

Chapter 3

The boys had left and Anna was trying to decide which dress to wear. She had brought a couple from England but nothing seemed right. After talking to her mother, who had suggested she wear her first saree tonight - Anna agreed. Her mother had sewn the saree blouse awhile ago eager for Anna to wear it when she arrived. It fit perfectly and soon Anna was draped in her first saree.

Raj had offered to drive both of them to the engagement and said he would pick up Anna last - after Jai. So Anna was a bit surprised when Raj arrived at the door and Jai was not with him. On seeing Anna, Raj was speechless. He just stared. She looked so beautiful and the saree draping around her enhanced her figure more. He couldn't help looking at her eyes, her lips, her arms..... She felt uncomfortable after awhile and decided to speak

"You think it's ugly right?" She asked discouraged at his lack of words. "Anna...I'm speechless. You're the most beautiful girl I've seen" He replied honestly. But regretted it immediately as she blushed.

"Where's Jai?" She decided to change the subject, feeling very self conscious. "We'll pick him up now" Raj replied as he walked over to the car to open the passenger door for Anna. She got in and sat down feeling shy again while being in the car all alone with Raj. Why? This had never happened before.

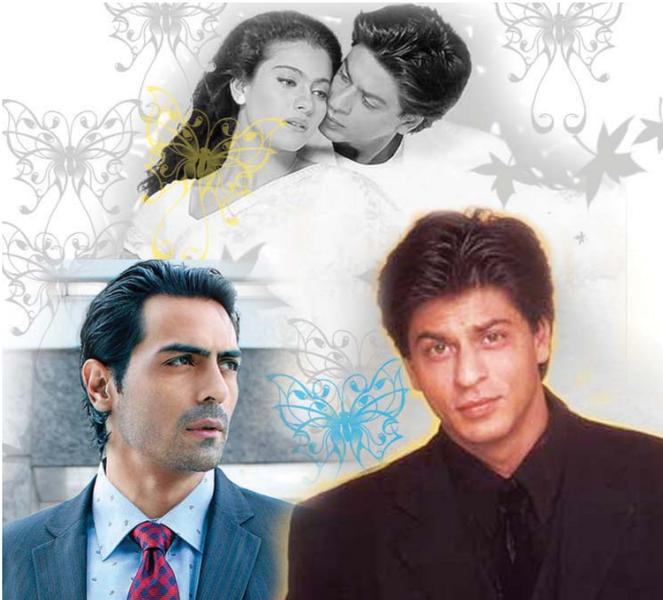
"Raj, tell me - did you meet anyone special while you were studying or working?" Anna asked, holding her breath for him to answer. "No" Was all that he said so she left it. "Tell me about your work...." She tried to make more conversation. Raj didn't feel like talking. He was feeling tired still and wanted to just sit quietly knowing Anna was next to him.

"What do you want to know?" "What did you do everyday?" "Just saw patients" he said laughing "Oh gosh Raj you're so boring!! Tell me something exciting!" Anna urged.

"Okay okay, I once got a patient who accidentally drilled a nail into his fingers - the nail was going through 2 of his fingers" He said this and looked at Anna for her reaction. "Ew, okay okay enough excitement, I don't want to know" She said and laughed. He just watched her laughing, mesmerised by everything. Getting carried away he stopped the car and continued looking at Anna, which made her horribly nervous. "What's the matter Raj? Why are you looking like that?"

"No, nothing Anna - Sorry if I scared you - I just felt like stopping to see if we were on the right route" He lied. What am I doing he thought to himself. THINK Raj think before you do anything stupid.

They arrived at Jai's house a short while later. When he saw that Raj had Anjali in the



front seat, he tried not to think anything of it. "Why didn't you pick me up first?" This was what made him curious. "I was at Anjali's part of town and decided to just pick her first" Raj lied casually.

They arrived at the engagement and took a seat feeling awkward. They didn't know anyone there, or thought they didn't. "Hi Raj - its Raj right? Do you remember me?" A bimbo looking girl suddenly appeared and took a lot of interest in Raj.

