

'OFFICE' ALY SMITTEN!

-SUHAS

(Background: The narrator has booked a cab and happens to share it with a total stranger. Disclaimer: This is a work of fiction. Resemblance to any person or thing is unintentional.)

“Good morning, Sir,” he said, beaming with a wide-toothed smile.

“Good morning, I need to go to the IT Park,” I retorted.

“Ok, Sir. But there is one more pickup”, he said.

I sighed. And immediately hated me for sighing - an act by those who dread expressing themselves.

Fifteen minutes pass.

Looking out of the window, I am lost in existential thoughts that sweep one's mind into an era of nostalgia.

We're at the co-passengers place. Seconds pass like hours.

“Sorry!” she exclaims apologetically with a smile that would make men go weak on their knees.

“That's....okay”, I am already stumbling over words—zero confidence.

Ten more minutes pass.

The urge to look at her pretty face grows stronger by the second. I'm doing the following in no particular order.

Rehearsing opening lines,

imagining how our conversation would work out,

looking at her,

praying to God that my office would declare a holiday,
and repeating the steps all over again.

I didn't want to come across as a creepy guy who hits upon women in a car.

Suddenly, she pauses my train of thought,

"Should we take the toll gate route? I'm in a hurry!"

"Yes, yes. The toll gate, it's the best", I blurt out.

It's the best! You fool.

You dim-witted, half-ass fool.

In a league of ordinary fools, among men lacking all distinction, you convincingly stand out as a man lacking more wit than all the rest.

She takes out a chocolate bar.

"Would you like to have some?"

"Okay."

That is my favorite word right now.

"So, you're new to Mysore?", she asks.

"I am. Just been a couple of months, really. What about you?"

"I have lived here for some time. My family lives in Coorg, so I must shuttle between Madikeri and Mysore."

"Interesting." At this point, I cannot take my eyes off her. She's nothing extraordinary but every bit as astounding as a woman can get.

"What do you do?" I asked hesitatingly.

"I work for an NGO. I work for the fundraising and relocation work to support homeless people."

I bet you're good at it. I bet you touch the hearts of many more like me.

“That’s so wonderful. I always thought about how people have patience and will serve society and how bonds are built between individuals. Do you feel we are living in a society that supports your work?”

She goes on for a couple of minutes about how the government is not functioning to its potential. How it might need to be restructured and what changes could be implemented. How they needed to put more kind hearts into this field of work and how the waves of homeless people are much stronger than they anticipated them to be. To top it all, she passionately makes me understand the math behind designing and implementing such a wonderful idea.

She’s so goddamn right. She must be right every time she speaks. Words flow out of her mouth like kites swinging in the air. And she can play with numbers like a guitarist plays a violin string. No, a violinist does that. Ahh, my feeble brain, why do you fall into the depths of romance so easily?

It's an unusually long line at the toll. She's unconcerned. I'm glad. *. *

“What do you do?” she questions.

“I work for a tech startup that is into e-commerce. I stop at that. It’s probably all gibberish to her.

“How fascinating! I have always thought about working for a startup. The passion, the drive to work towards a dream and let it culminate into reality is exhilarating”, she is bubbling with excitement.

“Tell me more about what you do.” She truly can’t contain it.

I go on a long monologue about how a startup works. About what I do at my company. About what drives me to work there, in spite of the fact that I burn my brains out every day for that bald head of a manager. About how my startup failed, leaving a deep void of dissatisfaction in my heart.

“That is just so amazing,” she proudly exclaims as if she had known me from time immemorial.

Nothing. Nothing could be more amazing than you in this time and place. And that is all there is and all there ever could be. Just me and you, aimlessly running around trees like in a 1970s song.

“Saar, we need to pay 60 rupees at the toll”, the driver cuts my imagination.

“Oh”, I take out my wallet and fumble it. So much for confidence.

“Shit. I only have 50 bucks. I booked my ride through PayTM”, I tell her sheepishly.

“That’s okay. I’ll pay for it”. She is there for the rescue act.

“I’ll pay you. I’ll pay you as soon as I get to the office.” I am in a state where one feels more sorry for themselves than the person one should feel sorry for.

She dismisses my pleas categorically. She is taking no money from me.

Ten minutes fly away. If only somebody could just stop them.

A thought of astounding proportion creeps into my mind. I have a Eureka moment.

“Do you use PayTM?” I ask innocently.

“I do. Why?” She’s a bit baffled.

“The fact that I could not pay you will always pinch me. I know it is just 30 bucks, but I still owe you, and I don’t want that. It is rather hard to explain. But if you give me your number, I will transfer it through PayTM”.

She looks at me shyly, pauses for a second, and bursts out in laughter.

Game over. *FACEPALM*

She can’t stop smiling. She had a hearty laugh for a few seconds, which in all honesty, felt like a lifetime.

“99018910XX. That’s my number.”

“Wh..what?!! Let me get my phone out.” I am so clumsy with things. My hands are the clumsiest thing ever made.

“My name is Ira. XXXXXXXXXXXX is my number”, she repeats.

I fidget with my phone profusely and type her name and number. I repeat her name like it's a verse from the Bhagavad Gita. She's sitting there as calmly as a cucumber.

“I'm setting up my media center at home. Get me some big discount from your website, will you?” - she says, all puppy-eyed.

I will steal all the stars from the sky for you. I will fight a pack of wild lions who have not eaten for days solely for you. I will deliberately lose a football match on Xbox to you if it makes you feel any happier. But discounts from e-commerce companies, ah!

“Okay,” there's my favorite word again.

“Your destination is on the right,” the American-accented lady screams out of the smartphone.

Curse you, Google. Curse you.

She smiles. I return it faithfully.

There are some moments in life that words fail to express.

Moments shared at home with parents on a dry, breezy afternoon make you fall into a peaceful slumber.

Moments shared between lovers on a pleasant evening when the world moves so slowly. And so perfectly.

Moments when you think that no matter what happens to you in the future or what has happened to you in the past, you will remember every last detail of those minutes forever as if they have been etched on life's tombstone.

This was one such moment.

Good day Sir” he was still glowing with happiness.

I looked at his weary eyes and grinned,

“Good day to you too, my man.”