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BEAUTY IN LITTLE THINGS

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"Feluda?"

"Yes, Feluda."

Mrinmoy looked at his wife with amusement. He was trying to figure out why she suddenly brought it up at 3 in the morning.

He cleared his throat and asked, "Madam, would you kindly tell me which direction your train of thought is taking you now?"

Arpita slowly turned her face towards him while lowering her gaze. She would often do that when she felt vulnerable. She said, "When I was little, I always thought if I was ever given a chance to live out life as a character from a book, I'd choose to live the life of Feluda."

"That's it? Your expressions made me feel like you were going to say something like I lied about you being my only love, Mrinmoy. It's always been Feluda!"

Then he burst into laughter.

"You always have to be sarcastic, huh?" She gave a little nudge on his tummy and turned her face away from him.

Mrinmoy knew how his wife was irritated but also that she didn't mind getting teased by him a little.

She didn't have to turn her face now. Mrinmoy rolled to her side and wrapped his arms around her tight. Arpita smiled at the calmness she felt. He was her refuge whenever she felt a storm brewing inside her.

"So, why did you wish to be Feluda?"

"You see, Feluda never struggled to regain his composure in whatever situation he might be in. He was always so certain about every decision he had to make. I won't deny that he did face quite a lot of dangerous situations, but he won each and every battle. He didn't worry much and travelled around the country with Topshe and Jatayu whenever he wanted. His life was so full of thrills."

Mrinmoy listened to her with thoughtful attention.

"You know, when you were telling me all this, I was picturing the little Arpita lost in the adventures of Feluda," he said affectionately.

"It's always been my desire, but now as I am living this life with you, I realize life isn't thrilling or fulfilling because of the action-packed events. This moment right now is not less than a dream for me. Look! I am with the love of my life, under the blissful stars around the glimmer of

this moon. I am sharing what I have in my heart, no matter how silly it might be. You are giving me not just a heart that listens to me, but a heart that fills me with such immense love and gratitude. It gives me a far greater feel of freedom and peace than imagining my life as Feluda. As I will close my eyes tonight, I will not be distressed. Because I will be falling asleep listening to your heartbeat which is more melodious than any lullaby in this world. If our life is exactly like this for the next 40 years, I won't get tired of us. These little things add up each day to something more and make me feel so alive from the inside. Any place becomes heaven living by your side."

Arpita and Mrinmoy both had tears in their eyes.

A teardrop fell over Arpita's cheeks.

"You are crying, Mrinmoy? Hey, come here."

She got up and held his face in her hands. Mrinmoy felt himself sinking into the warmth of them. He kept his face on top of her chest while she pulled him as close as she could. In his dulcet voice, he softly said, "Not just this night, but the sun that will rise and bring us the morning tomorrow, it will last longer in

me than any mornings I've spent before. I won't wake up alone, you'll be the first face I see. You'll be the first touch I feel. I'll wish to spend the time in bed with you just a bit longer each day before we have to get up. I'll feel love in the cup of tea that we'll share every day of our lives. Well, it doesn't matter if the tea isn't perfect every day!"

Mrinmoy winked at her teasingly.

"You'll have to finish it no matter how dull the taste is, okay?" Arpita shot him a playful smile.

They fell asleep inside each other's arms in the shelter of bliss and unconditional love. Little did they know that their first night together would be the last night of their lives – that the scarlet flames would eat up their dreams alive and burn them to ashes.

But the fire didn't know that their love wouldn't go up in smoke. Mrinmoy and Arpita would not let their hopes die even when they burned together.

Mrinmoy would still say, "Don't be afraid my love, not even death could do us part."

Their souls would soon mesh into one another and turn as one. Wandering among the stars, they would reminisce about the little things they loved.