

*"Total View"*  
*of a*  
*friendship tale*

A novel

*by*

VISHAL V. R. NANDIGANA

This book is a work of fiction. Names, characters, places and incidents are either the product of the author's imagination or are used fictitiously, and any resemblance to actual persons, living or dead, events, or locales is entirely coincidental.

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## Contents

Acknowledgements	3
Prologue	6
1. Tale of two friends unfold	8
2. Big meeting to win my dream job	34
3. Marriage alliance with my beautiful princess	54
4. I meet my best friend to share my dreams.....	79
5. My friend talked his dreams .....	96
6. Love with my princess.....	114
7. He competes for India's top singing competition – Episode I	.131
8. We say unhappy things to each other – Episode I	...152
9. He competes for India's top singing competition – Episode II .....	163
10. We say unhappy things to each other – Episode II (Our friendship breaks).....	174
11. Our princesses separate.....	180
12. A lucky force enters our life. The force is magical .....	185

## Acknowledgements

This novel is dedicated with love and bliss to my parents and to my alma mater, Anna University, Chennai, India. It was in the year 2008 I had graduated with a Bachelor of Engineering (B.E) degree in mechanical engineering from this prestigious college. Once done with B.E I wished to board the flight to Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) to pursue my PhD in mechanical engineering department in Computational Fluid Dynamics division. However, things did not go my way and I was unsuccessful in getting admitted to this most revered school. Heartbroken with the outcome I unassumingly badgered my PhD in another reasonably top school, University of Illinois at Urbana Champaign, Illinois, USA. Few cries and hatred later I regained my

flight in this prized college and met some of my best friends, Ismaeel and Venkat who were baiting their PhDs. During those days, I reveled every phase of my life breathing my best air. It was on a road journey that I narrated an exquisite friendship story to my friends. My pals were enthralled with the riveting story and were in heartfelt joyous blues listening to the synonym of friendship. They coerced and wheedled me to write this celestial friendship story into a novel. I was happy listening to their reaction and put my pen into writing. I wrapped my PhD and was keying on a job in such an organization that would balm me to spend some time on this heartwarming novel. After various trials in industry I decided to pursue a career in academics that galvanized my drive to excel in the desired field of writing. I leaped on the opportunity in teaching and research career at the India's renowned institute Indian Institute of Technology, Madras (IITM), Chennai, India, and was appointed as an Assistant Professor in mechanical engineering. At IITM, I decided to write the novel. I narrated the story for the second time to my best

childhood buddies Mohan, Dinesh, Prabhu, Sharon, Siddharth and Nachiket, and also with my fellow IITM professors, Viswa, Vaibhav and Murugan. All of them listened to the story and gamboled me to write the story into novel without having any second thoughts. On that very day I began writing this novel. However all roads were not really cozy when I started writing the novel. It was tenacious to admeasure time to the novel and college as the course and research load was tumultuous. I used to guide time late in the night to visualize the story and sieve the characters with a symphony to write. The novel blossomed into well laden petals with my pen. The full-right novel was completed in two years. I was happy that the novel came out well.

I would like to thank Mr. Vijay from Penguin random house for his pedestal approach in granting us the opportunity to submit our novel. Mr. Vijay's support and fortitude kept us motivated to submit the novel. It is through Mr. Vijay's warmth and reward that the novel is complete and is in your great hands.

I should say I have thanked all my well wishers who have helped me sculpt this soul satisfying novel and I wish you all imbibe and enjoy the novel as much I had the pleasure of writing it for you.

*(Back Cover)*                      *Friendship tale*

This is a friendship story between Arjun and Anand.

Arjun is a rich Tamil Brahmin boy studying B.E mechanical engineering at Anna University. He wishes to ace his Bachelor's degree and fulfill his dream of marrying a well-read girl, Anu, arranged by his mother.

Anand is a backward caste cook who wishes to be a rock singer and marry his long time girlfriend, Priyanka.

Arjun and Anand become best friends irrespective of their caste.

During the sojourn travel of their friendship, a mystical emotion of hatred gets incepted and the two friends separate. The friends' breakup with their girlfriends.

Caress your holler bones to know why they lose their angelic friendship and honest love.

The friends grind through heartache and mewl. A divine force crosses their life. The force is magical.

## *Prologue*

Today is 25<sup>th</sup> November 1974 and the time is 5:30 pm. I am at Guindy Engineering college campus in Madras, Tamilnadu. I am ecstatic by visually aesthetic flora orchestrated in the Guindy Engineering college campus and the fauna is equally harmoniously designed. Guindy Engineering College, Anna University is Tamilnadu's best government engineering college that I consciously got admitted three years ago after securing 5<sup>th</sup> rank in the state higher secondary examinations. Today I concluded last of my seventh semester exams. I still have one more semester to graduate and candidly travel with my free spirit. I will tell about myself a little later but right now I need to wear my sweater and monkey cap as I feel tremble cold like the

Kashmir winters. The temperature outside is 24 °C which is draft winters for us people of Madras. The cold air buzzes the ears of outgoing students and rain drizzle kisses the leaves on the oak trees giving a grandeur picturesque frame. On this cold wintery evening, I am watching Arjun, my nemesis sitting on the Guindy Engineering College main gate parapet wall with his three best friends, Bharath, Vetri and Kapil. Lots of exciting events are planned by Arjun and his friends to celebrate their post exam time. I am going to give commentary about Arjun's grand-masti celebration and also about Arjun's life. I am Vijay classmate of Arjun. I love mechanical engineering because it has subjects like Jigs and Fixtures, Machine Design I and II and my favorite Engineering drawing which other department students don't have and don't understand. I wish to narrate Arjun's story because he is my nemesis. I want to know about his life and career to edge past him and win gold medal award in college and get a better ranked job than him. Grab a cup of hot coffee with biscuits. Let's begin the commentary on Arjun.

## CHAPTER 1

### ***Tale of two friends unfold***

Arjun is a bloody geek. He is a math freak. He pesters me and other class students by talking math to us. He is also a college topper. He bagged every award in school. Son of ----- I used to call him. I cried a lot to win some of those awards. But none came to me. Today, I pray lord Murugan to award me the college gold medal. But Arjun will not let me win the award. He is very disciplined and studious. He keeps studying. But Arjun has a rear disorder. He has gynophobia, fear of talking to girls and grown up women. He cannot stand up and talk to a girl. As luck will have it our Head of Department is a lady. Our loser Arjun has no balls to stand in front of our HOD and talk why he should be awarded the

gold medal. That's sufficient to run ahead of him and win the most coveted gold medal award. Celebrations will be aired when you all hear my name for the most prestigious gold medal award. Days are not far. I just wrapped up my seventh semester exams. I am extremely joyous to tell you that I have performed all the exams supremely well. I have a GPA of 9.4/10.0 just 0.2 GPA away from my arch nemesis Arjun who has a GPA of 9.6/10.0. I still have one more semester to outsmart him to win the most revered award. These days I keep a close eye on Arjun to see how he prepares for exams and how he writes them. I have started to befriend him to know all his studying secrets and wish to learn them. I also wish to know where he gets a job so that I can clandestinely make plans to join that company and get a foothold there and overtake him. From today I will closely watch Arjun and will give a breezy commentary to you all. Fasten your seat belts and witness my nerve-cracking, spine-chilling and eye-popping commentary about my scourge nemesis Arjun.

Arjun is a Tamil Brahmin boy. He is from Madras. He lives in Alwarpet. His family had moved to Madras two generations back. Arjun comes to college in Fiat 1100 super select car. He drives the car on his own. He is from a rich family. His father Dr. Muthushankar Bharadwaj, is a renowned Physics professor in Loyola college. He loves Arjun very dearly that he presented him a costly Fiat 1100 super select car on his eightieth birthday. Dr. Muthushankar fulfills every dream of Arjun. Regarding Arjun's physical features, he is 5 feet 7 inches tall, lanky and handsome. But he doesn't see that. He is a nerd. He is just good in education. He has lots of defects. He treads to school wearing thick goggle-eye glasses like the Hans Moleman in "The Simpsons". He got his first shades at three and at that time he bunts a power of 2.5 and now he plops a power of 6.5. I mock at him when I see him blobbing those two giant framed glasses. What I feel happy is that even girls hate him. He's just a stupid geek. He has a rear disorder. He has gynophobia. He picked it up at three. We both were in LKG. Arjun smiled towards a beautiful little princess and started

talking to her. Later he kissed her. The girl slapped him hard because Arjun was talking number counting and math. The girl wanted him to talk fun. Arjun did not know how to talk fun. He is a nerd. He stopped talking to girls thereafter. The result is his gynophobia. Cut to the present he still talks about math and number counting but this time about complex Green's function and divergence theorem. The girls still hate him. The girls here in Guindy Engineering College wish to talk fashionable like new retro miniskirts with embroidery design, Peggy pants and curled hairstyle. Along with the latest outfits and fashion the girls also wish to talk about hot cars and men. Arjun doesn't care about fashion or about hot cars. He wears a plaid printed trouser with checked shirt. His friends taxed him to change and become smart. They ask him to find a girl so that he can change. But Arjun always cries the slap in LKG. He deems girls are psycho, unfailingly mutter about cars, fashion and about hot men. He deems he doesn't have any of those qualities. Arjun thinks girls hate him. I pray Lord Murugan he finds a girl. That's my wicked wish so that it will spoil

his chances of getting a gold medal and I win it. I will tell you one more secret of Arjun. He made a wish to Lord Ganesha, his favorite god that he wants to marry a beautiful Tamil Brahmin girl who is a well read and is very good looking. Arjun deems beautiful Tamil educated Brahmin girls fall in love with highly educated and extremely well earning Tamil Brahmin boys like how all the mom's say. Arjun knows he is well educated and is a gold medalist. Now in order to get his wish fulfilled he wants to earn lots of money. For that he wishes to work in a big company. Arjun wishes to work as a senior financial strategic analyst. He has an offer from HMT, the biggest watch company in India. But he doesn't wish to work there. He reckons HMT pays low salaries. He longs to work in another big Indian firm, Saregama music industry. It is one of the top two industries in India that sells gramophone records and audio cassettes of all leading singers and artists. However in the last two years the industry had taken a fall owing to their messed up financial accounts and stock prices. Arjun wishes to revive that company and tower that company back to profits so that he can

ask a hefty salary check. Before I narrate more about Saregama music industry, you may be wondering why Arjun is dying to become strategic analyst which is like a finance job? The answer is very simple, Arjun sees magnum money in finance job than in engineering job as he deems any industry's profit is determined by the sales of its products and only a financial strategic analyst can bring giant sales and create monstrous profits. Then you may ask why he has taken engineering course when all he is interested in a finance job? The answer again is very simple. Who will respect a commerce student in our society as they are reckoned to be dumb and unintelligent? But engineering students, the society keeps them high above their heads and wags their tails and nods their heads to what they say. Let me take a break from chanting about Arjun and will talk about his friends.

There is Bharath sitting on the same parapet wall next to Arjun. He is Arjun's best friend. He is a passable student who mostly hubs on his looks than books. He has a well muscled body and is a hulk.

He is towering six feet and two inches tall. Every girl wishes to go out with him because of his looks and how he talks. He talks about fashion and also about cars. He drives a Mercedes Benz d300 to college and girls look at him in awe and wish to become his girlfriend. Our man too kens his tricks with girls and accepts their requests to hang out with them. However he dreams of marrying only one girl that is his hot girlfriend, Divya. Divya is not only hot and beautiful but is very quiet natured and bares everything Bharath says. He fights with her and bullies her. Yet she bares him. Bharath thus has plans of marrying Divya after graduation and after finding a job in his father's steel company, Raghunath Steel industry. His father, Raghunath is a rich industrialist and is one of the top 10 millionaires in India. He has factories across eleven cities in India and across ten countries. Bharath however has no plans taking rein from his father and wishes to just earn money before fifty and retire thereafter. He wishes to spend all his earnings on travel and with his girlfriend, Divya. Bharath and Arjun are just a semester away from achieving

their dreams. Today we ended our last of seventh semester exam on Probability.

I see Bharath in a grungy mood. He wishes to howl out loud and vent his gall. Bharath usually is a B grader with around seven point GPA but today he messed up the exam. He thinks his favorite Probability professor Latha Narendran will think he is a dunce after she reads his paper.

Arjun tries to comfort his friend Bharath.

"Do not worry, you got around 5/10 in the last probability exam that is sufficient for you to just pass the course," said Arjun.

"Shut up. I am not dumb to fail. I am a B grader with 7.5/10 GPA. I am not a dumb. I don't want your consolence. I don't understand why I messed up the exam," said Bharath, snubbing Arjun.

Arjun looks at Bharath and tremors. He sees Bharath's six pack abs showing off ready to knuckle a guy into pieces. He steps away from Bharath and keeps mum.

"I think Madam Latha will not think about you after she reads my paper," said Vetrivelan, in an assuring way.

Vetrivelan is the chill guy in the group. He is 5 feet 5 inches tall, round face with dark thick eye brows and an over grown beard. He hates people crying or arguing and wishes to go easy.

"I also performed miserably in the exam but wish to just take it easy and drink a beer," said Vetrivelan.

"I think Latha's question was too simple. She was trying to ask us on what is the probability of finding multiple jobs here at Guindy Engineering college. I already have an offer from HMT and now I have sent my report to Saregama music industry hoping to get a call from the Managing Director. I am sure I will get that job as well. I had no trouble answering madam Latha's question," said Arjun.

Bharath and Vetrivelan listened. They want to knuckle Arjun to floors for his overconfidence. Arjun always fears Bharath's rough looks and his beastly avatar. He keeps quiet.

"I don't want to listen to this nerd. I want to let go my tensions. I want to have a beer," said Bharath.

"I know a new a five star hotel called Park Sheraton. It is in TTK road. My friend Anand visited and loved the hotel. They have variety of drinks and a dance floor," said Kapil.

Kapil is the fatso in the group. He is as big as a giant rhinoceros. Kapil has got a round torso, rides to school in a Hero cycle which is designed for people half his size. We all have such a friend in our group. The guy who eats heavily and drinks all beer but says I didn't eat or drink. That's Kapil for you. Bharath acknowledges Kapil's suggestion and wishes to head to that hotel. He gets ready to hug Kapil but steps' back noticing Kapil is as fat as a giant rhinoceros.

The friends hover into Bharath's car and tread to Park Sheraton. The hotel was inaugurated in April and is ten minutes drive from Guindy Engineering College. The five star hotel is four kilometers from the college. Bharath and his friends reach the hotel. The hotel has a giant bar room with a variety of drinks from Khajuraho beer to White horse Whiskey to Malibu rum to Valentine Liberator gin to Polar ice vodka and to Manhattan cocktails to attract all kinds of people, young, old and also hot girls. They also have a wild and hippy dance floor. But Arjun cannot dance for nuts. I watched him dance in his college fresher's party and I threw up watching his nightmarish dance. He is a loser in everything except in education. Arjun sits quiet next to few hot yesteryear movie actresses. He doesn't wish to talk to them as he has gynophobia. Neither Kapil nor Vetrivelan are interested in the actresses as they feel the actresses are old. Bharath meets such women regularly in his guest house so he doesn't wish to spend time with them but rather is interested in hot college teens. The college teens are

plenty in number. Bharath wishes to gulp a beer and go for a dance with them.

"Let's start the party," said Bharath.

The quartet boys celebrate their post exam fun. As they decide on the drinks they see a beautiful young waitress walking towards the table. She is damn sensuous. The four friends are ogling at her and eye her hot cleave.

"Hey, What do you want to drink?" asked the sexy waitress.

"I don't drink," said Arjun, gulping glass of water and gawking her.

"Why don't you wanna drink?" asked the waitress.

Arjun is completely faced out. He can't talk more than these few lines to a girl. He reveals his big secret.

"I have gynophobia. I can't talk to girls. Also I puke when I drink," replied Arjun, losing his composure.

Arjun's friends burst into tittles. The waitress too bursts. Kapil goes a step further and mocks Arjun. Arjun gets offended.

"Shut up Kapil," howled Arjun, showing his gruff side.

The waitress curtails being rude. She asks the three friends to be quiet. However the boys don't quit and mock at Arjun. Arjun feels dejected coming to the bar. He starts to mewl.

"I have gynophobia. Is it my fault?" cried Arjun.

"No, it's not your fault. You are a good boy. It's fine if you don't want to drink," said the waitress.

She leans forward and gives him a kiss on the cheek. Arjun feels euphoric and kisses her. The friends look lost and forget to order. The waitress coyly gives him a flying kiss and marches towards table 2. I hate Arjun. Here is his last secret. Arjun is a loner. He did not kiss any girl. When we were in our third year Arjun did try his best kissing a fresher on the fresher's day. Arjun secretly prayed Lord Ganesha to give him a first kiss experience.

"Can you help me kiss a girl on this fresher's day. I will do anything for you. I will give you my GRE books. I am not planning to go abroad, but still I have all the GRE books. I am preparing just in case things don't go my way in getting placed in Saregama music industry," said Arjun, to his college seniors.

"Do you have all the GRE books? Can we trust you?" asked the college seniors.

"Yes. I have all GRE books. I am the college topper. I am going to win the gold medal. I do not lie," said Arjun.

"Ok. We will help you kiss a girl. Please give us your GRE books," said the college seniors.

"Thanks. I will give the books. Please help me," said Arjun.

"Ok," said the college seniors.

Arjun has seriously planned every detail of his life including his back up plans. He's a serious nemesis of mine. I will prepare for GRE as well. I can also have a backup plan. Coming back to the

fresher's day party Arjun dressed like a rich parvenu and approached the first year student. She was beautiful. Her name is Asha. She is from New York. She got admission under NRI quota. Her father is a big Eye doctor in New York. He deems New York is not the right place for his teenage daughter to study degree as she will be spoilt. He sends her to her grandmother's house in Madras to study. Asha gets enrolled in Electronics and Electrical Engineering in Guindy Engineering College under NRI quota.

"Give a kiss to our friend," said the college senior.

"Who are you? I will complain to the Vice Chancellor," said Asha.

"If you talk extra we will harm you. Don't create a scene. Give a kiss to Arjun and leave. This is part of ragging," said the college senior.

"No. Please don't harm me. I will do what you say," said Asha.

Asha gaits towards Arjun to give him his first kiss. As she inches closer Professor Natteri rushes speedily to the scene.

"Who are those rascals ragging the fresher year student?" howled Professor Natteri.

The seniors gawk Professor Natteri and run away. Asha too ran away fearing trouble. I ran so hard that I didn't wish to get caught. Arjun was not a dunce on that day. He ran full speed that Professor Natteri did not know who ragged the girl. Asha didn't complain seeing she would be harmed by the seniors. The issue just subsided into a worm hole. Arjun missed the best chance to kiss a girl that day. Today Arjun got lucky and kissed a beautiful hot waitress. I am envious. I hate him. He is just a geek. He is just good in education. He cannot be kissed by a girl. His friends look shocked.

"How did you get kissed by the waitress?" asked Bharath.

"I don't know. I was lucky. May be she liked me. I guess I am not just good in education. I am not just a nerd. I am also a show man," said Arjun.

"You are not a show man or a show stealer. You have to be a macho like me. You were just lucky," said Bharath.

"You will never accept me as a show man," asked Arjun.

"Never. You need to be a macho like me," said Bharath.

"I will show you a nerd can also be a show man. I will have my time," said Arjun.

"Do not fret too much. That day will never come. You need to be a macho like me to be a show man. Let us just order the drinks and call the hot waitress again. I want to go out with her," said Bharath.

"You are mean," said Arjun.

"Yes. I am and you are nerd. You will never get girls if you stay this way," said Bharath.

"I will get girls. Girls will love nerds like me. I am not a debauchee," said Arjun.

"Keep dreaming. That will never happen. Girls will never love nerds. They love macho men. They love men who talk about hot cars and fashion. You will never get a girl if you stay this way. Please change and become a man," said Bharath.

"I will not change. I am a nerd and I want girls to love nerds like me. I know that will happen," said Arjun.

"Keep praying. That will not happen. I am telling please change," said Bharath.

"I want girls to love nerds like me. That's final. It's my wish," said Arjun.

"Ok. I don't see that happening. But since I am your friend I will wait and watch," said Bharath.

"Please watch. Girls will like nerds like me," said Arjun.

"Ok wish you luck. Shall we order food, drinks and call the waitress back. I want to talk to her," said Bharath.

"Ok," said Arjun.

"I will order a masala dosa with filter coffee," said Arjun.

"I will have a prawn curry with rice and also have a beer," said Vetrivelan.

"I will order a Chicken tanduri and mashed potatoes with Khajuraho beer," said Bharath.

"I will order a fish salmon, chicken tikka, mutton curry and prawn biryani with Malibu Rum," said Kapil.

"How much will you eat?" asked Arjun.

"I can eat all. I have a big appetite," said Kapil.

The friends' chuckle. They decide to call the waitress. However Kapil sees Anand. He waves towards a dark, six feet two inches muscled hulk.

"Whom are you waving?" fumed Vetrivelan.

"Hey, that's Anand, my friend who suggested this place. I called him tonight," said Kapil.

Man Anand is a big beef. He is tall, dark and dapper. He must be in his late twenties. He wears a green colored kurtha with white pajama and brown sandals. He certainly doesn't look rich and must be from a low backward caste community.

"Why did you invite a backward class man to our party?" asked Arjun in anger.

"He is a nice guy," said Kapil.

"I don't want such low caste men in my party. They are neither intelligent nor rich," said Arjun, fuming.

"Yes why do you want such men in our party. They are scanty poor and don't know how to behave," said Bharath.

"Don't call him a backward class man. He is my friend. I know him well," said Kapil.

Kapil met Anand when he had a chicken biryani, fish curry and mutton roast at Madras Café in Teynampet. Madras Café is a true south Indian restaurant with all authentic Madras dishes. Anand works as a cook at this restaurant. I guess Anand was seven when he first picked up a broom and mopped the floor at this hotel. At seventeen he was promoted to be a cook at this restaurant. Anand comes to work from Marina beach. He lives with his mother who worked as a maid at the homes of police commissioner and judges near marina beach. Now she is diagnosed with asthma and stays at home. Anand works hard and saves all money to buy her medicines. Anand beseeched her not to work any longer and took the responsibility of taking care of her. Anand's dad passed away when Anand was five years old. He used to work as a watchman in Marina but spent all his earnings on drinking. He suffered a heart attack due to over consumption of alcohol. Anand loves his mother so much that he decided not to travel in bus or rickshaw to work but walks all the way from Marina to Madras Café in Teynampet to save money. It is almost

close to an hour walk. Anand never really cared about the struggle he had to go through. Also he did not really think about studies or school. He felt school was not worth the money and time when it comes to taking care of his mother and buying medicines for her.

One day his friends however urged him to come along with them for an English movie, Sound of music in Devi theatre in Mount road. The movie was released on May 2<sup>nd</sup> 1965 and Anand was about eighteen. His friends taxed him to tag along with them to the movie as they saw the heroine Julie Andrews pretty and sexy. Anand too agreed to watch the movie as he discovered Julie Andrews hot. In those days typically before the movie was screened an old Ben King's "Stand by me" music was played in the cinema theatre. Ben E. King is a black pop singer who was already a phenomenon in the United States of America. Anand listened to his only English song, "Stand by me" and fell in love with the music and the strums of the guitar. Anand's heart was racing hard

listening to the guitar strumming and the mellifluous melody of Stand by me. He was hell bent on learning music at any cost and could not resist the temptation of buying a guitar. After the movie was over he raced to his house looting fifty rupees from his mother's purse and ran all the way from Marina beach to Nungambakkam Sterling Music Company to buy a second hand guitar. He was in blissful tears gazing at the sight of his first guitar. He wished to become a rock singer like Ben E. King and turn into an Indian rock singer. That day May 2<sup>nd</sup> 1965 was the turning point in his life. Music was his life and passion. However his mom yelled at him for wasting the hard earned money on a second hand guitar. She was weeping nonstop. Anand comforted her. He told her he will work double shifts in the hotel to repay her fifty rupees. He indeed worked double shifts and went to bed at 3:00 am in the morning and woke up before the sunrise at 4:30 am. He used to take his shower with cold water and by 5:00 am he used to get ready to play his favorite Ben King's song. Anand did not take up any professional course to learn guitar but started

learning the song of Ben King by his great hearing acumen. Anand practiced the guitar strumming of Ben King's Stand by me for nearly two hours every morning before walking all the way to work. By 7:30 am he used to reach his work place and continued work till 12 am in the night finishing his two shifts for a day. He reached home at 1:00 am and practiced Ben King's stand by me song until 3 am. After five months of day in and day out struggle Anand finally learnt the song. Anand wished to become a rock singer in India. He started to write his own compositions and wished to perform in a rock concert. However his mother thinks negatively about his music ambitions. She deems Anand cannot be a rock singer because he does not have a godfather to push his career towards music. She urges Anand not to have high hopes in music. Anand knows this but still continues to dream. Anand has made many valiant efforts to fulfill his dream but was denied from singing in many major events due to his caste. Caste plays a huge role in becoming a singer. Today all great singers and musicians are from Brahmin castes but Anand belongs to low

and poor backward caste. None in the music industry wants a backward caste man to sing for their songs. However Anand still instills confidence and dreams Lordess Saraswati will indeed show her mercy and fulfill his dream. He deems to earn lots of money after becoming a singer and wholeheartedly dreams of using that money to take care of his mother and his most adorable girlfriend Priyanka.

Priyanka is Anand's girlfriend. They both fell in love five years back. Anand was twenty two years old when he first met Priyanka. At that time Priyanka was studying twelfth standard. She also lives in the same Marina and is the only educated girl in the entire area. Anand glimpsed her for the first time when Priyanka was washing clothes in her house. Anand was standing outside Priyanka's house and was smoking a cigarette with his friends. He slowly gawked into Priyanka's eyes and at that moment Anand fell for Priyanka. He walked straight to the her house.

"I love you", said Anand.

"I have flirted umpteen numbers of times but none of them were able to become my soul mate. You are my soul mate and I wish to be your best husband," said Anand.

Priyanka slapped him hard because she knew Anand was uneducated and was a playboy. Anand felt dejected.

