who she is, her overall personality.~~

##

From: Jyotsna (An hour and 21 minutes later)

Hmm... Okay.

The thing about beauty is that it is directly connected to how a person thinks.

Most people are confused between looking pretty and actually being beautiful – most think the two of them are the same.

A person who has good thoughts can never be ugly.

But, when a person has ugly thoughts every day, week, month and the year around, it starts to show up on the person, their personality and how they conduct themselves. Such a person can never be beautiful in the truest sense of the word.

##

From: Abhishek (37 minutes later)

That is so true.

Kavi is a good person. She tries to do the right thing always – at least from what I know. She is a good mother and a good wife as well.

I have come to know some very attractive women, but somehow, they are so crooked in the way they think and how they conduct themselves, that it is an instant turn off.

##

From: Jyotsna *(30 minutes later)*

Yep... no amount of makeup will give a person the kind of radiance which comes out from thoughts which are pure and good.

A woman's real beauty is in the eyes – always in the eyes. It never goes away with age.

Also, do you know what could go wrong with pretty girls – especially if they know they are attractive, and the world addresses them for their beauty first and everything else about them next?

##

From: Abhishek *(42 minutes later)*

I know where this is going. You are probably going to say that these pretty girls turn out to be snobbish and arrogant.

##

From: Jyotsna *(An hour and 36 minutes later)*

You are right. These girls make the prettiness factor to be so much a part of their personality, they fail to develop one which is independent of it.

They take themselves so seriously that they won't be able to develop a sense of humor either, end up being such bores and often fail to connect deeply with another human being.

##

***Kavitha-Abhishek**

From: Abhishek

December 2012

We haven't decided yet – what do you want for your birthday?

##

From: Kavitha *(15 minutes later)*

I don't want anything sweetheart.

When your alliance came and when we got married, I used to look at you and wonder, out of all the faces in the world, how did I find one that was so perfect for me.

I have all I want.

##

From: Abhishek *(49 minutes later)*

Ohoo...

That's all nice, Kavi. But we still have to live in this world.

##

From: Kavitha *(24 minutes later)*

I don't know if you have understood me till now – I don't need fancy things to be happy. Happiness for me is to be with Ritu and you in our own cozy home where we can be ourselves and take care of one another. This is all I want.

##

From: Abhishek *(An hour and 13 minutes later)*

I don't deny anything you've said, Kavi. But what I mean is, we still need few things which would let us get through life with a lot more convenience.

I know you've had your eyes on that iPhone since a while now. Do you want it? Even your phone isn't working well since Ritu dropped it in the bucket of water.

##

From: Kavitha (*An hour and 29 minutes later*)

I was reading this somewhere that the world is designed to depress us. That happiness isn't very good for the economy. If we were happy with what we had, why would we need more and that isn't very good for businesses and economy.

About this iPhone, yes, I would love to have it. I think this need has come into me for the fear of missing out on getting the latest and the greatest.

Thinking more about it, I would not be able to forgive myself if anything happened to the expensive iPhone once we buy it. If Ritu drops it somewhere or I lose it, then it will be such a loss. The iPhone just costs too much money.

##

From: Abhishek (*18 minutes later*)

Okay. But you do need a phone. We can get something in exchange for your phone at the mall and use that money to buy a really good phone for you. We should make sure that Ritu understands that the phone is not a toy and should not be put in water. We have to be really strict with her on this.

##

From: Kavitha (*The next morning*)

Yes, we have to be strict with Ritu on this. In my phone, I want fast internet access, at least a 5MP camera, a touch screen and a big enough screen size. Hope this doesn't cost too much.

##

From: Abhishek (*25 minutes later*)

There are plenty of phones these days available for our budget. I came across one from Motorola which is waterproof and shock proof, and it comes with a 5MP camera, a large touch screen and a fast processor. Only thing – it is not theft proof. Here is the link...

##

From: Kavitha (13 minutes later)

I really like this one. I don't have to worry about Ritu dropping it in water. I have to be careful with it though – can't lose it.

##

From: Abhishek (17 minutes later)

Okay then. If we have to buy this as an exchange for your phone, then we have to go to the mall. You can also see if you like it before we actually go ahead and buy it. Let's go to the mall today itself.

##

From: Kavitha (28 minutes later)

Not today. We will go on the weekend. Meanwhile if you come across any other phones, we can check them out by then.

##

From: Abhishek (12 minutes later)

Alright, let's eat out on that day. The biryani place we went to last time – we can go there on your birthday as well. Your mom had liked it too.

##

From: Kavitha (11 minutes)

Okay, Abhi. And thank you...

##

From: Abhishek (5 minutes later)

Hold on, you haven't got the phone yet. What if you don't?

##

From: Kavitha *(19 minutes later)*

I have no doubts that I will. So, thank you.

##

From: Abhishek *(11 minutes later)*

You turn the tables on me very well.

##

From: Kavitha *(9 minutes later)*

After all, I am your wife.

##

Jyotsna-Abhishek

From: Abhishek

December 2012

By the way, I am still unable to digest that you managed to remain single. What about becoming a mother then...? Don't you ever want to experience motherhood? Don't you want to hold your own child in your arms? Don't you feel the need to have kids and settle down...?

##

From: Jyotsna (*The next day*)

Seriously?

Look around you, Abhi. There are lots of people 'settling down'.

Love, Marriage, Birth, Children – seems like it's something people do because they have nothing else to do and they label it 'settling down'.

Where is the glory in it?

People are making compromises and settling down into okay relationships, okay jobs, okay friends and eventually an okay life.

These people are fine with settling down and creating an okay version of their life, Abhi. I am not. I don't want to.

Every life seems like a project defined by the society where one has to get educated, get married, have kids and conform to whatever the society expects.

Every day of your life then becomes indistinguishable from the next. It is like living life in a perpetual déjà vu.

There is no rule that says I have to live life like everyone else. I'd rather die than live a life that is a repetition of repetitions of each day of how others have lived their lives.

The older you get, the more you value your peace and quiet. At this stage I would not want to give that up for anything.

I've finally realized I'm the only person I need.

##

From: Abhishek (*58 minutes later*)

So, you think you will be happy all by yourself the rest of your life? Don't you feel attracted to other men? Don't you feel the need to just cuddle up to somebody? What about falling in love with someone? I am sure all the hurt I gave you will go away the day you fall in love with someone, someone who values your love, who thinks about love the same way as you do...

##

From: Jyotsna (*Later that night*)

I've had enough of men for this entire lifetime, Abhi.

Do you know, not everyone who is single is lonely and not everyone who is taken, is in love.

And you know what fascinates me? Hardly anyone is wondering what we are doing with our lives on this planet.

Most have accepted 'Birth → Education → Work → Marriage → Work → Family → Work → Die' as a life.

This is what is broken in this generation – there are too many sad eyes on bored faces in 'happy' pictures.

This is precisely why there is a depression epidemic – it's the mind of most people telling them they are bored of the same character the entire generation is trying to act out.

I know, because I've been there – there is nothing scarier than battling with your own mind every single day.

Being depressed is like you are tired all the time, but no matter how much you sleep, the tiredness doesn't go away.

Have you ever thought there could be something else to life than work, eat, sleep?

Have you ever wondered about finding meaning in life?

For most, life just becomes a really long story about how they died.

Have you pondered what is the point of it all?

What is it that we as a human race have set out to achieve?

Wherever we go, we leave a trail of destruction, ruin ecologies, make species extinct and then move on to the next destructive act.

Hope there are some answers somewhere...

##

From: Abhishek (*The next morning*)

Yes, I have thought about those, but haven't found any answers. Decided to not further mess up my thoughts by thinking more along those lines.

Surprised though, that you have brought it up.

##

From: Jyotsna (*That afternoon*)

Life humbles you as you age. As you grow older, you realize how much nonsense you've wasted your time on.

You need to make an effort to keep your mind away from all that BS going on around you. And only then, your head clears up and you start thinking about all these things.

I am happy. I live for myself and enjoy my own company in my cozy 1 bedroom apartment in a city I have come to love.

Sitting in the place you call home, in peace, eating food you made just like you like it, minding your own business, is priceless.

People think that I am writhing in loneliness.

Where and how I am now, this is real freedom for me.

##

From: Abhishek (*57 minutes later*)

But how can you live like this, especially in this society...?

People are important, aren't they? Aren't we known as 'social animals'? People make life worth living. Won't we need the help of other human beings at different stages of our lives?

