

SNACKS ON A PLANE

RUMMAN R KALAM

DAY 122

I, Shariful Siddique Shaheb, have witnessed rains like no other man. For over four months, I have stared at the sky while it sprayed all over my face. Not too hard, not too much. It was a gentle drizzle reminding you that everything you love is about to drown and the only silver lining is the hope of a silver lining. How did all of this start and why am I relevant in such a natural crisis? It's because I wanted to make it rain.

DAY 0

"Shaheb sir, the aircraft is ready with the cloud-seeding mods. Are you sure about this?"

"It's not a joke, Maisha. Bigger things are at play here."

"What sort of bigger things, sir?"

"When you look at the sky, you want to reach for it. I don't want to reach for the sky, I want to make it mine."

"You're a restaurateur, Shaheb sir! You are not an X-Men. Why are you trying to control the weather?"

"And that's why I own a chain of *bhaat er hotel* and all you do is crunch numbers. Now go prep the plane. I want

to be there when they start the cloud-seeding."

I was sitting behind the pilot of my plane on a folding chair I brought with me from Chittagong in my luggage.

There was a slight smell of anticipation in the cabin as we approached the clouds. I could feel the tension tickle the hairs inside my nose. Just five more minutes until we spray the clouds. The Twin Otter, called "Shopnophonkhiraj" that we equipped with the attachments, shuddered all of a sudden — the old plane screaming at the joints. Seeing the tension in the cabin, I took in a deep breath to calm myself down and realised the smell was not of anticipation as I looked at the pilot.

"Bhai, *ami na*."

I shook my head and focused ahead at the cloud of our dreams. Just a little spray and my business skyrockets for a week. There was a sudden thud as the plane dipped and the pilot struggled to control it. My grip on the pilot's shoulder kept tightening with each passing microsecond.

"Shaheb sir, chill."

"I am chill."

"No, sir. I think there's a hawk in the

propeller."

"Are we going to die?"

"No, sir. We can finish the run with one engine and do an emergency landing."

"Okay, carry on," I said as I took my hand off his shoulder.

The co-pilot piped in immediately afterwards, though.

"Sir, propeller 2 is also down. It's not spinning."

"There's no smoke. Why is it not spinning?"

"There seems to be something stuck there...it's a banner... a banner that says UDVA..."

How did THAT get there?

DAY 9

How did I get here?

Maisha was staring at me across the room in the hospital cabin.

"What... happened, Maisha?"

"It's been over a week. It hasn't stopped raining and it won't stop raining."

"What do you mean? It's supposed to be over by now."

"Well, the low-bidding geniuses you hired did not secure the mod tanks and they overfilled them. They kinda burst

all over the place in the middle of clouds and now we have nonstop rain."

"Maisha, that doesn't sound very scientific."

"None of this is, Shaheb sir. You still did it I still don't understand why."

"If you understo—"

"No, I am not interested in your vague philosophies," she cut me off, "Do you have any coffee in this place?" said Maisha, sighing.

"No, but I think there's some broast chicken over there."

"Thanks. I'll leave my resignation letter here as well."

DAY 122

I wish Maisha was here today to enjoy the fruits of our labour. After all, we did spend two years planning a chain of Tagore-themed restaurants that only serve khichuri. I could have all the profits from my 135 taka plates but nothing can bring her back. I wish Maisha was here to crunch my numbers today.

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