

Rain was still coming down gently. I opened the door of my car, turned on the ignition and started to drive out of the parking lot.

To my surprise, Tapasya was still standing in the parking lot looking lost. I noticed that there was no other vehicle in the whole parking lot except for my car. On most days I was the last one to drive out. I was not sure if Tapasya owned a car but with her salary she should be able to afford one.

I drove back to her, "Tapasya, what happened? Where is your car?"

"Sir, I just realised that I had given my car for service. It will be returned tomorrow morning."

I was not sure what to do. If I offered her a lift she might misconstrue my intentions. I waited.

"I had planned to take public transport. I guess I am too late for that. Maybe I will take an auto rickshaw." She was still incoherent and dazed. It sure was not her day.

Whenever girls are in trouble, they want men to offer the help. I could never understand, why they don't ask for help?

"And where do you reside?" I asked her.

"Satadhar, near Ghatlodia." It was almost 45 minutes away.

"I don't think any auto rickshaw will take you there. I live in Satellite. If you are okay I can drop you off." Her face lit up with a brief smile. I swear, if she had shown more drama, I would not have given her the lift.

"Thank you again, Sir." She took her seat.

I threw the gear, released the clutch and we were on our way.

"I think the rain might slow us down a little. I don't have much to talk about. If you want you can listen to the radio."

I turned on the radio and selected my favourite station. Golden oldies hour was playing delightful melodies. The wet road was reflecting the street lights. The red stoplights created shimmering images. I drove carefully.

"Sir, if you don't mind, may I tell you something?" She could not bear the silence after ten minutes.

"Sure, go on. I never mind if someone tells me the truth honestly."

"You are totally different from what I had anticipated."

"You must have thought I was kind of peculiar."

"No Sir."

"So you found me strange. Why?"

"I always thought you were reserved and aloof, especially around girls. But today I feel you are very caring and have more respect for you."

"If I had not offered you the ride you might have thought that I am an uncaring man, right?"

"Perhaps, yes! I really wanted you to offer me the ride." I smiled lightly. I was surprised how innocent and honest she was. In the office she looked totally professional and in command. She did have a vulnerable side and now she was opening up.

"Anyway, thanks for the appreciation!" I was saying things that I never used to.

She relaxed her body in the seat and removed the ponytail rubber band. Her hair cascaded down to her shoulders. She took a sip from her water bottle.

"Do you want a sip?"

My throat was dry so I took a sip from her bottle.

"This is not water; what is this?"

"Lemon drink-it gives me energy for work."

I took another sip. I liked it.

"This is really nice. Does your mother prepare it for you everyday?"

"No, I prepare it myself. My mother and father had divorced a year back. They are remarried to other people. Upon my graduation, they gave me a small house. I get to meet them occasionally. A maid does all the housework, but I like to cook for myself. I love cooking." She suddenly realised that she was talking non-stop.

"Sorry Sir, I just went on talking!"

"I also cook my food myself. I love cooking, although I can afford a cook." I showed no objection to her non-stop babbling.

"There is one more thing I want to tell you, Sir." I smiled and gave her a silent consent.

"Sir, you have very beautiful hair. I have longer hair but your hair is very silky and lovely. I dream to have such hair." I could not believe what she was saying. I was with a

beautiful girl who had a perfect figure and a cute smile. And she was continuously praising me!

“We ladies in the office like your hair and wish to have hair like yours. Your hair looks so elegant; please don’t cut them any shorter. I always wanted to tell you this but I was not sure how you will react considering your tough personality.” People always like to praise their bosses. I did not take her seriously.

Fortunately, we reached her area and I hoped for some respite from this talkative lovely girl.

“Thank you again, Tapasya! Here is the Satadhar crossroad-now, which way to go?” She directed me to her home. I stopped the car in front of her home.

“I am thankful to you for the lift Sir!” She stood outside the car window.

“You are always welcome!”

“Sir, if you don’t mind, may I invite you inside for dinner?” She was excited to have dinner with her boss.

“I don’t mind but I may not accept the invitation.” Her face fell.

“Sir, it is almost eleven o’clock and you won’t reach home before 11:30 pm. Don’t you think it is a good idea to have dinner at my house?” I thought it was a great idea but something stopped me.

“Sir, I will never tell anybody that you had dinner with me, and I don’t think I am a dangerous vamp.” I realized how within a matter of minutes she has opened up to me. Her offer seemed irresistible.

She was right; she was not looking like a vamp. Actually, I was in no mood to go home and cook. I would have just eaten a sandwich. Every minute I was growing hungrier.

“Okay I will take you up on your offer but I have a condition. The condition is that I will help you in dinner preparation.” She happily accepted the condition.