With such a mindset, people won't accept you – they perhaps might not even want to talk to you – and you can't live all by yourself....

It's worrying.

##

From: Jyotsna *(39 minutes later)*

I've learnt it the hard way – worrying is the worst use of human imagination.

And honestly, I don't care.

##

From: Abhishek *(12 minutes later)*

It's easy to say that you don't care about what people think or say. But deep down, everyone does. And there is no denying it.

##

From: Jyotsna *(15 minutes later)*

If you care about what other people think, you will always be their prisoner. Once you care, you know at that moment that you are screwed.

And you know what, most people don't even like themselves.

Most of the time we are all being judged by these very people who can't get their own shit together. So, it really doesn't matter.

##

From: Abhishek *(An hour and 20 minutes later)*

I don't think this is the same Jyotsna I have known since school.

You've changed – you seem to think at a totally different level altogether.

##

From: Jyotsna (*That night*)

The broken are more evolved, Abhi. Having your heart broken is a tremendous way to learn about the world.

I never realized how strong I could be, but after you left, being strong was the only option left. I am slowly becoming the person I should've been a long long time ago.

There is this term – 'Unfuckwithable'. Have you heard of it?

##

From: Abhishek(*22 minutes later*)

Nope.

##

From: Jyotsna (*That next morning*)

Unfuckwithable is a state of being – when you're truly at peace and in touch with yourself, nothing anyone says or does bothers you, and no negativity or drama can touch you.

That is where I am trying to get to.

I wanted to get to a stage where, one fine day, when I see you again, I will not feel anything at all.

I was getting there until you showed up again.

I don't think I can get to that state as long as you are in my life.

##

Kavitha-Jyotsna

From: Kavitha

January 2013

Hi Jyotsna,

I have something to confess.

I have not been able to resist reading the emails between you and Abhi.

Sorry.

I got to know so much of the real and completely different Abhi just by those email exchanges between you and him.

Those mails have indeed been a revelation – if not for your mails, I never would have seen this side of Abhi hidden behind his mask.

Again, I am sorry I read his mails, but could not help it.

##

*Kavitha-Abhishek

From: Abhishek

January 2013

So, Madam, tell me this – what is your New Year resolution?

##

From: Kavitha (*An hour and 23 minutes later*)

You are asking questions now. That's GREAT!!!

So, most of the time, I make these new year resolutions, but I am somehow not able to execute them. I am going to keep it SIMPLE this year – to take care of my health, spend more time with Ritu and try not to fight with you.

##

From: Abhishek (*Two hours and 45 minutes later*)

Ha... I didn't know we have reached a point where you have to make it a new year resolution to try and not fight with me.

And I have this eerie suspicion which part of your new year resolution is going to fail this year.

But it's all good – at least you are trying. I will also try not to irritate you as much – now that I know what annoys you most of the time...

##

From: Kavitha (*48 minutes later*)

That's settled then.

What about you – do you have a new year's resolution?

##

From: Abhishek (*An hour and 39 minutes later*)

Yes, I have a few. I want to spend more time with Ritu, stay fit, paint more and more importantly, to not piss you off...

Also, I want to find a resolution to the regrets that have been bothering me for a while.

##

From: Kavitha (34 minutes later)

What kind of regrets do you have, Abhi? You had mentioned it earlier as well.

Do you think you can SHARE them with me? Is there something I can do to help?

Is it that you haven't been able to paint as much as you can? It seems the most regretful people on earth are those who felt the call to creative work but did not give their creative urges the power or time.

##

From: Abhishek (29 minutes later)

No, Kavi. The regrets I have are not about me not being able to paint.

They are about something else which I can't share with you – you will be needlessly worried and perhaps, you might not understand them right. I brought those regrets upon myself and I will have to deal with them on my own.

I have to heal myself, else, I will have toxicity from my past left in me.

#

From: Kavitha (An hour and 29 minutes later)

Please tell me, Abhi. Open up to me. This is how this thing called MARRIAGE works.

Sometimes I hide my love, because I don't know what you will do with it, or how you will react or rather not react with your mask on you.

Just so you know, Abhi, the past cannot hurt you anymore – not unless you let it. Perhaps you are letting this toxicity build within you, when you need not even let it in.

##

From: Abhishek (31 minutes later)

Agree, Kavi. What you say makes so much sense...

But things are not as simple – the human heart isn't all that easy to pacify. I have to find a way for long lasting peace – I had tried ignoring and burying these regrets deep within me, but they always find a way of showing up and hurting you when you are least expecting them.

Somehow, no matter how good I try to be, what good I try to do, I am bound to end up as a villain in someone's story... That's all I can say.

##

From: Kavitha (The next morning)

Okay!! I don't think I understand what you are trying to say completely.

But I don't want to impose myself on you just because I am married to you – I know it wouldn't ever work like that. If you don't yet feel comfortable letting me in on what you are going through, do remember that I am HERE for you.

I think it's about time you need to get rid of the toxicity from within you.

I am sure this is also connected to the mask you wear all the time – which isn't letting me get through to you.

##

From: Abhishek (48 minutes later)

Probably.

But I feel that you have a lot to deal with as well – with your job, Ritu, your parent's health issues. I do not want to be another reason for your stress.

If it gets to a point that I cannot handle what I am going through, I don't have any doubts you are the only person I can go to...

And thank you for offering support.

##

From: Kavitha *(34 minutes later)*

Ha... You needn't have to thank me, Abhi.

I am GLAD you said you will come to me when you really need me.

It is why we are in a marriage together, aren't we? It is for these reasons only.

##

From: Abhishek *(31 minutes later)*

Agree, again Kavi.

What about you? Do you have any regrets?

##

From: Kavitha *(11 minutes later)*

I would have had regrets if I hadn't married someone like you.

##

From: Abhishek *(30 minutes later)*

Back to your filmy dialogues.... Ha...

##

From: Kavitha *(An hour and 49 minutes later)*

Nothing like that, Abhi. Can you IMAGINE how it would be for a girl to marry a drunkard or a wife beater or a womanizer or someone who wants his wife to sit at home and cook for him?

My life would have been hell.

I am happy I have no such regrets.

##

From: Abhishek *(33 minutes later)*

Good to know...

#

From: Kavitha *(The next morning)*

A thought - don't you think, life gets so BORING without regrets. It is as if you are saying that you never tried anything new, never did anything foolish and always held yourself back from doing anything which even had the slightest of risk.

Alas, I never did anything which I can regret about.

Which is a big regret in itself.

I can only hope I do something over the next few months or years due to which I end up with the right set of regrets.

##

From: Abhishek *(Two days later)*

Hmm... That is a perspective about regrets I hadn't come across before.

It definitely changes how I've been looking and trying to deal with my set of regrets – in a good way.

So, thank you.

#

From: Kavitha *(An hour and 12 minutes later)*

You took your time thinking about what I said.

You are always welcome, Abhi. Glad I could help.

##

From: Abhishek *(43 minutes later)*

But don't you feel bad though you did not do justice to the talent you have for singing and dancing? I feel bad that I have not supported you enough so that you could have pursued them...

##

From: Kavitha (*An hour and 19 minutes later*)

I do feel bad about not pursuing singing and dancing, but that isn't like a REGRET I live with. I enjoyed doing those for a while, but I don't have the energy now to pursue them anymore.

But, for sure, you don't need to feel bad at all that I don't want to pursue singing and dancing.

##

From: Abhishek (*34 minutes later*)

Okay. That's another perspective which I wasn't aware about.

##

From: Kavitha (*The next morning*)

Abhi, do you realize, by writing to each other like this, we are creating MEMORIES – though of a different kind. There is a different kind of intimacy which I am sharing with you in these seemingly mundane emails saying things to you which I cannot say to anybody else.

Around the time I married you, I felt I could say anything to you. After that, with everything that happened and especially Ritu was born, we lost 'us' somewhere.

It's all coming back, Abhi. I am so glad.

##

From: Abhishek (*34 minutes later*)

I am glad as well, Kavi. I really am.

##

Jyotsna-Abhishek

From: Abhishek

January 2013

You were in my dreams yesterday. We were sitting across from each other and having a decent conversation.

It felt good seeing you.

And we could talk about anything – just like old times. All my regrets had melted away.

It's a beautiful thing when you are so comfortable with someone and you realize you're telling them things you've never said out loud before.

And then I woke up – much earlier than my scheduled wake up time.

And I could not go back to sleep.