"Wait till I return," asked Anand.

"I don't care," said Priyanka.

She left to school. Anand followed her all the way to school.

"I will call the police," said Priyanka.

Priyanka felt annoyed and called the police. The police arrived at the scene and thwarted Anand so fierce that Anand ran away.

"I wish he will not return," said Priyanka.

After school she returned to the beach area to see Anand waiting with his guitar in the hand.

"Amma, come here. This man is annoying me," said Priyanka.

"Please don't call anyone. I will fall on your feet. Please don't call anyone. Please listen to me once," said Anand.

"Ok," said Priyanka.

She softened. Anand smiled, took his guitar and began strumming. He started to sing

*"When I sing for you, I become a Mozart,  
When I see you, I begin to smile,  
When I go around with you, love enters my life,  
But when I know you don't care for me, I don't know what to do  
Who am I my dear, who am I,  
I am your love my dear, I am your love,  
Be my love.  
I love you, I love you,"*

Rendered Anand to his soul mate Priyanka.

Priyanka eyes turn moist. She doesn't say any word. She hugs him.

Anand cries hard and construes that he had found his soul mate, his true love Priyanka.

Priyanka is now pursuing M.S.C chemistry in Stella Maris college, Madras. Anand is a cook and a struggling rock singer. Today Kapil wanted Anand to come down to the Park Sheraton hotel and meet his friends, Arjun, Bharath and Vetri. He had also given him hundred rupees cash to enjoy the party. Anand thanked his friend for his cordial gesture wished to seek contacts at this hotel for his singing plans. However Arjun, Bharath and Vetrivelan are not in the mood to entertain Anand.

"I don't want to entertain a conversation with him. Please ask him to get out," said Arjun.

"Please show respect to him. He is my friend. I liked his cooking at Madras Café and became his friend. He is a very good cook. He is talented. Please include him in our group," asked Kapil.

Vetrivelan politely succumbs to the request and talks to Anand.

"So Anand are you only a cook or a student as well?" asked Vetrivelan, pondering the courtesy request of Kapil.

Anand feels ecstatic. He sees a high caste man finally talking to him. He doesn't get to talk to such men in his profession as most of his fellow cooks are from backward caste. Anand starts to ramble with his strong north Madras accent.

"No way. I am not a student. I'm not wasting time reading. Every day I feed 300 people with food. Also I am a world class singer," said Anand, in a euphoric tone.

"Anand is just a cook and an aspiring singer," said Kapil, cutting short Anand's excitement. Kapil doesn't want his rich friends to be snobbish with Anand so he cut shorts Anand's excitement.

"Hey don't call me a cheap cook. I am a chef at Madras Café. I think being a chef is not everyone's cup of tea. Preparing food takes creativity, magic. Also doing music is God's true ability," Anand said, in a fuming north madras accent.

"Cut the bullshit. We are not jabbering our brains for a cheap cook and an unheard singer talk. We are Guindy Engineering

College toppers. We talk math, science and mechanical engineering. If you do not close your mouth, we leave, period," Arjun said, in an agitated voice.

Arjun doesn't sweat hard on Anand and loathes him wholeheartedly. Arjun wishes to shun Anand away from the table and hence starts to talk geeky. He babbles about a new oil refinery industry which is launched recently in Mathura, Uttar Pradesh.

"Hey Vetrivelan, checked the recent Mathura oil refinery launch? Our Thermal Power plant professor, Natarajan asked us to submit a project report on this topic after New year. Have you started working on it?" continued Arjun, bulldozing Anand.

"Yeah, I have. I have jotted notes on this topic yesterday. I read Smt. Indira Gandhi laid the foundation stone to the refinery," Vetrivelan said, giving support to Arjun cutting off Anand.

"Vetrivelan, there's more news than that. I have taken some serious notes on this topic after yesterday's exam. Mathura oil refinery is owned by Indian Oil Corporation and it is the sixth refinery of Indian Oil Corporation. Also the refinery costs about 200 crores to build," said Bharath, relieved that Anand is cut out of the conversation.

Arjun continues to talk about the oil refinery project.

"Bharath there's even more than you think. I had completed the project work yesterday after the exam and before preparing for today's probability exam. Let me explain. Now Mathura oil refinery is going to be built near the Mathura region in Uttar Pradesh. It exactly costs 253.92 crores. Also the thing you did not notice is that Mathura oil refinery is built in Agra near the Taj Mahal. This is extremely dangerous as there's every chance for the oil refinery's toxic gases getting exposed to the atmosphere and depleting the ozone layer. The toxic gases release can damage the beautiful Taj Mahal. Mark my words there will be news that Taj

Mahal will turn yellow because of these toxic gases. The exposure of toxic gases will cause new rains in the form of acid. I do not want Mathura oil refinery to be constructed near our world wonder. I have written all these details in my project report and will submit it to Professor Natarajan after New Year and hopefully the issue is raised in the news papers by Professor Natarajan after reading my report. I am going to ask Professor Natarajan to take such an action," said Arjun, in a charged tone imparting his total knowledge on Mathura oil refinery.

Anand glares as if he is mugged and not being cared. He wonders why the boys are talking irrelevant like oil refinery in a hotel. He remarks all Tamil Brahmins are geeks. He wishes to howl at Arjun but can't raise his voice against a Brahmin man. A backward caste man raising his voice in front of a Brahmin man is still considered a strong naysay in the Indian society. Anand bears to here Arjun's antics and his jargon talk on oil refinery. He listens to the odd chide Arjun throws at him in despair.

"Not all uneducated and dark skinned assholes can understand my report and wish they have some brains inside that rigid hard skull to understand these serious and society important issues," said Arjun, smirking towards Anand.

Anand finally loses his control and mucks at Arjun for being a rat's ass.

"Arjun you are a fucking A-hole. I have some brains and this Mathura oil refinery talk is irrelevant information for me. We are inside a bar for heaven's sake and there is no need to show your societal concerns in a bar. Now as far as you other dolts are concerned you are all trumpets to this A-hole. You guys are pissing me off with this insane oil refinery shit and your geeky gibberish talk," said Anand, irritated with Arjun's geeky talk and his arrogant attitude.

Anand wishes to leave from the geeks table and walk towards the bar and dance room where the music is being played.

"What the hell? We are having a serious conversation on an important topic of preserving our world wonder, Taj Mahal and that shitty dark asshole just walks off. He is a jerk and can never raise above his cheap low caste heads," said Arjun, in his furious attitude.

Anand doesn't care. Anand gaits towards the bar room and talks to the bartender.

"Hey bro had a rough night, can I get a Khajuraho beer." Anand said, looking at the bartender and feeling relieved.

The bartender hands over his Khajuraho beer and Anand gets refreshed. He springs to gaze girls at the dance floor. Anand gapes at a fair skinned north Indian girl who is probably in her teens dressed in black low neck skirt showing off her thighs. Anand is inebriated after boozing Khajuraho beer and he is peering hard at the fair skinned girl. Even though Anand has a loving girlfriend, Priyanka, he continues to be a playboy. Anand is like Bharath. He likes girls and wishes to admire them up close.

But unlike Bharath he doesn't sleep with them. He just flirts with them and cuddles them. He feels that is rabbit. Anand continues to look at the girl and ogles at her.

"Waiting for someone?" Anand enquired, as the fair skinned girl walks towards the bar table.

"Yeah the bartender," the fair skinned girl said, in a dry voice.

"So you are ordering a Malibu Rum?" Anand inquired, sounding confident.

"Bloody hell how you guessed my drink?" asked the fair skinned girl.

"Baby, if I shall share my secret with you, will you dance with me?" asked adventurous Anand.

The girl whispers in his ears.

"Tell me your secret I will dance with you," whispered the fair skinned girl.

Anand takes her hand and rambles across.

"The weather outside is cold and it is a beautiful winter evening. Baby as I want to call you, a strong Philippine rum with cane juice is the right tropical cocktail my sweetheart would've ordered," said Anand, moving close to the girl.

"Bloody hell, are you checking me out?" inquired the fair skinned girl, already half on her knees.

"I am indeed checking you out. I wish to dance with you." said Anand.

Vetrivelan notices Anand's playboy moves. He mucks at him in horror.

"Hey look is that your friend Anand talking to that fair skinned north Indian girl?" asked Vetrivelan, feeling hatred about Anand.

Kapil stands up and notices the fair skinned girl gleaming at Anand's jokes. Anand takes the girl's hand and kisses her. He slips his Madras Café hotel phone number inside the girl's up skirt.

Bharath meanwhile watches Anand. He wishes he was in his shoes. Bharath bawls at Anand.

"How on earth did that cheap cook pull that kiss? He's even touching her thighs," shouts Bharath, in envy.

"Douche we are just a bunch of geeks having a useless conversation on Mathura oil refinery," said Bharath, feeling really pissed off.

"Come back tomorrow at the same time. We shall dance," said Anand.

The girl nods.

Kapil rises from his seat and walks towards Anand. Anand signs a goodbye to the girl and treads towards the restaurant table to bid goodnight to Kapil.

Kapil fumes in anger and hatred. He raises his voice inside the restaurant.

"Anand, you are a bloody jerk. Don't you already have a girlfriend?" shouted Kapil, with a hard tongue.

Arjun is shocked as hell. He is totally lost on why Anand is kissing a girl when he already has a girlfriend?

Anand doesn't plunge a muscle. He is calm as a cucumber.

"Yes I do have a girlfriend. How does it matter? Girls are as beautiful as nature, and I like to admire them up close. But at the same time I draw my line. I am not crossing the line. My girl and I trust each other. All these small flirts are just for time pass. They are healthy for the body" said Anand, in an easy going way.

Arjun, Vetri and Kapil don't muster along Anand's take on admiring girls that close. Arjun spits his hatred on Anand.

"Never met like him before. Bloody idiot," Arjun said, raging inside.

Anand doesn't bother the little scorn his new friends have towards him. He bids a final goodbye to Kapil and hugs him. He treads

outside the five star hotel. A black ambassador taxi is parked next to the hotel entrance. Anand has ten rupees in his pocket. Those are left over cash that Kapil gave him.

"Hey brother, take me to north Madras," said Anand, in a completely intoxicated state.

The taxi driver nods his head starts the car. He switches on the tape recorder. Coincidentally Ben King's "stand by me" is being played in the radio.

"When the night has come, And the land is dark, And the moon is the only light we'll see, No I won't be afraid, no I won't be afraid, Just as long as you stand, stand by me," the tape recorder plays, inside the taxi.

This was the very song Anand listened nine years back on May 2<sup>nd</sup> 1965 in a cinema theatre. It was this song that changed his life and his dream. Anand dreamt of becoming a great rock singer like Ben King and his singing dreams are still as solid as his desire to

become rich and live luxurious life with his educated girlfriend Priyanka. Anand listens to the song and thinks about his benevolent girlfriend who always stood by him. There are more great tales in Anand's romantic love story but before I can know that from Anand, he dozes off in the taxi. The taxi vrooms past Alwarpet. Arjun decides to call off the night as well and walks out from the hotel. The friends hover along his side.

## CHAPTER 2

## ***Big meeting to win my dream job***

Last night Arjun and his friends spent cracking time at Park Sheraton hotel until a low class mutt called Anand disturbed them. Anand was showing his ace flirting skills and his over the top confidence at the party that Arjun and his friends got belittled and irritated. Arjun left the hotel gawking at Anand's reckless attitude and his philandering acts and was prudently calming his brain to gush out his mind. He found Anand as an uneducated jerk and a rogue who lures women. Arjun prayed lord Ganesha not to meet Anand ever in his life and he quietly prayed to just concentrate on his life and on his big meeting today with the CEO of Saregama music industry, Dr. Saket Bhattacharya. Arjun wished to put all his thoughts and report in one file to discuss the financial crisis of Saregama music industry. He sincerely wishes to give advice on the revival plans to the penny paucity music industry. Arjun wants to do this work just to acquire a financial strategic analyst position in Saregama music industry and earn a

hefty salary. As Arjun ponders about his job, somewhere in Nungambakkam Dr. Saket Bhattacharya sits in his cabin and accords deep into the financial trauma of his music industry. Saket Bhattacharya is a good man at heart and is a great industrialist. When I looked at him for the first time I felt he was an inspiration. He was a man of his words and talked prodigiously about his craftsmanship. He looked an average built at five feet ten inches height with an over grown stomach and spots a grey moustache. But when I looked at his air, man I saw a great god gifted amiable man with great heart and a mammoth vision. I was told that Saket was an ace ranker in college. I found he too was an alumnus of my college, Guindy Engineering College, Madras. He graduated from Guindy Engineering College with a Bachelor's degree in mechanical engineering in the year 1954. After graduation, he moved to University of California, Berkeley to do PhD in media science. I was surprised why he wanted to do PhD in media science after graduating in mechanical engineering. When I heard the real reason I was dumbstruck. I found a man who was

frenziedly in love with his art of ancient music and its cultured history. I imagined he wished to explore in depth in music and its fineness that I guessed he chose media science over mechanical engineering to do his PhD. Dr. Saket cracked the course exquisitely and graduated with a highest honor, namely the best dissertation award. That's his appetite towards fine music. Along with Saket, I see his best friend Dr. Suman Chatterjee sitting right next to him mulling over the share market lose and the hefty loans that his music industry has to pay. Dr. Suman is the Chief Financial Strategic analyst at the Saregama music industry. He was a college mate of Saket at Guindy College Engineering where both were pursuing B.E Mechanical Engineering. What is more fascinating to hear from their story is that Dr. Suman also joined Saket at University of California, Berkeley to do PhD. However both had different career interests. Dr. Suman enrolled in mathematics to do his PhD which is considered  $n^{\text{th}}$  order tough and dauntingly gally at University of California, Berkeley. Suman chose mathematics over mechanical engineering because he was

always fond of probability and statistics. He wished to be a chief financial strategic analyst after his PhD and hence chose this industrious subject. Unlike Saket, Suman was a meticulous thinker and a sincere worker. When we look Suman upfront he doesn't hit us like a tower but more so is a hobbit. He is five feet tall too short for his busty hips and round torso but man he can clout a pile. He met Saket during his swimming course. Saket tutored him the skills of swimming for long hours by urging him to maneuver his body using his frog legged feet. Suman cherished his time learning swimming and talked long hours with Saket. The two gelled benevolently and found out they had similar style of working for long hours at night and frivolously talking about their career goals. It is during the final year of PhD that Saket asked Suman if he was interested in trying something new and eyeing for a career in business. He asked Suman if he would be interested to be a joint partner with him.

"What was the business about?" asked Suman.

"How about start music industries in India?" asked Saket.

"I don't know much about music," said Suman.

"I have a PhD in music. My PhD topic is commercialization of singers and musicians in music industry. I know music business. I want to start a music industry in India," said Saket.

"I don't know much about music. I like the idea. I can be the chief financial strategic analyst in your music industry since I have a PhD in Mathematics. I will chalk out the industry economics and its stock plans," said Suman.

"India is still neophyte and not as commercial as the United States. They are glut of singers and talents who sell their solo audio cassettes and tapes for a good fortune and have spectacularly commercialized the trade in United States. I wish to do that in India. I want to launch independent music industry in India and introduce singers and musicians," said Saket.

Saekt eyed a monstrous music industry market in India. He was an avid listener to western music and had a great eye for new songs and albums that were released in the late 1950's. He listened to all songs of Dean Martin, Hank Williams and also Johnny Mathis at the time of his PhD.

"Shall we start a music industry in India?" asked Saket.

"Yes," said Suman, welcoming Saket's big challenge.

The two buddies' amassed funds from their college savings and hovered to India to incept the foundation stone of their dream music industry. That was 1959. There was no music industry in India. Suman had one question in mind.

"What should be the name of the music industry?" howled Suman.

"Sa..Re..Ga..Ma..." sang Saket.

"That's a fantastic name. Name it immediately," said Suman.

“Wonderful. Our music industry will be called from now Saregama music industry,” said Saket.

Saregama music industry thus was founded on 29<sup>th</sup> July 1959 and became functional that very year. The industry was set up in Vadapalani, Madras, Tamilnadu. The two pals chose this location for their music industry as it is considered the movie street of Madras.

Today after 15 years of business, the Saregama music industry is in clamorous doldrums. The company messed up its financial accounts and witnessed a severe drop in sales of audio cassettes and gramophone records. If we look back the reason for the slump, we get answers from the inauguration of a new spirited resplendent program of Vividh Bharati in All India Radio services. The program for the first time introduced mellifluous tunes of warm hearty music from yesteryear classic movies. The mellow music was suddenly admissible to the common folks of India at a wee cost and we just need a small radio.

Dr. Saket Bhattacharya is in muddled state as he doesn't fathom how to recover from the financial mess. He doesn't wish to shut down his music industry as that will spoil his reputation and his foothold in the music industry. Also at the same time he doesn't wish to run the industry because it is in dire loss. This leaves him in a befuddled state. He is sitting in his chair with a muddled look on his face praying the lord to offer him some luck. As the saying goes, when we wish the lord wholeheartedly, he shines us the elixir. The word of Saket might have reached the lord and as lady luck would have it he receives a hand written report about his industry's messed up financial mess from my friend Arjun. Dr. Saket opens the report and tensely calls in for a meeting with Suman in his conference room.

"Have you looked at this algorithm sent by a Guindy Engineering College boy, Arjun. He talks about our music industry's soft spot and messed up equity shares. He has solutions to the revival. Isn't it wonderful", said Saket.

Suman collects the report from Saket and leers at the report quietly. He ponders over the report and rambles to Saket,

“Will this boy interested to work in our industry as we are in big financial mess and we are in no position to pay hefty salary to him,” howled Suman, sounding a bit cynical.

Saket however remains firm in his mind and deems the report sent by Arjun is strong and confers that the boy knows what he is talking about. He wishes to call in for a meeting with him and arrange for the boy’s salary through some means. He says,

“I guess Arjun is our last hope. I will bring him on board. I will arrange for the money by bucking some lose ends in my bank. First let me give him a ring,” said Saket, seeing his self judgment is his last resort to revive his industry.

Suman concords with his friend Saket after leering that Saket is confident about Arjun’s revival plans.

Saket picks up his phone and dials Arjun’s home. The phone rings. Arjun doesn’t pick the call. Saket gets piqued and his blood zaps

at full speed. The phone still rings and Arjun still doesn't answer the call.

"Bastard must be swoon over by a hot girl. He must be in her pants. Little dog is not answering," said Saket, with an angry voice.

Saket loses his composure and flips his phone back and forth in distress and bangs the phone hard on its receiver. Suman feels irked with Arjun not lifting the phone. The two lose their composure and become frenzy. Meanwhile Arjun is not at home. He gaits across a spiral staircase and walks inside a colossal conference room. He talks in a husky voice to the men inside the conference room.

"Sir, can I come in?" asked Arjun, feeling nervous to enter into a big conference room.

"Come in," said a voice from inside the conference room.

"Sir, I am Arjun. I have come here to discuss my report about your industry's financial mess," said a little confident Arjun.

"Oh my god, Arjun it is you. I was just trying to reach your home phone," said an excited Saket, looking blithe at Arjun walking into his office.

Saket howls his lady luck and deems his prayers are answered by god. He asks Arjun to take a seat.

"I read your piece of report. Your analysis about our messed up financial accounts was spot on. As alum of Guindy Engineering College I am really impressed with your work," said Dr. Saket feeling pleased with Arjun's work.

Arjun deems joyous that his work is likened by Dr. Saket.

"Hi Arjun, I have read your report in great depth. As you had written in your report that our music industry would run out of business in another four years, I felt trembled. Can you give us an explanation on why that will happen?" asked Suman.

"Sure. I will explain. Can I get your financial accounts from the starting year, 1959 till today, November 27<sup>th</sup> 1974 to answer your question," asked Arjun.

Dr. Saket leers at Suman.

"Please give Arjun access to all the financial accounts of our industry," said Saket.

"Purbha, can you assist Arjun in looking at our financial accounts," said Saket.

Purbha is Saket's accounts manager who is in charge of the accounts for the last five years.

"Sure. I will help Arjun," said Purbha.

Saket rivets his eye on Arjun who gets access to all the financial accounts. Arjun and Purbha leer at the accounts together. As Purbha picks up the first account and gawks at it Arjun has raced ahead reading the rest of 15 years account books.

"You read them all," asked Purbha, with a shocking look.

"Yes, I don't want to waste time. I need answers. Give me that marker," bawled Arjun, with a focused head.

Arjun scribbles on the scratch pad. As he squiggles his calculation extend beyond the notepad and extends to the glass table. Purbha looks at his lightening bullet like brain in wonderment. Arjun bursts out in ecstasy. He circles the last 2 digits in every month of every year and finds an extraordinary pattern in the numbers.

"Have you seen these numbers?" shouts Arjun, with wonderment.

"No. I haven't. What's with them?" asked Purbha, with an inquisitive mind.

"You see the last two digits. A generalized Langevin dynamics is followed to get the numbers. Langevin dynamics says the industry finance every year will depend on its predecessor year," howls Arjun, who at this point of time knows he's cracked the pot.

“Ok hold on. I have read about Generalized Langevin dynamics in my probability and statistics class. Generalized Langevin dynamics follows a finite correlation with its neighboring numbers, in other words the probability of finding a succeeding number correlates finitely on its preceding number” said a knowledgeable Purbha, with a thorough math mind.

Arjun lauds Purbha for her knowledge in mathematics and statistics. He smiles and dawns to shed more information about the industry’s financial mess.

“The numbers tell us that the final two digits in the accounts thus depend finitely on its preceding number. Hence, owing to this dependency we see that the financial accounts will be influenced by previous years from 1959 to 1974 irrespective of whether we want them to be or not,” said Arjun.

“That will mean the numbers will surely depend on the first inaugural year where we suffered a slump in the audio cassettes sales owing to the minimal marketing and poor reception from

the public," bursts out Dr. Saket metamorphosing into hot and spicy red chili and wiggled noodle head that he figured out a pattern in the messed up equity shares of his accounts.

"To put it more bluntly, you have taken into account the first year finances in all your stock price calculations and as a result your profits have significantly dropped. At this rate, the algorithm says, your industry will end bankrupt in the next four years," cried Arjun.

Saket weeps frantically and deems his industry will become bankrupt in the next four years. Suman breaks down and cries madly screaming in pain. Purbha sobs profusely as she is not able to control her tears. At this juncture, Arjun rises up from his chair and comforts Saket and Suman. He pats on their shoulders and narrates a top class plan to revive their company.

"I know a master plan to get your industry out of trouble. We shall start a new project which India has never witnessed and I will like to name this program as "Super Singer competition". The program shall hunt for an outstanding new singer who is picked

from the downtrodden middle or lower class society of India. To achieve this we shall not leave any stone unturned and shall travel to every corner of this country to audition for the best singer and once we have him we shall launch him from our music industry. We will make him a number one singer in our country. His audio cassettes are going to be sold by us and that will bring us great profits and returns. Not leaving there we will live telecast his every music recording in Doordarshan and also air the program live in our radio channel, All India Radio. The rights for the television and radio telecast will be sold by us and that would help us make great profits. The program will be a sensational hit in the TV and Radio channels as this will be the first time we are live telecasting singers and the singer we pick is from common towns of India and the best part is he is one among us, a common man of India," said a confident Arjun, looking straight into the eyes of Dr. Saket and Dr. Suman.

Saket gets floored by the masterful idea of Arjun.

"Arjun, you are a great genius."

He hugs Arjun earnestly and cries. Dr. Suman also cries.

"Arjun you are a true genius," said Suman.

Arjun becomes emotional and cries. His emotions are out of euphoria because two most experienced and revered gentlemen are acknowledging him as genius.

"What do you want in return for your idea?" asked Saket.

"I want to work as a senior financial strategic analyst in your music industry. I like to get a paycheck of Rs. 35000 per month as salary," said Arjun.

Dr. Saket smirks.

"You surely know how to negotiate and get a deal through," said Saekt.

"Yes," said Arjun.

"I will hire you as the senior financial strategic analyst and will pay you the salary you asked. You can start the work from today," said Saket.

"Merci. I will also like to audition for the singer and will like to be the lead selector. I know how to assess the economics of the singer and his potential market strength and crowd pulling factor," said Arjun.

"Ok you will be appointed as the lead selector along with senior financial strategic analyst. You are answerable only to us and report directly to us," said Saket, with Suman nodding his head.

"A new hiring talent agency is recently inaugurated in Madras, near Vadapalani by Vahini studio to select new artistic talents. Why don't you talk to them to search for our singers? Let that hiring agency audition from every middle and lower class section of India and also advertise the audition in All India Radio and the TV giant Doordharsan. I shall personally talk to the hiring industry to organize such an event," screamed Saket.

As Saket discusses his idea to Arjun, Suman calculates the entire expenditure and ponders,

“According to my calculations the entire expense of Super Singer competition will cost two lakh rupees and when heavens will shower praise, our profits will run anywhere close to ten lakh to twenty lakh rupees,” yelled Suman.

Saket wonders in excitement.

“I will be a crorepati with this masterful idea,” said Saket.

Saket jubilant at this thought picks up his landline phone and calls Mr. Srinivas Iyer, the MD of the new hiring agency inside Vahini studio.

Arjun doesn't sit idle but squiggles his adroit mathematical skills on a piece of paper. His new algorithm removes the effect of preceding years in the profit calculations and incorporates a novel backward Eulerian model which merits for a dependency of the profit on the succeeding years. In this way he negates the effect of

inaugural year's drastic loss in the calculations and makes the profit rise up every year by making the market ring to his tunes in the succeeding years. He shares the numbers to Saket.

"Dr. Saket I have changed the algorithm to negate the dependency of the inaugural year and included the dependency of the succeeding year which we are tuning as profit every time. In this way a profit of twenty lakh rupees next year will reap a profit of two crores in the subsequent fifth year," said Arjun.

Saket gleams speechless and bawls at the new math in wonderment.

"That will mean I will become a multi-millionaire within the next five years. Thank you god and thank you Arjun," howled Saket, feeling joyous and bustled.

Saket hugs Arjun.

"I met many intelligent people in my life but none as astute as you when it comes to making money," said Saket.

Arjun feels exalted and hugs Saket warmly. Saket brims and hugs him dearly. He steps out of his conference room and glints to make a phone call to Mr. Srinivasan Iyer.

