



A Time-Warp, A Favour and Kacchi

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"Through the crowd of strangers I saw you. Your deep green eyes piercing back. And in that moment I was yours. Though later on you told me you weren't really staring back or anything, you were just bored and looking for *paan*", I reread mom's letter to dad, and smiled again. Two years have gone by since her passing, and today dad and I will go back to that special day in 2015, at a stranger's wedding, where they met and I was destined.

Dad readies the engine and tells me to sit tight in the inner compartment. Though time machines are near illegal according to time-warp laws, dad having friends in the ministry has its perks. "But before we attend the wedding, I have a personal favour to myself I must fulfill," dad shouts through the clatter of the machine's gears and levers. He jumps in, closes the shafts, types in the date and we're off.

All my friends stood in a circle around me, flashing their phones with their high resolutions, large screens and no keypads. "Whatsapp!" one of them yells. "Angry Birds!" yells another one. "Temple Run!" "Viber!" "Candy Crush!" "Instagram!" "Clash Of Clans!" I couldn't hold myself back anymore. Tears drop, my hands tremble and my Nokia falls, shattering the ground beneath me and I wake up.

This dream felt more real than the last ones. Maybe because there are dried tears on my pillow from last night's argument and a hollowness in my heart for being unable to convince my father. "You're too young for this son." "No, father, I am the exact demography smartphones are sold for. My satisfaction fuels the tech industry masterraces. I am the living organism responsible for the revolutionary strides and greater innovations of technology. And I also crave for that Whatsapp group my friends talk in all day, and play Clash Of Clans with them. None of it mattered though, father wouldn't bat an eye and resumed watching the 10 o' clock news.

Now I have to go to the mall anyway because the wedding season is here.

As mother and I leave, a stranger rings the bell and enters. Probably the tax guy. He sits in the living room with father and we leave. "Did you see that man's eyes? So beautiful, kinda like yours," mother tells me. I couldn't care less. *He didn't have a beautiful smartphone for me, did he mother?*

I feel good. Not only because I'm witnessing one of my life defining moments, but also because I'm attending a vintage wedding after so long. Weddings in the 2030s don't really have the feel of a classic wedding ceremony. With animals going nearly extinct, no internet memes nor cyber



bullying could stop the all-veg revolution. That meant no *kacchi* since 2026. *I'm just afraid I'd be too busy devouring that red meat to witness what we came here for.*

"Dad, how did that favour go?" asks my son, who's all too unfamiliar and equally fascinated with all these wedding traits. "We'll find out now. First let's find me inside," I reply with a tinge of pride in my voice.

We enter the hall and look through the people searching for a seat on the first batch. And I spot me, one small glare and I instantly recognise those green eyes, looked at them in the mirror my whole life.

"Son, look, there, see that handsome bloke? That's your old man," I say.

"I can't really see anyone's faces, dad. They're all looking down for some reason," says my son.

"Well Smart Lenses weren't invented yet. Smart phones forced our heads down," I say.

"You have to use your fingers? Wow, that's tiresome," replied my son.

"At least I completed my favour," I replied.

We sit at a table close to young me. We wait for that fated moment, and also the *kacchi*.

I can feel father's scrutinising glare on me as I tap away on my new phone, still not accepting me "wasting my time" on this phone. Well I can't still believe what

You never leave your food so early," remarks my son.

I look at young me's chair, he left already. *I didn't diet.*

"Did you see where he went?" I ask my son with little urgency.

The craving for some more *kacchi* is overwhelming me. "Down there", he points. I stand up, look for where the crowd is gathering, that's usually where the *paan masala* is served and young me's supposed to be. It was opposite to where my son pointed. Then I saw the cream white gown, lush black hair with a dimple on one side. "I see your mother." – "Where!?" – "There," I half-heartedly point as I look behind to find my young self. He's sitting at the now isolated



made him change his mind. Maybe the 2 PM news showed some stat how smartphones sharpen the brain or something. Doesn't matter. *And also father, Clash of Clans isn't a waste of time, it is life.* This precious game just saved me from utter boredom in this stranger's wedding. At the moment, I'm raiding another village for practice with the clan war scheduled just 15 minutes from now. This can seriously harm my *kacchi* consumption, which is the only good thing about attending this wedding, but sacrifices must be made for the greater good.

Wow that kacchi was good! I could eat another batch.

"Did you use to diet back then dad?"

chairs in front of the bride's podium. "Isn't he supposed to be with that crowd? Why is he there?" my son asks worriedly as a borhani burp escapes me.

"He's on that phone of his! He's not coming this way!" my son exclaimed.

I consider staying for the second batch. "Dad," he pushes me, his voice rising, "Do something. Call him, distract mom, don't just stand here!" I locate the waiters and see if they've started serving again. "Dad please..." And then it happened. My young self jumps at the joy of a successful raid, the pretty girl with her pretty gown leaves the hall, I decide to sit for another batch and the annoying kid yelling beside me disappears.

At least there's more kacchi.