The dream felt so real when I was in it with you. It was the kind of dream I would have loved to be stuck in.

In my dream, we are still together.

In my dream, you are still holding my hand. I am still holding your heart.

In my dream, you still love me.

##

From: Jyotsna *(49 minutes later)*

We all suffer from these dreams, Abhi.

Maybe, 'us' was a dream too good to be true.

I would have loved to hear these things from you at some point of time in the past. That moment has passed us.

If only you had not left then, the love you keep talking about would have stayed in my heart. It's too late now.

The worst thing about loving you was not that you left then. It was hoping you'd come back.

And now that you have, I am not sure anymore.

Now it's almost as if I am lining myself up to be burnt twice by the same flame.

##

From: Abhishek (19 minutes later)

Okay... Let's meet up then.

Let's meet like it's the first time we are meeting.

Let's start with a blank slate.

Let's talk things out.

##

From: Jyotsna (An hour and 21 minutes later)

What else is there to talk about? ~~I don't think there is anywhere we can get to by starting with a blank slate.~~

I don't know if it is a good idea to meet....

##

From: Abhishek (49 minutes later)

It's been so long since I last saw you. I don't even remember how you look...

I've imagined how I could react on seeing you, things I could say to you a million times already.

But I don't have the slightest hesitation in my mind I want to see you again in person at least once more in this lifetime...

##

From: Jyotsna (-)

~~There is nothing that you can achieve by seeing me again. I don't think we should ever meet.~~

##

From: Abhishek (Two days later)

Come on, Jyotsna.... You don't have to think so much. Do you want to meet me?

##

From: Jyotsna (The next evening)

I don't remember how you look either. The last we saw each other was when college ended and when you walked away from my life.

I've thought about how I would react to seeing you a little MORE than a million times, Abhi – every day, every hour, every minute over all these years.

I've also thought if it would perhaps be best for both of us if I just walked away if I saw you – denying I ever knew you, denying what I felt for you.

Denying you felt the same about me as well.

I don't think it is a good idea to meet now...

##

From: Abhishek (43 minutes later)

Why not? I am married with a kid. What are you worried about?

##

From: Jyotsna (21 minutes later)

That is exactly what I am worried about – you are married with a kid.

##

From: Abhishek *(53 minutes later)*

Seriously!!!

Come on... It should be fine. Really.

~~You know I am a good guy. I am still the same gentleman you knew so well.~~

##

From: Jyotsna *(Two hours and 12 minutes later)*

When I think about what made me stop believing in love, just the thought of you chokes me up.

No matter how good you are, you have been a villain in my story.

I am afraid of meeting you....

Even seeing you would bring back everything I tried so hard to forget.

For now, let's just live.

And let what is supposed to happen, happen.

##

Kavitha-Jyotsna

From: Kavitha

December 2012

You come across as a very levelheaded and sane person. What made you write back to Abhi – even after he told you he was married and has a kid?

##

From: Jyotsna (*Two hours later*)

Hmm!!

Perhaps things would have been a lot simpler if I had just ignored him when he wrote back to me.

But there were things left unsaid. I needed answers. I had waited forever for them – and the answers had to come from Abhi. One can't just walk away from someone's life like that.

~~Perhaps more than him, I needed closure – which is why I decided to write back.~~

##

From: Kavitha (*That night*)

So, did you get your answers?

##

From: Jyotsna (*The next morning*)

Answers – yes, perhaps to an extent. Not satisfactory ones, but there's still too much hurt.

Maybe I should have just slammed the door shut on him – like he did all these years ago.

But he was a good friend and we connected well. And he is (still) a good person – which is important.

Now that we have started to talk again, I am not sure if shutting the door on him at this point would be the right thing to do.

##

From: Kavitha *(An hour later...)*

But Abhishek seems to be so much happier since he began writing to you...

##

From: Jyotsna *(An hour and 26 minutes later)*

Why do you say that? And why are you saying as if it has anything to do with me?

##

From: Kavitha *(The next morning)*

Once you get married, you start to become good at observing these kinds of things.

At home, when he is sitting in front of his laptop or checking his phone, I see him smiling often – he hasn't smiled so much in all these years while sitting in front of his laptop. I don't need to be a genius to understand that the emails he has been exchanging with you have something to do with it

##

From: Jyotsna *(That afternoon)*

But still, there could be plenty of other reasons... work, colleagues, reduced traffic, silly forwards. You never know.

##

From: Kavitha *(Two hours and 39 minutes later)*

Okay... But my instincts have rarely failed me.

##

From: Jyotsna *(Two hours later)*

Is something wrong?

##

From: Kavitha *(That night)*

No, nothing wrong.

Abhi is, after all, my husband. Not just that, he is the father of our daughter as well.

It bothers me that there is some other woman who is the source of Abhi's recent substantial happiness and change in behavior.

##

From: Jyotsna *(The next day)*

Listen, he got in touch with me. I had moved on.

I have made it clear to him that you and your daughter are his future. I don't want to ruin his marriage.

He was a good friend, and we share a great rapport.

##

From: Kavitha *(That night)*

Don't you think it is about time you distance yourself from him before it leads to unnecessary complications in our married life?

##

From: Jyotsna *(Two days later)*

~~You mean further complications? It's complicated already...~~

So, you want me to stop writing to him now – you had earlier insisted that I don't cut off my communication with him? Is this what you want finally?

##

From: Kavitha *(That afternoon)*

Yes.... I am sure about this.

##

From: Jyotsna (*The next night*)

If that is what you want, if you believe that it is the best for all of us, then I could do that.

It would take me sometime – I just can't close the door on someone I've known for most of my life in a heartbeat.

##

From: Kavitha (*The next evening*)

Okay, fair enough.

I would appreciate it if Abhi does not know about this conversation....

##

From: Jyotsna (*An hour and 42 minutes later*)

Yes, he doesn't know we have been in touch ...

##

From: Kavitha (*Late that night*)

Okay then.

##

From: Jyotsna (*The next day*)

Thinking about it, it would perhaps have been better for all of us if I had not written back to him in the first place.

##

From: Kavitha (*Late evening*)

People talk about love being unselfish and giving.

I tried to be exactly that – unselfish and giving – when I got to know about you and Abhi reconnecting.

But love is nothing like that – if you think about it, there is nothing more selfish than love.

I hope someday you will understand.

##

From: Jyotsna (*The next day*)

It's people who are selfish. People are hurtful. And people conveniently blame love.

##

From: Kavitha (*Two hours and 46 minutes later*)

Hmm... True. I shouldn't.

##

From: Jyotsna (*The next day*)

I just want to know before I end it – do you really love Abhi?

##

From: Kavitha (*Two hours and 46 minutes later*)

Yes, of course I love him. He is my husband and the father of my daughter.

Why do you ask?

##

From: Jyotsna (*An hour and 29 minutes later*)

~~I don't think I need to answer why I asked the question.~~

But, apart from the fact he is your husband and the father of your daughter, do you still love him?

##

From: Kavitha (*Later that night*)

Yes, Jyotsna. I love him very much.

Thinking about it, whether I love him or not does not take away the fact he is my husband and the father of my daughter – and I am not going to let him walk away from my life for anything.

##

From: Jyotsna (*The next day*)

Do you think Abhi loves you?

##

From: Kavitha (*Two hours and 37 minutes later*)

Hmm...

You think Abhi loves you...???

So, what do we do then?

##

From: Jyotsna (*About two hours later*)

What do you think we should do?

##

From: Kavitha (*An hour and 28 minutes later*)

A big part of me doesn't know why we are even having this conversation.

But we could do this to be fair to everyone – we could let Abhi decide on who he wants to be with.

##

From: Jyotsna (*That evening*)

Okay. Let's do this then... Let us see who he can live without.

It's about his happiness as well. He has to make up his mind – he can't be on two boats at the same time.

Once he makes up his mind, it would be the best for all of us.

##

From: Kavitha (*Next morning*)

You really want to do this, Jyotsna?

Why do you want to put all of us through this?

Would you take Abhi back if he comes to you?

I thought you were so much wiser than all of us...

##

From: Jyotsna (*That night*)

Trust me on this then.

I want us to go through this to get clarity on what Abhi wants. I am clear on what I want – I do sometimes wonder why I am still in touch with him.

I know what Abhi wants – I just want to see what he is willing to go through for what he chooses. He needs to be clear that there is no place for the both of us in his life.

Without this clarity, Abhi would be miserable for the rest of his life.

