



PHOTO: ORCHID CHAKMA

The crushing reality of knowing that your friend is getting married

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Along with hoodies and badminton, winter brings with it another pandemic – watching eight people get married in a single scroll. Fridays aren't just about waking up late or *Jumma* prayers; it's also about watching half your social media feed become wedding content. Usually, the people getting married are older than you, so it doesn't affect you very much. Until one fine Friday, it's someone your age.

Suddenly, you feel old and unaccomplished. It hits you that someone in your classroom had life all figured out while you were scrolling through the cake epidemic of Agargaon. Someone out there embraced adulthood while you were considering enrolling on a master's programme just so you could delay the reality of unemployment.

But perhaps the greatest tragedy occurs when the "Brutus" in this story is your childhood friend. Your 25-year-old friend who struggles to mute himself on Zoom calls and uses LinkedIn as a dating platform has been called many names, but never did anyone in the group think he'd be called a "husband".

So, naturally, when he invited you to his wedding, the first response was "How?" Not when or even why. Because how is this man getting married before me?

And soon, it's not just the one, but the entire herd. Even the ones you thought were above romantic attachments are now looking for *holud* song playlists. At first, it was just you and your boys in the group. But by next winter, the group expanded to you, your boys, and their better halves. You're now the group's unofficial couple photographer, smiling and nodding aggressively as you get asked to take a picture of the 12th couple that night.

After devouring two plates of *kacchi*, when you've successfully evaded your deeply rooted insecurities the entire evening, life punches you in the gut. As the bride and groom utter that magical word "*Qubool*" thrice and smile at each other, the teardrop at the corner of your eye convinces you that this is what you've been missing. As a 26-year-old emotional vagabond who has changed career goals as frequently as Gen-Z youth change their political opinions, you realise that marriage is the band-aid which is going to mend the hole in your heart.

Crazily enough, your friends getting married affects your weekends. Suddenly, you're the only one desperately mentioning everyone in the group chat and begging them to give you one hour of attention on a Thursday evening. Even your BBA graduate friend is too busy for you. I mean, how dare they prioritise their newlywed partners over

their emotionally unavailable friend who's always passive-aggressive about being unmarried?

As you stand by yourself at Farmgate and indulge in fried junk, you try to fill the gap in your heart with cholesterol, which others are filling through marriage. Halfway through your sixth *shingara*, you realise it's time to change things once and for all. You're not going to let your friends' happiness define your sadness. If not through marital affection, you're going to find happiness in your career. After all, the people who changed the world didn't let marriage distract them – Isaac Newton, Nikola Tesla, *Haloom* from *Sisimpur*, among many others. Perhaps it's time to complete that MBA after all.

After changing your bedsheet and cleaning your wardrobe, when you're already halfway into fixing your life, a notification pops up – a junior just invited you to his wedding.

The deafening silence in the room reminds you that you were wrong to think that you've entered the marriage threshold. The truth is – you're way past that. With vision all blurry and lips quivering with shame, you reply, "Congratulations! So happy for you!"

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