

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

Jai felt betrayed. He had told Raj how he felt about Anna, long before they had come back to India. He didn't expect Raj to do this to him. Maybe he didn't return her feelings?

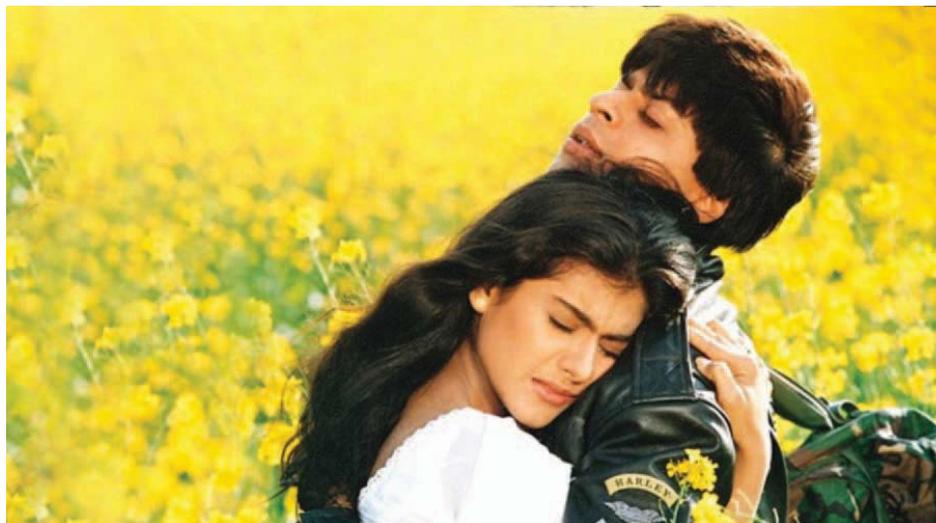
"How does he feel?"

She knew she shouldn't be talking about this with Jai, it was obviously hurting him. The downside to not having any girlfriends

"No, he wouldn't say. He's made me so confused. He loves me yet you're better for me and he has reasons for not being with me. Men are so confusing!"

"Not all of them are Anna, some have told you how they felt about you and have stuck to that"

"I know" she whined. "I don't know what to do!"



was this, it was either Jai or Raj who listened to Anna's problems. It felt good to get it off her chest but she was burdening Jai with something he didn't need to hear.

"So? Anna? How does he feel?"

"Jai, you don't have to talk about this with me, let's talk about something else"  
"Anna, I want to know dammit!" He raised his voice slightly.

"Jai leave it" Anna sensed his agitation and really didn't wish to pursue this. She had made a mistake of mentioning it to him in the first place.

"I can handle it Anna, talk to me" he tried to calm himself down. It didn't matter, he still loved her.

"He said we couldn't be together and that you were the best match for me"  
Jai sighed in relief. Raj was a good friend.  
"So he doesn't love you?"

"He said he does" She replied quickly "But he doesn't want to be with me"

This made Jai's heart burn. He had told her that he loved her! Why did he have to do that!

"Did he tell you why he couldn't be with you?" Jai replied acidly

"Isn't it better you marry someone who wants to be with you?"

"Jai....!" She just didn't feel that way about him. What could she do?

"Anna Raj has a big secret – he's not good for you dammit!" Jai erupted. He hadn't meant to. He had promised Raj a year ago that he would keep quiet.

"You know about it? What is it? Do you know about Mahi as well?"  
"I know about Mahi" Jai ignored the other question. He has spoken too much.  
"Tell me what happened with Mahi?"  
"I can't, you will find out someday."  
"Jai tell me dammit!"  
"Raj simply wasn't interested Anna!"

"I can't imagine Raj would abandon anyone like that, after agreeing initially"  
"Anna leave it – you don't know what you're talking about here"

"Then tell me! Or don't talk to me ever again – You're both keeping secrets from me and I don't need friends like that!"

"Anna but we need you" He replied gently  
"Obviously you both don't – you're both pushing me away"

"I'm not! I need you"  
"You're keeping secrets from me"

There was no winning this argument, Jai thought. He was keeping a secret from her and it wasn't good for their relationship. He couldn't commit to her if he couldn't be completely honest with her. But how could he betray Raj's trust? But Raj had betrayed him. He had gone behind Jai's back and told Anna he loved her. Jai still couldn't bring himself to reveal this though.

"Anna, I can't betray Raj like that – please somehow find out from him"  
"Jai!"

"It's not my secret to tell" He replied quietly.  
"You will find out eventually"  
"Okay, you have made your point" Anna replied giving up.

Jai wanted Anna to stay away from Raj, but he didn't want her to be unhappy.  
"talk to him next time you see him"  
"hmmmm, I'll try again and again" She said feeling confident. But as soon as Jai left Anna went back to being sad and lonely. Before she could decide on what to do next,

and Mahi walked in.

"Anna can I talk to you?"  
"Sure"

"Do you love Raj?" She blurted out. Anna hadn't expected this all so suddenly.  
"What?"

"Do you love him?"  
"Yea I do, I thought you said you knew"  
Anna replied a little too icily than she had intended to.

"Then be careful, he could do what he did to me to you and I don't want that"  
"Thanks for your concerns Mahi, But I'm sure he won't hurt me – he's my friend"

"I feel, that he is already hurting you?" Mahi

## A novel

By  
**Shanali Edirisinghe**



had stepped over the line.

"What makes you say that? I'm perfectly fine!"

"You didn't come to work for the whole week."

"That has nothing to do with Raj" Anna lied.  
"Just be careful" Anna felt this sounded too much like a threat. But let it go.

"Okay – thanks for your concerns" She replied.

Mahi left the room and Anna sat feeling weird. What was all that about? Oh well maybe Mahi was being sincere. It didn't matter, Anna trusted Raj. She would see him the next day for dance lessons and just for that time she could be close to him. He may not want it, but she found comfort in those moments.

Anna woke up that Saturday feeling a little better than she had the entire week. She wanted to see Raj and talk to him again. Try to find out his secret. She made herself a promise that soon she would get it out of him. She wasn't worried as to what the secret may be, she felt surprisingly calm about the entire thing.

That afternoon Anna happily drove to the studio and arrived right on time. She walked in expecting to see Raj but to her chagrin he hadn't arrived yet. She found this a bit strange because he was always early but decided to wait. She waited for more than an hour. She had tried his phone but it kept going to voicemail, she was becoming worried. He would never stand her up especially not without some sort of advanced notice. Where was he? She decided to go to his house.

She rang the door bell a couple of times and Raj's mum answered the door.  
"Aunty, is Raj home?"

"No Anna, he left a couple of hours ago, to attend an appointment"

"For what?" Anna asked worried.  
"He never said, but he said he'll be back home before ten. Do you want to wait for him?"

she was receiving a call, from Jai!

"Hey Miss Anna, I'll be back tomorrow okay? So please smile and get some good sleep"  
"Alright then, I will dad!" Anna said her spirits lifting.

"Goodnight"

She felt better that he will come to see her again. She didn't like to be a lone for some reason. And when she thought about Raj her heart ached. She was losing herself in this mess and she hated it. She decided to call Raj.

It rang a couple of times and went to voice mail. She tried again and again, but nothing. She would see him that Saturday and decided to give it a rest.

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Anna went to work that Friday to get her mind of things. She decided to be stronger and fight these sad feelings away. She was not this sad person and she wouldn't be for anyone.

Mahi was working at her desk as Anna walked past to get into her office. Mahi didn't look up. Anna started work and felt the day going by quicker than usual. She liked this feeling, it was better than being home moping around. There was a knock at the door