If we don't do this, I have no choice but to keep this door open.

##

From: Kavitha (*Next morning*)

Okay. Let's do this then...

Even I am clear. There isn't enough room for both of us to occupy a place in Abhi's heart. I have no second thoughts on this.

Do you want to set a time for all of this to end?

##

From: Jyotsna (*Two hours later*)

Why set a date?

##

From: Kavitha (*Next morning*)

Can't wait forever for this to resolve....

##

From: Jyotsna (*Two hours later*)

Okay... I think it would take a couple of months for all of us to get complete clarity on this.

##

From: Kavitha (*Next morning*)

Okay. End of February then – it would either be me or you in Abhi's life.

##

*Kavitha-Abhishek

From: Kavitha

January 2013

Tell me this, what are you most SCARED of?

##

From: Abhishek (33 minutes later)

What am I scared of? Hmm... Probably you.... Ha ;-)

But do you want to take a guess what I might be scared of the most...?

##

From: Kavitha (An hour and 30 minutes later)

I think you are scared I will find out something about you – which you haven't TOLD me about. ~~In fact, I am sure of it – this is not a guess.~~

##

From: Abhishek (Two hours and 14 minutes later)

Hmm... Nope. What made you think I would be scared of such a thing.

##

From: Kavitha (35 minutes later)

Instincts, maybe. I think it is why you always have a MASK on.

~~Sometimes I wonder if my instincts are strong enough that I am able to read your mind. Then I wonder, if I could handle the truth.~~

But go ahead... Tell me what scares you.

##

From: Abhishek *(Two hours and 49 minutes later)*

I've never admitted this before – even to myself that at one point of time, I was scared of commitment. Terribly scared.

Things have changed now, and I now live in a dread my world might collapse any moment and I will be just standing there helpless to do anything about it.

I cannot imagine my life without you or Ritu in it. I am scared something might happen. I pray to God every day to keep you both out of harm's way.

I also worry about my job sometimes and from where my next paycheck is going to come from if I am laid off.

But my primary concern has always been the wellbeing of the two of you.

Your turn now – what are you most scared of?

##

From: Kavitha *(33 minutes later)*

You know, Abhi, I am terribly scared of COCKROACHES. I can even smell them, even when I don't see them – that rotten stink they have. And when I smell them, I know they are somewhere around, and it creeps the hell out of me.

##

From: Abhishek *(49 minutes later)*

Ha... Yes, I know how exactly you feel about cockroaches...

##

From: Kavitha *(An hour and 29 minutes later)*

Also, there is another thing. It is something you guys wouldn't understand – it's scary being a girl and at my age, a woman.

##

From: Abhishek *(49 minutes later)*

Hmm... Go on.

##

From: Kavitha *(The next day)*

Every SINGLE MOMENT of our lives we live in this constant fear there is a molester or a rapist around.

Every single action of ours is driven by this thought. Who we decide to talk to, confide in, be friends with, hang out with – there is this constant niggle at the back of our minds ‘would we be safe’?

And now, since Ritu is born, my fears have increased manifold. I look around and see what the world is coming to, I constantly worry ‘*How can I raise my child in this world? What kind of a life would I be able to give her?*’

There are so many things you guys take for granted which we women have to worry about.

It isn't easy being a woman in this world.

##

*****Kavitha-Nathan**

From: Nathan

January 2013

You still read their mails?

##

From: Kavitha *(That afternoon)*

Yes, it's too hard not to.

##

From: Nathan *(41 minutes later)*

Are they talking about getting back together?

##

From: Kavitha *(10 minutes later)*

No, not at all.

It's still Jyotsna is philosophizing about life and Abhi sounding like an idiot.

I feel horrible, though, sneaking up on Abhi and reading his personal mails.

##

From: Nathan *(12 minutes later)*

Hey... You don't need to put yourself down for doing so. Your marriage is at stake here.

##

From: Kavitha *(17 minutes later)*

Perhaps, but still, I don't feel happy doing so. I resisted for a few weeks, but I am back checking Abhi's email exchanges with Jyotsna now.

And I admitted to Jyotsna as well that I am reading their emails though I told her I would not.

Just too much to handle. I've started to smoke again.

##

From: Nathan (*The next morning*)

Look Kavi, I am absolutely shocked that you have reacted so mildly to Abhi getting back in touch with his ex and, importantly, hiding it from you.

Abhi should be the one who should feel all the guilt for writing to his ex behind your back. Remember, he has not even let you know about her in the first place even after so many years of marriage.

And you seem to be the one who is stressed out and feeling the guilt. ~~You should not have written to Jyotsna in the first place.~~

##

From: Kavitha (*Two hours later*)

I don't know what to do. Should I confront Abhi about her?

There is some kind of trust building between us after we started emailing each other. All that will be gone if I confront him – he will lose whatever trust we have been building up and hate me for sure that I've been reading his emails.

Abhi doesn't know I've started smoking – he will be disgusted with me if he comes to know.

##

Jyotsna-Abhishek

From: Jyotsna

January 2013

I keep asking myself if it is right that we keep in touch...

##

From: Abhishek (16 minutes later)

Why do you keep thinking like that?

##

From: Jyotsna (An hour and 19 minutes later)

~~Sometimes I really don't know what to say anymore.~~

We have been friends before. And now that you are married, things are different. You know how I felt about you earlier and now that we are back in touch with each other, and we are able to talk to each other like before...

I am not sure if we are doing the right thing ...

##

From: Abhishek (42 minutes later)

Ah... Look, I am clear in my head about you. You have a place in my life and so does my Kavitha.

##

From: Jyotsna (Nine minutes later)

It can't be as simple ... ~~What if I tell you that cannot happen?~~

##

From: Abhishek (An hour and 52 minutes later)

Can we see it this way - as long as we don't hurt or harm anyone or break any societal laws, we should be fine?

If I had some kind of guilt in my heart about being in touch with you, then I wouldn't be happy.

I am happy to write to you. There is no guilt. Now, there aren't any regrets either. We were good friends despite everything and with how things are going, I can sense it that we can be good friends for life. I do not want to lose you again.

##

From: Jyotsna *(46 minutes later)*

Would Kavitha understand?

##

From: Abhishek *(39 minutes later)*

Hmm...

~~I don't think so.~~ She definitely wouldn't.

##

From: Jyotsna *(The next morning)*

What makes you so sure? Do you want to at least tell her, hear what she says?

##

From: Abhishek *(43 minutes later)*

~~I don't want to.~~ Things are fine as they are – simple and uncomplicated.

##

From: Jyotsna *(31 minutes later)*

Wives have a way of knowing these things. You better tell her about me before she finds out on her own – and importantly, reaches a wrong conclusion about us.

##

From: Abhishek*(42 minutes later)*

I'll have to think about it...

By the way, how did it all begin to matter to you?

##

From: Jyotsna *(13 minutes later)*

It would have started to matter sooner or later. Best to get it out.

##

From: Abhishek*(36 minutes later)*

Actually, this is madness.

We are two mature adults behaving like high school kids. Can't we just trust ourselves?

##

From: Jyotsna *(16 minutes later)*

It's not that simple, Abhi. Look – if a relationship has to be a secret, you shouldn't be in it – like it is happening with us. And you are keeping us a secret from your wife – the most important relationship in your life.

##

From: Abhishek *(The next evening)*

I thought about what you have been saying, but I am unable to figure out what I am supposed to do.

I've got something bad inside of me. I ruin things. I don't want to ruin I have you back in my life again.

##

From: Jyotsna *(Two hours later)*

What do you think I can treat you with? Pity?

##

From: Abhishek *(12 minutes later)*

What's wrong?

I love you.

You know I do.

Can't that be enough of a reason for you at least be nice to me? Please....?

I thought you would understand me. You were the only one who could.

##

From: Jyotsna *(19 minutes later)*

That's a side effect of growing older – you run out of people who understand you.

You, meanwhile, are the last person I could possibly ever understand.

##

From: Abhishek *(53 minutes later)*

I wish – I have wished a hundred thousand times already – the small episode where I walked away from your life could be deleted from mine.

##

From: Jyotsna *(Two hours and 39 minutes later)*

Ha... You can only wish.

That's not how life works. You can't just delete episodes or skip chapters of a story of your life.

It seems there are two tragedies in life – one is not to get your heart's desire. The other is to get it.

Perhaps, we are better off this way.

##

Kavitha-Jyotsna

From: Kavitha

February 2013

I still don't get it – why you want to put all of us through this? You are willing to break up a family just to make your point.