"Uhm sorry who are you" He was a bit uncomfortable with the attention. "hehehehe it's okay, I'm Pinky from high school" She fluttered her eye lashes, this time at Jai as well.

Anna was getting angry at the cheap way she was approaching her two boys. She couldn't let it go on like this and Raj was looking very nervous. Jai looked uninterested.

"Hey Pinky, beat it!" Anna said roughly

They travelled great distances to be together, broke through barriers to love one another but will destiny force them apart?

"Oh ho are these two boys taken? Both of them? Couldn't I just take one to dance?" "They are both mine, now go away" Anna said crossing her arms across her chest. Jai and Raj looked at each other at these words. It had been like this since they were little. Anna was very protective of them and they were both very protective of her. It worked well. Pinky went away and soon people were getting up to dance.

"Anna, lets dance?" Jai asked. She looked at Raj to see if it was okay and he nodded courteously signally for her to go. She didn't like Leaving Raj alone. Jai led Anna into the dance floor and held her by the waist. She didn't have time to think; all of a sudden he pulled her into him and was gliding with her around and around. It was quite a thrill and soon Anna forgot her troubles about Raj. Jai was guiding her and she was moving a long with his body. The next song was slow and Jai pulled Anna even closer. She felt tired so she decided to rest her head on his shoulder.

Raj watched, feeling helpless. This was how it was meant to be.

After dancing for awhile the two returned back to the table.

"Raj, don't you want to dance too?" Anna looked eagerly at Raj. He wanted to say yes, but he couldn't.

"No Anna, not today" He said

Once Jai had insisted they draw on her face one morning when she had refused to wake up. A moustache and thick eye brows were her look that day. She was so angry at them; she didn't speak to them for a week.

Raj opened his door and got out. Opening the back door he crept into the back where Anna's head was. Her hair was sprawled all over her face and he reflexively brushed them off. As he did so, he couldn't help stroking her face. He felt sad, that she could never be his.

She woke up and he immediately drew his hand back, his heart beating rapidly. "Raj? What's the matter" she asked squinting her eyes to see in the dark. She noticed they were both in the back seat very close to each other. She sat up fixing her hair. Her saree was in a mess and suddenly she realised she was just wearing her blouse. The top part of the saree had slid off. Feeling embarrassed

A novel

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she fumbled around in the dark trying to fix her saree. He noticed her discomfort and looked away. After awhile of unsuccessfully trying to fix her saree Anna stopped and looked at Raj looking away. "Raj I'm going to get out of the car and fix it ok?" He dared to look at her from the corner of his eye.

"Anna, if someone is watching, and you get out of the car like that - It won't be good for you" "I can't fix it in here, there's not enough room and I can't see"

"Do you trust me?" Raj asked gently. "Yes, why?" Anna became curious. "Then let me help you" After some silence Anna replied. "Okay"

He turned around and faced her. She was looking up at him and suddenly became breathless and shy. He put his arms around her waist and felt around for the saree material. He moved closer moving his hands slowly so as not to scare Anna. His heart started beating faster as his hand brushed the skin on her back. She closed her eyes and let him come closer.

"Found it!" He breathed onto her neck. Pulling the saree material from beneath her he brought it forward and placed it over her chest. She held onto it and looked into his eyes. She didn't want to get out of the car anymore.

"Anna, go now - It's late" Raj urged gently. "Raj - I don't" "Your mother will wonder where you are" Raj cut Anna off sounding more serious. "Go on, I'll see you soon"

Anna gave up and got out of the car. Raj followed her to her front step and waited until she was inside before he got into his car. He sat there for awhile wondering what had taken over him. He was so smitten by her that it drove him to do crazy things. He should not have done any of it - he was giving Anna hopes for something else and he had to stop. Raj drove off into the night and did not notice Anna standing at the window looking down.

She was so out of breath after what had happened, she just wanted to stay in the car with him and go wherever he went. Smiling to herself she went to bed that night.

To be continued