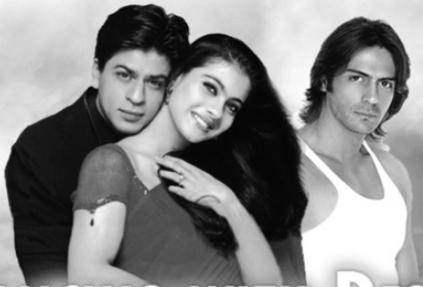


*They travelled great distances to be together, broke through barriers to love one another but will destiny force them apart?*



## DANCING WITH DESTINY

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He kept taking small steps away from her hating himself for what he had just blurted out. Suddenly he turned around and started walking toward the exit at lightning speed.

"Don't you dare!!" Anna screamed out. "Take one more step toward the door and I'll leave and you will never see me again"

He stopped and stood there motionless. He had let himself go and he was beating himself up inside. He wanted to leave and settle his head – but here she was threatening to leave. One part of him wanted her to leave, for her own good. The other part wanted to embrace her and love her. He was battling himself and in the end he would lose either way. He remained standing not knowing what to do.

Anna walked toward Raj. He stopped when she threatened and just stood there. She had heard what she had wanted to hear for so long, but it made her feel worse. The circumstance she heard it under was far from ideal. But she couldn't stop her heart from beating in need. She needed him and she was drawn to him like a magnet. She was standing right behind him now and the heat from his body touched her skin. Through her pain she felt desire; she slid her arms around his waist and rested her head against his back. He was warm and she felt him breathing.

She was holding him and he was losing control. He wanted to hold her, to tell her over and over again of his love. But he couldn't. He wriggled out of her hug and took some steps forward.

"Dammit Raj!!" She clenched her fists in frustration. "You always do that. You pull away and you pretend like it never happened"

He didn't reply.

"Talk to me! Answer me, tell me the reason you keep yourself away from me!"

He didn't reply.

She felt such rage that she couldn't contain herself anymore. She walked up to him, grabbed his arm and turned him around. He wasn't looking at her and tears sprang to her eyes.

"Dammit Raj, why do you do this to me" She hit him through tears, a slash across his chest for each word she said. His arm caught her hand and held it tightly.

"Enough" He said, his voice a rumble she could feel through his chest. He pulled her into him and held her tightly. She cried into him for a long time. He pulled away.

"I think the lesson is finished for today" He said gently. "I'm so confused Raj" Anna said through tears. "You said you love me, yet you don't elaborate – and Mahi...What you did to her wasn't right"

"I have my reasons for that Anna, please leave it"

"Argh forget it! I'll see you on Monday!" with that she left the venue, not looking

back. She had to forget him and his love; it was only causing her pain. She got into the car and slammed the door shut. She couldn't get herself to drive, her head was a mess. So she just sat in the car, for a long time. It started raining outside and the noises of the droplets hitting her car soothed her somehow. She had always loved rain. She



finally drove out onto the main road and was stuck in traffic – she got home late that night and was screamed at by her parents yet again. This time her phone wasn't with her, she had left her handbag at the dance studio in a haste to get out.

She didn't call Raj to find out if he had found her phone. She didn't want to talk to him. He had hurt Mahi and he had hurt her. If he loved her, then why couldn't he do something about it, instead of running away from her?

She spent most the Sunday in bed wallowing in her misery. Anna hated feeling like this, yet she couldn't help it anymore. That night to Anna's relief Jai called.

"So nice hearing from you Jai! How was the photo shoot?"  
"It was so much fun Anna! This job rocks! SO how have you been?"  
"I've been okay"  
"You don't sound so well"

"It's nothing, I'm fine" She faked a laugh.  
"Enough about me, tell me more about the shoot"  
"Well I met so many hot models" he said I a cheeky voice  
"Oh really now? Why don't you bring one home so I can meet one?"

"Sure she's right here, I'll introduce you tomorrow" he said laughing.

"What's her name?"  
"Anna..."  
"Anna eh? Same name as me!"  
"You can't take a hint" he said shaking his head.  
"Oh cut it out, me a model? Yup sure!"  
"Hey have you heard from Raj?"  
"I saw him yesterday"  
"Why?"

"It's a secret, I can't tell you"

"Why not!?" he was getting really curious but was keeping his voice under control so as not to show Anna his frustration.

"It's a surprise for you, not that's all I'm telling – end of topic"

After her conversation with Jai, she fell asleep feeling at peace.

At work, the entire day Anna dreaded going to dance lessons with Raj. Something that started out so well, was going so wrong. Mahi had avoided Anna the entire day and she couldn't figure out why. Finally Anna built up some courage to ask Mahi straight out.

"Ask miss Mahi to come to my office please"

"Raj, what we talked about last lesson, we have to forget it all okay? I don't accept any of it"  
"Huh? Okay" Raj said not quite understanding.  
"You don't love me and I don't love you, end of story okay?" Anna snapped.  
"Okay..." He replied going along with Anna. It was the best thing, to just forget it. "If that's what you want"  
"I have no other choice, you tell me this big thing and then you act like nothing has changed"

"It's for the best, I'm sorry"  
"Nothing to be sorry about, just forget it" Anna replied stiffly. She felt so hopeless.

"Let's get on with it?"  
"I guess so" She replied silently.

### A novel

By  
**Shanali  
Edirisinghe**



They were warming up when someone walked into the studio.

"Oh so this is your afternoon activity?" Mahi's voice rang in Anna's mind

They both turned around to face a very angry looking Mahi standing near the doorway.

"Oh Mahi, what are you doing here?"

"God Anna I thought after what I told you, you would..."

"Forget Raj? Ignore him?"  
"Maybe..."  
"Mahi..."  
"Why should she ignore me Mahi? She's my bestfriend" Raj said  
"So she should just blindly believe you?"

"I haven't told her anything Mahi, She knows what you told her only"

"Then? Anna? Why would you still?"

"Because he hasn't told me his story Mahi – I can't go by only one side of the story, it wouldn't be fair"  
"What? And what he did to me was fair?"  
"I had my reasons Mahi!!" Raj intervened.

"OH the reasons you conveniently told no body? Of course! Great reasoning" She mocked.

"They are my reasons and I don't have to tell anyone" Raj replied quietly.

Anna felt hopeless again. She wanted to know what his so called reasons were, she wanted with all her heart to trust him, to believe him.

"And what I do from now on, are because I have my own reasons – be prepared Mr Raj"  
"Mahi, please" Anna pleaded "Don't say things you don't mean!"  
"I do mean it Anna, and forget about dinner – you stay with him. I think I know what's going on here!"  
"What? Mahi don't be like that c'mon"

"You love him right? I know, I felt it when you spoke about him that day. I know Anna and both of you will keep" Mahi said and walked out.

Anna and Raj both stood motionless staring at the door.

*to be continued*