You were fine all these years. Now you are having these thoughts about letting Abhi take a call. Why can't you just walk away?

##

From: Jyotsna (*The next morning*)

I have a confession to make ...

##

From: Kavitha (*An hour and 19 minutes later*)

Confession? Go on....

##

From: Jyotsna (*22 minutes later*)

You were saying you were surprised Abhi hasn't mentioned to you about me...

##

From: Kavitha (*29 minutes later*)

Yes, I am surprised indeed. Why bring it up now?

##

From: Jyotsna (*That night*)

Abhi has been telling you about me the whole time – the girl who got serious about the FLAMES game, the girl who Abhi winked at in high school, the girl who gave Abhi a red rose on rose day and the girl who Abhi gave his first Valentine's card to – are all the same person.

I wish you both only the best.

##

***Kavitha-Abhishek**

From: Abhishek

January 2013

My online portfolio of my paintings is ready. Here is the link.

##

From: Kavitha *(An hour later)*

They have come out beautiful. Your paintings look even better in the portfolio. I am so PROUD of you, Abhi. Party!! Party!!

##

From: Abhishek *(11 minutes later)*

Thank you so much, Kavi.

Party – definitely.

##

From: Kavitha *(An hour and 32 minutes later)*

Maybe, Abhi, this could be your contribution to making the world a BETTER place. Through your paintings, if you are able to convey what we are doing to this world and how it is deteriorating, perhaps someone will take notice, and something could be done about it.

##

From: Abhishek *(31 minutes later)*

Hmm... Hope someone takes notice.

##

From: Kavitha *(28 minutes later)*

Seriously. Are you planning to send it to some art gallery? It would be awesome if they agree for a painting exhibition. And I have been thinking – if you want to do painting FULL TIME, you should give it a

shot. I think we can easily manage with my job and some of my wedding jewelry for a year. If nothing works out by then, you can always get back to your job. Think about it seriously.

##

From: Abhishek *(39 minutes later)*

I am still thinking about sending this to some galleries. At this point, it makes me happy I have a portfolio like this.

It is not so easy to give up on a well-paying, 'stable job' and start doing painting full time. If I take a break from work, it is gonna show up on my resume. What will I tell people a year down the line – I gave up on work and I was painting? Nobody will give me a job for such an excuse. And don't ever want you to bring up the topic of selling your jewelry again.

##

From: Kavitha *(27 minutes later)*

I hadn't thought it would be so difficult to get back to work with a year's break in the middle. But even then, don't you think it would be worth the RISK? Your paintings are really awesome.

##

From: Abhishek *(An hour and 13 minutes later)*

I am not a *MF Hussain*. Even if I paint, my paintings will sell only for peanuts. Even if I establish myself to a certain degree, we cannot live life with the peanuts I make. I cannot even think of bringing up Ritu in these expensive times if I were to become a painter. If Ritu wasn't born yet, then maybe I would have thought about it, but now it is just not the same.

##

From: Kavitha *(19 minutes later)*

You are right, Abhi. It is not the same with Ritu in our lives. Things are so different. We need to think about her in every decision we make. But we cannot just give up – we need to start somewhere, right? I would love to see your paintings in an art gallery. If it cannot happen while I am ALIVE, I will be disappointed.

##

From: Abhishek (46 minutes later)

Okay, Kavi. Let me try. It is not simple, you know. There are lots of talented painters around and they are probably working just as hard – if not harder – to come up in life, to get established.

##

From: Kavitha (39 minutes later)

But you have taken the first step already by making the online portfolio. You just need to start mailing it to different people. One can never know who will like your paintings enough to agree for an exhibition. I will have my fingers crossed.

##

From: Abhishek (31 minutes later)

Okay, Kavi. Fingers crossed. Hope for the best.

##

From: Kavitha (41 minutes later)

I wish I was as CREATIVE as you, Abhi.

##

From: Abhishek (11 minutes later)

Oh, sweetheart.... You are creative. Other than all your creative talent in delivering sentimental movie type dialogues whenever you get a chance, you have this enormous talent for creating difficult situations with your questions for both of us in our lives. ;-)

##

From: Kavitha (13 minutes later)

Grr....

##

From: Abhishek *(42 minutes later)*

By the way, there seems to be someone smoking outside our window. I can smell the stinking smoke sometimes.

I've told the security a couple of times already to not allow any smokers outside the window, but still.

##

From: Kavitha *(31)*

Are you sure you are smelling cigarette smoke? I haven't smelt anything as such.

And we live on the first floor – we shouldn't be smelling anything this high above the ground.

##

From: Abhishek *(Nine minutes later)*

I am sure it's cigarette smoke. I seem to be highly sensitive to the smell and just can't stand it.

##

From: Kavitha *(The next morning)*

Hmm... I'll check with the neighbors and security as well about the smoke.

Another news - I've missed my period. It's late by THREE DAYS at least.

##

From: Abhishek *(Nine minutes later)*

How did that happen? We were careful, weren't we?

##

From: Kavitha *(18 minutes later)*

Condoms are not foolproof, you know that. I'll get a pregnancy test kit on the way home from office.

##

From: Abhishek (*Seven minutes later*)

Please do... Life's gonna take such a turn if it does come out positive.

##

From: Kavitha (*14 minutes later*)

Oh... Are you worried you would then have to put in all that ADDITIONAL EFFORT to take care of the newborn and Ritu as well then?

##

From: Abhishek (*An hour later*)

Ha... No, nothing like that.

Anyway, it isn't sure yet. Get a test done fast.

##

From: Kavitha (*An hour and 42 minutes later*)

I am not sure if this would be the RIGHT TIME to have another kid.

As I said, I will buy a kit on my way home from work.

##

From: Abhishek (*12 minutes later*)

Did you tell your mother?

##

From: Kavitha (*32 minutes later*)

I have not told anyone. You keep it to yourself as well.

##

From: Abhishek (11 minutes later)

Who can I tell it to, Kavi? I don't have anyone at the office to share such unexpected news.

##

From: Kavitha (32 minutes later)

I did spot some ladies in the office snap you sent. Don't you discuss such things with them?

##

From: Abhishek (14 minutes later)

Seriously!!!! You are joking right?

Why will I share such information with them?

What about you? Do you have any such 'best friends' at office?

##

From: Kavitha (28 minutes later)

Naah... Everybody is busy with their own lives. But what will we do if the test turns out to be POSITIVE? I can't even imagine what we have to do next.

##

From: Abhishek (10 minutes later)

It's gonna be fine. You are not the first person to get pregnant a second time, right? It will be one hell of a ride for the next few years with two kids though.

##

From: Kavitha (An hour and 11 minutes later)

We could have gone for a trip somewhere. Imagine, we cannot go anywhere until the second child grows up. Our lives are going to come to such a STANDSTILL.

##

From: Abhishek (14 minutes later)

Kavi, it isn't just about travel and life coming to a standstill. It is about bringing another human being into the world. It is not even comparable.

##

From: Kavitha (38 minutes later)

I agree. But if the test is positive, then can we keep it a secret from all our relatives and friends for at least a few months?

##

From: Abhishek (21 minutes later)

Why? You will have to tell your mother and you know what will happen then.

##

From: Kavitha (18 minutes later)

We have to keep it a secret somehow. I know it would be a bad idea to not tell my mother about it, but I think I can manage.

##

From: Abhishek (Five minutes later)

No way. ~~Are you crazy?~~ You have to tell your mom. ~~I will tell her otherwise.~~ I don't think for secrecy's sake we can take such a risk on the baby. We can ask her to not tell anyone.

##

From: Kavitha (18 minutes later)

If the test comes negative, then we don't have to WORRY about all this anyhow. Let's think about it when the time comes.

##

From: Abhishek *(Three minutes later)*

Okay, fine.

##

Jyotsna-Abhishek

From: Jyotsna

February 2013

You know what keeps bothering me – my memories about us. I can remember everything – that is my curse. Memories are the greatest curse that has been inflicted on mankind. Remembering all the moments that we have had and not being able to forget them, especially memories about people we can never be with.

Sometimes I think I am being disrespectful to myself by continuing to be in touch with you.

##

From: Abhishek (11 minutes later)

Why? Because we have a past? Or is it because of the conversations we are having?

##

From: Jyotsna (That evening)

Especially because we have a past.

I had reached a point in my life where I no longer clung on to my past. Then you come back.