The phone rings three times. Mr. Srinivasan lifts the phone. He talks huskily.

"Hello," said the voice, not expecting any call at this time of the day.

"Hello Mr. Srinivasan Iyer. This is Dr. Saket from Saregama music industry. I have a new business for you," said Saket, in an exultant tone sensing a big deal is on cards.

"Yes what's it about?" asked Srinivasan Iyer, anticipating his business is going to see a good deal.

"Mr. Iyer it's all good news. We are looking for new talented singers for our Super Singer competition and we will like your hiring agency to advertise a new talent search program across India and select singers for our competition. He shouldn't be from

the music industry or any movie industry but should be one from the common towns of India," re-stressed Dr. Bhattacharya, feeling vigorous of the entire talent search program.

Mr. Iyer shimmered with exultation.

"That's fantastic. I haven't heard anyone asking for new singer from common towns of India. What you are asking sounds like a never witnessed talent hunt," said an animated Iyer, foreseeing new revenues for his hiring agency and for him.

"Yes Mr. Iyer, what you are saying is indeed right. You are witnessing a great path breaking revolutionary Super Singer competition that our country has ever witnessed. The singer we want to select from the competition is going to be from common public. He is one among us, a common man," said Saket.

"That's fantastic," said Srinivasan Iyer.

"Yes, we want you to be part of this project and begin to advertise the event in all major newspapers, radio stations and also in the

TV media Doordarshan. We will like you to pick few singers from every village so that we can select best Super Singer from our competition. This is a never witnessed event. We want your help and support. Please Srinivasan," asked Saket.

"No problem. From your words I am already sensing Goosebumps in my body. We will surely select the best singers. We will not disappoint you. Let me know when we shall all meet and finalize the business deal," asked vibrant Iyer, foretasting a giant businesses deal and a blockbuster result from Saket's project idea.

"Come right now to Taj Coromondel. We will be there in another half hour," said a fired up Saket, wasting no time to seize the deal and get the program up and running.

"I will be there. I am starting now. I will reach in half an hour as well," said an exuberant Srinivasan sensing the deal is going to be signed today.

Srinivasan drives to Taj Coromondel. Taj Coromondel is a five star hotel opened this year and gained huge popularity among the movie industry for their exuberant service and high class environment. The five star hotel was started by Oriental hotel group and was promoted by Reddy Group of South India. The multidimensional international standard hotel was opened in Madras this year in Nungambakkam about nine kilometers from Saregama music industry in Vadapalani. A car ride from Vadapalani takes about fifteen minutes to reach Nungambakkam, Taj Coromondel.

Saket and Dr. Suman rush to the car and ask Arjun to sit in the car and drive along Vadapalani to Nungambakkam. They reach the hotel by 2:00 pm ready for high tea.

Mr. Srinivas Iyer reaches the Taj Coromondel hotel. Dr. Bhattacharya, Dr. Suman and Arjun also reach at the same time. Dr. Bhattacharya greets Mr. Iyer with a firm handshake and asks him to take a seat. He offers him a red zinfandel wine to drink

before starting the meeting. Mr. Srinivasan is animated to finish the project deal and readily accepts the drink.

“We have a proposal to revive both our companies. I know your hiring agency is new in town and you need projects. As I talked over phone we request you to please organize a talent search program to pick singers for our Super Singer competition from the common towns of India. We do not need them from any music industry or movie industry but from the common towns of India. I hope you understand our request,” asked Dr. Saket with a vibrant look on his face.

“Yes, sir. We understand. We will do the needful help,” said Mr. Srinivas Iyer.

“We will launch the singer through our Saregama music industry and give him a break. In the process we get to keep 70% share of the singer’s profits. You take 30% share, that's the deal,” said a calculated Saket, with his business skills up to the fore.

"The percentage share is little too low when you consider the amount of work we have to do in the whole process," said Mr. Iyer.

"There's more benefit to you than us, your company's hiring agency will get more such events in the future. This is the first of its kind event and your profits will surely shoot up in the years to come. Don't miss this chance," talked a confident and calculative Suman.

"Ok. But we get to keep the singer during his foreign programs and his foreign concert profits are with us. That's final," said Mr. Iyer who knows his business skills and to rake money from business minded people like Dr. Saket.

Dr. Saket hasn't thought about the concert events and he is taken back with the sudden new event proposed by Mr. Iyer. Organization of foreign concerts is not well known in India and this proposal of staging a foreign concert with a new singer is indeed a big surprise to Dr. Bhattacharya.

Dr. Saket leers at Dr. Suman who is also taken up by surprise. Arjun interrupts into the conversation,

“You can indeed arrange foreign concerts with the new singer and take the profits. However you need to release the concert videos and sell the audio cassettes and gramophone records of the new singer’s foreign concerts through our music industry. We get to keep the profits of live telecast video tapes and the recorded audio tapes. That’s the deal,” said a mastermind Arjun.

Mr. Iyer is agog by Arjun’s words.

“I think that’s a great idea. Please agree,” requested Saket.

“Ok, that’s a mastermind idea by your employee. I have nothing else to negotiate. I will sign the contract. Do you have the papers for me to sign?” asked Srinivasan.

“Yes, here are the contract papers. We added the last part about the foreign concert videos and tapes rights are going to be held by us,” said Saket.

Srinivasan gazes at the documents. He adds his clauses about the foreign concert programs are going to be organized and its profits are kept by his hiring agency. He signs the contract after reading it thoroughly. Arjun gets his senior financial strategic analyst job and his first assignment of lead selector for searching singers for the Super Singer competition.

"I trust this boy completely. He will work with you Mr. Iyer to pick a new singer from the common towns of India. That's final," putting his full trust on the young nerd Arjun.

Arjun shakes hands with both Saket and Srinivasan. He reveals a full smile of being appointed as the senior financial strategic analyst. He is next to Dr. Saket and Dr. Suman in the hierarchy of the industry and is answerable to those two men only.

"You have a big responsibility on your shoulders," said Mr. Srinivasan.

"Yes, sir. I will live up to your expectations. I will find the best singer from common towns of India and will make him a rock singer," said Arjun.

Dr. Saket roars in joy. With this our nerd Arjun got his first box ticked of landing into his dream job. Now, in the coming days, I will play my strokes to enter into the company and become his colleague and earn the same salary. I hope I will get my chance.

## CHAPTER 3

### ***Marriage alliance with my beautiful princess***

Arjun sips his morning coffee and gleams because his last week went well. He has gotten the financial strategic analyst job in Saregama music industry and also last week Arjun made a request to Dr. Bhattacharya that he would like to get 5% profit share from the singer audio cassettes sales to which Bhattacharya readily agreed. Arjun is extremely happy with all the merry developments in his life and has been dancing high on spirits. He has informed the news of him gotten a job to his parents Muthushankar and Geetha Bharadwaj. They are extremely jubilant and lively with the

news. Today Arjun is a grown up man and Bharadwaj is extremely cheerful and has happy tears on his face. Bharadwaj gleams that his son has found a great job with handsome salary and he is next to the CEO and Chief financial strategist in the company. Today Arjun's father is a contented man as he sees his son surpassing him in all aspects and becoming an independent man standing tall on his own feet. Arjun's mother Geetha is a house wife. She is extremely doting mother and loves Arjun with all heart. She spends her time with her rich friends who are parents of Bharath, Vetri and Kapil. She loves shopping and spends money on imported dresses and perfumes. She is extremely trendy and imparted all qualities from her friends. She does her shopping and buys her son new clothes but Arjun doesn't wear the trendier clothes as he feels they are not nerdish. Geetha wishes Arjun wear them to look fashionable in their family parties but Arjun continues to wear simple Kurtha and Pajama to look studious and nerdish. Geetha has given up telling Arjun and has got used to Arjun's geeky antics. Today Geetha is extremely blithe for Arjun

gotten a job at Saregama music industry. She is doubling joyous for Arjun getting a hefty salary which propels Arjun to lead a rich lifestyle just like them. Geetha hopes Arjun changes his antics. Also, Geetha notices that for such a thing to happen her son should get married.

"Time to settle down Arjun as you have gotten a nice job. Shall I find a good match for you?" asked Geetha.

"Yes, amma," said Arjun.

He feels it is time to find his beautiful geeky princess as he has gotten his dream job.

"Find me a beautiful rich Tamil Brahmin girl who is as studious as me," said Arjun.

"Ok, I will find you such a girl," said Geetha.

After two weeks Geetha understood that finding such a girl is a hard task. She's been chasing marriage brokers to find those qualities filled girl but is always ending up in vain. The broker has

brought in some alliances and has shown some photographs. Geetha showcased all photographs to Arjun but Arjun wishes not to marry them. He nitpicks saying one girl's eyes are not good, the other girl doesn't have enough money and the other one's educational qualification is bad. His mother is worried if Arjun would ever get married. She is extremely fretful about the entire marriage alliance as she deems Arjun is too hard to convince to marry a girl. Meanwhile Arjun wishes to be awestruck by seeing his future wife's beauty, go out in big cars and have a great conversation with his future wife. In order for the latter to happen he wishes to marry a studious girl.

"You are greedy asking for so many qualities in a girl," said Geetha.

She gets upset with the fact where can she find such a girl. She continues to mewl and pester Arjun with matches. As she continues to find matches for Arjun, he continues to ignore them and does his routine work. He sips his morning coffee and begins

to read books on stock analysis and squiggles the math on a white paper. The math is on the stock price analysis of his pocket money investments made in TATA group of companies. His father had given him all that pocket money. Bharadwaj glints at his son working on the stock prices calculations and gleams happy.

“Work on high frequency trading to acquire big money,” said Bharadwaj.

“I don’t have expertise for such a trading. I need to read algorithms to experiment on high frequency trading,” said Arjun.

“Read this article. The algorithm for high frequency trading is in this journal article published in scientific literature. You should note that high frequency trading is a type of algorithmic trading which results in high turnover rates at fast speeds. Read the algorithm in this paper and you can understand how to get big money in quick time,” said Bharadwaj, peppering up Arjun to invest big.

The journal paper is written by Black Fischer a Financial Economist at Harvard. The title of the paper is "Towards a Fully Automated Exchange- part 1 and II."

"Appa, the paper deals with computer-assisted market making system and also gives the algorithm. We can write our own code based on the algorithm given and we can check our code with the stock prices in the newspapers. Also the good part is we can make changes to our investment and monitor the stock values prior to the companies publishing their stocks in the newspaper. In this way we are a day ahead of the market and can control the market trade and earn big profits. I will indeed read the algorithm thoroughly and write the code," feeling positive about his father's suggestion.

"Great Arjun. You got the algorithm. Write the code and monitor your investments. You will be able to make big money," said Dr. Bharadwaj, feeling gleeful that his son will be able to experiment on high frequency trading.

Arjun's mother Geetha enters the living room and she doesn't understand high end mathematics and stock prices. She always pesters Bharadwaj to earn big money through real estate and not through stocks. But Bharadwaj and Arjun are smart men who have enough knowledge about stock market. As Geetha approaches the living room Arjun discretely hides the journal article under the table. Geetha notices Arjun hiding something. She gets kooky at both Arjun and her husband, Muthu.

"I see you are talking something with my son Arjun. What is it Arjun?" asked Geetha, with a finickish mind.

"Amma this is a stock price paper that dad had given me to read," said Arjun to his mother Geetha.

"Muthu, Please don't talk about stocks to my son. I want him to invest on real estate and not on stocks. He is no longer a small kid to always listen to you," shouted Geetha.

"I was just helping Arjun with his savings. As a father it is my responsibility to teach my son to save money. I have no idea with real estate so I teach him stocks. If you want to teach real estate please go ahead and do that," said Bharadwaj.

"I will teach him real estate when he receives his first salary. Arjun you will listen to me after getting your first salary," said Geetha, looking straight at Arjun.

"Yes, amma," said Arjun, nodding his head.

"Do the stock price investments as well," said his father secretly.

"Yes, appa," winking at his father.

Geetha doesn't notice Arjun. She goes to the living room and perches on the recliner single seater sofa. She sips her morning coffee and looks at the newspaper. In the paper, she finds ads regarding alliances for girls. She looks at Arjun and bawls at him,

"When do you want to meet a girl for marriage alliance?" asked Geetha, bringing back the topic of matchmaking for the second time.

Arjun gets vexed with the question and shouts at her,

"Amma I told you what type of girl I want. Please arrange that type of girl to meet for marriage alliance," said a fully firm Arjun, standing tall on his requirements.

Geetha gets peeved and yells at Arjun,

"Arjun this is not fair. It is hard to meet your requirements. I have shown you enough girls' photographs. Why don't you choose from that list?" said Geetha, tired of finding any more new matches for Arjun.

"No Amma I didn't like any girl from those photographs," howled Arjun.

"Arjun you are already 21, you are too late for marriage. Your father found me when he was 18," said a saddened Geetha, worried about Arjun's marriage.

"Amma I think you and dad were very lucky to have found each other at a very young age. But these days are different. We want all qualities," said a firm son.

"Arjun, you are torturing me. I am going to see some more matches from my pool of friends. I will wait for one month. You need to finalize the girl within this month. I will no longer see any more matches for you," said Geetha.

"Amma one month is too short of a time. I see you will rush up my marriage with an average face in the crowd girl," said a worried Arjun.

"I don't want any of your explanations. I will try to find a girl that matches your qualities. If you don't find that qualities in a girl you

need to marry the one which comes to you. That's final," said a sturdy Geetha, praying Arjun to come to their end.

Geetha takes the empty coffee cup from Arjun and leaves to the kitchen. Bharadwaj heaves in vain. He never questions his wife when her intentions are correct and when he too has the same line of thought. He tells Arjun to find a girl who is seen from his mother. Arjun feels extremely annoyed and livid with his parent's tantrums. He throngs the stock paper into the dust bin and cries. Arjun gaits to the bedroom and locks the door. He weeps hard and deems his parents cannot understand his needs. He wishes to talk to his friends Vetri, Bharath and Kapil and gives the three of them a phone call.

"Hello Bharath can you please come home. I want to talk to you urgently. It's important. Please call Vetri and Kapil as well when you are coming," said a worried Arjun, thinking his friends will understand his state of mind.

"Ok Arjun. I will come," said Bharath with an assuring and comforting tone.

Bharath calls Vetri and Kapil to come to Arjun's place.

"Arjun sounded worried and wishes to discuss trouble news with all three of us," said Bharath.

Vetri and Kapil readily agree to come down to Arjun's place. They start their vehicles. Vetri owns a Standard Herald Convertible 1963 model and Kapil owns a Chevrolet Biscayne Hard Top 1958 which costs around one lakh. Vetri and Kapil own big money as their parents are all rich businessmen. That's the reason Geetha is friends with their parents.

The trio reaches Arjun's home. Arjun gets up from his bed feeling teary eyed and opens the door.

"Why do you look so worried?" asked Bharath.

Arjun explains the entire episode between his mother and him and fears the kind of girl he will end up marrying.

"Come by the swimming pool. I will give you some advice," said Bharath, comforting Arjun.

"Ok, I am coming," said Arjun.

Arjun wears his sweater and cap as it is cold outside due to November winters and treads to the swimming pool. Bharath, Vetri, Kapil and Arjun sit by at the pool.

"Do not worry Arjun. Your parents will find you the right girl with all the qualities," said Bharath, assuring him that good things will happen.

"I don't know if my mother will have the patience to find me the right girl. Can you talk to her," asked Arjun.

"I can't talk to her. I am afraid. Why can't Kapil or Vetri talk to them? They are much brave than me," said Bharath, backing off from talking to Arjun's mother.

"We can't talk either. Your mom is very prudish. She will beat us if we raise our voice against her," said both Vetri and Kapil in chorus.

"Then who will help me talking to her," asked Arjun, crying.

"Don't worry Arjun. When you meet the girl you can always talk to her and see if she has all the qualities of your expectations and then decide whether you would like to marry her or not," said an over spirited Kapil.

"Ok this sounds like a good idea. But there is another problem. How will I talk to that girl? You all know I suffer from gynophobia," said a worried Arjun.

"I will tell you my style. I trick girls and flirt with them," said Bharath, his words are straight from his head.

"I don't want to trick girls. I wish to genuinely talk to a girl. I want to be honest with them," said Arjun.

"Arjun, we are also equally scared talking to girls. We neither know how to trick girls nor can talk honestly with them. We are bunch of cowards," said Vetri and Kapil, feeling they have no secrets to share with Arjun.

"Then who will help me talk to a girl. What about Nadeem, Dinesh and Deepak? Can they help me talk to the girl," asked Arjun.

Nadeem, Dinesh and Deepak are college friends of Arjun who are equally rich and from well to do families. They might help tip Arjun in talking to his girl. But Kapil says something important.

"Nadeem, Dinesh and Deepak are all playboys. They flirt with girls like Bharath and dump the girl. They are not the right ones to talk to," said Kapil.

"What about others in college? Are there anyone who can help me out?" asked Arjun.

"None in the college can help you out. You need to understand Arjun, all our college friends' fall in any one of these categories.

Some are playboys like Bharath, Nadeem, Dinesh and Deepak. Some have fear talking to girls like me and Vetri. While some others are nerds like you who don't know how to talk to girls. I don't think there is anyone who can genuinely talk to a girl in our college," said Kapil.

"Then who will help me out. Guys do you know of anyone who can help me talk to a girl?" asked Arjun.

"I think of only one person who can help you. He is my friend Anand. He doesn't show off like Bharath nor does he have fear like me or Vetri. He is a nice guy and knows how to genuinely talk to girls," said Kapil, knowing only Anand can solve Arjun's fear of talking to girls.

"I don't want to talk to Anand. He is a mutt and we all saw how he flirted with that north Indian girl the other night at Park Sheraton hotel. I don't want to talk to him," howled Arjun.

"Bend your rules for once Arjun. He is a nice guy. He has two shades in him. He can casually flirt with girls for fun and at the same time he can talk to girls in a polite and correct way. Trust me he has a girlfriend," said Kapil.

"Ok. I trust you. But, if I don't like what he says I will surely chide him," said tough and unyielding Arjun.

Three weeks pass by. Mrs. Geetha shares dozens of photographs to Arjun but Arjun doesn't concede to any girl. Last week of their agreed time gets closer. Arjun is clutched that his mother will ask him to marry an average girl. Arjun sweats hard regarding this. He begins to gain weight and decides to do some running. He dashes many laps in his lawn and gears up to burn extra fat. A door buzzer whirs at the front. Arjun stops his run and checks the door.

"Hold the bag. Have talked to my friend Vijayalakshmi, we are going to her house next week to see her daughter Anu," said Geetha.

"Amma, this is all of a sudden. Why are you doing this to me? Do not show me an average girl," screamed Arjun.

"No Arjun she is not an average girl. She is very pretty, extremely educated and rich. All the three qualities you had asked for," said Geetha, wishing Arjun will marry Anu.

"Amma, I don't want you to lie. I want to get married to a rich beautiful Tamil Brahmin girl who is studious like me. Do you have her photograph," asked Arjun, inquisitive to know more about Anu.

"Here is her photograph. You can look for yourself," said a firm headed Geetha.

Arjun slowly looks at her photograph.

"Amma, she is beautiful. Tell me what she does? Is she a model?" asked Arjun.

"She is microbiologist student. Isn't she beautiful? Just like you she is very studious and a topper in her class," said Geetha.

Arjun begins to like Anu. Geetha looks at Arjun and pulls his leg.

"Shall we go to Anu's house to talk about marriage alliance," asked Geetha.

Arjun feels rabbit.

"Yes," said Arjun.

"She is a great girl with a good heart. She is a girl whom I want you to marry. We are going to her place in another five days. We will have your marriage alliance on 2<sup>nd</sup> December 1974," said Geetha.

"Yes," said Arjun.

Arjun secretly sips Anu's photograph in his pocket. He gushes to his bedroom and locks the door. He looks at her photograph again. He feels Anu is the most beautiful girl in the whole world. Anu is a microbiologist student at Stella Mary's college in Madras. She is very brainy and extremely knowledgeable girl. She has secured state fifth rank in the twelfth state board exam. Anu did

not wish to become a doctor but took microbiology since she was always interested to do research on bacteria and viruses to cure human illness. To tell more about Anu she is five feet three inches tall just the average height for a woman. She has a demeanor smile and captivating eyes and treats people with tender heart. Anu has all the qualities of becoming a great researcher and her goal is to reach pinnacle in her profession. Anu is also extremely giving person and does social work. She is fondly known in her college as a "girl with a great heart". She has earned this tag even before she earned her microbiology degree. As we talk about Anu, somewhere in his room Arjun sits on his bed with the photograph of Anu in front of him. He smiles and feels bliss. He wishes to marry Anu for her qualities. Five days pass by and Arjun's fortune turns into nervousness and tension. He gets agitated on what and how to talk to Anu because he has gynophobia, fear of talking to girls. He picks up his phone and rings Bharath.

"Please help me. I have a girl Anu arranged for my marriage alliance. I don't know how to talk to her. She is beautiful. I want to talk to her and impress her. Please help me," asked Arjun.

"Sorry Arjun. I only know to flirt with girls and girls fall for me. I don't know more ways than that," said Bharath.

Arjun gets worried. He calls Vetri.

"Hi Vetri. I have a girl Anu arranged for my marriage alliance. I don't know how to talk to her. She is beautiful. I want to talk to her and impress her. Please help me," asked Arjun.

"I am not good in talking to girls. I feel nervous in such situations. Sorry, I can't help much," said Vetri.

Arjun feels anxious and gets a nervous breakdown. He resorts to talking to Kapil.

"Hi Kapil. I have a girl Anu arranged for my marriage alliance. I don't know how to talk to her. She is beautiful. I want to talk to her and impress her. Please help me," asked Arjun.

"Sorry, I can't talk to girls. I get nervous and fidgety when I talk to girls. None in the college will be able to help you because all boys in our college fall under three categories. First being playboys, second being cowards, third being nerds. These are the three categories where all our college boys fall. Only one person who can help you in talking to Anu is my friend Anand," said Kapil.

"He is from a backward caste. He is a debauchee," said Arjun.

"Yes he is from backward class. Yes he is a debauchee. But he can talk to girls and impress them. He is good with girls. He knows all the tricks," said Kapil.

"Ok. Since you guys have given up I will ask him. Where does he work?" asked Arjun.

"He works at Madras Café in Nungambakkam," said Kapil.

"I will go now. I will meet him now," said Arjun.

“Good. Talk to Anand, he will help you talk to Anu and impress her. He knows how to talk to girls. He is good talking to them,” said Kapil.

Anand hangs up the phone. He takes his Fiat 1100 super select car and zips across to Madras Café. He is in no mood to waste time. He reaches Madras Café. Time reads 5:00 pm. The restaurant is silent as very few have food at this time of the day. People have Mysore Bajji, Vada or Samosa along with a strong filter coffee or ginger tea. Madras Café filter coffee is the best is what people say as it has the authentic aroma of coffee beans and the strong taste of Chikori. Anand streams a strong filter coffee to table 5. The Café is a small restaurant with not many waiters in the restaurant so Anand serves the order himself. Anand places the coffee cup to the customer at table 5. Arjun reaches the restaurant parks his car and marches into the café.

“Can I talk to your cook, Anand for fifteen minutes?” asked Arjun to the restaurant owner.

"You have to pay me his hourly rate. I charge twenty rupees to lend the cook for that much time," said the restaurant owner.

"No problem. I will give you twenty rupees. Here is the cash," said Arjun.

Arjun pays cash to the restaurant owner.

"Anand, someone wants to talk to you. Please come out," said the restaurant owner.

Anand comes out from the kitchen and notices Arjun waiting for him.

"Hey, what brings you here?" asked Anand, in excitement.

"I want to talk to you," said Arjun.

"I am at work. My hotel owner will not allow me to go outside," said Anand.

"I paid twenty rupees for fifteen minutes of your time," said Arjun.

"Can I go out with him?" asked Anand to his restaurant owner.

"Yes, but you should be back in fifteen minutes," said the restaurant owner.

"Ok," said Anand.

Anand treads along with Arjun. He understands Arjun had paid money to his restaurant owner to talk exclusively to him.

"Can we go to a small cigarette shop? I want to buy a gold flake cigarette," asked Anand.

"Sure. We will go," said Arjun.

Arjun and Anand tread to a small cigarette shop.

"Buy whatever you want to buy. I will pay the money," said Arjun.

"Can I get a gold flake cigarette," asked Anand to the cigarette shop merchant.

The cigarette shop merchant hands him a gold flake cigarette. Anand gleams.

“Why did you want to talk to me? Is anything important?” asked Anand.

“I need your help. I don’t know why I am asking you this help. I know you are jerk but you are the last person I can talk to now. I need to talk to a girl, a girl whom my parents arranged for my match. I am jittery to talk to her as I have gynophobia, which is fear of talking to girls,” said Arjun.

“Arjun you look like a good man. I will certainly help you talk to her. I will tell you two ways. First you see that girl standing in the bus stop waiting for the bus. I will show you how to flirt with that girl and get her name and home address,” said Anand.

“Hey I don’t want these cheap tricks of flirting with girls. I want a genuine method to talk to a girl. Let us not experiment with any

girl," said Arjun, pulling Anand off from his crazy antics of flirting with random girls.

Anand scans Arjun and knows he is an honest man.

"I just wanted to test you if you are an honest man or a playboy like other rich boys. I finished doing my tests and now wish to help you out. Just follow these tips. Number one, you got to look straight into her eyes and impress her with your lines. Whatever that might be, be she is beautiful or she has lovely eyes everything must be impressive and not sound made up. Second, here are a few tips on what you can say when you first see a girl. Talk about her dress and her hair. You can say your dress is adorable and fits you well and your hair is well curled. Then allow her to smile and let her say thanks. You genuinely complement her smile and her eyes. Say her eyes have an honest smile and looks pretty on her. Allow her to smile big. Then talk to her cheesy impressive lines like what is her hobby and how she passes her time. Listen to her words like you are involved in the entire

conversation. Don't pretend listening to girls as they will easily know you don't care for them. Your eyes should reflect your intentions and your honesty is seen in your eyes. Also ask what she likes in you. The last act pretty much closes the deal if she says I like you because of your impressive talk. Then she is your girl. She will marry you. That's all I wish to say. Hope you got it," asked Anand.

