

# *The Next Morning.*

"Mom ! Hurry up , the show is about to start " exclaimed Priya slicing through pizza and distributing it to three plates. It was Friday night so Pizza Night with their favorite Tv show "Monty's mystery". Actually pizza was never a part of that night, it was the only way to lure her brother-Aashik ,so that he would stay even though he hated that show. Responding to her daughter's words Rita came running from her room Yelling "Did I miss anything? " . "Nope, but that idiot will definitely do!, where on earth is he? " murmured priya rolling her eyes. Before Rita could answer anything, Aashik rushed through the main door. "Pizza it is," he said to Priya, but his amused gaze clung to Rita's.They all sat on the green couch ready for the show. Aashik made sure he chose the plate with bigger slice. To be frank, Priya- who was even though 18, was far more mature than her 25 year old brother. But to Rita's eyes they were cute little preschool toddlers who she always adored.

Rita loved this day, not because of the show or pizza, she loved it because she could spend time with both of them. Widowed at young age they were all she had in her life. These little happy moments were enough for that woman who had crossed her fifty's. Time flew as the show continued, the house was filled with giggling and laughter. The clock struck 12 and it was late for everyone. Priya starting cleaning the mess, it was always her work given her useless brother. Aashik too headed towards his room, when he was just about to enter, he looked back. All he could think of, was how he could lead his life without them. They were the two most important women of his life. That moment was perfect, he wanted every day to be that way. Little did he know that fate had other plans for him.

It was a matter of minutes before Priya fell asleep on the couch. Rita too went back to her room, she sat in her armchair. Even though she felt tired she couldn't sleep, she reached out to her favorite novel. She loved Reading, it allowed her to cry over someone's sadness when she could no longer identify her own. She tried hard but she couldn't read for more than 10 minutes, her hands and feet became blotchy, cold. Her heart rate became irregular. She understood that it was time. She was feeling every symptom that the doctor described that would happen to her in her last minutes. Yes! She had terminal cancer.

She couldn't bear the pain anymore, not the physical pain but the fact that she had to leave them forever. She started sobbing, but she didn't even have time for that. She rushed to get that envelope and kept it just beside her pillow with her trembling hands. That moment was indeed difficult: death was so much easier. Yet she wanted to live. There was a verse: what was it?

*Maut kitni bi Haseen ho; Zindigi tera jawab nahin.* No matter how beautiful death may be, there is no recompense to life... Each and every event of her life flew across her eyes like a movie, for one last time she looked at the family portrait .It was the first thing she would see when she woke up, but now it was going to be her last. That was it, it was the End. The world appeared wonderful for a split second .she slowly lied down on her bed, she closed her eyes with a grin on her face.

Rita's life had never been easy. Yet her will power keep her alive, her loneliness made her the kindest, she didn't want anyone to suffer the way she did. She always made sure that Aashik and Priya got whatever they desired no matter how hard it was for her. She had, from childhood up, armed them with a strict moral code, teaching them religion, without weakness, and duty, without compromise .She loved them too

much and now all of a sudden letting them go was like poison to her heart. she never wanted them to know about her condition, she didn't want to spend her last days sobbing in vain. Instead she wanted to make the most of that time.

The next morning priya woke up to see her brother standing in front of rita's room, she went near him, his face had turned pale. she shook his hand, called his name many times yet he didn't react. he was completely numb, he couldn't feel anything. his eyes were fixed on rita. Priya didn't understand, she went near her mother trying to wake her up.

Rita had died quietly, as a woman should whose life had been blameless. Now she was resting in her bed, lying on her back, her eyes closed, her features calm, her long white hair carefully arranged as though she had done it up ten minutes before dying. The whole pale countenance of the dead woman was so collected, so calm, so resigned that one could feel what a sweet soul had lived in that body.

Kneeling beside the bed, Priya started weeping as though her heart would break. They had hardly known their father, knowing only that he had made their mother most unhappy, without being told any other details. she was everything to them. A small family of three now grew even smaller. Aashik was still in shock. The envelope beside her caught his eye. he went to the living room and opened the envelope. he found a letter, it was from her, her last words.

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*Dear Son,*

*I'm not going to lie, it won't be easy for you, it's definitely not. I'm sorry for not letting you both know about my illness, please forgive me for that. I've had the best time of my life the last three months, I would do anything to get those days back. The day you told me about your promotion, the day priya got into her dream college, the day we went on a long walk at rock beach. Except for that stupid fact you kept on telling us about how tides were caused due to moon's gravitation. Haha ! that was definitely a mood killer. Anyway these small moments are enough for this life. I have to say this, both of you have given a meaning to my life and I am very grateful for that.*

*Do you remember the day when your father left us? You were sitting beside me holding priya in your hands, she was just one year old then. I didn't know what to do, I didn't even have a job. I was so dependent on him and all of a sudden everything changed in my life. It wasn't easy, definitely not. Here's what I learned: people will leave and you'll survive. I survived days when I didn't want to even be alive. You're going to hate this, but people you love the most are going to cause you the most hurt, it's a fact. You have to accept it.*

*I realized that there were some things in life you would never get over, some transgressions you could not forget or forgive yourself for, some pains that could not pass, some people you'd never stop missing.*

*There will always be battles, battles between the mind and the heart. Between the things you know and the things you feel. Between what you want and what you need. Between who you are and who you want to be. So remember, tomorrow is a new day and you will always have a chance to succeed. Just keep going and stay strong. Take care of Priya for me.*

*Will miss you both. Good Bye*

*Love always*

*Rita*  
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A tear drop of his, fell on the letter smudging her name, "Good bye mom" he whispered in pain looking at the place where she sat the previous day. she always preferred the corner spot -her face right up close to the television. That was sort of their family portrait .it's not the kind of thing you think you would miss, Maybe you don't even notice it all those thousands of times, sitting between mom and sis on big green couch. But you notice it when she isn't there anymore. You notice so many of the places where she isn't, and you hear so many of the things she doesn't say. For the first time Silence was horrifying

He gently put letter back in that envelope, it would remain a sweet memory of hers. He went back to the room. Priya was in lot of pain. "can we go back to yesterday" asked Priya and sobbed out her pain to him. He sighed. He sat beside her trying to comfort her, Priya slowly rested her head on his shoulder, he could feel the warmth of her tears. he gently kissed her hair and said " it will be alright" . she didn't speak this time, only moved his lips, but he heard her, her silence, her thoughts, her pain. That morning had already changed their lives.

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