And you are not 'back' as such – you are seeking some closure for your own peace of mind.

I can't continue being the choice you did not make.

There is no place for me in your future.

And I don't see any place for you in mine as well.

##

From: Abhishek(23 minutes later)

Ah, come on.

I am really happy I am able to connect with you again.

What do you want from me? What can I do to make you stay?

Why can't we just live in this moment and be happy about it?

##

From: Jyotsna (*The next morning*)

Living in the moment is such a cliché, Abhi.

When two people really care about each other, they will always look for a way to make it work, no matter how hard it is.

By walking away, you proved you did not care.

~~That is what kills me every single time I think about what you did.~~

##

From: Abhishek(*43 minutes later*)

It hasn't been easy on me at all, Jyotsna. Which is why I wrote to you. To spend the life I have in peace.

##

From: Jyotsna (*That night*)

Stop it, Abhi. I can't take this anymore.

I can't take it that even though I am hurling insult after insult at you, you are standing there willing to take more.

You seem to be taking the easy way out of this by writhing in self-misery. Misery is easy. Happiness is what you have to work at.

##

From: Abhishek (*The next morning*)

For you. Just for you.

That is what you mean to me.

I am better off feeling hurt than feeling nothing at all...

##

From: Jyotsna (*That evening*)

If this is how you think closure will come to you, think again.

This is not leading to closure for you or for me in any way. The both of us will probably walk away with more regrets and heartaches than we ever had...

##

From: Abhishek (*That night*)

What do you suggest we do then?

I want to know, with what we had, if there is anything at all I can offer you.

##

From: Jyotsna (*Two hours and 17 minutes later*)

Please don't be under the impression I need you in my life. I was doing fine all these years until you showed back up.

But you have already told me this isn't about me – it's about you.

At this point, there is nothing at all you can offer me.

##

***Kavitha-Abhishek**

From: Kavitha

February 2013

Were you DISAPPOINTED the pregnancy test turned out negative?

##

From: Abhishek *(43 minutes later)*

To tell you the truth, I was indeed disappointed.

What a ruckus you created though.

##

From: Kavitha *(An hour and 37 minutes later)*

I created a RUCKUS? Do you know how EMBARRASSING it is to walk with a pregnant tummy when every eye is telling you 'I know what you did to get that'? Do you know how uncomfortable a woman feels carrying that tummy around? Do you know how it feels to look for a toilet every fifteen minutes or so?

I so wish you will be born a woman in your next life. Then you will be able to know exactly how much it takes to get pregnant and deliver a human being. And you talk about a ruckus being created. I don't understand how you can get so INSENSITIVE...

##

From: Abhishek *(Two hours later)*

Hello... Why do you get riled up so needlessly? I understand, it's a sensitive topic. There is no need to get so angry. Chill, sweetheart.

##

From: Kavitha *(17 minutes later)*

You shouldn't comment without thinking. I haven't been able to sleep for the past few days thinking about it.

##

From: Abhishek *(56 minutes later)*

Okay, Kavi. I am sorry. For a moment, I did not think about what women go through during pregnancy.

##

From: Kavitha *(An hour and 43 minutes later)*

Anyway, do you remember this photograph from a long time ago...?

##

From: Abhishek *(The next morning)*

Of course. It was the first time we met. You slipped out to meet me before we were formally introduced to each other and our alliance was formalized. It seems so long ago. I don't remember ever seeing the photograph after meeting that day. How did it show up now?

##

From: Kavitha *(17 minutes later)*

Yes, you are right. It was from THAT day. I had emailed it to myself – was looking for something else when I found this. It is from about eight years ago. You look about the same but have actually changed so much.

##

From: Abhishek *(13 minutes later)*

Is the change in a good way?

##

From: Kavitha *(28 minutes later)*

You know it yourself, Abhi. I don't have to tell you anything.

##

From: Abhishek (*An hour and 46 minutes later*)

Ha... There is a saying 'Men marry women with the hope they will never change. Women marry men with the hope they will change. Invariably they are both disappointed.' Are you disappointed I've changed or disappointed I haven't?

##

From: Kavitha (*An hour and 11 minutes later*)

Nice one, Abhi. But people don't really change. They just become more of who they really are.

There is another saying, 'There are only two tragedies in life: one is not getting what one wants, and the other is getting it.' It must have been meant for women like us. Either way, our life is a TRAGEDY.

##

From: Abhishek (*Two hours later*)

Honestly, Kavi – I don't know what you are all disappointed in life about to call it a tragedy. You just have to look at Ritu once – just once – to not have any complaints or regrets ever in your life. I am not even asking you to look at everything else you have achieved and the position of envy you hold in the family. There are millions of girls who would give an arm and a leg to have what you have today. It pains me, Kavi, you are living with such disappointment in your heart.

##

From: Kavitha (*The next morning*)

You've never made the EFFORT to understand what my heart really wants.

##

From: Abhishek (*That afternoon*)

Perhaps the efforts I've made to understand you haven't been enough. I've failed miserably.

##

From: Kavitha *(Two hours and 32 minutes later)*

I want to pour out my heart to you. But you don't seem to understand the language I speak, and I don't seem to speak the language you comprehend.

Perhaps I was expecting something else from marriage, from you and from this life.

##

From: Abhishek *(The next morning)*

Expectations? What else can you expect from marriage?

With God's grace, things are picture perfect. Re-read all the emails we have exchanged recently – this is the reality of what marriage is. This is how couples solve issues and live life – I honestly think we have been communicating and understanding each other so much better since we started to write emails to each other.

##

From: Kavitha *(43 minutes later)*

You are completely missing the point. I thought I meant something to you.

##

From: Abhishek *(23 minutes later)*

You and Ritu mean the world to me. We should feel content and thankful with the surplus God has given us.

Get real. Look around you. Things can't be any more perfect than they are now. I honestly believe this is the best phase in our lives. So, if you want happiness, the only thing that needs to change is your mindset and attitude. The sooner you can bring about the change, the better it will be for all of us.

##

From: Kavitha (*An hour and 31 minutes later*)

Thanks for letting me know what you think about me and that you think the REAL PROBLEM is my mindset and attitude.

Do we really mean the world to you? I thought your paintings are everything to you. You can spend hours painting, but after a few hours with us, you get all restless. Your painting is like your second wife – my *sauten*. I am jealous.

##

From: Abhishek (*That evening*)

Ah... My paintings!!! You did not seem to have a problem with them earlier. Do you remember - you wanted my paintings in an art gallery one day? Today they are your *sauten*. I don't understand you, Kavi.

##

From: Kavitha (*Five minutes later*)

I don't think you EVER WILL. Leave it.

And the cigarette smoke you smelt, that was me.

##

Jyotsna-Abhishek

From: Jyotsna

February 2013

I waited, Abhi. I waited for you.

For a painfully long time.

For whatever reason, there is nobody I can talk to like I do with you.

I hate to admit it, but I haven't had that kind of connection with anyone else.

I could not believe, for a long time, you did not want 'us' to happen.

It is a disaster how much I loved you.

I've begun to think falling in love is a form of socially acceptable insanity which humans as a species have to go through to procreate.

The next time I feel I am even this close to falling in love with someone, I am going to jump off a building instead.

Do you know the biggest coward is a man who awakens a woman's love with no intention of loving her?

##

From: Abhishek *(Three hours and 18 minutes later)*

It killed me to walk away, Jo. What do you want me to do now?

Just tell me what can I do to make it up for you?

##

From: Jyotsna *(The next day)*

The worst thing you could ever do was listen to what I've been through and then put me through it again.

I am not sure what is more painful – the hurt or the healing.

It's beautiful, though, that you are back in my life making the effort to heal. Sometimes, I hope and even wish you and I could somehow end up happy together.

But you are a part of something else now which I cannot be a part of – there is just too much heartache.

Loving you has been the most exquisite form of self-destruction.

##

Kavitha-Jyotsna

From: Jyotsna

February 2013

When a man is not happy with himself, he takes it out on the woman who loves him.

And until he is healed, he will be toxic to every woman who tries to love him.

I hope Abhi heals and finds peace within himself ...

##

From: Kavitha *(Two hours 45 minutes later)*

Why are you saying this to me now?

##

From: Jyotsna *(Three hours 20 minutes later)*

Perhaps it will help you understand why Abhi is the way he is.

##

*****Kavitha-Nathan**

From: Kavitha

February 2013

Sometimes I wonder why I am going through all this trouble for a person who hasn't trusted me enough even after so many years of 'togetherness'.

