



## Falling In Love Is Synonymous to having Gum Wrappers Attack You from Within

# I am nobody.

Nobody you would want to know the name of. I am not famous. I don't have an incredible personality that makes you attracted to me -- no bright smile, no beautiful curls. Just someone you cannot help but miss while passing by the streets. Yet I exist. Even when you don't want to know who I am, I am right here, around you, beside you, in front of you. Every time you turn around, I am there, but how is it that you manage to ignore me again and again?

Yes, it is very easy to miss me out. After all, the spotlight was never on me. Why do I deserve to be noticed? I am too plain. When there are sparkling personalities, shimmering around me, illuminating with beauty and success, I can easily drown. Almost blend into nothingness.

And for that very reason, I stand here, telling you my story. Yes, you have to listen. For too long I have lived a life similar to the dirt floating on the water. It was hard. All of you had made it hard for me. Telling me that I am not good enough, saying that I don't deserve the sky, you've kept me buried underneath for eternity. However, mind you, how long can you do that? Yes, I don't shine. But exactly till when do you plan to suppress me? Magazines, billboards, commercials- they have given me the same message; I am not good enough. My complexion is too dark, my smile is too dull,

and my eyes are too watery. However I want to ask one question, how light does your color need to be to have a good heart?

There is a strange tale about the volcanoes of Spain. It is said that the dormant ones are always more vicious than the active ones. That's why they remain dormant. Because once they wake up, it's all over for the others. Everything becomes nothing in front of them.

Words are very simple indeed.

*You are not good enough. You can never do this.*

It takes a moment to utter it, but a lifetime to fulfill it. Queer isn't it? Right now, I ask myself, why was I scared all my life? What was it that pushed me to the background? There is no answer. I was afraid, of people around me. But the shadow needs to disappear once the light appears. And right now, my shadows of fear are gone. I am free. To become somebody from the nobody I am right now. Because we are scared, we make it too easy for others to get on with life. There is no fierce competition for them. It's an easy battle. But not anymore. All you have to do is wait, I'll roll up the curtains. The show is about to begin. After a very long time, it is finally going to begin.

Times have changed. And so have I.

**NUSRAT JAHIN ANGELA**

*The writer, aged 16, is a grade 11 student.*

**RAFEE SHAAMS**

*A storm of colorful gum wrappers (I'm talking about the ones that my grocer tries to hand me instead of change) risk being unleashed within me. I have decided no matter how much my skin protuberates and then perforates with the force of a thousand gum wrappers attacking as if they are in line to buy the limited tickets to this heavy metal concert everybody will be dying to go,*

*I shall keep this to myself.*

*I saw you today with your friends, playing the game you play when you're all together. The giggling and laughing and joking around and teasing the ones who're present and backstabbing the ones who are not. I'm the ogler at the corner of the picture staring at you like you are chocolate fudge ice cream with three kinds of sprinkles on top and a caramel wafer piped in. I can't keep this to myself. Any longer.*

*You make a face of confusion, that you don't know what I'm saying, that your responses (= "What Gum wrapper? What're you talking about?") are enough for me to get that you're not interested.*

*Your sidekicks think I'm an endangered species captured by smugglers, the way they snicker. You went away with them, presumably thinking I'm pathetic or something. No worries: I would wait another day to inform you of my lyrics. Remember only that these wrappers that I talk about hold surprises. (Mainly anime stickers inside. But, even so, I am trying to pretzel this info into a good enough metaphor.)*

*I think I like you.*

# Smile

**MARISHA AZIZ**

I cannot remember the last time I smiled.

Now, don't get me wrong; I curve my lips upwards in order to express positive feelings all the time. However, I have not really, truly smiled for quite a long time.

Take the day before as an example. At school, people were laughing about an 'ingenious' prank they had played on an innocent girl. They had set up a fake Facebook account through which they had conned her into thinking a guy was in love with her. I did not find this half as amusing as everyone else, so I didn't smile. I did, however, curve my lips upwards; like every other teenager, I am in dire need of friends, and anyone will be your friend if you smile at their jokes.

When I came home from school, I once again curved my lips upward in

response to my mother's queries about school. I couldn't smile, though, because things were not okay like I'd told her. There was simply no point in explaining the various troubles of high school to her, since she already has enough on her plate.

On that afternoon, I received an Eid gift from a friend. It was a beautiful dress—splashes of colour that sparkled when it caught the light—but it was something I would never be caught dead in. I was quite disappointed that my own friend didn't know my taste, but I curved my lips upwards anyway, because we have been taught since birth to never find fault in gifts.

An aged colleague of my father's dropped by for tea. I have known him for quite a long time and am quite familiar with his outdated views. So I was not surprised at all when he talked for an hour about the foolishness of women who pursued higher education. "Women should learn how to cook,

clean, and be a good mother," he declared pompously, "not about the theory of relativity and human anatomy." Even though the feminist in me was screaming in protest, I silently stared at him and kept my lips curved upwards, partly to get him to stop talking and leave, and partly because arguing with the elderly is considered a severe act of disobedience.

There was a party that night at a neighbour's house. People came up to me and admired my clothes and hair and shoes. I could see the disdain hiding under the false admiration, yet I curved my lips upwards to portray my fake gratitude. The hostess asked me if I were enjoying the party and I replied in the affirmative, with my lips curved upwards, because I was actually bored out of my mind. All everyone ever talked about was either money or gossip, neither of which was appealing to me. However, I had to keep my lips curved upwards the whole time, occa-

sionally passing out not-so-heartfelt compliments, because that is just how you are supposed to act like around the elite of the society.

At the end of the day, when I analyze all these events, I realize that every day is alike. The exact events may vary, but the results are always the same. In order to conform to the rules of society and get along with friends, family, and peers, my own opinions constantly take a backseat. The world only seems to get duller, and the future turns bleak.

I do not know when I will finally be able to smile. Nevertheless, I am on the lookout for any opportunity that presents itself. Be it a random act of kindness, or just a really great song playing on the radio on a breezy afternoon, I'll be ready for it.

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