Arjun notes down all pointers in his mind and nods with a muddled head, confused and nervous.

"How do I say these lines without fear," asked Arjun.

"You can rehearse with me and practice well," said Anand.

Arjun listens to Anand's request and rehearses all the lines with him multiple times. He goofs up for the first few times but later gets all the lines right. He gets his confidence saying the lines.

"Be confident when you see Anu. Do not fear, talk honestly. Say what you have practiced. Keep it genuine," said Anand.

Arjun nods his head. He deems Anand is a gentle man. He genuinely shakes hands with him. Arjun starts to treat Anand as his friend and Anand too treats him the same. They share a cup of coffee near the cigarette shop. Arjun pays for Anand's cigarette and coffee. Anand hugs Arjun. Arjun doesn't feel itchy-bitsy but genuinely feels merry. Fifteen minutes are passed and the owner asks Anand to return to work. Anand says goodbye to Arjun and hops inside the kitchen to get back to work. Arjun wears his goggle-eyed glasses and gets back into his car and vrooms past Madras Café to Arjun's house in Alwarpet. Arjun reaches home and feels upbeat that he has rehearsed all lines. He feels joyous and goes inside his house. His mother Geetha is at the door entrance and wishes to share the good news with him that they are going to Anu's home tomorrow (2<sup>nd</sup> December) at 9 am for marriage alliance. Arjun smiles and feels bliss.

"I am all ready and excited to go to her house and talk to Anu," said Arjun.

Geetha feels joyful and hugs Arjun. She gives him a cup of coffee and some biscuits to eat. Arjun has his second coffee and enjoys it as much as he enjoyed taking his first coffee fifteen minutes ago with his new friend Anand. Arjun goes to his room and thinks about Anu. He looks at her photograph and just imagines all lines he has to say.

"I have to look into your eyes and be confident all the time. I have to talk about your dress, hair, your smile and your beautiful poignant eyes. Oh it looks like I am the prince seeing my princesses tomorrow. Anu, I will be the happiest man if you say yes to my marriage proposal. Oh you are mine Anu, mine forever. I want the night to end soon and for the day to start early. The night is young and my heart is for you my dear. Oh I feel poetic as well," says the geeky Arjun, mesmerized and in paradise thinking about his girl Anu.

Arjun dozes off on his bed with the photograph of Anu next to him. The night relaxes but gazes him to succeed in his mission of

getting his beautiful geeky princess. The sun comes out freshly handsome to witness the two studious people talk on their first matchmaking setting. Arjun wakes up from his bed. He looks at the beautiful face of Anu in the photograph and smiles at her. He gets mesmerized with her beauty and the dawn asks him to wake up and go and talk to the girl. Arjun goes to the bathroom shaves his morning beard and takes a shower. He gets ready with a beautiful white shirt of Raymond make and wears a blue Paige pants and his goggle-eye glasses. He looks like a prince as the nature smiles and sheds morning dew showers to deem they are happy. Arjun gets out from his bedroom and enters the living room. His father is dressed in a blue kurtha and white pajama and his mother is dressed in a fancy red Kanchipuram silk sari. The time ticks 8:00 am. Arjun's mother asks him to have breakfast as she made puri and upma. Arjun gorges on his breakfast and looks T for his marriage alliance. His mother carries out the morning puja and offers him the aarti. Arjun takes blessings from his mother. He hugs his dad. Arjun gets out from his home and starts

his car. His father sits in the front seat and his mother perches on the rear. Arjun bustles through to Nungambakkam. Anu and her parents reside in the Porsche area of Nungambakkam near the Taj Coromondel hotel. They reside in a five bedroom house in Nungambakkam which is five kilometers away from Alwarpet. Arjun reaches their house in ten minutes and the time is now 9:00 am, the auspicious time to meet the alliance.

Anu's parents Dr. Subramaniam Iyer and Dr. Vijayalakshmi Subramaniam greet Arjun and his parents with smiles. They welcome the new alliance with a joyous and cheerful heart. Arjun touches the feet of Dr. Subramaniam and Dr. Vijayalakshmi to seek blessings on this auspicious day. Subramaniam and Vijayalakshmi bless the boy with an emotional and upbeat blessing. Arjun enters the house and sits on the red leather laid two seater sofa. Arjun loses his patience to meet his princesses Anu. Anu's mother Vijayalakshmi hands the guests coffee and biscuits. The biscuits were especially brought from Dubai only for

this marriage alliance. The girl's side is from very well to do family and is extremely wealthy. As the guests gorge at the food Vijayalakshmi brings Anu. Anu enters the living room. She is dressed in a beautiful white silk sari with an eye catching platinum pedant. Arjun looks at her synergistic lips which flaunt a cultured smile and she carries a feathered hair with the retro 1970's style. Arjun gazes her crème rain drop ear rings and her natural elegant hair. Arjun looks closely at Anu's upturned eyes that inquisitively look for him. Arjun rises from his seat. Anu gives a natural smile. Arjun's heart skips a beat. He feels rainbow colors and its beauty are nickel and dime in front of her princess Anu. Anu slowly hands over the coffee to Arjun and she looks at him. Arjun looks at her and poignantly smiles. Anu treads back to her room. Arjun's eyes follow her. Anu turns back and looks at Arjun. She elegantly smiles.

"Do you want to talk to Anu? You both can talk and tell us what you both have decided," asked Vijayalakshmi, Anu's mother.

"Yes," said Arjun, feeling rabby.

"Talk to Anu independently without our disturbance," said Muthushankar, Arjun's father.

"Ok," said Arjun.

Arjun enters the bedroom and looks at Anu's eyes. He falls weak on his knees to her beautiful eyes and says to himself,

"The stars are right. There can be only one twinkling star in the sky which I see right in front of my eyes," said Arjun.

Arjun walks closer to Anu. Anu smiles. He greets her with a Hello.

"Hello," said Arjun.

"Please sit," said Anu.

Arjun perches down on the wooden sofa. The sofa has a coffee finish. Arjun gets rabby. He turns too anxious. He loses his mind. He forgets all his rehearsed lines. He starts to ramble.

"Hello, what do you do?" asked Arjun.

Anu calms him down.

Arjun's parents are anxious to know what they are talking. Anu's parents pray lord that their daughter likes Arjun and all ends well between the two bright and talented couple. Arjun and Anu talked for half an hour. They exit the room. Anu smiles and treads to her mom. Arjun looks faced out.

"What do you think? Shall we go ahead with the marriage?" asked Geetha, Arjun's mother.

Arjun is blanked out. Anu feels anxious.

"Do you like Arjun?" asked Anu's mother.

Anu whispers in her ears. Vijayalakshmi turns emotional. She kisses her daughter.

"Anu says yes to the marriage," said Vijayalakshmi.

Arjun looks fizzled. He is shocked.

"What convinced Anu to say yes to the marriage? I don't remember what I talked? I recollect I talked some of Anand's cheesy impressive lines. Has Anu fallen for that? This is unbelievable. I have to thank god. I have to thank Anand. Anand you are genius. I impressed Anu because of you. You are my best friend forever," said Arjun, feeling bliss.

"Do you like Anu?" asked Geetha, Arjun's mother.

"Yes, amma. I like her a lot," said Arjun.

Geetha feels joyous hugs Arjun. Geetha and Muthushankar exchange the marriage gifts with Vijayalakshmi and Subramaniam. They perform all rituals in front of Lord Ganesha for showing their son a beautiful and well read wife Anu. The marriage is locked on February 26<sup>th</sup> 1975 at morning 9 am.

"We still have two months for the wedding," said Geetha, Arjun's mother.

"We will do all the necessary arrangements for the marriage," said Vijayalakshmi, Anu's mother.

Arjun deems emotional looks at Anu with a joyous smile. Anu reciprocates with a smile. Arjun's romantic love life incepts today. All gods witness the romantic saga of Anu and Arjun begin. Arjun marriage is locked with his princess.

## CHAPTER 4

### ***I meet my best friend to share my dreams***

As Arjun wished he is marrying a beautiful rich Tamil Brahmin girl, Anu, who is as well read as him. Arjun wishes to share his marriage fixture news with his close friends, Bharath, Vetri, Kapil and also with his new best friend, Anand. He calls Bharath to share the marriage news.

"I can't believe it. How did you get the marriage fixed? What did you talk to her?" asked Bharath, with a heavy bustle on his face.

"I have no idea. I was blanked out. I don't remember what I said," said Arjun.

"Some lucky charm has helped you," said Bharath, smiling heartily over Arjun's marriage fixture.

"Let's have a party at the Park Sheraton hotel where we always hangout. But this time you must drink, and not say you will puke," said Bharath, laughing his gut at Arjun.

"Yes, I will indeed drink. I will not puke. I promise. And I will call all our friends for the party," said Arjun, with a blithe voice.

"We will celebrate and have a rage at the dance floor of Park Sheraton. The party will be filled with dance, booze and rave," said Bharath, sounding upbeat with the party being planned.

"Ok, meet you at 6 pm at Park Sheraton. I will call others including Anand," gushes out Arjun.

"Who is Anand? Isn't he a friend of Kapil whom we met last time at Park Sheraton? Why do you want that varmint to attend the party? He is a low class rat," asked Bharath, sounding a bit finicky and edgy about calling Anand.

"Yes, I also thought the same about him. But he helped me talk to Anu. He gave me tips to impress Anu and make her say yes to the marriage. He asked me to look straight into Anu's eyes and talk impressive lines. It helped Anu fall for me," said Arjun, feeling perky and blest.

"I want to thank him whole heartedly and hence want to invite him for the party," said Arjun, with a joyous feeling.

Bharath gets emotional hearing Arjun.

"Definitely call Anand for the party. He has helped you," said Bharath.

Arjun hangs up the phone and gets merry that Bharath had agreed to invite Anand. Arjun gets ready to call Vetri to get his confirmation for the party and his resounding yes to invite Anand. Arjun knows Vetri well. He is a nice guy and he will agree inviting Anand. He gets ready to call Vetri. The phone rings. Vetri picks up

the phone and Arjun paints his marriage fixture news with Anu. Vetri ponders to the news.

"I am very happy for you my friend. My best wishes to you," said Vetri, sounding joyous hearing the news.

"Thanks, Vetri. I am so happy that you are thrilled. Come down to the party at Park Sheraton at 6 pm today. I will invite Kapil and also Anand," said Arjun.

"Definitely I am coming to the party. But why do you want to invite Anand? Isn't he a backward class rogue?" asked Vetri, not sure why Anand is being invited.

Arjun explains the entire scene of what happened the previous day. He recites the entire conversation of how Anand helped him talk to Anu.

"It is my duty to invite Anand as he has helped me get Anu," said Arjun, becoming sentimental reminiscing Anand's help.

Vetri stands still and becomes lumped listening to Arjun. He asks Arjun to definitely invite Anand for the party. Arjun's emotions reach the pinnacle. He thanks Vetri for accepting Anand to be invited for the party. He lastly decides to call Kapil as well to share his marriage fixture news and also get his permission to invite Anand. Kapil readily accepts the invitation and feels extremely merry for his friend Arjun. He deems joyful to know that Anand has become a good friend of Arjun after listening to Arjun about Anand's help.

"I told you Anand is a nice guy and as I had imagined you got benefitted from his tips," said Kapil.

"Thank you for your best suggestion," said Arjun, with a chuckle in his lips.

Arjun hangs up the phone and reminiscent Anand's help. He ponders how to invite Anand as Anand does not own a home phone. He is scanty poor. Arjun deems Anand might be poor but has a good heart. He mews down and talks to himself,

"I will not look down upon downtrodden backward class people because I know they are good people as well. They will help us as well. I will care for all people irrespective of their caste, creed and race. This is the lesson I learnt from my friend Anand," said Arjun with wet tears running down his eyes.

"I will personally invite Anand by driving to Madras Café," said Arjun, murmuring to self.

Arjun drives along Nungambakkam and zaps with gusto to Madras Café hotel. He gawks at Anand who is working. Arjun gapes at Anand and whistles at him.

"Come out," said Arjun.

Anand hears Arjun. He points his fingers towards the hotel owner.

"That shitty owner is still at the hotel. He will not muddle me out at these odd hours," said Anand.

Arjun understands Anand's hand gestures and smirks.

"I will get you out," said Arjun.

Arjun treads towards the hotel owner.

"Can I talk to Anand for fifteen minutes," asked Arjun.

The hotel owner grins.

"I take the usual twenty rupees," said the hotel owner sheepishly.

"The money you always charge is high but I want to talk to Anand. I will give you that money. I want Anand out for fifteen minutes," said Arjun.

Arjun takes the cash from his wallet and hands over to the hotel owner. The hotel owner chuckles and gleefully accepts the cash. Arjun treads towards the kitchen and tucks Anand to come out. Anand sneers at Arjun.

"You are a rich man. I saw you paying twenty rupees every time to the hotel owner to talk to me. I can never pay so much to talk to a person every time for fifteen minutes," said Anand.

Arjun grins.

"I will spend any amount for your time. You are my friend," said Arjun.

"You are my best friend," said Anand.

"You are my best friend as well. I want to inform you that my marriage is fixed with Anu. It is all because of you. Anu said yes because of your tips," said Arjun.

Anand hears out the news and jumps in zenith. He clasps Arjun tighter and shakes hands with him feverishly. He cries out.

"I am very happy for you my friend. This news is heaven," said Anand, with a boisterous feeling in his head.

"Thanks. You helped me get my girl. I owe you a lot. You are my best friend," said Arjun, feverishly shaking hands with Anand.

"Calm down Arjun. I never thought a Brahmin man like you will become my best friend. This is indeed magical. I will be your best

friend if you really meant what you just said," said Anand in emotion.

"I really meant what I said. You are my best friend," said Arjun, feeling lumped in his throat with this new friendship bond.

"Come walk with me to that cigarette shop. I need a smoke to beat these tears," said Anand, with water rolling down his eyes.

"Let's go," said Arjun.

Arjun and Anand tread towards the cigarette shop. Anand lights the cigarette and bobs in paradise.

"I am relaxed now. The smoke helped me. I am happy. Come let us go to the nearby temple and take god's blessings to celebrate the news of your marriage," said Anand, wanting to share the joy of marriage with the lord.

"Yes, we will go to the temple. I want to go to Lord Ganesha's temple and take his blessings. He is my favorite god and I will like

to share my marriage news first with Lord Ganesha only” said Arjun.

“There is still ten minutes before I am called up by my owner. Let us go to the temple and return in 5 minutes,” said Anand.

“Sure,” said Arjun.

“Lord Ganesha’s temple is down south,” said Anand, gesturing the temple’s direction to Arjun.

“That’s nice. We will go then,” said Arjun.

Anand puts down his cigarette.

“I will wash my hands, legs and mouth at the temple entrance so that I am pure when I walk inside the temple. I don’t want to enter with cigarette smell,” said Anand.

“Good. You are a good man. We shall wash our hands, legs and mouth at the temple entrance before we walk inside for Lord Ganesha’s dharsan,” said Arjun.

The two best friends walk south and reach the temple. They wash their feet, hands and mouth at the entrance. The two friends then enter the temple. Arjun buys an archana ticket. He hands over the archana ticket to the Iyer.

“Under whose name should the pooja be performed?” asked the Iyer.

“Under the Lord Ganesha’s name,” said Arjun.

The Iyer performs pooja under lord Ganesha’s name and gaits out from the main Ganesha’s prangan to offer prasad to Arjun and Anand. Arjun takes the prasad and does a shastang namaskar to have a blissful life with his beautiful fiancé Anu. Anand also takes the prasad and seeks Lord Ganesha’s blessings. Arjun and Anand walk back to the hotel with a joyous smile.

“Thanks for coming down to the temple and praying for me. You are my best friend. I wish to convey another important news to you. I want to celebrate my marriage fixture. I want to have a

party and want you to attend it. It is at 6 pm tonight at Park Sheraton hotel. All my close friends are coming. Bharath, Vetri and Kapil are coming. They all like to meet you. Can you please come” asked Arjun, sharing the party event with Anand.

“I will attend the party. I never expected you and your friends will be accepting me as your friend. I am a low backward class cook. Thanks for making me part of your gang. I will surely come to the party,” said Anand, feeling cheerful.

“Thanks. See you at 6 pm today,” said Arjun, giving Anand a hug.

The two friends reach the hotel. Anand gaits inside the kitchen. Arjun leaves the hotel. He pedal starts his Fiat 1100 super select car and zips through Teynampet to Alwarpet. He is joyous mood. He does a frantic full speed stop at front of his house. He gaits to his living room and gawks Geetha, his mother.

“All my friends are perky happy about my marriage fixture. We wish to have a party today at 6 pm. Amma can you give me four

hundred rupees to organize the party," asks Arjun, with a zingy face while talking to his mother.

Geetha asks Arjun to wait. She treads towards the living room and asks money to Muthushankar, her husband. Muthushankar calls Arjun.

"Why do you want to celebrate this party in a big hotel like Park Sheraton? Why can't you have it somewhere in a smaller hotel?" howls Muthushankar.

Arjun gets irked.

"I am celebrating my marriage fixture news with my close friends. If not now when will I celebrate?" bawls Arjun at his father.

Muthushankar loses his cool and gives him a piece of his mind.

"Arjun, the point of this party is to celebrate your marriage fixture with your friends. Why can't you have it in a smaller hotel? Why do you want to waste money and booze at Park Sheraton hotel," asked Muthushankar to his son.

Arjun gets miffed and yells at his father.

“This is once in a lifetime celebration. I want the party to be special. That’s why I want to celebrate at Park Sheraton,” barked Arjun.

Muthushankar continues to argue with fire.

“No Arjun, you are not going to celebrate at Park Sheraton. I do not wish my son to celebrate in a big hotel. If you want the party to be special, celebrate it at home. What better place to share your happy feelings than home. I don’t want you to waste four hundred rupees on junk drinks and food and that’s my final decision,” yelled Muthushankar.

Arjun loses his cool and shows his anger towards his father. He howls at Muthushankar.

“If you don’t allow me to celebrate at Park Sheraton, I will cancel this marriage,” barked Arjun, with anger.

Geetha overhears the conversation and scuds towards the living room. She howls at her husband for being an iron head. She whizzes towards Arjun and calms him down. She gaits swiftly to the master bedroom and opens the cupboard. A tally of fifty thousand rupees lies in the locker. This is just one twentieths of the cash that Muthushankar owns from his ancestors. The rest are invested in land, house, and stocks and deposited in bank. In spite of owing big money Muthushankar never wastes money in lame and cheap parties. He wishes Arjun emulate him in safeguarding money and invest them smartly. But Arjun doesn't oblige. The exuberance of youth shuts his eyes. Geetha takes the cash and moves to living room.

"Here is your four hundred rupees. Go and enjoy the party," said Geetha, calming Arjun.

Arjun deems happy and profusely thanks his mother. He looks at his father and angrily grins. Muthushankar grins back. Arjun

doesn't care. He treads to his bedroom and closes the door. Muthushankar howls at Geetha for being a soft pigeon.

"Why did you give Arjun four hundred rupees? Why do you want him to become a victim of gaudy night parties at expensive hotels?" asked Muthushankar.

Geetha holds Muthushankar's hand.

"Do not yell at Arjun. He is an impulsive kid. If he gets agitated he will cancel the marriage. Let's leave this issue at once. Please," said Geetha, beseeching Muthushankar.

Muthushankar gets miffed.

"Go to hell. God will punish him if he continues to be impulsive. Please ask him to change. I have said what I wanted to say. I will keep quiet now," bawls Muthushankar.

"He will change his impulsive attitude. I will help him out. Please be patient with him," said Geetha.

Arjun takes a shower and gaits out from the bathroom rolling his towel. He wears a blue Paige trousers and an ironed checked white shirt. He treads to the living room.

"Amma I took a shower. I am relaxed and happy now. Thanks for giving me four hundred rupees. I will go to the party," said Arjun.

"I thought there is still time for the party. It is just 4 pm. I don't know what time you will have dinner at the party. Why don't you eat something and go," asked Geetha.

"Amma, We will have food early at the party. I promise," said Arjun, assuring he will eat at the party.

"Have something now before you go to the party so that even if it gets late at the party for you to have food you will not feel hungry" said Geetha, worried for Arjun.

"Ok, Amma. I will eat something now," said Arjun.

Geetha deems happy and asks him to sit. She serves pongal, medu vada and sambar which she had specially prepared for

Arjun to make him feel happy. The sambar is made in an authentic Tamilian style with coconut powder, drumsticks, carrots and two table spoons of sambar powder. The aroma of sambar fills the house. Arjun gorges his pongal and vada along with the sambar. He loves his mother's food and skittishly smiles that his future wife Anu will also prepare similar food like his mother. Arjun sumptuously eats and drinks a glass of buttermilk at the end. He hugs his mother and gives a gush-gush smile. Both mother and son share a happy hug. Arjun feels jocund and treads to bedroom. He gawks Anu's photograph and deems he is madly and deeply in love. He wishes to marry her. Wedding bells are ringing in the air. Rain pours out in the balcony to spur the marriage of Arjun and Anu with a joyous fizzle in the sky. Time is 4:30 pm. Arjun dreams a dance with his fiancé amidst the down pouring rain. Arjun is in his stride thinking of kissing Anu. The time reads 5:33 pm. Arjun rubs his eyes and wakes up from his dream. He gushes. He changes his dress to grey colored printed trousers and a dark blue linen shirt. He also spots a tie and carries a jacket. He looks like a

parvenu. He puts on Eau de parfum cologne the most expensive and long lasting perfumes. Arjun smells at his scent, looks T. He removes his goggle-eyed glasses and puts on contact lens for the first time. His mother bought them last year, but Arjun did not try them deeming the goggle-eyed glasses make him look more nerdish. But today he wishes to be splendid and a real show-stealer. Arjun treads out from his bedroom.

"Amma, I am going to party," said Arjun.

"Ok, come back soon. You are looking handsome," said Geetha.

"Thank you," said Arjun.

Arjun looks at his father. He grins. Arjun grins back. His father yucks him. Arjun doesn't care. He walks out of the mansion and gets into his Fiat 1100 super select car. He zips to Park Sheraton. The hotel is five minutes' walk from where he resides but Arjun decides to take his car to show his transformation into a real show-stealer. Arjun reaches the hotel and asks the valet to park

his car. The valet gleefully accepts his command. Arjun gaits into the hotel. A waiter escorts him in. He marches towards the table reserved under his name. The time reads 5:50 pm. Arjun waits for his three most trusted friends, Bharath, Kapil and Vetri along with his new best friend, Anand. Bharath picks up his two buddies, Vetri and Kapil from their apartment which is close to his in Gandhi Nagar, Adyar. The three walk into the hotel and peeve their eyes towards Arjun. Arjun waves at them. The three are dressed in formal bell bottom pants, grey shirt and a jacket to celebrate the party.

"You three look sharply dressed," said Arjun.

"You also look striking for the first time. What happened to you? How are you so well dressed?" asked Bharath.

"There is no secret. I wish to be a real show-stealer like you. I want to dress well," replied Arjun.

"You indeed look striking. Anu will be impressed if she sees you," said Bharath.

"Thanks. I want to dress well to impress Anu. She is my love," said Arjun.

"Great to hear that you are finally in love. My heartiest congratulations to you. I always saw you as a nerd," said Bharath.

"I am a nerd, but I have transformed into a real show-stealer. I want to be in love with Anu. I want to marry Anu," said Arjun.

"We are with you. We will help you transform into real show-stealer. We promise," said Bharath.

"Thanks. Let's begin the party. I am in happy mood," said Arjun, kicking the party.

Arjun deems to order Champagne. However he doesn't see Anand yet and hence waits. Anand walks from Marina beach to Park Sheraton. It is roughly six kilometers walk and has been walking for the last forty five minutes. He looks feverishly excited to meet

his friend, Arjun. Anand experiences nervous fidgets before meeting his friend. He walks to the hotel and gawks at Arjun sitting next to the glass window inside the lovely feel good Park Sheraton hotel. Arjun boisterously waves at Anand. Anand smiles and waves. Anand wears a green colored kurtha, white pajama and brown sandals. He wears the same attire when Arjun first met him. Arjun never liked Anand for his attire during his first meet. But today Arjun accepted Anand as he is. He doesn't care. He hugs him.

"Here is my best friend, Anand," said Arjun to his other close buddies, Bharath, Vetri and Kapil.

All his close friends willfully welcome Anand into their gang. They accept Arjun-Anand's camaraderie. Arjun raves. The party begins.

"Waitress, get drinks to the table," said Arjun.

Arjun's father exactly feared that Arjun will spend cash on alcohol which is injurious to health. But Arjun doesn't care. He wishes to

drink all night to celebrate his marriage fixture. Arjun orders Champagne worth seventy rupees.

“Order the drinks that you need,” said Arjun to his friends.

Bharath orders a Khajuraho beer worth twenty five rupees. Vetri orders Malibu rum worth forty five rupees and Kapil orders a white horse whisky for thirty rupees. Anand orders a simple King’s beer for fifteen rupees. All the friends also order food. Arjun orders vegetable fried rice and cauliflower manchurian, Bharath orders Chicken curry with rice, Vetrivelan orders mutton biryani and prawn curry and Kapil orders chicken biryani, fish curry, tandoori chicken. The waitress takes the order and leaves. Arjun opens the Champagne. A few tears roll down Anand’s eyes as he toasts for the first time with elite class men like Arjun. The friends gleam. Bharath calms Anand. The party begins.

“I never partied with elite men like you. Thanks for calling me for the party,” said Anand.

"You are my best friend. You helped me get Anu. This party is happening because of you," said Arjun.

"You are a good man. Anu is really lucky. You and Anu marry happily and live forever," said Anand, with tears rolling down his eyes.

"You are my best friend. Thank you for your wishes. Our friendship should also last forever," said Arjun.

Anand hugs Arjun. Arjun feels joyous.

"Let the party begin," said Arjun, feverishly.

