

**SHREYOSI ENDOW**

"Do you ever wonder if the moon feels insignificant?" Oni asked.

We sat on the edge of the rooftop of a fifteen storied building. Dhaka, in all its glory, lay beyond us. Neon lights illuminated the streets which snaked through its heart and I counted the cars that sped over them. Oni, on the other hand, stared at the yellowish moon that rose above the horizon and counted the neighbouring stars.

"Insignificant?" I asked.

"Yes. Think about it." He said and I watched the reflection of the city lights dance on his pupils. "It has to rely on the Sun for its light and its beauty and most importantly, it is surrounded by the stars which are actually a thousand times larger and shine a thousand times brighter. I can't help but think it feels awfully lonely and insignificant."

"Maybe." I said. This was one of the things I had always admired about him—he had his own way of looking at the world.

Oni and I found ourselves here every time we needed each other's company. My family moved into this apartment four years ago and it had been our spot ever since. We talked very little and it would seem as if a comfortable silence would wrap itself around us like a warm blanket as it did now. There was something so special about sharing this silence with my best friend that I could never really explain but was always grateful for.

For the last couple of days, I had been thinking about us. I thought of the time our worlds collided in eighth grade when he shifted to my school. He was a weird lad. His pants whooshed as he walked over to his seat and his shirt was always crumpled. He wore the same stoic expression on his face for months, which I later found out was because he missed the two friends he had finally made in his previous school after years of being bullied by his classmates, and the only thing he said on his first day was a "No" when I asked him if he was ready to submit his classwork. I was the prefect and now that I thought about it, he never really did submit his classwork.

I wished I could put a finger on the exact moment his weirdness started seeming extraordinary. The days we didn't talk were a blur I didn't bother trying to figure out. Months passed in getting to know each

other and one day, I realised he had become a constant in my life too precious to lose.

"It wasn't a good date," Oni broke the silence and my train of thoughts came to a screeching halt.

"I know." I said, keeping my calm and rested my palm on his shoulder.

"How do you know?" he frowned.

"You would have told me all about it had it been the other way round, wouldn't you?" I chuckled.

Oni smiled a little and went back to stargazing. I looked back at the streets and felt a pang in my chest. It seemed as if with every failed attempt at dating other people, we were taking baby steps towards acknowledging what everyone else had been telling us all this time. The truth was an unwanted guest knocking on our doors relentlessly and we were much too comfortable inside this little cocoon we had built around us to open them and welcome it.

There was, however, a tiny part of me that felt suffocated inside and I could feel it taking over my actions slowly.

"Have you ever thought what it would be like if we dat-"

"I decided to give it another shot!" Oni blurted out. His eyes looked guilty as he turned to face me.

When I didn't say anything, he added, "You were saying?"

"Nothing important." I sighed. "Did you ask her out again?" I tried to sound cheerful.

"Yeah, for a movie. I'm not sure if that was a good idea, though. She hates the lead actor but well, she said yes, so that shouldn't matter much." He spoke so fast he was breathless. He had never sounded more nervous.

Catching his breath, he mumbled, "I think I really like her, you know."

"I know." I sighed and wrapped an arm around his torso and rested my head on his shoulder. "I hope it works out this time."

Oni sighed and pulled me into a hug. I looked up to see his face. Orange lights and shadows played hide and seek on his cheeks and at that moment, it seemed like I had never seen something so beautiful before.

I buried my face in his neck and muttered under my breath,

"I really hope it works out this time."

**KAZI AKIB BIN ASAD**

It was just another other cool, summer evening. Samira and I sat cosily atop the 15-storey building – talking, not talking. We hung our feet over the ledge as windows lit up like fireflies in front of us following the placidity of the call for evening prayer, soon forgotten by the honking of cars below.

I decided to break the silence up here, casually, like I do.

"Do you ever wonder if the moon feels insignificant?" I attempted.

"Insignificant?" Samira asked, a little surprised perhaps at the randomness of my inquiry.

"Yes. Think about it." I began.

"It has to rely on the Sun for its light and its beauty and most importantly, it is surrounded by the stars which are actually one thousand times larger and shine a thousand times brighter. I can't help but think it feels awfully lonely and insignificant."

"Maybe," muttered Samira.

"Maybe?" I paused and thought. I was hoping browsing through all those science channels added with my own flair of philosophy would at least bring half a smile on her lips, from which she'd proceed to ruffle my hair and call me stupid. Not this time I suppose.

I remembered the day I found Samira sitting here, which was originally my spot. That was a gloomy day four years ago. There was something about her that led me to share this little world of mine with her. We came up here with or without reasons, and now I know that she's become a reason herself. She's my best friend, a precious gift - one I've come to realise meant more than a lot.

It took time to come to that realisation, though. I met her on the first day at my new school here. She was a force to be reckoned with; a pompous strut made way for her through the busy corridors. Her braid hung over the shoulder and often caught itself on her prefect badge – an authority that demanded a lot of attention, even from an introvert like me. She was a flower in perpetual full bloom. She was my polar opposite.

We've come a long way since then. I, personally, cannot be grateful enough to have her around – a friend who would look after me like no other.

Reeling back to the present, I felt her eyes on me. I could read her mind. It was time to break the silence once again.

"It wasn't a good date," I said as a matter-of-factly.

She returned with a ready response, "I know."

"How do you know?" I shot, and realised her statement had brought my eyebrows closer and my eyes narrower.

She snickered. "You would have told me all about it had it been the other way round, wouldn't you?" I couldn't help myself but smile.

I looked up at the stars again and let out a sigh under my breath. It was difficult not to listen to one's heart, even more so when the universe was showing so many signs. Were we, and if so, why were we cheating ourselves by trying our luck with others? The truth was that we had seen each other grow too big inside a cocoon of trust and affection. There was no room for others and we were happy that way, with ourselves.

Yet, I couldn't risk it all. I could see there were two roads in front of me - one that I knew well, and one that spelled uncertainty. I heard her calling me back from my thoughts.

"Have you ever wondered what it would be like if we dat-"

"I decided to give it another shot!" I had surrendered. Something clawed at my heart as I looked into her eyes, secretly wanting her to finish what she started - to finish the idea.

"You were saying?" I somehow managed to ask.

She let out a deep sigh. My heart dropped deeper.

"Nothing important. Did you ask her out again?" There it was - the most beautiful fake smile in the world.

"Yeah, for a movie. I'm not sure if that was a good idea, though. She hates the actor but also that it shouldn't matter much. I think I really like her, you know." I lied at a speed that could qualify for the world records.

"I know," she said, then scooped over, resting her head on my shoulder. "I hope it works out this time."

I breathed out and locked her in an embrace. She pulled away for a moment and under the moonlight I saw my reflection on her dark pupils as the wind blew a strand of hair across her face. At that moment, there was no time.

She wrapped her arms around my back. I hoped she had her fingers crossed when I heard her mumble the few words before a long silence.

"I really hope it works out this time."