Twitter Thread by (I'm done)■



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@Shayonnita15

I met her, a couple of Feb 14s earlier, on the way back home. It was post-9pm, the compartment was empty, save one girl.

She was dressed up—dress, heels, lipstick—the whole deal. She quickly wiped her tears when I walked in, switching to looking out, resolutely.

THREAD.

I tried doing nothing for a few stations, but then, restless about all the grief that came off her, took the bench opposite hers, finally.

“All okay?” I asked.

She hesitated. Blinked.

“Valentine’s Day,” she replied, sadly.

“Date didn’t work out?”

“He dumped me!”

2.

I winced. An asshole with no respect for symbology!

She rubbed her nose, looking both sad and angry.

Tired from a day of work, I groped for words. What could I say that would help?

"Maybe if—," I began, but she cut me:
"How many times will this same thing happen to me?"

3.

"Every time I like someone, they turn out to be assholes. I was so happy I wasn't single on Valentines' Day. FINALLY. But this is WORSE! I dressed up so much. And went all this way from home... And he, and he..."

Turns out, I realised, one doesn't need to say much.

4.

All sad people on Valentines' need, is a listening ear.

Till, five stations of ranting later, they ask, "So YOU tell me, WHY should I believe in love?"

Interrogated thus, in a local train corner, I felt... cornered. Why should one believe in love, I wondered?

5.

It was messy; people died, left, didn't love you back.... Gross. Not to mention unnecessary. She was probably better off single.

And yet, (even though I'm not Cupid's dalal), I felt like telling her all this would make her feel worse, not push her towards a new beginning...

6.

And so, before I knew it, I found myself talking:

"Arun met Sunita at a party. They mostly just sat around and blushed. But Arun did manage to bring Sunita a Fanta when she smiled and told the carpet she was thirsty."

7.

"A week after she told her folks 'bhaloi legeche' (liked him), they wrote to his uncle in Baranagar.

Om Jethu poured over the letter. He was a strict man, partly-blind, Arun's only surviving family. He met the girl, liked her kind eyebrows; said she had a responsible chin."

8.

"They were married in a cold, Kolkata February."

So far, my listener was hooked to me.

"Raised in an empty house by an angry man who felt emotion was the death of logic, Arun had a whole store of love to give and express."

9.

"Dressed smartly in pinstriped trousers, he'd gift his wife flowers, take her to the movies. On Sundays he'd comb her hair, hum a song as she lied in bed, looking up at him dreamily. He encouraged her to get a job—teaching at the local academy."

My listener sighed.

10.

"The year after their first child was born, he was posted in the other end of the country.

She cried every day after he left. Most of his letters didn't reach her.

He hugged her handkerchief to him for days, till its colours got faded and the scent of her disappeared."

11.

"She wrote him urgent letters about the house, jethu, their son. 'Come, watch your Monu grow up,' she begged him.

He wrote her torrid letters full of yearning and need. Torn from the man she loved, she threw herself into work, taking up more classes at the academy."

12.

"The family elders wrote to him, 'Ask your wife to stay at home. Take care of the family.' He crumpled the letters, tossed them into the salty sea. He missed them, physically.

Then, finally, 8 months later, he boarded a train, off to see his family."

13.

"That evening, Monu, as if listening to the whistle of a train 6 states down South, wobbled, laughing, towards the balcony.

Savita turned. But by the time she had finished screaming his name, dashing towards the railing, Monu had become a memory."

My listener was horrified.

13

"For the next 24 hours, Savita lived with the knowledge that her husband was somewhere, hurtling through the country smiling about a dead child, in the dark about what grief had sliced through their family.

Pacing, without tears, she prepared for his hatred—

14.

—to be held responsible for this tragedy.

When Arun returned, he returned to a neighbourhood where everybody hated his wife.

'She was always grading papers.' 'She couldn't care for your child.' 'She is a bad mother, a bad wife.' "

15.

" 'Why such lust for the academy. The Math teacher there is male, I see?'

Arun shut the voices out, took her in his arms. Mother and father cried in shared grief.

'It is my fault,' she whispered. He put his finger on her lips, and that was the last she spoke about it."

16.

"Arun and Savita moved away from the house that had memories of Monu and his little smile and little feet. They left the voices, and the pointed fingers, and went South, closer to the sea.

But Savita couldn't heal. Broken, she could barely wake up, cook, or speak."

17.

"It felt like their happiness had been lost to time and memory, fallen—never to return—off some balcony."

I paused for a sip of water, we were a few stations away from home. My listener chimed in, "Then?"

"It took 6 years for Savita to get her smile back," I continued.

18.

"6 years through which Arun waited, never losing patience, never forcing his wife to 'cheer up'. Every day he spoke to her with just as much care, as much love. Every day he waited.

Then, finally, on that one day six years later, he saw her crying when he handed her tea."

19.

" 'What have I done to deserve you?' she whispered.

'One doesn't do things to deserve love. Love is not 'transactional'. One just loves. I love you, Savita. And you love me.'

Savita went back to teach at another academy. Arun worked, pursued his passion for singing."

20.

"Savita and Arun never had another child.

At 62, when Arun was diagnosed with cancer, Savita turned nurse, accountant, driver, provider—ferrying him to and from from the hospital, cooking for him, staying up by him for all eight years that he fought the disease."

21.

"She exchanged her timid, easy-going demeanour for fierce, no-nonsense stare—Reading reports, fighting with insurance guys. She bit back her tears as they pricked his hand for blood day and night. She put on a brave face as he crumbled, losing his voice."

22.

After Arun died, Savita searched for what might have killed him in every corner of the house.

Could it have been in the plastic coke bottles they had filled and stored water in for so long? Could it have been in the Teflon coating of her pans?

23.

"Could it have been in the cigarettes he had occasionally smoked when they were young? The too strong sunlight? A perfume? A food? A sadness?

Many evenings, while talking to us she would stop, as if arrested by a shape on a wall."

24.

"She would start and get up grudgingly changing her clothes, putting on a sweater, reading the paper... As if her were still here, scolding her for being lazy, calling her silly.

She never spoke about him in past tense. Never wore the widow's white."

25.

" She'd tell us, 'In me, he is alive.' "

*

My story concluded, I sat opposite the girl in silence, the train lulling us by. "Is this a real story?" she asked.

I nodded.

"But they don't make love like this, anymore," she said.

"They don't make love. We do," I said.

26.

"We choose our love, and we make its destiny."

*

"Why did you tell a random girl in a train a fake love story?" my brother asked.

"I don't know. I needed her to believe."

"Why?"

"How hard we struggle to disbelieve," I replied.

27.

"Yet, all of us, secretly, love a good love story. We love listening to those tales about how people met, spoke, fell in love. We hope this will be us, soon. In the way in which we listen, we have such deep vulnerability."

"But love doesn't exist, di!" he replied.

28.

I smiled. "Isn't it strange that while we learn a love language, we're born with the ability to love inbuilt?"

"It is. But what does this mean?"

"Nothing. Just that it's okay to believe. In chocolates and cards and one magical day. It's okay to dream—

29.

"Believing in love doesn't make us lame, or stupid. Questioning love doesn't make us dinner. Allowing ourselves to be vulnerable doesn't make us weak.

These are the things that make us human."

End.

Lol, if you've survived 30 tweets - I love you. :p

I started writing this with one direction in mind, it's ended up somewhere else altogether.

The basic idea was to say - it's okay if you don't believe in Love/Valentine's. Don't shame those who do.

Live and let live, yo. :)