Bharath howls. He drinks his Khajuraho beer and wishes to dance with college teens to rampant the night. Vetri and Kapil also wish to rave. Anand however wishes to be sober and be a good man at his best friend's party. Arjun doesn't wish to flirt as well as he knows he has got the love of his life, Anu.

"Let us kick start the party..," tramped Bharath, with his glass held high.

The friends rise their glasses and howl.

“Let the party get started,” yelled Vetrivelan and Kapil.

## CHAPTER 5

### ***My friend talked his dreams***

Bharath, Vetri, Kapil, Anand and Arjun drink. Bharath looks at the college teens dancing in the bar. He wishes to join them. He treads towards Shruthi, an Andhra Civil Engineering student who is visiting Chennai to meet her friend Swapna to celebrate Swapna’s birthday. Swapna is pursuing her undergraduate degree in Electrical Engineering at the world renowned Indian Institute of Technology, Madras, and her friend Shruthi is pursuing Civil Engineering in Jawaharlal Nehru Technological University (JNTU) in Kakinada, Andhra Pradesh. Swapna turns 18 today. She is legal to drink. Swapna planned her birthday party at Park Sheraton

hotel and invited Shruthi from Kakinada. Shruthi agreed. The two girls begin their birthday party.

"I need an imported Gordon & Macphail Scotch Malt whisky," said Swapna.

"I need a Douglas Laing imported Scotch whisky," said Shruthi.

"Yes, I will get your order," said the waiter.

The two girls are unimaginably rich. Swapna's father owns coal mines in Guntur, Andhra Pradesh. Shruthi's father owns granite factory in Guntur. They both earn crores of rupees in a year. They are rich elite men. They bathe in money. They engage in night parties in elite hotels and spend that money. After high school Swapna got admit at IIT Madras while Shruthi got admission in JNTU, Kakinada. They both have brains. They are a mixture of beauty with brains and complemented with power of money. They are a complete package. Those who marry them wins jackpot. They both order drinks and slug them. They get high and begin to

dance in the bar. Bharath watches them walks closer and makes an adventurous move.

"Hey, what's your name?" asked Bharath.

"Move off jerk", shouted Swapna, asking Shruthi to be with her.

Shruthi intervenes. She pushes Bharath and takes Swapna by her side. Bharath does not stop.

"Hey, want to go out to the corner," asked Bharath, stooping to poor talk.

Swapna mewls and calls for help. Shruthi tries to help but cannot push Bharath away. He is a hulk. He continues to talk dirty. He gets close to Swapna and rests his hand on her. Shruthi pushes him hard but Bharath doesn't move an inch. Swapna mewls cries for help. Vetri sees Bharath, joins in. Vetri touches Shruthi. She shouts. None in the hotel care as the music is too loud. Shruthi has no energy. She is also wasted. She folds to Vetri. Bharath

forces Swapna to fold and she succumbs to his request. Bharath and Vetri get the girls.

"Where are you taking us? We want to go home," shouted Swapna.

"Do not worry. I want to be your boyfriend. I am from a rich family. You see this watch. I bought this in Dubai. It is imported, costs Rs 8000. I shall get you a ladies watch, worth Rs 20,000 if you be my girlfriend," said Bharath, indulging in gaudy talk.

"I do not want your watch. I am rich as well. My father earns in crores. I just want to go home. Please leave me," said Swapna.

Bharath does not stop at his scurvy talk.

"You see my diamond chain it is worth eight lakh rupees. I can buy you such diamond chains if you accept my love. I am a nice guy. I want to be your boyfriend. I like you," said Bharath, putting the diamond chain around Swapna's neck.

"Leave me alone. I will not fall for your cheap tricks. I want to go home." said Swapna, feeling worried.

"Do not worry. I will not trick you. I want to be your boyfriend," said Bharath who moves closer and attempts to kiss her.

Swapna is taken aback by Bharath's kiss.

"Back off. Please do not touch me," said Swapna, who cries for help.

"Get inside the car. I will not harm you if you listen to me. I will drop you home. Do not force me to harm you," said Bharath.

Swapna feels fidgety. She listens to Bharath and doesn't want to be harmed. She sits inside the car. Shruthi gets scared doesn't say anything extra, gets inside the car as well. Bharath is happy he got his girl for the night. Kapil gawks at all the developments. He rushes out from the bar.

"I want a girl as well. I don't have the courage to talk to them so Bharath you help me get a girl," asked Kapil.

"Swapna, do you have a friend in town?" asked Bharath.

"Please do not ask any questions. I want to go home. I am afraid," said Swapna, feeling nervous.

"I will not harm you if you listen to me. I will drop you at your friend's place if you know anyone in town," said Bharath, tricking Swapna.

"I know there is Lakshmi at home. Please do not harm her. We all just want to be home," said Swapna, feeling nervy.

"I will drop you home. You are safe with me. I promise," said Bharath.

Bharath starts his Mercedes Benz d300 car. He drives to Swapna's big mansion. Arjun looks at the developments and bitters. Anand winks at the boys and deems all rich kids are playboys. Bharath reaches Swapna's house in Adyar, Gandhi Nagar. The clock ticks 12:30 am.

"Lakshmi, can you come out," howls Bharath, from the gate.

Lakshmi walks out. She sees Swapna and Shruthi along with three men.

"Hi I am Bharath. I am Swapna's boyfriend," said Bharath.

"Can you come out with us?" asked Bharath.

"What?" asked Lakshmi, with a puzzled look.

"We want to celebrate Swapna's birthday and she accepted my love," asked Bharath.

"Is this real?" asked Lakshmi.

Swapna doesn't wish to be harmed.

"Yes. Listen to Bharath and get inside the car," said Swapna.

Lakshmi trusts Swapna. She gets inside the car. She sees Shruthi with other two men. Shruthi doesn't say a word. She plays it safe. Bharath starts his car and drives. The boys can sense an amusing night ahead....

"My friends are nasty. They are mean and deviant. They lack moral. Especially Bharath, he is a debauchee," said Arjun.

"I know rich boys. They are all playboys. I am not rich but I also flirt with girls but I just limit with talk," said Anand, who doesn't want to be called a debauchee.

"I know you are a flirt. I saw you luring a drunken girl the first time we met," said Arjun.

"Yes. I lured the girl and she liked me. I kissed her but did not go beyond. I love my girlfriend. I promised her that I will not cross the line with girls," said Anand.

"Why did you kiss the girl, when you already have a girlfriend?" asked Arjun.

"I am a flirt. I make one or two quirky moves but I do not cross the line," said Anand, saying the truth.

"Can you stay true to your girlfriend?" asked Arjun.

"I will. I love her. I promised her I will not cross the line," said Anand.

"Let's see. I see you are a debauchee. You can never be true to your girlfriend because you flirt with girls," said Arjun.

"Let's see. I agree I flirt with girls. But I will not go cross the line. I promised my girl that I love her," said Anand.

"Ok, I will not spare you if you break your promise. I will end our friendship. This is my warning," said Arjun, with a stern head.

"I will not cross the line. I promise. I want our friendship to last forever," said Anand.

Arjun blithes. He orders one more drink in happiness.

"Waiter, get me one more Khajuraho beer," said Arjun.

"Yes, sir," said the waiter.

"Do you want one more beer?" asked Arjun.

"Yes," said Anand, in a joyous mood.

Arjun checks the cash he's spent on drinks.

"I have sixty rupees. What would you like to drink?" asked Arjun.

"I need a King's beer," said Anand, in a blissful mood.

Arjun orders a Khajuraho and a king's beer. He's spent all cash on drinks and food. He doesn't wish to order any more drinks. Anand toasts for Arjun.

"Brother, I want to be your friend forever. I want our friendship to last forever," said Anand.

"I will be your friend. I want our friendship to last forever. You helped me get my girl. What more do I want. I will be your best friend," said Arjun.

Anand hugs Arjun and smiles.

"I want us to be best friends. Can you tell me more about yourself? I want to know" asked Anand.

"I am a nerd. I was always a nerd. I don't want people to look at me as just a nerd but look at me as a real show-stealer. I want to be a hero. A hero who reads books and does mathematics and solves puzzles!! Why should a hero always be a hulk and fight? They can be reading books and yet do superhuman things like the Marvel comics. I don't know if you read Marvel comics but I like those comics. I admire the heroes in those comics. Mark my words friends of our age will read Marvel comics in future and admire the superheroes in them. These superheroes are highly knowledgeable and do inhuman technologically advanced gadgets. All girls will love such men in future. I want the girls to love such men now. Today's girls love men who are macho. I am not a macho. I want girls to love nerds like me. What's wrong with that? I think I found Anu who loves me. I hope she loves me for who I am. You helped me talk to Anu and make her say yes for the marriage. I don't know what I talked to her. I guess I talked what you helped me rehearse but I hope if she likes me for who I

am. I would be very happy if she does that. That's all I want," said Arjun.

"It is good to know your honest feelings. But there are times when reality is different. Today's girls love macho guys and that's a fact. If you think foreign girls love Marvel comics and fall for nerds that will never happen in India. I wish I am wrong but I am right most of the times about girls. You can take my word on this," said Anand.

"I wish you are wrong. I want girls love nerds like me," said Arjun, with a tear in his eye.

"I think that will never happen," said Anand.

"I think you are mean and a debauchee. I want girls love nerds like me," said Arjun.

"Ok. Let's hope your wish comes true. Tell me more about yourself. I want to know about your family," asked Anand.

"I want to talk more. I want to talk about my parents. They are the best. My father is the best teacher I know. He is my hero. He shows me the wisdom of truth. He shows me the right path and I

take his advice. But there are times I don't listen to him. Today he asked me to celebrate the party at home and not waste money in drinking but I didn't listen. I am arrogant. I wanted to drink with you all and I want to celebrate the party at a five star hotel. I felt it is a once in a lifetime occasion. I asked him money. He refused and chided at me. I yelled back. He refused to budge and did not give me money. I howled at him and created a ruckus. My mother panicked and rushed to me and gave me four hundred rupees. I am a bad boy. I am arrogant. I feel bad to what happened today. I want to change my attitude. I want to be a good son to my parents. I want to be a good husband to Anu," said Arjun.

"You have many flaws in your character. I am noticing now. You are arrogant, nerd, want things to be done as per your wish. You have all the qualities of a rich brat. You should change your attitude. Anu will not love you if you stay this way. I will be your true friend pointing your flaws and help you change," said Anand.

"Ok. If you point my flaws and help me out. I am happy to listen and change," said Arjun.

"You are a good man. You are willing to change. I will help you. It is good to know you like your parents. I like my parents as well. But unfortunately I lost my father at ten. There is none to show me the wisdom of truth. He was an alcoholic. He used to work as a rickshaw driver. He used to spend all money on alcohol. He used to hit my mother. I sob every night seeing him beat my mother. I was young to fight him. He died of heart attack. My mom worked as a maid. She saved all money to raise me. She never used to eat. She saved them for me. Within three years she got asthma and liver cancer. Doctors advised her to not work and get medical attention. But we didn't have much money to get her treated. I decided to give up my school and worked in Madras Café hotel as a sweeper. I saved all money to buy her medicines. I still do that. Now I am promoted as a cook. It is my wish to admit her in a big

hospital and get her treated. I wish to take care of my mother. That is my big dream," said Anand, recollecting his childhood.

Arjun calms Anand.

"Stay strong. Your dream will be fulfilled," said Arjun.

"I am not an arrogant man like you. I am an honest and hard working man. But I have no father, no money and no happiness in life," said Anand, with a tear rolling down from his eye.

"Stay strong," said Arjun.

"I want to be a rich man. I want to have comforts, happiness and provide medication to my mother. I don't know anyone to ask. I don't have a guide or a father," said Anand, not able to control his tears.

"Calm down, Anand," said Arjun.

"Why can't people like me have a dream? Why can't we be shown a direction to achieve our dreams? I wish to be a world class rock

singer. I am a self taught guitarist and a rock singer. I wish to sing. I wish to earn money and be rich and famous. I wish to provide the best medication to my mother. I wish to roam around the world with my girlfriend, Priyanka and be happy clicking pictures. That's my dream. Why can't I live that dream?" asked Anand.

"What a great dream you have. I am impressed. You are not a mutt. You have an ambition in life. I like such people. I will be your guide. I will give you direction. We at Saregama music industry in collaboration with Vahini Studio are organizing a Super Singer competition to pick a lead singer for our music industry. I am the lead strategic analyst and lead selector in charge of this competition. I want you to apply. If you have the talent we will select you. We are not going to show any favoritism in this selection process. We are not auditioning people who are already established singers or who are from rich families. We want to audition singers who are from common towns of India who have no money or family support and come up on their own. We want

to pick a singer who is people's hero. It is my idea. I pitched it to the Saregama music industry and the MD loved the idea. He hired me immediately hearing my proposal and gave me the responsibility to pick the lead singer. I want you to apply for the competition. Post us your music audio cassette. I will listen to it and if I like it. I will select you to the Super Singer competition. You are satisfying all the criteria which I have advertised in the competition. You are poor, with no family or money background, and are a singer from the common public. You have a real chance. You can become our company's lead singer if you perform well in the Super Singer competition. The stage is rightly set for you. Lord Ganesha is listening. Make your dream come true," said Arjun.

"That's a great news. You are my best friend. Thanks for showing me a path. I will apply for the Super Singer competition. I will post my audio cassette. I want you to select me. Please select me," asked Anand.

"I will help you out. I promise," said Arjun.

"Thanks. Can you hear my voice and my song and give your honest reviews and select me directly. Can you please do that?" asked Anand.

"I can do that. I am free tomorrow. I will listen to your voice, your song and give my honest reviews. If I like your singing I will select you for the Super Singer competition," said Arjun.

"Thanks. You are my true friend. I found my guide to make my dream come true," said Anand.

"I will be your guide. I will help you make your dreams come true," said Arjun.

"Thank you. Can you come tomorrow evening at 6 pm to Marina beach? I will play my song and introduce you to my girlfriend, Priyanka and to my friends," asked Anand.

"I will come down tomorrow. I will listen to your song," said Arjun.

"Excellent. You are my god. You are helping me to make my dream come true. I can become a rock singer. I can earn money and be rich. I can save my mother and live happily with my girlfriend. Thank you for giving me the confidence. You are my real god," said Anand.

"Your dreams will come true," said Arjun.

Anand is joyous to see his dream getting fulfilled. He has a guide. Arjun is his guide. He has shown him the direction. He is giving him the stage to perform. Anand is in joyous mood and wants to talk, talk, talk...

"I want to know what is your dream?" asked Anand.

"I told you I want to be a real hero. I want people to accept a nerd like me as a hero. I want to be a real show-stealer. I want to do mathematics, solve puzzles, build technologies and be regarded as a hero. To achieve my dream I wish to bag the university gold medal. I want to work in Saregama music industry

as a lead Strategic analyst and lead selector. I am already getting paid lakhs of rupees. I want to save that money and set up my own enterprise, Arjun enterprises. I want to earn crores of money. I want to live a rich luxurious life with my fiancé Anu. I want to earn so much wealth that my grandchildren and their children can also live wealthily. I wish to be like Jamshedji Tata. I wish to be that rich," said Arjun.

"That's some wish. You have a real big dream. I wish your dreams come true. I will be with you throughout your journey and help you achieve your dream. I will be your best friend and will repay the favor. We can be best friends and sail this journey and make our dreams come true together," said Anand.

"Yes that's a great idea. We will sail together and will make our dreams come true together. You are my best friend," said Arjun.

Anand toasts Arjun and wants to talk more.

"What is your biggest fear?" asked Anand.

"My biggest fear is my inability to talk to girls and grown up women. I have gynophobia. I get paranoid in front of girls. My blood pressure rises up and I get trembles. I lose control and become blanked out," said Arjun.

"Why?" asked Anand.

"I don't know. I always thought the reason was a girl in my LKG class. When I saw her for the first time, I liked her and kissed her. She slapped me. She didn't like me because I was a nerd. I don't know why girls hate nerds. I want them to love nerds. Nerds are also heroes. The Marvel comics say that. But I don't know why girls hate nerds. I developed gynophobia because of this fear," said Arjun.

"I see your fear is not girls hating nerds but you cannot handle rejections and accepting reality. I think that is your inner fear," said Anand.

"What do you mean by inner fear?" asked Arjun.

"Inner fear is a negative emotion. Imagine if all things are going well in your life. You have a great job, a beautiful fiancé and loving parents. Because of these external positive factors we see your positive side which is your nerd's side. But imagine if your life turns nightmarish, like you lose your job, lose your fiancé and you are getting separated from your parents. What will you do? That's when we see your negative emotions. We see an Arjun, who can't handle rejections and can't take reality?" said Anand.

"I never thought about it in that way. I will get paranoid if everything turns negative in my life," said Arjun.

"That's exactly your fear. You cannot handle rejections and reality," said Anand.

"How do I shun my inner fear?" asked Arjun.

"There are two options. One way is by working continuously so that your negative emotions do not blossom. This is what most

accomplished men do. They work continuously and not think about their negative emotions," said Anand.

"The second method is the toughest method. In this case release your inner fear. For example if you wish to break a tea cup to vent your gall, you go ahead and break the tea cup. Break it two or three times. That vents out the Satan in your head and it will never come back because you have grown up," said Anand.

"It is really tough to vent your anger. What if there are repercussions," asked Arjun.

"You need to learn to grow up. You need to crush your inner fear. You should handle rejections and accept reality. Then work towards getting success and overcoming rejections. It may take months or years," said Anand.

"It is indeed hard. I understand both methods, one method is to work continuously to not think about negative emotion and another method is to vent out the negative emotions through

practice and grow up as a man. I will practice both. If I have doubts I will ask you," said Arjun.

"Ok," said Anand.

"Thanks. I want to know your inner fear?" asked Arjun.

"My inner fear is will I ever meet my guide. I always thought I am not a Brahmin to get a break in the music industry. I see all present day singers and musicians are Brahmins. I am from a poor backward class community. How will I get a chance in the music industry? I feared I will die without making my dream come true. But today I see my guide. You are my guide. You are showing me a direction. You are giving me a hope. You are giving me dreams. You helped me beating my inner fear. I hope to make my dream come true. I hope to make money and be rich. I hope to save my mother and have a happy life with my girlfriend. You have shown me the direction. I will follow that. Come let us go to the cigarette shop. I wish to smoke," said Anand.

"Ok. Let's leave," said Arjun.

Arjun asks for the bill. The friends had ordered Champagne, 3 Khajuraho beer, 2 Malibu Rum and 2 White horse whisky and 2 King's beer and food. The total comes around three eighty five rupees. Arjun has four hundred rupees given by his mother and he personally has an extra fifty rupees. Arjun pays the bill and leaves two rupees tips to the waiter.

The two friends tread past the five star hotel. They muster haphazardly and gait to a cigarette shop.

"Please help me make my dream come true," asked Anand.

"I will. Please help me overcome my inner fear," asked Arjun.

"I will. Let us help each other and make our dreams come true," said Anand.

"Yes, I want the same to happen. Let us help each other out and beat our inner fears and make our dreams come true," said Arjun.

Life destined to be lived and we shall see whether the two friends beat their inner fear and achieve their dreams. The clock ticks 2:00 am and the seconds key ticks 1,2,3...

## CHAPTER 6

## ***Love with my princess***

Anand puts off his cigarette.

"Come, I will drop you home," said Arjun.

"Ok," said Anand.

Anand totally sloshed in alcohol has no words but to keep quiet and scam into Arjun's car. Arjun drives the car. It is night 2 am. He observes dogs wandering around the roads. Arjun floats less about the dogs and drives at full speed. He drives at 120 km/hr. Arjun enjoys the thrill. Anand too enjoys the thrill. Both are totally drunk. They don't care for the signals. It is pitching dark. No one is walking on the road. Arjun drives at maximum speed. But he sees the scary side of the city. He goggles a girl probably eight or nine walking on the road. The girl walks back to her slum. Arjun gawks at the girl.

"Something is not right. Why is the girl walking alone in night? It is not safe. I probably should reduce my speed. It is better I park my car and follow the girl," said Arjun.

"Don't get down. The slums are dangerous place. You will see all sorts of people, from forced sex workers, abused wives, maid mothers, illiterate kids, alcoholic and beating fathers. We live in these slums," said Anand.

"I don't care. I want to see if that young girl reaches home safely," said Arjun.

"She will be safe. She is used to this every night. I don't want you to follow her. It is dangerous. Get inside the car. Drop me at my place," said Anand.

"No, I will not leave this place without knowing whether the girl safely reaches her home. I will follow her. You get out of the car and walk with me," shouted Arjun.

"Ok. But I warn you it is dangerous to walk in slums as people here are criminals," said Anand.

"I don't care. I want the girl to be safe," said Arjun.

Arjun tramps out of the car. He walks towards the slums. People of all sorts are living in the slums. They do all types of illegal and harmful activities. Arjun sees this but continues to follow the girl. The girl heads to her home. She sees an old rickshaw man pedaling a drug and opening the door. The old man pulls her hand and pounds her cruelly.

"Sleep with me," said the old man.

"Father, I like to be left alone tonight. I am not feeling well," said the young girl.

"Shut up and sleep with me. I need you," said the old man.

The old man freights the young girl and beats her cruelly. Arjun witnesses the entire scene. He runs to save the girl but Anand intervenes.

"Do not go near the man. He will have a sharp knife," said Anand.

"I don't care. I want to save the girl," said Arjun.

"Don't go. This is our lives. Slums are pathetic. Slums are dangerous," said Anand.

"I don't want people to be beaten and tortured. They can have a better life. We should get the girl out," said Arjun.

"This is our lives. We live in the slums. Slums are pathetic and dangerous," said Anand.

"I want to save the girl. I will go," said Arjun.

"You cannot save the girl. There are so many criminals in the slum like the old man who will beat you and kill you. Don't go near the old man. Don't try to save the girl. This is our lives. We live this life every day," said Anand.

"Don't watch our lives. Our lives are pathetic. Slums are pathetic," said Anand.

"I cannot save the girl. There should be some way to make you all bring out of slum. First, you come with me. We will go home. I don't want you to stay in the slums. You stay at my house. I will take care of you and your mother. Come with me," said Arjun.

"Our girls are not protected from our parents. This is our lives in the slums?" cried Anand.

"Slums are pathetic. If you want to bring me out of the slum please help me make a singer. I want to make money and be a rich man. I don't want to live in the slums. No one really cares for us. Please get me out. I will get my people out," said Anand.

"That's a fantastic idea. I will get you out of the slum by making you a singer. You bring other people out of the slum. You work your ways out. I will help you. I promise. Trust me," said Arjun.

Anand hugs Arjun.

"You are my best friend. I want to be out of the slum. I want to be a rich man and make money. If you help me make my dream

come true I will do anything for you. I will be your trustworthy friend. Please use me for your work," said Anand.

"I will help you out. I will help you make money and make you a rich man. I promise. I will use your help in return. I want you to help me talking to Anu. I have seen your life. I have seen slums are pathetic. I have seen you accepting that fact and am ready to accept I have gynophobia and I am ready to accept I can't talk to girls. I want to tell this truth to Anu. I want her to know about my inner fear. I want Anu to accept me for who I am. I want her to love me as me. I want to share everything with her. I do not want any secrets between me and Anu. I need you to help me talk to Anu about my inner fear. That is the only favor I will ask you as my friend," said Arjun, with a lump in his throat.

"I will help you talk to Anu and make her accept your inner fear. I will repay your favor. I will teach you talking to Anu. I will make Anu fall for who you are. I want to see both happily married and have a family together," said Anand.

"Thanks. I will never forget your help," said Arjun, sobbing.

"You call Anu tomorrow and ask how she is doing. Get to know her more. Both of you talk everything and get close to each other and truly fall in love," said Anand.

"Yes. I will call her. I will talk to her. I will tell her everything about me and know all about her. But how do I start my talk?" asked Arjun.

"You can start the talk by asking who she is as a person. You probably know a little bit of Anu from your earlier conversations. Now know more. Listen to her words. If you think you can relate everything what she says then she is definitely your girl. If you cannot then she is not your girl. But you have seen some of her qualities and fallen for them. So there are few qualities of her that you like. Now see if you like her other qualities. See if you can relate to her. If you can then she is your love. If you see some qualities of hers you cannot relate tell her them and tell her what she needs to change. If she accepts to change then she is falling

for you. Similarly you tell her everything about yourself. Tell her your inner fear, tell her you fear talking to girls. Tell her you cannot look into the eyes of a girl. Tell her you cannot express your love to her. Tell her you love her immensely but cannot express. Ask her how to talk to her. If she says I do not mind you fearing girls and says you can talk whatever you want then she is a nice girl. If she says she doesn't judge people. Then you can go ahead and talk everything with her. If she says she is not judging you then you can talk more. If you bring all your personality out in front and ask if those qualities she likes. If she says yes and gives you hints of what other things you should do and change to make her fall for you more. Then go ahead and implement those and ask if she sees the change and is impressed. If she says she does and likes you more. Then there is nothing you need to change and fear about you can talk everything to her and be in love with her forever. She will be your love forever. You two can happily marry each other. She will accept to be your wife forever. Take her

out for a dinner and talk about everything and see if you both are made for each other," said Anand.

"Thanks. I will take her out for a dinner. I will talk everything and make sure she likes me for who I am," said Arjun.

"If you need write down the lines what we discussed. Rehearse few times before you talk. Get the lines in your head and say them from your heart. Remember girls know if you are faking. Practice well and talk honestly to her. See if she loves you for who you are. If she does and you also love everything about her then you both are made for each other," said Anand.

"Ok I will write down all the lines and rehearse them. I will practice it well and say them honestly. I hope I will not panic," said Arjun.

"There is nothing to panic or to be afraid. You are asking Anu if she likes you as you. If she says yes then she is your girl. If she says she doesn't like you. Then she is not the girl you are looking for and you will not be happy with her for whatever possibilities

you want to try. There is no use of trying because she said she doesn't like you. Do not panic and talk to her when you two go for dinner," said Anand.

"Ok. I will talk everything," said Arjun.

"Go home now. It is late. We will meet tomorrow at Marina beach. Please hear my song and select me for Super Singer competition," said Anand.

"I will come tomorrow. I will hear your song. I will make sure you are selected for the Super Singer competition. I give you my word," said Arjun.