##

From: Nathan (41 minutes later)

Is that the same Kavitha who was saying she won't go down without a fight?

What happened now? Did you confront Abhi?

##

From: Kavitha (39 minutes later)

Jyotsna told me that she loved Abhi all the way from 6th grade and that Abhi knew how Jyotsna felt about him since then.

And from the emails, I know the reasons Abhi gave when walked out on her – despite knowing how Jyotsna felt about him all these years.

How could he do such a thing?

##

From: Nathan (11 minutes later)

So, what? I don't understand. What has changed for you?

##

From: Kavitha (42 minutes later)

It's a realization...

If Abhi can do that to someone who has loved him unconditionally all these years, I've realized that I don't stand a chance – Abhi can walk away from my life at any moment.

I can't live with this kind of uncertainty in my life.

I can't die a million deaths a day thinking he will walk away from my life too.

##

From: Nathan *(33 minutes later)*

I wish I was there for you, Kavi. I really do.

What do you want to do now...? ~~Do you want to speak with Abhi? Is this a good time to just confront him about Jyotsna?~~

##

From: Kavitha *(Two hours later)*

I have to free Abhi. I have to let him go.

##

From: Nathan *(Seven minutes later)*

What do you mean 'let him go'? ~~Are you out of your mind?~~

##

From: Kavitha *(41 minutes later)*

I don't want him to stay with me with this guilt inside him. That way, he will never be happy with all the toxicity he has in him.

And, because of the same poison in him, I will never be happy – we are done as a family.

##

From: Nathan *(An hour and 21 minutes later)*

Okay... I don't know what to say. Think through first. You are not just letting him go, but you are destroying all that you have built over these years

##

From: Kavitha *(44 minutes later)*

Without trust between us – there cannot be anything else. Everything else is just a sham.

##

From: Nathan *(10 minutes later)*

I suggest you sleep over it. Don't do anything drastic.

What if he doesn't want to go?

##

From: Kavitha *(Nine minutes later)*

Then he will remain mine.

##

Jyotsna-Abhishek

From: Abhishek

February 2013

Some people are so easy to fall in love with but are never meant to be together.

What we had through school and college makes such a beautiful story, but I ruined its ending.

Perhaps, I loved you at the wrong time.

##

From: Jyotsna (*An hour and 36 minutes later*)

Sometimes I think you never loved me. You just loved how much I loved you.

##

From: Abhishek (*22 minutes later*)

No... No... No...

It isn't true at all.

How can you even think of saying such a thing?

I fell in love with you when I did not even know what I wanted. It was not clear what I had to offer. I was in no position to be in a relationship with anyone.

This one mistake has cost me the most – my peace of mind.

##

From: Jyotsna (*An hour and 38 minutes later*)

I hope you realize you are the reason I don't believe in such relationships anymore.

Do you know how a broken heart feels? It is the worst. It's like having broken ribs. Nobody can see it, but the pain is unbearable every time you breathe.

You have left me with one to last the duration of my life.

##

From: Abhishek (*Two hours and 48 minutes later*)

Love is strange, Jyotsna. How can something so wonderful bring so much pain?

Why can't you forgive me?

##

From: Jyotsna (*That night*)

I can forgive you, Abhi. That is not a problem.

But I can never forget how you made me feel.

The highs of the moments of happiness we spent together and the low of you walking away. I can never forget that.

I had found freedom. You had become a memory I had to get over with. Losing all hope that you will ever come back was freedom.

After all that time, I realized I am the only person I need. I cannot be free until you are out of my life.

For my own peace of mind, I need to close this window that you have forced me to open.

##

***Kavitha-Abhishek**

From: Kavitha

February 2013

I know you want another baby. With how our lives are going on, I think it is going to be difficult. Plus, my boss is becoming more and more FRUSTRATING as the days go by. On most days, you have this mask on you and hardly seem to care about anything. I am not sure about a lot of things in my life – in our lives actually. This is not my intent to point any fingers, but I have come to realize that we are two VERY DIFFERENT PEOPLE. I can't seem to find enough of a common ground to be able to run our house as one. We are not getting younger and our lives are getting duller day by day. I don't know what to do...

##

From: Abhishek (*Two hours and 28 minutes later*)

I understand planning for another baby is a huge challenge – especially if you have picked up the disgusting habit again.

And as you said, we are not getting younger and our lives are getting duller. But I am facing my own challenges and stress. I am doing my best to not let you both be affected by it. I don't show my frustration at home and bottle myself up – which is how I like to deal with things. I don't use other people as punching bags. It doesn't mean I don't care about you both.

##

From: Kavitha (*An hour later*)

See, it is a vicious cycle. When you close yourself up, I feel I have to scream to get through to you.

Do you realize it is affecting Ritu?

If the only tool you have is a hammer, then you make a nail out of every problem. If your only solution to every problem we face is to wear a mask and close yourself up, then I don't think we will ever bring PEACE AND HARMONY into our lives.

Smoking seems to be my solace.

##

From: Abhishek (*An hour and 11 minutes later*)

Ahaa... you are blaming me for your screaming and starting to smoke again. Brilliant. I am trying to make peace in the house; with all the other stressors we have in our lives, you are justifying your screaming. I am dealing with things the best I can, please let me. You can call it closing up, but I think it is the best for everyone around.

##

From: Kavitha (*That evening*)

Closing up like you do instead of communicating is just as toxic as arguing.

I don't think I can DEAL with a closed person who can't trust his own wife. It will not serve our purpose of giving Ritu a loving environment. I think it's time we either try to mend things or just go our separate ways. For now, the idea of having a second child goes out of the window.

Sometimes, I feel I have been waiting for the connect between us to happen and that might never happen. That's the tragedy of our life as a couple – it won't be that it would end soon, but that I waited so long to begin it without realizing that it might never happen.

In fact, I should know when to END the story.

There cannot be any love if you don't trust the person you are in love with. I won't spend my whole life waiting for you to trust me and love me back. If you do not love me, I think you should stop faking this whole relationship.

It's really TIRING running after you. Perhaps it is better if I walk on my own now.

But remember this, if I was ever given one wish to have anything I want, I would always use it on us, on our relationship, on being happy together.

##

From: Abhishek (*The next morning*)

Listen Kavi, there is no need to get all that dramatic.

As I said, it is a matter of time. We are playing different roles now – that of a parent and also that of breadwinners.

We can't always be a romantic couple. Have patience. If you really believe that I am the one for you, consider these years as an investment – I have done so.

Nobody is living at anyone's mercy – you are equipped with your education and everything else that you have acquired.

Do what you have to do.

But remember, you and Ritu have become an integral part of me, part of who I am.

I can't imagine a life without you two in it.

Relationships aren't easy. Some last, some don't. Not many get it right, but I think we are all supposed to try.

I have been trying and will continue to try to make our little world a better place for all of us to live in.

I do love you, Kavi. Please don't go.

##

Jyotsna-Abhishek

From: Abhishek

February 2013

Why do you keep talking about ending things? Why can't we let things be as they are between us – at least keep writing to each other like this.

##

From: Jyotsna (*That evening*)

This time, I mean it Abhi. I have to walk away. I need to walk away – if not for anything else, but for my own peace.

There were all those long days when I just couldn't stop thinking about you. About us. Then I wondered, why had I been wasting my time? I don't want to go down that path again.

I need to walk again like I had learnt to – alone.

I cannot expect you to walk along – I don't think you are in a position to, either.

We were friends. Then we became something more than that. I don't think you should expect we can ever go back to what we were before.

It is best if we end things and go on living our lives like we had been before you wrote to me.

I don't see any other option.

This is my life, my story, my book. I don't want to let anybody else scribble all over it again.

##

From: Abhishek (*The next morning*)

Before you end things, can I see you once?

Just once... For old times' sake, Jo.

I want that one chance to look into your eyes, just one more time.

To see your eyes, looking into mine and telling me all those things that words could never say.

Just one more time...

Please?

##

From: Jyotsna (*That evening*)

I can't see you, Abhi.

If I see you, I don't think I can walk away.

I can't trust you to walk away either and let you ruin everything else that is part of who you are now.

##

From: Abhishek (*16 minutes later*)

Ah.... You've really made up your mind then.

I thought if we could meet, I will be able to convince you that it doesn't have to end like this.

I really don't want to lose you a second time. Please, Jo.. Please. Please.

##

From: Jyotsna (*The next morning*)

No, Abhi. Nothing can convince me to continue like this.

