

Finally, I Embraced Reality...

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INDIA • SINGAPORE • MALAYSIA



Notion Press

No.8, 3rd Cross Street
CIT Colony, Mylapore
Chennai, Tamil Nadu – 600004

First Published by Notion Press 2020
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ISBN 978-1-64983-810-0

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Dedicated to
Believers of Love and Friendship

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Acknowledgements

Writing fiction is harder than I thought. On the other hand, it is far more satisfying and engaging than I could have ever imagined. However, it wouldn't have been possible if I didn't have the support of the right people.

I would like to express my gratitude to my fiancé, Aditi Algudkar, who worked with me and shared her honest and brutal feedback on every chapter I penned down. I would like to thank my family for being patient and supportive of my initiatives and ideas. I appreciate the Notion Press team for the effortless and easy journey.

THANK YOU for choosing this book to be a part of your life.

Happy to stay in touch. Take care and I hope you enjoy your reading!

Prologue

I hate it when people spell my name as Ahan, and I end up correcting them every time. By the way, it is A-a-h-a-n. I can't speak fluently when I am anxious or under pressure. I intermittently stutter. Hence, I was always ridiculed during my academic years, which made me insecure and an introvert.

Like others, I have made a few mistakes in the heat of the moment which resulted in irrevocable pain. Though people didn't care about me, I always made an effort to be a responsible individual. At times, I trusted the wrong people and faced the consequences of my decisions. However, I strongly believe that not everyone around us is bad, so I simply follow the 'live and let live' rule. Clearly, in my case, they live and I have to struggle to live, suppressing my insecurities and unsettling emotions.

Though I feel lonely at times, I have a friend. His name is Daksh. I always hated it when he pulled my leg and embarrassed me. But, whenever I was in trouble or pain, he always stepped up and guided me. Indeed, a true friend. I can talk about him for the next two hours but even that wouldn't be sufficient.

“What's the value of life if you don't choose to spend it with the people you love?” I've always asked myself this question, even though I have never experienced that selfless love and affection. Maybe,

that's why I still believe in love and friendship. Life has always seemed hard on me. My parents often travelled on business trips, so I stayed alone in a big apartment, trying to convince myself that they would return soon and spend some time with me. That never happened.

Though I shifted with Daksh to another city for career progression after my graduation and stopped working out for a few months, I still managed to be in a fighting-fit state as I am a non-smoker and non-drinker. I, however, hate the love handles which are irritating and even embarrassing at times. Due to my diet, they aren't exposed too much or is it because of my 5 ft 9in height?. Anyway, I have strictly followed a mindful diet until last month, but now I don't want to. I am tired of pulling myself up right from my childhood. I want to live a care-free life. I want to live with the people who actually care about me and look at me, instead of my stammering. I want to be with the one who isn't embarrassed by me. All I have now is Daksh and some memories I will always cherish.

An Unexpected Date

I was sitting at the corner of my bed reading a book when he entered my room. “I am not in the m-mood to go out, D-Daksh.” I shouted at him for insisting that I go out with him.

“Dude, it’s been more than a year. You should go out and meet new people.” He shouted back.

I looked at him in frustration, shutting my book and said, “I w-want to be alone for a couple of d-days more.” I wanted to tell him that I missed her. I really missed her a lot and it was difficult to stay away from her without talking. I wanted to tell him that I wanted to see her. I wanted to hug her. But, I didn’t. I was certain he wouldn’t understand or hesitate to lecture me for an hour.

“Get up!” He yelled and snatched the book, throwing it at the other end of the bed. I couldn’t argue anymore. I felt weak and helpless.

“I know you are feeling bad right now but you need to accept the truth and move on,” he continued.

“Alright! Where is the s-shirt you borrowed from me last week?” I questioned hesitantly.

“It must be lying somewhere on my bed. Go find it yourself or wear something else,” he responded,

looking at himself in the mirror and brushing his hair.

I couldn't find my shirt, so I picked a black t-shirt which was lying on his bed and put it on. It smelled weird, so I sprayed some body deodorant on it from his half empty bottle. I was almost ready in the black t-shirt and a forest-green pair of jeans, looking around for footwear. I decided to wear crocs.

"P-Please..let's come back early. I have w-work to do." I told him while getting into the car. He looked at his t-shirt but didn't say anything.

"Yeah...yeah. We'll see," he answered carelessly and started driving.

"W-Where are we going anyway?" I questioned, looking out the window hopelessly. The trees and other vehicles on the road were blurry and disappeared rather quickly. Indeed, he was driving rashly.

"Surprise... Surprise!" He responded cheerfully.

"Fine! B-but I want to go home soon," I replied, looking at him disappointedly.

I have known him for eight years. He is cheerful only on two occasions. One, when he is going to meet a girl and two, when he is with a girl. So, I knew we were going to meet a girl. We reached our destination in a couple of minutes.

"Sir, please park your car over there." An old watchman shouted from far away, directing us with his left hand.

“Okay Boss!” Daksh replied sarcastically, waving his hand at him as if he could hear him. He then parked his car in front of a luxurious café.

“Oh... he h-heard you,” I commented ironically and opened the door of the car.

“Shut up, man,” he yelled at me for guffawing.

I looked at a restaurant on the opposite side of the road, assuming Daksh had asked the girl to meet him there. It looked like a South Indian place but I wasn't convinced. I was baffled by the thought that he had asked a girl to meet him in such a place. I turned back to clarify, but he wasn't there. I bent down and looked inside the car to find him brushing his hair looking in the rear view mirror.

“Did you ask your girl to meet you in that r-restaurant?” I questioned him, pointing my finger towards it. Undoubtedly, I was shocked.

“What?! What girl? We came out to eat. Don't you dare judge me!” He yelled.

I breathed out abruptly and rolled my eyes indicating that I knew the truth. He got out of the car and started walking towards the luxurious café.

He turned back and said, “Oh... I asked her to meet me in this café.” His excitement was clearly visible on his face.

“I knew it, D-Daksh.” I responded confidently with a satisfying smile. We entered the café. While I was gazing at the interiors and the stunning furniture, he reached out to the hostess and requested for a table for

four. He came back to inform me that we would have to wait for 15 minutes and walked out.

“Oh... okay!” I agreed and turned my head towards the hostess, who had leaned forward to write the names of other customers. She looked beautiful. She wore a little black dress with full sleeves. It looked perfect on her. The next second, I felt empty. I couldn’t figure out why.

I started walking towards my friend who was standing near his car. He lit a cigarette and stood facing the entrance of the café. I couldn’t help but look at his clothes. He wore a tight and transparent, white half-sleeved shirt with rugged, baby blue colored skinny fit jeans and white casual shoes. His big belly was fighting with the third and fourth button of his shirt, looking like it wanted to pop out and feel the world. I stood beside him, waving my hands in front of my nose. I felt irritated and disgusted for allowing the cigarette smoke reach my lungs.

“Ahem... Ahem... Urgh!” I intentionally coughed louder so that he would hear me, but he didn’t bother to respond or act.

“We have selected online payment, okay?” I heard a girl saying to someone. We turned back to look at who it was. There were two girls getting out of an auto rickshaw, one was about 5ft 3in tall while the other was about 5ft.

“Hi Ridhima,” said Daksh, greeting the taller girl as he approached her. I wished he would throw his cigarette but he shifted it to his other hand. I waved