"I trust you. I want to be out of the slums and make money and be a rich man. I want your help. Please help me. Let us help each other and live happily with our family," said Anand.

"I will help you. I give you my word. Let us help each other and live happily with our family," said Arjun.

Arjun bids goodbye. Time ticks 3:00 am. He starts his Fiat 1100 super select car and drives home from Marina slum. Arjun reaches his mansion. He knocks the door. His mother opens.

"Why are you so late? We were worried? Did you eat? How was the party?" asked Geetha.

"The party was fun. We had great time talking and chatting. I made a new friend. He is Anand. He is a great man. He lost his father young, taking care of his ailing mother, lives in the slum, works as a cook and has a great dream of becoming a rock singer. I promised him to select him in Super Singer competition in Saregama music industry, where I work. I am the lead selector and lead Strategic analyst in Saregama music industry. I will make sure he is selected. He is a great man and his is a great story. I am going tomorrow to listen his song and promised him to select him. Myself and Anand became great friends and we had good time at the party," said Arjun.

"Your friend Anand is a great man handling struggles and striving to make his dream come true. You should select him. Now get some sleep. It is late. I am happy you enjoyed your marriage fixture party," said Geetha.

"Yes, I will sleep," said Arjun.

Arjun treads to his room. His father wakes up. He stops him.

"Why are you late? Did you drink? Have you wasted those four hundred rupees?" asked Muthushankar, Arjun's father.

"Yes. I spent the money on drinks and food. Why are you worried?" asked Arjun.

"It is my hard earned money. I have safe guarded it for our happy future. Why do you want to waste them on alcohol?" shouted Muthushankar.

"I wanted to celebrate my marriage fixture party. I wanted the party to be special so had it in Park Sheraton. I wanted to be really happy so drank for the first time," said Arjun.

"You have become a brat. You should change your attitude and be a good boy. Otherwise you will suffer," warned Muthushankar.

"I am arrogant. I am a brat. I know that. I promised my friend Anand that I will change. Today I had a reason to drink. My marriage is fixed with Anu so I was really happy. I promise I will not drink in future. I was angry on you when you stopped me from being happy. I am not an alcoholic to drink everyday and I am not a spendthrift. I value money. I spend wisely. Why were you angry? Don't you know what kind of a person I am?" asked Arjun.

"You don't waste money. I know that. But I don't want you to develop such bad habits. I don't want you to get carried away and party and drink. It is a bad habit. That's why I was angry on you. I was not stopping you from celebrating your marriage fixture. You can do that at home or a small restaurant but not by throwing a lavish party and getting drunk," said Muthushankar.

"I am sorry. I understand. I will not drink in future. But I was never so happy after Anu said yes to the marriage. I never imagined she

will say yes to the marriage. I always imagined no girl will marry me. I know girls don't like me. You know I don't talk to girls. I have gynophobia. I am a nerd. Girls don't like nerds. They don't want to marry nerds. I know that. I was expecting the same reply from Anu. I was expecting Anu will reject me. I am not a heartthrob for her to like me. I am just good in education. When she said yes for whatever may be her reasons I didn't believe. I was so happy that I called my friends and organized a party. I drank because I was happy that Anu accepted the marriage. I will not drink again," promised Arjun.

"I am sorry. I didn't know you still have fear talking to girls. I know you have gynophobia. But I didn't know it affected you as a person. I didn't know you were hurt inside fearing Anu will reject you. I know what impact that would have had on you if Anu said no to the marriage. You will never talk to other girls. You will never marry and be single and depressed. I am sorry. You have every reason to be happy and to enjoy the party. I realized my

mistake. Go and talk to Anu and let go of your fear. She is a nice girl. You found the best. You two are made for each other. I know that. She will understand you as a person. She is a good girl. Talk to her and let go of your fear. Love her and be happily married. God bless you," said Muthushankar.

"I am also sorry dad if I hurt you. I will talk to Anu. I discussed everything with my friend Anand and he too advised me to talk honest and get my fear out so that I can live happily with Anu," said Arjun.

"She will love you no matter what. She is a good girl. I know that. I have seen her character. She is a good girl. She is educated. She is a microbiologist. She will love you when she finds you are a good guy. She will marry you for who you are. I know that. Don't worry. Talk to her. If she says something's you need to change do those changes and ask her if she is impressed. If she says she is impressed with your changes then stick to those changes. You have so many great qualities. You are my son and you are a

champion. You are top ranker in college and have a great job. You have plans of starting a company. You are good in stocks and handling money. You have such great qualities. Why should you live with this thought that you cannot talk to girls? You are born like that. What is wrong? You have other great qualities. Tell Anu all your great qualities and she will be impressed. She will love you. Even I feared talking to your mother before marriage. I talked to her after marriage. She helped me open up. Your mother is a great woman helping a nerd like me. That's why I love her and we are happily married. Anu will also love you. Talk to her nicely. She will fall for you. I know that," said Muthushankar.

"I will talk to her and tell everything. I love you dad," said Arjun.

"I love you too. Go and happily sleep. Talk to Anu tomorrow," said Muthushankar.

"I will talk to her tomorrow," said Arjun.

"Good night," said Muthushankar.

Arjun deems bliss. He walks to his bedroom. He locks the door. He writes down all the lines that he wishes to say and memorizes them five times.

"I have written all my lines. I have written everything about myself, my strengths, weakness, my fear and my love towards Anu. I will talk everything that I have written. I will say them from heart. I hope Anu loves me for who I am. I will call her tomorrow and take her out for a dinner. I will tell her everything. I hope Lord Ganesha is listening. Please Lord Ganesha help me," said Arjun.

Arjun prays Lord Ganesha. The night listened to his prayers and wishes to pass them to Lord Ganesha. The sun rises in the morning. Arjun wakes up. He treads to bathroom brushes his teeth, showers and heads to the room. He wears a nice white shirt and Khaki pants and puts on Eau de parfum cologne to look T. He treads to living room. Geetha is awake and so is Arjun's father, Muthushankar.

"You look good. Did you catch a good night sleep?" asked Geetha.

"Yes. I did. I did catch a good night sleep. I want to call Anu and take her out for dinner tomorrow," said Arjun.

"Ok. Call her and talk to her. She will be happy to come for the dinner. Join us for breakfast now. I made puri and potato curry. Along with that there is masala vada," said Geetha.

"I will have them. I love your puri's. I will come to the table," said Arjun.

"Will you also have breakfast?" Geetha asked her husband.

"Yes. I will. I love your puri's. I will come to the table," said Muthushankar.

Arjun and his father walk to the breakfast table.

"Did you catch a good night sleep?" asked Muthushankar.

"Yes. I did. I had a good sleep," said Arjun.

"Go and talk to Anu and you will feel more happy," said Muthushankar.

"I will. I am taking her out for dinner tomorrow," said Arjun.

"Ok. Today is Saturday. Tomorrow is Sunday. She will be free tomorrow. You can take her out for dinner and talk to her," said Muthushankar.

"Ok," said Arjun.

Arjun gorges on four puri's with potato masala and has one masala vada. He feels full.

"I am full. I will call Anu," said Arjun.

"Ok," said Geetha.

Arjun heads to his room. He picks up his landline and dials Anu's number. This is the first time he is calling Anu. He feels nervous but doesn't panic as he knows he has to talk everything about him

to make her love for who he is. He knows what he is doing. He calls Anu.

"Hello," said Anu.

Arjun hears Anu's voice. He feels nervous. He starts to panic.

"Hello. Is it Anu? This is Arjun," said Arjun.

"Yes. This is Anu. Hi Arjun. How are you?" said Anu.

Arjun smiles. He talks slowly.

"I am good. How are you?" asked Arjun.

"I am good. I was working all last week. Today is Saturday so I am at home. I am idle sitting and watching TV," said Anu.

"Ok. I also like to watch TV. It's good entertainment," said Arjun.

"Yes, it is. It has become like family member. It will always talk and keep us entertained," said Anu.

"Yes. It always talks and keeps us entertained. It is like family member. Though I feel nervous I want to ask if I may take you out for dinner tomorrow night. Will you come?" asked Arjun.

"Yes. I will come. I am happy to come out," said Anu.

"Thanks. I didn't expect you will say yes. You are nice. I want to know more about you and also tell about myself. So thought of taking you out for a dinner," said Arjun.

" I will be happy to come and talk. We can talk about us. I will come," said Anu.

"I want to know what made you say yes to the marriage. Do you really like me?" asked Arjun.

"You are a good man. I saw honesty in our conversation. I like honesty. I liked all the things we talked. It felt some connect. I started falling for you during the talk and said yes for the marriage. I like you," said Anu.

"I don't remember what I talked during the alliance but I have to admit it was not honest. I hid some things about me. I don't want to hide them. I want to tell you everything about myself and wish you still like me. Please come with me for dinner. I will talk everything about me," said Arjun.

"I will come. I want to hear everything. I will come with you for dinner tomorrow," said Anu.

"Thanks. I don't know what honesty you saw in me during our last meet. But tomorrow I will tell everything. I will be honest," said Arjun.

"I will come tomorrow and hear everything. We will talk," said Anu.

"I am falling for your character. You are a good girl. I fell in love for your looks and beauty the first time I saw you at the alliance. Now I am falling for your character. I want to know more about you. I will come tomorrow. We will talk everything. I will pick you at 7 pm," said Arjun.

"I will wait for you to pick me up. We will talk everything," said Anu.

"See you tomorrow. Bye," said Arjun.

"See you tomorrow," said Anu.

"Anu is really honest girl. What did I say that made her like me? I memorized few lines of Anand and spoke them to Anu. How did she see honesty in them? I don't know what Anu liked in my words? But tomorrow I will talk everything and make her fall for who I am," said Arjun to himself.

Arjun dreams about Anu. He rolls on his bed and thinks about her. He dreams kissing her. He dances with her to a soft medley. The wind hovers across the room singing a symphony that both the boy and the girl are deeply in love. They wish the boy to happily marry the girl and stay bliss forever. The wind blesses and sails away.

## CHAPTER 7

## ***He competes for India's top singing competition – Episode I***

Arjun still thinks about Anu. He deems he is deeply in love with Anu. With those happy emotions he decides to get ready and meet Anand and hear his song. He's already decided to select Anand for the Super Singer competition since he helped him get Anu. He's helped him overcome his fear. He trained him to talk to Anu. Arjun treats him as his best friend. He wishes to repay the favor by helping him get selected for Super Singer competition. He treads out of the room to leave to Marina.

"Where are you going? Did you eat dinner?" asked Geetha.

"I am going to meet Anand. I am going to hear his song and select him for Super Singer competition. I have decided to select him. He's my best friend. He helped me get Anu and overcome my fear. I want to repay his favor," said Arjun.

"Please select him. He is a good man. He has helped you get Anu. Please repay the favor," said Geetha.

"I will select him. I promise," said Arjun.

Arjun starts his Fiat 1100 super select car. He zips to Marina. Time reads 5:30 pm. The sun bids good bye. Crepuscular insects set out in the beach. Anand rubs his fingers on Priyanka's back. Priyanka coys. Anand spurts. He holds her and kisses. An Air India flight fondling lands at the Anna International Airport. Anand kisses Priyanka amidst the landing.

"I love you," said Anand.

"I love you too," said Priyanka.

"Take me for a walk," said Priyanka.

"I will. Come let's go," said Anand.

Priyanka feels rabbit holds Anand's hands.

"I want you to sing for me," asked Priyanka.

"I will sing for you. You are my love," said Anand.

He goes Priyanka by his arms. Gopichand sees them walking. He admires the lovely couple. Gopichand is Anand's old friend. He lives in the same slum. He plays drums. He wishes to be in Anand's band after Anand is selected for the Super Singer competition. He requested him to take him in his band and Anand agreed. Priyanka rumbles in Anand's ears.

"Please take Gopichand in your band. He is our friend and has helped us," said Priyanka.

"I already decided to take Gopichand in my band. I have listened to his drums. He plays them well. We rehearsed together many times. I will take him in my band. Today Arjun will hear my song. After he selects me for the Super Singer competition I will take Gopichand as my drummer in my band. I hope Arjun keeps the process simple and selects me without hassles," said Anand.

"You are talented. He will select you. He has given you his word. He is a nice guy from what I heard from you. He will select you," said Priyanka.

"Thank you. You are my love. You are the best because you understand me," said Anand.

Priyanka eyes moisten. She reels off softly.

"You are good hearted. I found the best. I should thank god. I love you," said Priyanka, softly sobbing.

Anand embraces her and hustles.

"You are my love," said Anand.

"Why don't you sing our first song? The song that made me fall for you. I wish to hear that," said Priyanka.

"It is a special song. It made me get you. Do you think it would be a good idea to croon that for the Super Singer competition?" asked Anand.

"I think it is a wonderful idea. It has beautiful lyrics. You sing it well. I think people at the Super Singer competition will love it. Go ahead and sing that song," said Priyanka.

"I will sing that song. Give me your honest reviews," asked Anand.

"Yes. I will," said Priyanka.

Priyanka roots for Anand and asks her friends to rave along. Varun, Gopichand and Radha cheer him. Varun has known Anand from nine. He first met him at the Devi theatre along with his and Anand's common friends to scope their first English movie, The Sound of Music. It is the only English movie that Anand had watched until now. Ben King's, Stand by me music was played before the beginning of the movie and it was that song that inspired Anand become a rock singer. He was talking about his dream throughout the movie to his friends but none in the group cared except Varun. Varun listened to his talk and supported him. He motivated him to learn music and practice it even if it was hard. He spent every night with Anand and kept him focused to

learn music. Varun was Anand's biggest support system. He played a major role in helping him get trained in music. He was his biggest pillar. Anand shares everything with him including his love for Priyanka.

"I love Priyanka. I want to propose to her. Please help me talk to her and propose my love. Please be with me when I propose," asked Anand when he decided to propose Priyanka in 1965.

"I will be with you. I will help you. I see you are deeply in love with Priyanka. I want you and Priyanka to be happily married and have a family together," said Varun.

Varun kept his word and helped Anand propose to Priyanka and she agreed to marry him. Anand and Priyanka are in love from that till today. It has been nine years now.

"Varun and Anand share an honest friendship bond that is a joy to watch," said the Marina slum dwellers.

"We believe Anand will succeed. We see he is talented and see the support and motivation that Varun gives him," said the slum dwellers.

Varun is an ordinary man with no big dreams. He wishes to see Anand becoming a singer. He sees Anand ready to croon the song for Arjun. Radha sees Varun murmuring.

"What are you talking to yourself?" asked Radha.

"I want Anand to get selected for Super Singer competition. I am praying god," said Varun.

"I also want him to get selected. I will also pray god," said Radha.

Radha lives in the same slum. She works as a maid at an Inspector General Officer's house, in Egmore. She's been working in the house for seventeen years. She is now 27 and married to Krishna. Krishna met Anand in 1955. He works as a cook at Madras Café when Anand just started his work in Madras Café as a sweeper. Anand was nine then. He saw Anand walking daily from Marina to

Madras Café for work. He saw Anand save his bus money for his mother's medication. Krishna liked this quality in Anand. Krishna lost his mother when he was six because of liver cancer. She was diagnosed with cancer because she was not eating well and she saved her food for Krishna. Krishna recollects talking to his then childhood friend and now wife Radha.

"I killed my mother because I was eating her food. I was useless. I was responsible for her death. I feel guilty," said Krishna, crying.

"You are not responsible. You didn't have money to save her," said Radha.

"I could have earned. I saw a boy today, Anand mopping floors in our hotel. He is nine. He comes to work sharp at 7:00 am. He walks to work. He saves the bus money to buy medicines for his mother. I wish I was like him. I wish I was earning money to save my mother. I was totally useless. I feel guilty," said Krishna.

"Don't feel guilty. You didn't know the means to earn. Make friendship with Anand and learn to make money for our future," said Radha.

"I will make friendship with Anand. I will learn from him to make money and save for our future," said Krishna.

"Good. He will teach you. Now go and sleep. Don't feel guilty. Wake up tomorrow and meet Anand and learn from him," said Radha.

"I will meet him and learn. You are my biggest inspiration. I want to save money for you. I want to save for our future," said Krishna.

"I want you to save money for our future and for our family. Get some rest now. Sleep," said Radha.

"Ok," said Krishna.

"Good night," said Radha.

"Good night," said Krishna.

Krishna treads home and hits bed. He recollects his mother and cries for not able to save her. He sleeps with those thoughts. The sun rises in the morning. People begin their morning walk near the Marina. They feel piqued. Time reads 6:30 am. The wind hovers from the sea and breezes towards the entire Marina. The walkers feel zipped up to walk in the fresh air. Krishna gets ready and pines to meet Anand. He cycles to Madras Café. He reaches the hotel. Time reads 7:00 am. He gawks Anand mopping the floors.

"Can I be your friend?" asked Krishna.

"Who are you?" asked Anand.

"I am Krishna. I work in this hotel as a cook. I have been working here for the last three years. I make idly, dosa, puri, and pongal. They are my specialties. I watch you mopping floors. I watch you walking from Marina to Madras Café. I watch you walking to save the bus money for your mother's medication. Can you teach me how to save? I want to learn," asked Krishna.

"I am saving money to buy medicines for my mother. She is suffering from asthma. Doctors said she will die in two years. But I want her to live long. I am saving money to buy medicines for her and make her live longer," said Anand.

"You are a good boy and also tough inside. Can I be your friend?" asked Krishna.

"Yes, I am tough inside. I don't have a dad. He died when I was seven. He was an alcoholic and died out of lung failure. I live with my mother. She worked tirelessly to feed me. Now she is suffering from asthma. Doctors said she will die in two years. I want to make her live longer so I began working and asked her to stay at home. I want her to take rest. I work earn money and save to buy her medicines and keep her alive. I am ready to make sacrifices to make her live longer," said Anand.

"You are a good boy. I want to be your friend? I want you to teach me save money," asked Krishna.

"You can be my friend and I will teach you to save money on one condition," said Anand.

"What is that?" asked Krishna.

"You should save every rupee from this moment for your future," said Anand.

"I am asking the same. How to save? I don't know. Teach me?" asked Krishna.

"I will teach you. First to save money you need to have a dream. Do you have a dream?" asked Anand.

"No. I don't have a dream," said Krishna.

"You have to have a dream. I will tell you what your dream can be with time. Until then keep telling me all your expenses and I will tell you if they are important. You spend only on those which I agree as important. The rest of money you save. We both will save every rupee for our future and for our life," said Anand.

"I will listen to you. I find it is tough guideline to follow," said Krishna.

"Yes. It is tough. You need to show discipline. We will help each other to save every rupee," said Anand.

"Ok," said Krishna.

From then till today Anand helped Krishna save every rupee. He also helped Krishna get Radha.

"I want you to marry Krishna. He is a nice guy and will take care of you like none," said Anand to Radha.

"I trust you. I heard about you from Krishna. I saw you helping Krishna save money. I am impressed seeing Krishna save. I treat you as my brother. I will accept to marry Krishna," said Radha.

Krishna deems bliss. He mewls.

"I will never forget your help. I will be your trustworthy friend," said Krishna.

"I want you both live a happy married life," said Anand.

"Thank you for your wishes," said Krishna.

Krishna hugs Anand and mewls. Anand hugs Krishna.

"I want you to save more money. I have decided your dream. You will be a piano player in my band. You earn what I earn. You make what I make. Together we will make lots of money. I promise," said Anand.

"I do not know music. Will I be able to play piano?" asked Krishna.

"I will teach you. You have shown discipline and dedication for last fifteen years by saving every rupee. You will need to show the same discipline to learn piano. I will teach you. Come to my house every night after work to learn piano. I will train you. We will start the piano classes from tomorrow," said Anand.

"I will come and learn. I will be disciplined. I will come to the piano classes from tomorrow," said Krishna.

Anand on that day bought him a second hand piano for four hundred rupees from Nungambakkam Sterling Music Company. Krishna feels bliss and mewls. He came every night to Anand's house and learnt piano. Anand knows the raga and the tunes. He taught Krishna to play piano in sync with the tune. Krishna dedicatedly learnt piano with the help of Anand. After four years of dedicated practice, Krishna fully learnt piano. He learnt to play movie songs and new songs of his own on his piano.

"I have learnt piano. I can play movie songs and my own songs. Now what should I do with this music training?" asked Krishna.

"I will take you in my band. You will be my piano player. You have learnt piano extremely well. You showed impeccable dedication to learn. You are now a master. You are my piano player. I will take you in my band. I am talking to my friend Arjun who is working as a lead Strategic Analyst and lead selector in Saregama music industry. He is coming tomorrow to hear my song and promised to select me for the Super Singer competition. I will take you in

my band once I am selected in the Super Singer competition. We both will play in the competition," said Anand.

"I wish you get selected for the Super Singer competition. I will pray god," said Krishna.

"I will get selected for the Super Singer competition. Arjun gave me his word. He is my best friend and he will keep his word. Please come tomorrow and hear my song," said Anand.

"I will come and hear your song. I wish you get selected for the Super Singer competition so that I can play in your band. I can earn money and be rich and keep my wife happy," said Krishna.

"I also want to make money and be rich. I also want to get selected in the Super Singer competition to make money. I want to take care of my mother and give Priyanka a rich lifestyle. I promised her that lifestyle. I will take you in my band and we both can earn money together. You earn what I earn. You make what I make. We both will earn and make our families live a happy life.

Why can't we dream of that? Is money reserved only for the elite?" asked Anand.

"No that isn't the case. We also can earn money. We also can lead a rich life. We have learnt the art and we are talented," said Krishna.

"Yes. We have learnt the art and we are talented in our art. We can also make money. Money is not reserved for the elite," said Anand.

"Yes. Money is not reserved for the elite," said Krishna.

"Please come tomorrow to Marina. I will play my song. Arjun will come to select me for the Super Singer competition. You please come to cheer me. I will see you tomorrow. Have a good night," said Anand.

"I will come tomorrow to cheer you. I will meet you tomorrow. Good night," said Krishna.

Krishna treads home. Anand goes for a smoke. He lights a cigarette.

“Wish everything goes according to plan tomorrow. I hope Arjun keeps the process simple and selects me for the Super Singer competition without much hassles,” said Anand.

Anand puts off the cigarette and treads home. He hits bed. He thinks again and hopes Arjun selects him for the Super Singer competition. He hopes Arjun will keep his word. He sleeps deeply with that thought. The sun rises in the morning. Time reads 5:30 am. Anand wakes up gets ready for work. His mother too wakes up. Anand gives her the morning medicines and keeps the night rice for her breakfast. She eats them.

“You are a good man,” said Anand’s mother, with a tear.

“What happened Amma?” asked Anand.

“You are a good man. I have seen you learning music. I have seen you walking to Madras Café to save money for my medicines. I

have seen you wanting to be singer. I have seen you applying for auditions. I have seen you getting disappointed when they don't respond. I have seen you crying when Brahmins are getting selected as singers. I have seen you not giving up and persisting. I know you want to be a rich man and make money. I know you want to make money to make me live longer. I know you want to take care of Priyanka and give her comfort. I have seen your talent. I have heard you sing. I love your voice, lyrics and your guitar strums. You are a talent house. You are a rock star. You will become India's greatest singer. I know that. You have great talent. I know people like you will succeed. I have seen such people in my life. I have read about them in books. I am seeing my son as one among them. I am proud of you. God bless you," said Anand's mother.

"I never knew you were watching me for all these years. I never knew you know my music, my struggles and my rejections. I have not discussed with you because I didn't want you to know I am

sad. I didn't want you to experience my suffering. I didn't realize you were watching. I didn't realize you know my dream. I want to be a rock singer. I want to make money and save you. I want to live happily with Priyanka. That is my dream. I didn't know you know all this. I am happy you see me talented. I am proud to be your son and will take care of you. I will persist until I succeed. I will achieve my dream and save you amma," said Anand, crying.

"You will achieve your dream. You have great talent. You have the grit and the persistence. People like you will succeed. God bless you," said Anand's mother.

"I love you amma," said Anand.

"I love you too," said Anand's mother.

She cries. Anand cries and hugs her. He keeps the night rice for her breakfast and heads out. He walks to Priyanka's house. He knocks her door. Priyanka opens the door.

"Did your mother take her morning medicines?" asked Priyanka.

"Yes," said Anand.

"Is she back to sleep?" asked Priyanka.

"Yes," said Anand.

"Why are you crying?" asked Priyanka.

"My mother said she was watching me all these years. She knows my music my dream. She said I have best voice, I write great lyrics, and have best guitar strumming. She knows everything about me. She knows I want to be rich and make money to make her live longer and have a happy life with you. She saw my struggles, my sacrifices and my rejections. She saw my persistence and my perseverance. She said I am a great talent and read people like me in books. I am joyous she knows my dream. I am blithe she loves my music my singing and my lyrics. I am grateful to have a mother like her," said Anand, crying.

"I didn't know she's watching you. She never told me. She hardly talks. I know her as a woman who does her work and not disturb

anyone. I didn't know she was watching you. I didn't know she knows everything about you. Your dreams, your music, voice, lyrics, guitar strums, your struggles, your rejections and your persistence. I am happy she saw your talent. I am happy she knows you will be a great singer. We all know you are great talent. We want you to persist with your dream and succeed. We will be with you. We promise," said Priyanka, crying.

Anand kisses Priyanka. He hugs her and kisses her lips. Priyanka kisses him. Krishna knocks her door to meet Anand.

"Anand," yelled Krishna.

"What are you doing at Priyanka's place early in the morning?" asked Anand.

"I went to your house. Your mother said you are not home. So I thought you will be at Priyanka's place. I guessed right. I found you here. I got a brand new Ben King's cassette. It's a classic soul song. I stole it from Vijay. I want you to hear it. I want you to get

inspired to write new songs for the Super Singer competition," said Krishna.

Vijay is Krishna's friend who owns an old tape recorder repair shop. Krishna saw the Ben King's cassette in his shop and stole it thinking Anand will like it.

"Play the song in your tape recorder. We will all listen," asked Krishna.

"You know what I listen. You are my best friend," said Anand.

"I know everything about you. You are my mentor and guru. I am your trustworthy student and friend," said Krishna.

Priyanka walks out with a cup of hot coffee. She sees Krishna.

