

Anything but Indian Food

Sid (short for Siddhartha, his given name) sat across from Kelly in the romantic Italian restaurant, in the university town where they were seniors. In spite of his parent's arranging an engagement for him with a suitable Indian girl in Mumbai, the second-generation college student only had eyes for Kelly, quite possibly the antithesis of everything his parents had planned. Kelly was protestant, preppy and the only daughter of a good, upper middle class family from Boston.

"Why don't we ever go to Indian restaurants Sid? Don't you like Indian food?"

Sid took a bite of his risotto, smiled and looked into Kelly's eyes. "No, I don't. Cumin and curry are disgusting and every Indian dish has them to excess. Look at Italian food. Elegant, delicate and romantic, like you." Kelly blushed. "America is my home. I have no desire to visit India, much less marry someone my parents have arranged."

Kelly squeezed his hand. "Sid, you know how I feel about you, but what will your parents say?"

Sid's expression told Kelly she had nothing to worry about. "They will see in you what I do, the light of my life."

A violinist played an Italian aria accompanied by a heavysset waiter in a tuxedo, serenading the patrons as they ate in a restaurant Kelly had always wanted to visit. "This is so romantic. What a perfect night." Kelly was in love with Sid. He was smart, athletic and handsome. They had been together for a year now. Their relationship had taken off, since she first saw him on the football field. But Kelly loved his mind as much as his body; with a 3.85 GPA in Economics, Sid made college look easy. She took another look at the menu. "Sid, this is so expensive; we could go to four dinners for what this is going to cost." Sid appreciated Kelly's watching the budget, but this was a special night.

The violin player came over to their table as the tenor began 'O Sole Mio. "Do you know what the words mean in English Kelly?"

She shook her head. "No, but it's beautiful."

Sid translated. "It's about a man who sees the sun come out after a storm, then tells his lover that her face is even more beautiful than the sun. That's how I feel when I see you. I love you Kelly!"

Kelly leaned over and kissed him. "I love you too Sid." They could feel the moment, smell the food and were at peace. It was one of those times that don't come along very often, when everything is in sync.

Sid pulled out his chair, kneeled down next to Kelly and looked deep into her eyes. “Kelly Ann Caverly, you are my sun.” Suddenly, everyone around them was listening. “When I wake up, you are what I want to see. At sundown, you will be the light that keeps shining. With you by my side, I will always have the warmth and light I need. Please do me the honor of lighting up my life. Kelly, will you marry me?”

Kelly began to cry. She reached out for Sid, nearly knocking him over. “Of course I will. You are my sunshine too.” The tenor hit his high note, the other diners clapped and the couple was now engaged. The owner put the Tarantella CD on and for the rest of the night, Sid and Kelly had an engagement party. There were cannoli for everyone and a cake the restaurant reserved for special occasions.

The last year of college went by quickly. Sid and Kelly were planning their futures and their wedding. Kelly had an internship at Deaconess hospital and Sid had offers from several banks. On a warm afternoon in May, they walked hand in hand in Kenmore Square, to see a Red Sox game. Outside the stadium, they stopped for a steak and cheese sub, smothered with onions, peppers, mushrooms and grease. Just as smoothly as their life was going, so were the Red Sox, coming off their first world series win in 86 years.

The next week, Kelly was planning on meeting Sid for lunch when she got a call on her cell phone. Sid had been taken to the hospital and Kelly rushed to the emergency room. Waiting for an hour, she began to cry, not knowing what had happened.

Finally a doctor came out to see her. “Kelly Caverly?”

She quickly got up. “Yes, I’m Kelly.”

The doctor took her into a treatment room. “Sid had an acute attack in his intestines. We’re running tests now. We’ve sedated him, but you can wait here with him.” Kelly thanked the doctor and sat next to Sid, holding his hand as he slept.

When Sid woke up, Kelly told him what the doctor said. “I’m so glad you’re here, not out on the street somewhere. What do you think happened?”

Sid groaned and rubbed his stomach, still in pain. “Maybe something I ate, but nothing unusual in the last few days.” The blood tests were done quickly at the emergency room. A beautiful young Asian doctor came into his room and gave him a tablespoon of medicine and told him to rest. Sid’s face turned sour. “Argh. This is terrible.”

Thirty minutes later, she returned to his room. “How are you feeling now, Mr. Patel?” With Kelly by his side, he looked exhausted but relieved.

“I feel a little better now. Am I going to be all right?”

The doctor smiled and reassured him. “Yes, you had a parasite; just take a tablespoon of this every six hours for the next week.”

Sid grimaced. “A week! It tastes awful doc.”

The doctor nodded. “Yes, I know. It’s the cumin, but it kills the worms faster than anything else.”