

## Their Story

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*I* had to do it. That's all that was left to be done – or undone...

With a trembling hand, I wrote as I always did - in pencil. The idea was enchanting - the marks smudged over little by little... and after a while, it would almost be as if they had never existed.

*...this is the last pain she will make me suffer,  
and these are the last lines I will write for her.*

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*The golden sun was fiery and defiant. His last rays streamed in through the dirty, broken pane of glass into her eyes. She blinked - she couldn't look directly at him, even though it was almost time for him to go. A grand exit, she thought to herself, and looked at the carefully folded piece of paper in her hand. A familiar handwriting filled the pages - neat rows of small letters, all in pencil. Parts of it were smudging already... her mind raced back to the previous night...*

"I think I love you. I have loved you for years now..."

Perhaps four years ago, the same revelation would have filled my heart with song...but not now. Not anymore. Four years is a long time; long enough to grow up. I was such a child when it all started out... I did not know what life really was, although I had always thought that I did. Perhaps I'd loved him then...

Why tell me now, I wondered. We hadn't met in four years – he had gone off to college, and his family moving to the East Coast hadn't made things any easier. He was so excited about seeing me again. The first thing he had wanted to do was some shopping, or at least that's what he had claimed. And what had we bought ultimately? A book that he made me pick out, just because he had a gift certificate that would expire in a few days. An excuse - I know that now. "I don't know what to buy," he had said, "...just pick something - anything. Whatever you like." I still don't know why I chose 'Love Story.'

We were walking back ... was it then? No, we were sitting on one of those benches by the lake – he'd said his head ached (another excuse perhaps) - the cool breeze blowing in our faces, little boys scampering to sell their wares to us. I



*mirror, mirror on our world...*



remember making a joke about how he was not very different from them - both in marketing or something of that sort. What I didn't say was that he was like them in other ways as well – scared and insecure. And clinging to me for support. He'd always been like that...I'd wondered how he had managed when he went away to college. But I knew the answer - he'd written to me from college and yes, his letters made for great reading; but then, opium and its cousins always produced great literature.

As the breeze blew through his dishevelled hair, he stammered a little, unsure if he should finally say it or not. He looked hard, watching me, waiting for some reaction, some response. I simply stared back - I didn't know what to say. I should have known, I thought. My God, it was so obvious. I should have known.

“It's just that I am leaving,” he said, “and I don't know if I'll see you again. Don't be angry, please. I had to tell you now. It was killing me, not telling you.”

His voice trailed off. I thought of the time when I would ache to see his smile, ache to hear his soft, gentle voice. But I was now standing next to a different guy... It was the same face and the same smile... but it wasn't him. For years I'd wished that the distance would melt away and the time spent apart would fade into inconsequence. But I knew it never would.

“I know I haven't been a very good friend,” he said, “haven't been around as much as I should have. I've probably disappointed you...”

I couldn't say yes. I had never been able to say things that I knew would hurt him. That had not changed. That would never change; even if I didn't meet him again.

The next morning, the seven o' clock train bore a part of my life away to a place from where I knew I could never claim it back. He left something behind, though. Later that evening, I found a parcel on my doorstep. It was the copy of “Love Story” with a note that read “Ironic, isn't it?” and a letter tucked inside. The same old familiar handwriting- neat rows of small letters, all in pencil.

*The sun went down as she opened the letter and began to read.*

\* \* \*



*Cactus Flower 2003*



“A week or ten days ...not more”. My mother came out of the chamber with the report in her hand. Her pale face managed to give me a small smile but she knew that I had heard it. I too faked a smile and then we did not look each other in the eye. I don’t know why, we just didn’t.

I just hadn’t realized it would happen so fast.

We got into the car, and the absolutely silent fifteen-minute journey back home seemed to take ages. Ages???? Ironic indeed. Dinner was also unusually quiet...and I don’t really remember what I ate. I guess it just didn’t matter anymore.

I told her that I wanted to sleep early because I was tired. She nodded saying, “Don’t forget to take your medicines.” She turned away to hide her tear filled eyes from me. I lay in bed for a long time thinking about how it all began. It wasn’t too long ago when I would spend my entire day rushing from one place to another doing a little bit of everything that I could get myself into. But the last few weeks were completely different. Those mild piercing headaches became more frequent, so frequent that I was forced to stay at home. Television, books, phone calls were all I was involved with. And in the evening, doctors - tests – reports...but I had still managed to make the trip to see her. I stood there by her side, and finally made my peace with myself, my love and hopefully with her. And soon I would do the same with God.

I shut my eyes - perhaps in resignation, and perhaps also because I did not want to believe what was happening. A tear threatened to slip past the wall I had built around my emotions and myself. I did not want pity or hollow advice. I wanted no one –or that’s what I led myself to believe; for the one I wanted wasn’t here anyway. And she will probably never know...

*My heart looks for her: she is not with me.  
My voice tried to find the breeze to reach her.*

It was better this way.

*The night is fractured and she is not with me.  
That is all. Someone sings far off.  
Far off, my soul is not content to have lost her.*

Morning dawned faster than usual. I lay staring at the ceiling, staring blankly at the white paint. It was past ten when the doorbell rang. Footsteps rushed into the house and up the stairs, paused briefly before entering the room, and then, a not so tall, not so thin figure came into the room- my cousin. I gave her a broad smile and, trying hard to be



*mirror, mirror on our world...*



normal, pulled her leg about her latest crush. She stared straight into my eyes. It was difficult to reciprocate that look without the crumbling of the facade that I called my self-confidence. All she said was, "Please don't go". I hugged her hard as the tears fell fast and furiously. I didn't want to go either.

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A week later, at his funeral, his "friends" came. From far and wide. Those he had played football in school with. Those who were with him when took the first drags that lightened his heart. Those whom he bunked classes in college with. Those whom he worked with on that brilliant design that won him the prestigious scholarship that everyone was fighting for. They all mourned his death and eulogised his "wonderfulness" as a friend. And even as he lay in that open casket, while they lay flowers beside him and kissed his cheeks, she did not come. Because he had not told her, and she had never bothered to find out why the letter had said just said one line- "Goodbye forever... I will always love you...."

*On his table they found this note, written the night before he died...*

*As though to reach her, my sight looks for her.*

*My heart looks for her: she is not with me.*

*The same night whitens, in the same branches.*

*We, from that time, we are not the same.*

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(This was an endeavour that had never been undertaken in CF. we received two stories from two students, **Himabindu Chitta and Deepti Nair** almost simultaneously. Some of the senior members felt that there was an inherent harmony between the two but we could not explain it. What followed were intense hours of brainstorming and today we proudly present to you **Their Story**- an effort to combine the two without changing the originals. We would just like to thank a certain person- someone called Pablo Neruda.)



*Cactus Flower 2003*