"Take the coffee Krishna. You brought Ben King's cassette to Anand for him to get inspired for the Super Singer competition. You are a true friend of Anand," said Priyanka.

"Thank you. I know everything about Anand. I know he likes Ben King's music. I know he will be inspired by listening to this new classic soul of Ben King's album. I know he will compose great songs for the Super Singer competition from this new Ben King's classic soul album" said Krishna.

"But Anand has not heard any of Ben King's song except for Stand by Me. Will he listen to this particular song," asked Priyanka.

"Yes, because he is an ardent fan of Ben King as he loves Stand by me. I know he will love this classic soul song of Ben King as well," said Krishna.

"Ok. Do you want to listen to this song?" asked Priyanka.

"Yes. I want to listen to this song. I know Krishna knows me completely. I trust his judgement if he says you will like this classic soul song of Ben King," said Anand.

"Great, Play the song Krishna," said Priyanka.

Krishna takes the new Ben King's cassette and plays it on Priyanka's old second hand tape recorder. Anand asks Priyanka to come close. He holds her hand and dances to the classic soul.

*What is soul? What is soul, babe?  
 Some few people really know  
 It's deep within us, it doesn't show  
 A soul is somethin' that comes from deep inside  
 But a soul is a somethin' that you can't hide  
 What is soul? What is soul, babe?  
 Search your heart, go deep down low  
 Way down there you'll find your soul  
 Come near girl, you look so cold  
 Touch my hand and warm your soul  
 Baby, baby, what's wrong with you  
 You don't know what I'm going through  
 Hold me so tight, so tight I can't breath  
 Can't you feel it girl? Don't you know what I mean?  
 This is soul!  
 This is soul! Feel the soul, babe!  
 What is soul, babe? Don't you know?  
 What is soul, babe?*

Anand kisses Priyanka listening to the classic soul song of Ben King. The song continues to play in the background and the two just dance. The song ends.

"What a song baby!! What is soul? Do you feel my soul baby?" asked Anand.

"I do. I know it is our chemistry. Do you feel my soul baby?" asked Priyanka.

"I do. I know it is our chemistry," said Anand.

"I love you," said Priyanka, kissing Anand.

"I love you too," said Anand, kissing Priyanka.

"Go to work. It's getting late. But come back soon. I will wait for you," said Priyanka.

"I will. I love you baby," said Anand.

"I love you too baby," said Priyanka.

Anand treads home and gets ready. He walks from Marina to Madras Café. Krishna treads with him. They reach Madras Café and begin work. Time reads 6:50 am. Anand makes idly, dosa, puri and pongal dishes. They are his specialties. He serves the orders

to the customers and busily works. Time reads 4:30 pm. Anand wishes to leave early to meet Arjun and make him hear his song. He gawks at the hotel owner.

"Sir, can I go home early? I have some work," asked Anand.

"Why do you want to go home so early? We have so much work. There are a number of customers waiting for food. Go and work. I can't give you leave?" said the hotel owner.

"I have personal work. My friend is getting married. I need to leave early to attend his wedding," lied Anand.

"But there are lots of customers in our hotel. Who will cook for them? Who will serve them?" asked the hotel owner.

"I asked Gokul, my friend who is also a cook to substitute me. Meet Gokul. He will be happy to substitute me," said Anand.

"Does he cook well?" asked the hotel owner.

"Yes. He cooks really well. He's been a cook for seven years in his uncle's hotel. I have tasted his cooking. It is really good. He will cook good and will serve the customers," said Anand.

"Ok. Ask him to go inside and cook. You can leave. You will not get full day's salary. I will deduct half a day's salary. Please keep that in mind. You can leave now," said the hotel owner.

"Ok. I will work more hours next week and earn extra money for the extra hours I work," said Anand.

"Ok. You can go now. Come early tomorrow. I will give you more work," said the hotel owner.

"Ok," said Anand.

Anand leaves the hotel in jocund. Time reads 5:00 pm. He deems excited to perform. He wishes to meet Arjun and impress him with his singing. He feels nervous. He reaches home, takes a shower gets ready. He reaches Marina and is all set to sing. The air wishes to hear him sing. The beach wishes to hear him sing. The waves of

the shore wishes to hear him sing. The Koel bird wishes to hear him sing. Crepuscular insects in the beach wishes to hear him sing. The evening sky wishes to hear him sing. Anand sings.

## CHAPTER 8

### ***We say unhappy things to each other –***

#### ***Episode I***

Anand begins to sing. Priyanka sits next to him. Arjun reaches Marina in a simple white shirt and khaki pant. He looks happy. He wishes to select Anand for the Super Singer competition. He knows Anand helped him get Anu and make her say yes for the marriage. He knows Anu fell in love because of him. He knows he is continuing to help him talk to Anu so that Anu loves him for who he is. Arjun knows all about Anand's help. He wishes to repay the favor and select him for the Super Singer competition. He knows it is in his hands as he is the lead Strategic Analyst and lead selector in Saregama music industry. He is ready to help him and repay the favor. He is joyous with the developments and wishes to

complete his camaraderie with Anand by selecting him for the Super Singer competition. With these thoughts in mind he meets Anand.

"How are you doing?" asked Arjun.

"I am doing well. How about you?" asked Anand.

"I am good. I am very happy. I called Anu and asked her out for dinner," said Arjun.

"What did she say?" asked Anand.

"She agreed to come," said Arjun.

"Excellent," said Anand.

"I said I wanted to talk everything and be honest. She said she will hear me out and will not judge," said Arjun.

"She is a good girl. I feel she will hear you and want you to be honest. She will tell you what she likes in you and what she doesn't. Work on the things she doesn't like and she will notice

the change and start liking you more and fall in love with you. You both are made for each other. Go and marry her and be happy," said Anand.

"She confessed she was falling for my honesty. She wishes to hear me and said she will not judge. I felt the same she is a good girl. I am falling for her honesty and non judgmental attitude. Based on your suggestion I had written down the lines what I need to talk to her. I rehearsed the lines. I will talk everything and hope she loves me for who I am. Please help me make Anu love me for who I am," asked Arjun.

"I will help you. You and Anu are made for each other. I see Anu is a good girl and likes honesty. She doesn't lie and wants you to be honest. Say everything. Anu will love your honesty and fall in love for who you are. I can see that. You two are made for each other. Be happily married and stay together forever," said Anand.

"I am very happy to hear that. It is all because of your help I am getting Anu. You are my best friend. I will repay your favor. I will select you for the Super Singer competition," said Arjun.

"I am happy. I will be happy if you really select me for the Super Singer competition," said Anand.

"I will select you for the Super Singer competition. I will repay the favor. Please go ahead and sing. I will hear," said Arjun.

"I will play the song. Please hear," said Anand.

Priyanka, Krishna, Radha, Varun and Gopichand are seated and are eager to hear the song. Varun decides to record the song on his old second hand tape recorder. Unfortunately he had forgotten the batteries.

"Does anyone have spare batteries," asked Varun.

"No," answered the group.

Varun grieves. He asks Arjun.

"I see you carrying an expensive Casio calculator. Do you mind sparing the batteries?" asked Varun.

"The calculator is from my office. I do not need them now. Please go ahead and use the batteries," said Arjun, with a companionable smile.

Varun is rhapsodic. He shakes hands with Arjun. Arjun smiles and greets Varun. Varun puts the batteries in the tape recorder and begins to record the song. The group gets ready to hear Anand sing. Anand sings. He epitomizes Priyanka's urbane eyes, recherché smile, her cheerful face and her pleasant personality divine as angel in the song. Priyanka hears and gushes. Anand deems blithe. Krishna, Radha, Varun and Gopichand listen to the song and are overwhelmed. They give a loud applause. Anand feels the Goosebumps. The song ends.

The friends hug Anand in delight.

"The song was outstanding," howled Krishna.

"It was out of the world," said Radha.

"You are a mega talent house. I am proud of you. You will get selected for the Super Singer competition. You will be a rock singer. The biggest India will ever see," said Varun.

"You are God of music," said Gopichand.

Priyanka kisses him. Anand kisses her. She expresses her feeling with the kiss. Anand hugs her and cries.

"The song was outstanding. Your voice was splendid. The guitar strums were truly breath taking. I love you," said Priyanka.

"Thank you. I am happy you loved the song. I see the same feeling in your eyes like the first time I sang the song for you. You fell in love with me then and falling in love with me now. You are my love. I love you too," said Anand.

"I love you. You will be selected for the Super Singer competition. The song was outstanding," said Priyanka.

"Thank you. I hope I will be selected for the Super Singer competition," said Anand.

"You will be selected. I know that. Let's ask Arjun," said Priyanka.

"I will ask him," said Anand.

Anand sees Arjun. Arjun gets shocked with Anand's singing. He gets rabbit. He didn't see anyone of such great talent before. He thinks such a talent is not possible. His ego gets beaten. He deems not to select Anand for the Super Singer competition. He takes his final decision.

"I didn't see anyone of such talent. It is not possible. I don't want to select Anand for Super Singer completion. He will surpass me in talent and in fame at Saregama music industry. I don't want to encounter that. I don't want to be a clown in my own industry. I will not select him. I am sorry. I will not select you Anand," said Arjun to himself.

"How was my song?" asked Anand.

"Not good," said Arjun.

"What? What was bad in my singing? Why didn't you like it? My friends were impressed. They liked the song," said Anand.

"You are a bad singer. You are not selected for the Super Singer competition. I don't want to lose my reputation at Saregama music industry by selecting you. Your friends are just your well wishers by saying you are a good singer," said Arjun.

"You are a liar. Why are you not telling the truth? I thought the song had great lyrics, good guitar strums and my vocals were best. Why are you lying?" asked Anand.

"You are an average singer. I found your voice average, the lyrics of the song are bad and cheesy, and your guitar strumming is bad. Overall you are a bad singer. I will lose my reputation in Saregama music industry if I select you. I am sorry I can't select you," said Arjun.

"You promised me to select me for the Super Singer competition. I helped you get Anu. I helped you make Anu love you. You promised me to repay the favor. Why are you backing off? Please don't do that. Please don't betray me. You are my best friend. We agreed to help each other. You are my only hope to get selected for the Super Singer competition. I don't have other means. Please select me. I want to get selected and become a rock singer. I want to make money for my mother and Priyanka. I want to keep them happy. Please select me. Please don't betray me," said Anand.

"I am sorry. I cannot select you. I will lose my reputation at Saregama music industry if I select you. You are an average singer. I am sorry. I can't select you," said Arjun.

"You promised me to select me. You gave me your word. I am your best friend. Why are you doing this to me?" asked Anand.

"I did give you my word and promised to select you. But you are an average singer. You are not talented. I will lose my reputation

at Saregama music industry. Please don't force me. I can't select you. I am sorry. I will leave," said Arjun.

"Please don't betray me. Tell me what I should do to impress you. I will do that. You are my only hope to get inside Super Singer competition," asked Anand.

"You need to practice harder train more and learn to write better lyrics, not cheesy lyrics. You get trained and sing better next time. If you are good I will select you. As far as this Super Singer competition is concerned you are not selected. I am sorry," said Arjun.

"Please don't betray me. I know I am good singer. What do you say Priyanka?" asked Anand.

"Yes. He is a mega talent house. He is a great singer. He is really talented. I can see that. If you say he is as an average singer then I see you jealous. You are afraid because he will overtake you in fame and name. Am I right? Be honest," asked Priyanka.

Arjun shouts in anger. He howls and loses composure.

“Yes he is talented. He sang really well. I was stunned. My ego was beaten. I felt threatened he will overtake me in name and fame if I select him. I don’t want him to overtake my name. It is my idea of selecting a singer from the common towns of India. I don’t want him to steal that credit. I want people remembering me in history who brought singers from common towns to limelight. I don’t want that to be killed. I fear Anand will kill my fame if he gets selected for the Super Singer competition. I don’t want that to happen. I don’t want to select him. I don’t want him to overtake my name and fame. I am sorry. I can’t select him for the Super Singer competition. I am cynical. I am leaving,” said Arjun.

“You are an A-hole. You are a debauchee. You are bad. Anand is many times talented than you. You know it well. He will overtake you and be famous no matter what. He doesn’t need your help to get selected for the Super Singer competition. We know you are a nerd and just good in education. You do not know how to handle

people. You don't know how to handle rejections. You do not know how to talk to girls. You fear girls. You do not know how to talk to Anu. Anand helped you talking to Anu and making her love you. We know everything about you. You will not be able to make name because you can't handle people and can't handle rejections. Anand is talented in everything. He can handle people, handle rejections, can talk to girls and is honest with everyone. He will overtake you in everything. He will earn more name and money than you. We don't want you to be his friend. Please leave," said Priyanka.

"I am honest. I know I can make more money than Anand. I know I am talented. I know I am good in education and have the vision of using my education in setting up my own finance company. I know I will build a big enterprise. As far as I can't handle people and rejections are concerned I figured out a way. I will talk honest with them and not judge them. I know I will make money in that way. Anand will not get selected in any music industry because he

doesn't have a support hand. I will also not support him. He will never overtake me" said Arjun.

"You are bad. You play with people's emotions. You hurt them. You will not succeed. You will never be able to make money. You will never overtake Anand. We don't want you to be his friend. Please leave," said Priyanka.

"I will leave. I will not select him and will make sure none select him. I don't want to be his friend either. I am leaving. Bye," said Arjun.

"I helped you talk to Anu. It was because of me Anu said yes to the marriage. I will tell Anu the truth and she will cancel her marriage with you. Are you ok if I tell her the truth? I know I am talented than you. I have learnt music and I am really good at it. My friends heard my singing and were overwhelmed. I am good at what I do. I am also good with people and know to handle them. I will make more money and will overtake you no matter what. I will find my way to get selected for the Super Singer

competition. I don't need your help. I don't want to be your friend. Please leave. I will tell Anu the truth. She will disown you. Please leave," said Anand.

"I am anyway going to tell everything to Anu. I will tell her I took your help to make her love me and say yes to the marriage. I will tell her everything. I don't want her to love me because of your cheesy lines. I want her to love me for who I am. I am taking her for dinner tomorrow. I will tell her everything. I am not afraid if you talk to her because I am anyway going to tell her everything," said Arjun.

"You are an A-hole. You used me for your work. You say you want to open up to Anu is a thought that I put it in your head. I helped you beat that fear. I will tell this to Anu? Will she ever marry you? I don't think so because you don't know how to talk good to people. You don't understand people. You hurt them. I will tell Anu and make her realize the real you. You betrayed our

friendship. You hurt me. I don't want to be your friend. I want to end our friendship. Please leave," said Anand.

"Let us end our friendship. I don't want to be your friend. You are mean. You are bad. I will talk to Anu tomorrow and tell her everything. You can tell whatever you want to Anu. I will tell her even the lines that I am talking to her tomorrow I had to rehearse. I fear girls to that extent. I will tell her everything. I don't want to be your friend. Let us end our friendship," said Arjun.

"I will talk to Anu tomorrow. Let us see who wins. You betrayed our friendship. You hurt me. I wish I never met you. I wish we never became friends. I don't want to see your face again. I want to end our friendship. Please leave and get out of my life. Bye," said Anand.

The group stays quiet. Priyanka holds Anand's hands and comforts. Arjun leaves. He starts his Fiat 1100 super select car and heads home. The night doesn't wish to say anything more feels despondent and stays quiet.

## CHAPTER 9

***He competes for India's top singing  
competition – Episode II***

"Arjun is mean. He is bad. He will not overtake you. You will overtake him. You will make more money and be rich. Forget you ever met Arjun. Forget he was your friend. Forget Arjun. Today is a bright day. Talk directly to the Managing Director of the Saregama music industry. I know you are very talented so directly impress the Managing Director of Saregama music industry. Get his appointment and sing. He is the head so he will immediately select you waiting for none. The Managing Director announced this competition for common people with no background. We qualify in that category. He will select you for the competition. We do not need to rely on Arjun. He is a debauchee," said Priyanka.

"That's a master idea. I will talk directly to Managing Director. I will sing directly. Yes this competition is announced for common public with no background and I qualify. I know I am talented and will impress the MD with my talent. I will go and meet him," said Anand.

"Go and meet him right away," said Priyanka.

"I will go," said Anand.

"Do not go wearing this cheap kurtha. Wear a coat and a business trouser. That will catch his attention and he will listen to you. Please buy them first," said Priyanka.

"Ok," said Anand.

Anand treads out. He prays Lord Ganesha and wishes for luck. He picks his guitar and treads out. He walks to the Marina station. He gazes an electric train to Nungambakkam and boards. Anand savors a window seat number 32. He picks a Tamil book, Ponninyin Selvan, a historic Tamil novel written by Kalki Krishnamurthy which tells the story of "Arulmozhivarman" who later became the greatest Chola emperor; Rajaraja Chola I. He reads the book for inspiration. Anand reads the Chola king's power struggles during his regime and the king's desire and perseverance to become South India's biggest and mightiest king in history. Anand feels stimulated. He gets inspired. The train stops at Nungambakkam and gets off. With those high stimulating energy he treads to

meet the managing director of Saregama music industry. Before he walks inside the music industry he treads to Raymond showroom to buy an over coat to impress the managing director. Anand walks across US consulate office and treads past the Higginbotham's book store and walks across the New Andhra Meals hotel in Pondy Bazaar and finally notices the Raymond showroom. He gazes the coat aisle. He selects a full sleeve, lapel collar Navy blue Raymond coat.

"Does this coat fit my size," asked Anand.

"I will check. Your shirt size is 40, so this should fit you," said the Shopkeeper.

"Thanks," said Anand.

Anand takes a white shirt and blue trousers from the shelf and heads to the trial room to try them on along with his blue over coat.

"Let's wear the coat to impress the managing director. He will make me singer by looking at my dress," talked Anand.

"That suit fits you to the T," said the shopkeeper.

"Thanks," said Anand.

Anand looks at the price tag of the shirt, trouser and the coat and calculates the set will cost him Rs 150. He checks his wallet and recollects Priyanka had given him Rs 200 to pay college fees. He deems the fees can be paid later as the college will give a three month period to pay the dues and he can arrange the money within that time. He makes up his mind to buy the dress.

"I will take the dress," said Anand.

"I will pack and get the bill," said the shopkeeper.

"I will wear the dress to attend a meeting," said Anand.

"Ok, sir", said the shopkeeper.

The shopkeeper bills the coat, shirt and trousers and gives the dress to Anand. Anand pays the money and wears the dress. He treads out of the shop and walks to the Saregama music industry. It is 10 am. The sun is firing his rays very hard in the city of Madras. The outside temperature is 32 °C. Anand feels the heat. He walks in that hot sun and enters the Saregama music industry.

“Hi, I am Anand. I need an appointment with the managing director of Saregama music industry,” asked Anand to the office secretary.

A beautiful Tamil Brahmin teenage girl, Rani works as a secretary to Dr. Saket. She takes care of Dr. Saket’s appointments. She is 19 years old, just out of Ethiraj college with a Bachelor of Arts degree in English. She has her locks long with not a single strand seemed out of place. She looks delicately beautiful in her sand semi-sheer silky polyester button cuffs long sleeve mid length secretary dress. She goggles at Anand in blue Paige trousers and white shirt and is

pleased. She falls for his sharp looks and his steel physique. She looks him and smiles.

"I need an appointment with your Managing Director for the Super Singer competition," asked Anand.

"I will check with my MD and give you his appointment," said Rani.

Rani smiles and sees Anand. Anand smiles little. Rani feels dispirited. She picks up the phone and calls Dr. Saket.

"Sir, you have a singer for the Super Singer competition. He wishes you to hear his song," asked Rani.

"Send him in. I will hear," said Dr. Saket.

Rani gets stunned that Dr. Saket immediately agreed to meet Anand. He never gives easy appointments. She deems Anand is lucky. She sends him in.

"You can meet our MD now," said Rani.

"Thank you madam," said Anand.

Rani coys. Anand winnows a rose from the desk and gives to Rani.

"That rose looks perfectly to the T to your semi-sheer silky polyester button cuff sleeve dress," said Anand.

Rani gleams.

Anand smiles and heads to MD office on the second floor. He takes the steps to think over what to say to impress the MD.

"I will tell my positive traits. I will tell I have a great voice. I write good lyrics. I play guitar best. I am great talent. I can mesmerize the audience. My audio cassettes will sell like chocolates. People will go crazy at my performances. I will tell I am one among the public with no background or money. I qualify your criteria. I will tell I am from slum and have ten thousand people in my slum who will buy my audio cassettes and do the marketing to bump the sales of my audio cassettes. They will spread the news like fire that a slum boy from Marina is the new rock star of India. My audio

cassette sales will be a sensational hit. I will earn big money and be rich. I will say all what I rehearsed. The MD will like my idea as he sees people from my community buying my audio cassettes and marketing my song and bump up the sales of my cassettes. If Arjun credits that it is his idea of selecting a singer from the common public. I have overtaken him with my idea on bumping up the sales of my cassettes using my community. I have won you Arjun. I am more talented and have overtaken you. I will make more money and be rich. I will talk this to MD," said Anand.

Anand knocks the office door of Dr. Saket.

"Come in," said Dr. Saket, the Managing Director of Saregama music industry.

"Hello sir, I am Anand," said Anand.

"Ok. What can I do for you?" asked Dr. Saket.

"Sir, thanks for your appointment. I didn't expect to get your appointment. I am lucky. I want to play my song and impress you for the Super Singer competition," said Anand.

"Why should I select you? I get thousands of applications and audio cassettes. People come to my office to play their song. What is your special talent? Please go to Vahini studio our partner company who are in charge in selecting the singer for the Super Singer competition. I have appointed Arjun our lead Strategic Analyst as the lead selector for the Super Singer competition. Arjun decides your selection. Please go to the studio," said Dr. Saket.

"I know Arjun for long. He was my best friend. We said unhappy things in our last meet. He felt jealous hearing my song. He felt threatened and said I am more talented than him and deemed I will overtake him in the music industry and earn more name, fame and money. He doesn't want to select me so I came directly to

you. You are the MD of Saregama music industry. I want you to hear my song and select me. Please help," said Anand.

"Arjun laid the idea of selecting a singer from common public. We are doing this for the first time in India. I saw potential in the idea and am implementing it. The credit will go to Arjun for his new idea and he deserves the fame. I am sorry I cannot select you. I want to respect Arjun's decision. He is my lead Strategic Analyst and lead selector. I listen to him. I am sorry," said Dr. Saket.

"Please hear my song. On what basis are you rejecting me? I am talented singer. Arjun also accepted. But because I hurt his ego and he deems I will overtake his stardom I got rejected. It is not fair. I am from common public with no background or money. I qualify your criteria. If your motto is to identify a singer from common people to bring them into limelight, I qualify that criterion. I am talented and Arjun also agreed. So what more should I do to show my talent and get selected? Please select me," asked Anand.

"I understand your point. You have a valid argument. But Arjun already laid out a plan this morning. He wants to select a singer from slum who is socially abused. It can either be a man or a woman. We don't have restrictions on gender. We liked his idea. He wishes to pick a singer from slums who is socially abused and give a face, name and fame. He wishes them to make lots of money and be rich and be a great singer. He put this as his proposal idea today morning and I accepted it. I know there is great revenue market in his idea. Do you qualify in that category?" asked Dr. Saket.

"I am from slum. I lost my dad at nine. My mother took care of me. She fell ill and stopped work. I took the job and mopped floors at Madras Café. I am working for twenty years doing different jobs to save my mother. I got inspired by music after hearing Ben King's stand by me which was played before the start of my only English movie in theatre, Sound of music. I got inspired from his music and bought a second hand guitar for fifty rupees

from my mother's savings. She yelled at me for wasting money on the guitar. I repaid her by working nonstop two shifts a day for several months. I learnt guitar for twenty years and composed my own songs and music. I learnt music and I know I am good at it. I am talented. I wanted to be a singer. I climbed every music industry in Madras but was dispirited. I found I am not from an elite Brahmin community. I know singers today are all from Brahmin community. I am from backward class community with no background or money. I tried every way to be a singer but none gave me a chance. Finally I got the news that your music industry is picking a singer from any community. I felt happy. I got the news that you are selecting a singer from the common towns of India where people like us can also participate. I don't have money or background. This competition gave me a hope that I too can be a singer. I got the hope that I too can make money and be rich. You gave us that hope. I found Arjun and trusted him. I asked him to hear my song. He listened but rejected me. I found you as my last hope. I wanted to play my song and impress you

directly. I was shocked when I got your appointment. I felt lucky. But you are rejecting me citing it is Arjun's idea. I don't understand why you are rejecting me. Please hear my song. It is your music industry and you can select me based on your discretion. I am talented and you will like my song. Please hear my song. I will get you the profits by making my community people buy my audio cassettes and market the song and bump up the sales of my cassettes with my community's support. We will make it a big hit. If it is Arjun who gave you the idea of identifying a singer from common public it is my idea of getting profits to Saregama music industry using my community. Please hear my case and give me a chance. Please hear my song," asked Anand.

"Ok go ahead and sing. I will hear the song," said Dr. Saket.

"Thanks," said Anand.

Anand picks the guitar and plays. The song ends. Dr. Saket stands still and motionless and gets overwhelmed with his talent.

"Did you like my song?" asked Anand.

"It is outstanding. You are talented. I understand why you were confident to get selected. I understand why Arjun feared and grew jealous. He was right you will overtake him. He has the right to fear. But the problem is it is his idea of identifying a singer among common public. He initiated the thought and worked on this idea and presented it to us to revive my company which is running in losses. So I have to adhere to his idea to lift my company from losses and bring it back to profits. I can select you but you will have to listen to his rules and conditions and he will be your boss. You have to play by his rules. He will overtake you in name, fame and money and be rich in anyway. But you can also earn money. The trouble is Arjun will not agree because of ego. I am sorry come down next year we will see what we can do. Let's hope Arjun agrees to make you a singer then. Hopefully he would have made enough name, fame and money from this year's Super

Singer competition and agrees to select you. I am sorry you don't have luck this time," said Dr. Saket.

"You agreed I am talented. That is enough so I am a rock singer. Why do you have to listen to Arjun? He gave you just the idea. Even I can come up with an idea but the fact is I have the real talent. I am a musician and a singer. You saw my talent then select me. Please. Why worry about Arjun? I am also giving you ideas to make profits. Why fret about Arjun?," asked Anand.