##

From: Abhishek (*That night*)

You seem to be determined to end this.

But why does something so wonderful as love cause so much pain?

How do you let go of someone you still carry in your heart?

##

From: Jyotsna (*The next morning*)

Abhi, I am really sorry for all the hurtful things I said after you wrote back to me. I don't think I have written such bitter stuff to anyone and it will take me a while to forgive myself for doing so.

But I am really glad that you wrote to me and tried to take away some of the hurt of walking away from my life. I needed it to happen, needed you to come back and clear things up – perhaps more than I can ever appreciate.

Someday, I hope you understand how much you meant to me. You will always have a place in my heart no one else would ever have.

Loving you was my choice. Leaving me was yours. Letting you go from my life is the choice I have to make now for everyone's sake.

Stop mourning the loss of what you thought your life could have been, how and with whom you could have spent it with. Things have a way of working out anyway – in ways you never anticipated them to.

I am just a chapter in your life, Abhi. Don't let me define what your story is. Know that there are far, far better things ahead than any you leave behind.

And just because we can't be together doesn't mean I won't love you. I will never stop loving you. It's just that I've lost hope in you – hope that we could ever be together again.

Only a woman could love you to death & choose to never talk to you again. I hope you can understand that.

You find the best things in life when you are not looking for them. Closure will come to you, perhaps years later. Long after you have stopped searching for it.

You will be grateful for the goodbyes that have brought you to this moment. And just like that, you will know.

Some endings don't have proper goodbyes. This is one of those. I have always wished the best for you.

Please don't come back. I can't let my heart be trampled all over by you again.

Always remember, I loved you unabashedly, with all my heart and in the truest sense of the word.

##

***Kavitha-Abhishek**

From: Kavitha (*Three days later*)

Abhi – it's a long road ahead, and you're the only person I want to walk it with.

Please understand, I can live without you. I just don't want to.

I love you

##

###Kavitha-Jyotsna

From: Kavitha *(Sixteen days later)*

Thank you...

##

*****Kavitha-Nathan**

From: Nathan

March 2013

Do Abhi and you still write emails to each other?

##

From: Kavitha *(39 minutes later)*

Don't see the need for them any longer, Nathan....

##

From: Nathan *(Two hours and 11 minutes later)*

Sounds good, Kavi. Happy for you.

My girlfriend is flying down and moving in with me next week. Her Advisor has given her permission to finish writing up her thesis from here – she just needs to go back to Singapore for her final thesis defense.

##

*#Mehreen-Abhishek

From: Mehreen *(A month and a half later)*

Hi Abhi,

How have you been?

Nobody in our Jive Box office circle knows your whereabouts or what is going on with your life – at least, they don't tell me anything. You seem to have deliberately and completely cut yourself off after leaving Jive Box.

It has been difficult forgetting you after all the time we spent together. You did not give me a chance to say a proper goodbye around the time you left. I had a really hard time finding your contact....

Then I found your email on your art portal where your paintings are exhibited...

So, what are you up to these days?

##

There is a theory that nothing in nature is ever lost—that every sound ever made, every word ever spoken exists somewhere in space and time and may one day be recalled. – Sidney Sheldon, Tell Me Your Dreams (1998).

A New Beginning....

It is perhaps better to let things end as they should...

The last page of a book,

The slam of the door,

The unanswered message –

It is more than the conclusion;

It is, in itself, the bridge to

A new beginning.

- M. Nolan

Author bio

Junaid is a Design Professional based in Bangalore with extensive industry experience working with organizations such as Adobe, Oracle, ABB, IBM and Intel (among others) during his career spread over fifteen years.

Junaid has a couple of MS degrees - one in Psychology and the other in Electrical Engineering – both from the US while his undergraduate degree (BE) is in Electrical & Electronics Engineering from Bangalore.

Junaid has always loved to write – the only prizes he won in school were for writing. Junaid got trained in writing fiction during a three week in residence 'Just Write' fiction writing workshop (back in 2011) where he got a chance to learn the nuances of and hone his story telling skills from authors and instructors Anil Menon, Anjum Hasan and Rimi Chatterjee.

Junaid used the epistolary style of narration for his first fiction novel – 'And We Remained' – a coming of age story told through first person accounts of events and email exchanges. Junaid went on to self-publish '**And We Remained**' in 2014. He designed the cover, formatted the content, got it printed, sold it on Amazon, Flipkart and other retail channels.

Indian Express's Meera Bharadwaj in her review of '**And We Remained**' mentions that "*... the style of writing emerges a winner as it is not only fresh but also original.*"

[Junaid writes regularly on Quora](#) and his answers have been viewed more than 900,000 times. [Junaid also writes articles on design on Medium.](#)

More about Junaid is at <http://www.asadalijunaid.com/>

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Q&A on 'Closure'

- **How did you get this idea of a novel/ story told through emails?**

My first novel 'And We Remained' is narrated through emails and first-person accounts of events. The format came out of the story I intended to narrate. In the end, I was pretty happy with how 'And We Remained's story came through.

After 'And We Remained', I wondered if a story could be narrated completely through emails – and that's how the seeds of 'Closure' were sown.

- **Do you think this email format for a novel will work?**

In 2017, 3.7 Billion users sent emails. By 2022, this figure is set to grow to 4.3 Billion users. More people are getting familiar with emails as a means of information exchange.

269 Billion emails were sent and received each day in 2017. This figure is expected to increase to over 333 Billion emails in 2022. People are getting used to communicating through emails.

In fact, I believe that people would find reading this novel much easier than reading traditional novels as a large section of us are used to reading tens and hundreds of emails on a daily basis.

- **Is 'Closure' a part 2 of your first book 'And We Remained'?**

'Closure is not a part 2 of 'And We Remained' though it started that way. 'Closure' is more of a serious read, a mature love story. 'And We Remained' is a college love story.

When I started out to write a part 2 for 'And We Remained', I got stuck for a very long time - a few years, in fact. I wasn't able to progress at all.

I then realized, that I did not want to write about any of the characters from 'And We Remained' anymore – there was no compelling story for me to narrate.

- **Are the characters in 'Closure' inspired by someone?**

There was a phase in my life when my wife and me used to correspond through emails. Some conversations in 'Closure' are inspired by discussions I used to have with my wife through emails.

But the bottom line for me would be, when the reader feels the story is realistic and leaves him with the feeling that 'Closure' has been a worthwhile read.

▪ **How did you get the idea of the '36 questions' game?**

I came across a psychology study about the '36 questions'. There is a novel written based on the study as well – '36 Questions that changed my mind about you' by Vicky Grant.

Given the epistolary nature of 'Closure', I believe the Q&A format of '36 Questions' and what Kavitha is attempting to achieve through the emails she writes to Abhishek would work well here.

Blurb

Below the title

A story about three characters and their intertwined lives told through email conversations.

Book Blurb

A married man – Abhishek – writes to his school and college romance – Jyotsna – to seek closure after their relationship had ended badly. Abhishek and his wife – Kavitha – are going through a difficult time in their marriage. Kavitha writes to Abhishek and wants to play a game of '36 questions' with him to put their relationship back on course. Abhishek hadn't been forthcoming about his past relationships – it comes as a shocker that someone like a Jyotsna existed in his life after she reads the correspondence between them.

Closure takes the reader through the joys of love and relationships to the low of heartbreaks while unveiling what Abhishek has to go through to get closure, how Kavitha deals with an old flame coming back into her husband's life and how Jyotsna handles a man who broke her heart getting back to her for 'closure'.

Thread 1

Hero 1 – Abhi;

Problem (s) – (i) Seeking closure from Jyotsna (ii) Find meaning/ relevance in marriage with Kavi;

Guide (s)/ Guidance – Jyotsna – though upset, gets into a good; Kavi,

Resolution for problem (i) Doesn't get to meet Jyotsna or the kind of resolution he wants (ii) Starts to connect well with Kavi through emails and they discover a better way to communicate.

Thread 2

Hero 2 – Kavi;

Problem (s) – (i) Connect well with Abhi (ii) Jyotsna coming back into Abhi's life leading to insecurity within her;

Guide (s)/ Guidance – Abhi reciprocates Kavi's efforts; Nathan, Jyotsna

Resolution for problem (i)

Thread 3

Hero 3 – Jyotsna;

Problem (s) – (i) Abhi coming back into her life (ii) Kavi writing to her;

Guide – Kavi

Resolution for problem (i)