"It is Arjun's original idea. If anybody could have gotten that idea why didn't you get? You knew the music industry today is dominated by Brahmin community why didn't you come with the idea of selecting a singer from any community with any background? You should have come and talked to us. I am sorry I have to adhere to Arjun's idea. We will meet next year. I am sorry you missed the chance and you are unlucky," said Dr. Saket.

"Please don't reject me. I was not given the opportunity to meet the heads like you. The watchman kicked me out. I begged him

but he didn't help. I tried several other means to get your appointment but I didn't get. What wrong did I do? I have talent and I know I am good at my talent and you saw me. You accepted my talent. What wrong did I do?" asked Anand.

"I am sorry you don't have luck. Come again next year. We will meet," said Dr. Saket.

Anand feels despondent. He leaves Dr. Saket's office with his head down, shirt untucked. His dream sirens a loud horn from a distance as it leaves his vision. A tear pedals out from Anand's eye. He lost his dream of becoming a singer. He is rejected from Super Singer competition. Anand walks out with his dream crushed. He decides to take revenge on Arjun.

"Can I meet your lead Strategic Analyst, Arjun?" asked Anand to Rani.

"He left the office. He has dinner plans with his fiancé," said Rani.

Anand feels enraged. He gets wrecked. He knows Arjun's motive behind the dinner date. He wishes to take revenge. He deems to talk to Anu and tell everything about Arjun. He fleets quickly to meet Anu. He gawks Arjun. Arjun sits on the chair with Anu in the front. Anand sees Arjun. Arjun sees Anand.

## CHAPTER 10

***We say unhappy things to each other –***

***Episode II (Our friendship breaks)***

A candle gleams at the table where Arjun and Anu are seated. Anu is dressed in Royal Blue Sleeveless Taffeta and Tulle Sparkle dress. Anu has a Chardonnay. Arjun gazes Anu and orders a juice. He feels nervous to talk to Anu. Anu sits in the front and waits.

"I don't know how to start but I want to tell you everything. The day I saw your photograph I thought you looked beautiful. I fell in love with you. My father said tomorrow we are going to meet you

for marriage alliance. I was very excited and happy. I was also nervous because I can't talk to girls. I fear talking to girls. I have gynophobia. I thought I can't talk to you. I got this disorder when I was in LKG. I saw a girl and liked her and kissed her. She gave me a tight slap and said I was not talking funny. She said I was a nerd. She said I was talking number counting and math. I cried. I told her I don't know how to talk fun. I accepted I am a nerd. She never talked to me from then. I always recollected that slap and feared talking to girls. I never talked to any girl after that incident. I thought girls don't like nerds. Even after I grew up, I didn't talk to girls. I thought always like to talk about new retro fashion, new luxury cars, masculine men and fun. I don't know fashion and have little about cars. I still fear talking to them. I cried many times why girls hate nerds. I know many boys in US are nerds and they don't have a problem showcasing themselves as nerds. They read marvel comics where every superhero is a nerd and uses science and technology to showcase his superhero skills. The superheroes in the marvel comics don't mind showcasing themselves as nerds.

Even girls love them. Why can't our girls love nerds? I am a nerd. I am good in education. I am talented have a dream to start a company in finance. I have presented a proposal to Saregama music industry and they liked my proposal and offered me a lead Strategic analyst job. I make Rs. 1,00,000 per month. I am making lots of money. I don't understand why girls don't like nerds. Don't they know nerds can be hot? The marvel comics showed that. I don't know why girls don't like nerds. I developed fear talking to girls. I developed gynophobia. When my father showed your photograph I liked you. But I know I can't talk to you. I don't know your personality and feared whether you are also like all girls not liking nerds. So I took Anand's help to learn to talk to you. He helped me practice the lines. I rehearsed them and said them when I met you for the marriage alliance. I don't remember if I said everything that I rehearsed. I practiced cheesy impressive lines and said that. I was nervous if you like me for what I said. I didn't talk to my parents when they asked my opinion and told let's wait what Anu will say. I saw you said yes to the marriage. I

was happy and shocked. I didn't expect you will fall for me. But you fell for me and liked me. I don't know why you like me? If it was for the cheesy impressive lines then I have to be honest they are not mine. They are Anand's lines. I rehearsed those lines and said that. I was not honest. That's not me. He helped me overcome my fear and asked to talk the lines. I rehearsed and said that. I have to tell you I was not honest. This is me. I am a nerd. I have gynophobia. I fear talking to girls. I fear talking to you. I liked you when I first saw you. I love you. I love you more when you said you were falling for my honesty. I have to tell you everything. I don't want to marry you with the guilt that I took someone else's lines to impress you. I want to impress you for who I am. Now I will leave it you if you love me for whom I am," said Arjun.

Anand treads to the table.

"Arjun you are a debauchee. You are bad. You are mean. You screwed my chances of becoming a singer. I went and talked to managing director of Saregama music industry and he too was

overwhelmed with my singing but rejected me citing he wants to adhere to your decision. You screwed my life. I will tell Anu everything that you are a liar. You used me to get her," said Anand.

"I already told her. There is nothing more to tell. Anu he is Anand. I took help from him. I rehearsed his lines to make you love me. I am sorry for what I did. I don't want to be with this guilt that I took someone else lines to make you love me. I want to be honest and told you everything. Now you decide what you want to do. I want you to marry me for who I am. This is me. Anand you can say whatever you want. I already told her everything. I will also say even this idea of opening up about me is also yours. I will also say you helped me talk fearlessly about myself to her. I have told her everything. Now you say whatever you want," said Arjun.

"You are mean. You are bad. You use people. You used me to get Anu. You said you will repay the favor by selecting me for the Saregama music industry. But you didn't select me for the

competition. You saw I am talented. You know I am a great singer. You grew jealous that I am talented than you and will overtake you in name, fame and money. I will tell everything to Anu. Anu he uses people. He doesn't repay the favor. He betrays friendship. He used me to get you. He is mean. Don't trust him. He will deceive you and leave you," said Anand.

"You are an A-hole. Don't mess with me and my fiancé. Yes I took your help to get Anu. Yes I rehearsed your lines and said them to Anu. I don't remember if I said everything. Yes I agree Anu was impressed with the lines and started loving me. I don't deny that. Yes I didn't want to select you for the Super Singer competition because you will overtake me in name, fame and money. I will be sidelined. I know it is my idea to select a singer from common public. I approached the managing director of Saregama music industry with the idea and presented the proposal. He liked the idea and offered me a job with high salary. If I select you I will be overshadowed and will lose my name fame and career. My career

will be gone. I can't take care of Anu and make her live happy. That's why I rejected you. Don't say I use people and betray them. I will never do that. Don't say I will deceive Anu and leave her. I will never do that. Let her decide if she wants to marry me for whom I am," said Arjun.

"You deceived me. You used my friendship to get Anu. You gave your word to select me for the Super Singer competition. But you rejected me. You were jealous. You betrayed our friendship. You use people for gain. Anu should understand you. You are mean and bad. Don't trust him. He will deceive you and leave," said Anand.

"Don't mess with me. I will kill you if you use such words that I deceive her and leave her. I love Anu. I got jealous and rejected you because you will ruin my career. Just get lost. Leave," said Arjun.

"I will see your end," said Anand.

Anand slaps Arjun. Arjun frets and slaps hard. They both fight. Anu intervenes.

"Stop," said Anu.

"He is bad. He used me. He betrayed my friendship. I will kill him," said Anand.

"I heard everything. He rehearsed the lines you wrote. He took your help to make him love. He said your cheesy lines and made me say yes for the marriage. He confessed everything. He betrayed your friendship because he found you professionally more talented and will overtake his name, fame and career. If you two have professional issues and fight over them, then fight outside. You end your friendship with him and leave. Don't make it personal and attack family. I don't want him to be your friend. Just leave," said Anu.

"I will kill him. Music is everything to me. He stopped me from becoming a singer. He stopped me from making my dream come

alive. I lost my dream. I lost my career. He betrayed me. I will not spare him," said Anand.

Anu intervenes.

"He didn't do it on purpose. His career is also on the line. His fame is on the line. His dream is also on the line. He betrayed you because his dream will be shattered. If you two want to fight about your supremacy fight outside. Now please leave," said Anu.

"He shattered my dream. I want his dream to be shattered. His dream is to marry you and live a rich life. He didn't get you on his own. He took my help to impress you. He should know that. You should also know that. He ruined my career and used me to get you. Don't marry him reject him," said Anand.

"I told everything to Anu. Let her decide if she wishes to marry me for who I am. I don't want to be your friend. Our friendship is over. Leave," said Arjun.

"I don't want Anu to marry you. Anu don't marry him. Reject him," said Anand.

"I will decide. You please leave," said Anu.

"I will leave. Anu I just want to ask you if you see a way I can be a singer," asked Anand.

"You need to wait. Arjun's career is also on the line," said Anu.

Rain gushes out. Anand mewls. He drops his head leaves. The rain pours hard. Anu decides.

"I will wait in the park near St. Mary's church. You decide. I will wait," said Arjun.

Arjun cries. He walks out from the hotel. Rain pours harder. He foots to the park. The rain doesn't stop.

## CHAPTER 11

### ***Our princesses separate***

Anu comes to the park. She sees Arjun and walks to him.

"Have you decided?" asked Arjun.

"Yes," said Anu.

"If you decide to call off the marriage I will not yell. I will walk away. I will understand," cried Arjun.

"I have decided," said Anu.

Arjun wipes his tears and loses in thought what Anu will say.

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Anand jaunts in the rain and reaches home. He sees Priyanka.

"Can you walk with me to the Marina park," asked Anand.

"What happened? You look weary today," asked Priyanka.

"I want to talk to you. Please let's go to the park," said Anand.

"I will come. Is everything ok?" asked Priyanka.

"Let's go to the park. I will tell you," said Anand.

Priyanka treads behind Anand. They stroll to the park. Rain gushes slowly as drizzles in the background. Priyanka gazes Anand. Anand opens up.

"I met the managing director of Saregama music industry and played my song. He loved my song. He said the song had great lyrics, my vocals are good my guitar strums were great. But he rejected me citing it is Arjun's idea of selecting a singer from the common public. He has to adhere to his decision. I begged him to select me but he refused to yield. I asked him several times that you are the managing director of Saregama music industry why can't you take the decision and select me. He cited Arjun presented the proposal when they were running into loses and found his proposal was perfect medicine to bring their music industry to glory and revenue. So they launched the Super Singer competition and Arjun is the lead selector. When they found Arjun didn't want to select me from the competition the managing

director too decided not to select me as he didn't want to have a tiff with Arjun," cried Anand.

"Arjun is bad. He is an A-hole. I will curse him. He messed with your career your dream. What are you planning to do?" asked Priyanka.

"I went and met Arjun. I saw he was on a dinner date with Anu. I howled at him. I told him he screwed my career my dream and my only hope of becoming a rock star. He killed my ambition. He killed my dream of living a happy life with you. He killed my ambition of making money and be rich. I screamed at him. He got mad. He slapped me. I slapped him. We fought. Anu intervened. I told Anu everything. I told her how Arjun used me to get her. I told her Arjun rehearsed my lines to talk to her and impress her. I suggested not marrying him. I told everything to Anu. She listened but supported Arjun in rejecting me from Super Singer competition because he was showing professional jealousy. He killed my dream of making my mother live longer and keep my

girlfriend happy. She didn't say anything further and asked to wait for my time. I howled at them. I slapped Arjun for screwing my dream my career. I ended my friendship with Arjun," said Anand.

"Arjun is a debauchee. I pray god Anu cancels her marriage. He is curse. I am sorry he killed our dream. He is a bad omen. Anu said Arjun's betrayal was professional jealousy and not personal. Arjun ruined your dream our happy life. Arjun's was not professional jealousy but it was personal. Anu is wrong. She shouldn't have supported Arjun. She is bad. You did the right thing ending your friendship with him," said Priyanka.

Anand mewls.

"We will figure out a way. Don't lose hope. You will still be a singer. We will keep trying. Let's not lose hope. I will be with you," said Priyanka.

"I have thought a number of times before I say this. I am sorry I want to break up with you. I want to end this relationship. Let's break up. I am sorry," said Anand.

"What? Why all of a sudden? Don't take hasty decisions. Arjun did betray you. He did not keep his word. He didn't repay your favor. Don't lose hope. Don't get fizzled. We will try out a way. You will be a singer. I will be with you. Please don't break up with me," cried Priyanka.

"I have met my fear. I failed to win over it. I will never make money and be rich. I will never be a singer. I tried all possibilities but failed. I am a failure. I will never be a singer. I will never make money. I can never keep you happy. You deserve someone better. Let's break up," said Anand, with tears running down his eyes.

Priyanka is thwarted.

"Listen. I have to decide if I will be happy marrying you or not. I love you no matter what. I don't need money or be rich. I will be happy with you no matter what," said Priyanka.

"You deserve someone better. I am a loser. I am not the right guy for you," cried Anand.

"The day I met you, I was immediately drawn to your fun loving nature and your creative spirit. I know it takes more than education or teaching to write great music. You are a great talent. I love your singing. I love your voice. I love your guitar strums. You are good at what you do. I love the beauty and elegance you bring to your music. I love you for everything. Please don't break up with me," cried Priyanka.

"I don't expect you to buy me a Mercedes or a big house. I just want to hear your songs and be the first audience. You are always my love. You are the only one. I love you. You will have your day. You will be a singer. I will be with you. Please don't break up with me," said Priyanka, with tears running down her eyes.

"You can live a better life. I am just an unworthy composer who can't even get a record deal. I lost my music. I lost my dream. I lost my career. I don't know if I will get another chance to be a singer. I had a good chance this time. I didn't grab. I am a loser. I can't live with the guilt of not keeping you happy. Let's break up. I am leaving Priyanka. Bye," said Anand.

Anand leaves. Priyanka is motionless. Rain gushes hard. Priyanka cries in pain.

"Please don't go. Please. I love you," cries Priyanka.

Anand doesn't hold back. He leaves. Rain pours hard. Priyanka screams, runs behind. The rain exacerbates in the background. Anand leaves.

## CHAPTER 12

***A lucky force enters our life. The force is  
magical***

"Have you decided?" asked Arjun.

"Yes," said Anu.

"I wouldn't mind if you call off the marriage. I know I was not honest during our first meet," said Arjun.

Anu seeps in the moment.

"Do you remember what you talked on our marriage alliance day?" asked Anu.

"I don't remember. I talked few cheesy impressive lines that Anand had taught," said Arjun.

Anu recollects the flashback.

“Arjun is a good boy. He is smart tall and handsome. You will be lucky if you marry him. Be nice to him. If he talks, talk to him,” said Anu’s mother, Vijayalakshmi.

“I will talk when he talks. I want him to talk freely besides flirting with me talking about my eyes, dress and smile. If he does that I will like him,” said Anu.

“You both talk and get to know each other. We are happy whatever you decide. From our side we want you to marry Arjun. He is a good boy, educated, handsome and has a good job,” said Vijayalakshmi.

“I will talk to him,” said Anu.

“Come down. Arjun and his parents are waiting downstairs. They have arrived,” said Vijayalakshmi.

Vijayalakshmi brings Anu to the living room. She is dressed in a beautiful white silk sari with an eye catching platinum pedant.

Arjun gazes her. He looks at her. Anu smiles. He looks at her cultured smile and feathered hair with the retro style. Arjun gazes her crème rain drop ear rings and her natural elegant eyes. Arjun looks at her upturned eyes that inquisitively look for him. Arjun rises from his seat. Anu gives a natural smile. Arjun's heart skips a beat. He feels Taj Mahal is nothing in front of Anu. Anu smiles hands over coffee to Arjun. She gazes him. Arjun looks at her. Both lock their eyes. Anu gleams. Vijayalakshmi takes Anu back to her room. Arjun's eyes follow her. Anu turns back and looks at him. She demurely smiles.

"Do you want to talk to Anu? You both can talk get to know each other and tell us what you both have decided," asked Vijayalakshmi, Anu's mother.

"Yes," said Arjun, feeling rabbit.

"Talk to Anu independently without our disturbance," said Muthushankar, Arjun's father.

"Ok," said Arjun.

Arjun enters the bedroom and looks at Anu. He falls weak on his knees to her demeanor.

"The tales are right. There can be only one twinkling star in the sky. I see that right in front of my eyes," said Arjun.

Arjun walks closer to Anu. He greets her with a Hello.

"Hello," said Arjun.

"Please sit," said Anu.

Arjun perches down on the wooden sofa. The sofa has a coffee finish. Arjun gets rabbit. He turns too anxious. He loses his mind. He forgets all his rehearsed lines. He starts to ramble.

"Hello, how are you?" asked Arjun.

"I am well. I am not going to college this week. I am on leave for the exam preparation," said Anu.

Arjun struggles for a word to say. He forgets his rehearsed lines. He recollects some of Anand's lines. He talks his cheesy impressive lines.

"Your eyes they are beautiful," said Arjun, without talking loud.

"What, please come again?" said Anu.

Arjun gazes her and thinks if he wishes to talk cheesy impressive lines. He decides to talk honest. He starts the conversation as a nerd.

"I have gynophobia. I fear talking to girls. I fear talking to you. I don't want to impress you by saying some cheesy impressive lines like your eyes, smile and beauty. You are beautiful. I fell for your looks. But I can't talk cheesy. I want to be myself. I want to talk honest. I am a nerd, good in education and work in a good company. I like you are studying BSC microbiology. You are a well read girl. Are you a topper in school?" asked Arjun.

"Yes. I get 100/100 in college," said Anu.

"I am a topper as well. I get 100/100 in college," said Arjun.

"What subjects did you take in your 12<sup>th</sup> standard," asked Arjun.

"I took Physics, Chemistry, Biology," said Anu.

"I took Physics, Chemistry and Mathematics. I like mathematics," said Arjun.

"I like biology," said Anu.

"Are you a topper in 12<sup>th</sup> as well? What is your percentage in 12<sup>th</sup>?" asked Arjun.

"I got 97% in 12<sup>th</sup>. I am the topper. I got a seat in Ethiraj college. It is hard to get into that college without top marks," said Anu.

"I got 98% in my 12<sup>th</sup>. I am the school topper. I got a seat in Guindy Engineering College which is very hard to get. The students from my college become big industrialist, ministers and highly ranked government officials like IAS, IPS, Gazette officers. My college identifies students and gives seats to only those boys

and girls who traditionally become highest ranked in their chosen careers," said Arjun.

"I also study well. Ethiraj is a good college. It is very hard to get admission in that college. I am only student from my school to get admission in that college. I was offered the seat because of my 12<sup>th</sup> marks," said Anu.

"Why did you take microbiology? What is it about? Can you please tell me? I am not aware of biology courses?" asked Arjun.

"Microbiology is a field of biology which studies microorganisms and their evolution to understand bacteria, fungi," said Anu.

"What are you going to do with that understanding?" asked Arjun.

"I want to do research in understanding viruses in human illness," said Anu.

"That's fascinating. That's a great science. Will it help cure diseases?" asked Arjun.

"The research will one day lead to cure of chicken pox, plague, influenza," said Anu.

"That's wonderful. I am amazed you are studying to do research to find a cure for chicken pox. You are studying to improve the lives of humans. You are studying for a cause. I am just good in finance and want to start a company. I want to make money and live a happy life with my future wife. That's my dream," said Arjun.

"I want to know more about you. I am intrigued with your clarity and goals in life. Trust I can take your help and set my goals," asked Arjun.

Anu is roused by his words.

"What to do you do to relax yourself?" asked Arjun.

"I read novels and spend time with friends have ice cream," said Anu.

"I like ice creams as I feel happy eating ice creams. I like you have similar taste. I don't mind taking you out and buying you an ice cream. I hope you will like to have one with me," asked Arjun.

Anu smiles. Arjun deems bliss. The two have a hearty laugh.

Anu finishes her flashback. She gazes Arjun.

"Do you remember any part of this conversation?" asked Anu.

"No, I don't remember. I talked like me," said Arjun.

"Yes, you dork. You did talk like you like a nerd," said Anu.

"Do you remember what we discussed at the end of our conversation?" asked Anu.

"No I don't remember. I am curious," said Arjun.

Anu explains the flashback marriage alliance.

"I will ask you a question," asked Anu.

"Please go ahead. I will answer to the best of my ability," said Arjun.

"What made you come to this marriage alliance?" asked Anu.

"I got excited seeing your photograph. You looked pretty. I want to marry a Tamil Brahmin girl who is well read and beautiful. I know such girls are rare. I know boys should have good job and make decent money to impress well read beautiful girls because they want us to be responsible. I am good in education. I am working in a company for a good salary. I don't know if you will say yes but if you do I will keep you happy and will love you. I will be happy if you say yes and will deem I found my beautiful well read girl. That's why I came to the marriage alliance," said Arjun.

Anu smiles at his cordiality and honesty. She finishes the flashback.

"Do you remember any part of the conversation," asked Anu.

"No I don't remember. Did I say all that? I talked like me and was honest," said Arjun.

"Yes dork you were honest. That's what impressed me the most. I never felt you were playing games with me. You were supportive about my studies and interested to know what I do. You were respecting my thinking. You were also funny. That's what impressed me. If all you had done was throw a bunch of pickup lines and talk about my eyes smiles and beauty like a bum I would have rejected you. We will not be talking now," said Anu.

"That means I didn't talk cheesy impressive lines that I rehearsed. I talked my words," asked Arjun.

"Yes, you nerd. You talked like you," said Anu.

"That means I didn't take Anand's help to impress you. I talked my words," asked Arjun.

"Yes. You talked your words. I liked you for your clarity and the respect you showed for my thinking without judging me," said Anu.

"I always thought girls don't like nerds like me," asked Arjun.

"I like nerd like you who is not judgmental," said Anu.

"I am ecstatic. So you like me for who I am?" asked Arjun.

"I fell in love with you the moment you started the conversation. You said you didn't want to talk cheesy impressive lines but want to keep the conversation honest and genuine. I fell in love with that start," said Anu.

"I love you. I found my princess who loves for who I am. I don't have to live with this guilt that I took Anand's help. I am happy. I love you," said Arjun.

"I love you too and want to marry you," said Anu.

"I am excited. I have overcome my fear. I can talk to you. I will go and meet Anand and say sorry for betraying his friendship. He is not my fear. I have overcome my fear. I can talk myself with you without being judged. I have beaten my fear. Anand I will help you achieve your dream as you are not my nemesis," said Arjun, feeling euphoric.

Arjun treads towards Anu. He kisses her with full gusto. Both kiss each other. The rain pours hard. They shower blessings to the couple. The magical force in Arjun and Anu's bond is love.

In the other end Anand leans near a banyan tree to smoke a cigarette. Priyanka walks with lost hope. She gazes Anand.

"I don't want to argue with you. I want to just walk with me one last time," asked Priyanka.

Anand eyes turn moist, tears roll down his eyes. He gazes Priyanka.

"Yes only one last time," said Anand.

Anand and Priyanka walk. They don't talk to each other. Priyanka holds Anand's hands and walks.

"Do you hear that song?" asked Priyanka.

"I don't hear anything. Let's just walk. Don't talk," said Anand.

Priyanka clouts Anand's hands.

"I hear a song. It sounds familiar. Please let's go and hear," asked Priyanka.

"I don't hear anything. Let's just walk," said Anand.

Priyanka locks her eyes towards Anand.

"Please, I will not ask anything else. Let's go and hear the song. It sounds familiar," begged Priyanka.

Anand confers to Priyanka's request. They walk towards the song. The song becomes audible. Anand recognizes the song. He walks faster. Priyanka runs behind to catch him.

"Anand.... wait don't run. I am behind," said Priyanka.

Anand doesn't hear. He runs towards the song. The song becomes audible and louder. The rain intensifies. It starts to pour hard. The wind whisks in the opposite direction to resist Anand's run but Anand doesn't care. He runs faster against the winds. Anand sees an eighteen year teenage boy Ganesh singing for Meenakshi, his girlfriend. Anand rushes towards the boy. Priyanka follows.

"Hey! Where did you hear this song?" asked Anand, breathing heavily.

The boy is startled, steps back. He rambles.

"I don't know my Dad's friend Varun recorded this song on his tape recorder. He gave the cassette to my dad to hear the song. I heard with my dad, fell in love and wanted to play it to my girlfriend," said Ganesh.

"That is my song" said Anand.

"Is this your song? Varun was talking to give you a chance to sing in my dad's music industry. You are a great talent. I and my dad loved your song. I thought your song had great lyrics, great vocals and stunning guitar strums. It just rocked. I played to all my friends in school. They loved your song. Your song was a big hit in my school. I wanted to play it to my girlfriend. She loved it and wished I had great talent like you and be a singer. My dad was thinking of meeting you and launching you as a singer in our music industry. Come with me. I will introduce to dad. He will give you the singing chance in our music industry. Come with me. We will make you our industry's lead singer," said Ganesh.

Anand turns emotional.

"Is this really happening? Your dad wants to introduce me in his music industry. Is this really happening or my dream?" asked Anand.

"This is not a dream. You are our industry's lead singer. My dad was planning to make you a singer. As luck would have it we met

today. Come with me to home. I will introduce to dad," said Ganesh.

"This is unbelievable. I got an offer to sing in a music industry. This is magic. Thank you kid," said Anand.

Anand kisses Priyanka passionately. Both of them kiss each other. Anand's and Priyanka's magical force is love and luck.

Few days later, Arjun meets Anand.

"I'm sorry for what had happened between us. I apologize. I have changed. I am sorry I betrayed you. I promise to make you a singer. Here is the contract letter we have selected you as the lead singer of Saregama music industry. There is no more Super Singer competition. You are directly selected. We have made all arrangements for your rock concert. I am sorry for what I said before. I apologize. I have changed. I want to be your best friend. Let us forget the past and be friends," asked Arjun, raising his hand to shake hands with Anand.

Anand shakes hands with Arjun.

Arjun and Anand walk on a wintery January morning in the early morning dew showers.

I got to see Arjun and Anand's life from such close quarters. I will yield my gold medal ambition to Arjun and will be friends with the two.

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