



Item Code: 951

Participant Code: 113

SUBJECT: HERE TO WHERE.

"ANYWHERE WITH YOU..."

Sitting on the lakeside bench in Alleyway, the place which now I call my home, I looked up at the bright sky and watched two kites one, yellow and blue, and the other, red and green flying up in the sky. I closed my eyes... Ali's voice echoed in my ears, "Anywhere with you..."

I still remember the day thirty years ago, like yesterday, sitting under the shade of the big banyan tree atop of the hill with my hand over Ali's shoulder, "Don't cry Ali." I murmur...

Ali was known as the boy whose mother ran off with a musician. I and Ali has been friends for thirteen years since the day we met at the hill top; Two boys; one, thin and skeleton, the other fleshy and strong. Ali and Ali, "Hey, Mummy's puppy..."

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Ali looked back at the group of boys,

"Don't mind them Ali..."

"Are you scared puppy..? Do you want mummy to feed you?..."

"Don't mind them, There's no use dealing them.."

By the time we enter the class. Ali's eyes were filled with tears, weeping slowly.. It was a daily routine for us, and each time, he would cry...

It was on a fine Sunday morning, we met for first, Ali was sitting under the banyan tree making a kite, I asked him if I could have one too..

I have never flied a kite before.. one word followed the other and soon, we were friends.

I opened my eyes to the ring on my phone...

It was Baba-I took the phone, "won't you come?"

I hesitated to answer. "I'll try?"

There was a minute's pause at the other end.

"I'll be waiting for you." He hung up.

I've always wanted to go back to <sup>my</sup> homeland,

but now, I find it hard to face my past...

"<sup>Anywhere</sup> ~~Anywhere~~ with you Ram..." The words has been haunting me since yesterday, <sup>when</sup> I got <sup>the</sup> call from Baba asking to come back.

I rested my head on the bench. cool air touched my face, as once again, I travelled back in time to the hot summer day in Achuthi.



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"Ram..." Ali was shouting while running up the hill towards me. He was panting heavily... He sat next to me under the shade of the tree. I took a cashew nut from my trousers' pocket and gave it to him. "Are you going?" he asked, still panting. I nod my head. He didn't shake, I saw his eyes fill with tears, for the first time not because of his mother, but me. "Would you like to come with me?" "Can I?" "If you want to... Do you?" "Anywhere with you, Ram... If you are there, I'll come anywhere with you." I laughed... "So you don't want to know where I am going?" "As long as it is with you, 'where' doesn't matter..." Tears were rolling down his cheek. "I wish we could stay together Ali... But you

know, there is no way I could help."

I saw him suppress his tears as he nodded.

"I really wish I could take you with me.."

He bursted out and hugged me tightly.

Twilight was falling, and one by one the houses in the lane were lighted.

I put a hand on his shoulder and patted.

"Don't cry Ali.." my eyes were watery..

"We could still see each other, and one day we could travel together to all your anywherees..."

He clenched me tightly... tears rolled down my cheek, for the first time for Ali..

"Don't you really want to know the name of the place I am going to?"

"He looked at me with his huffy eyes..

"Somewhere sounds much better... It's the only place I know other than Schuthi... what if your place is far than somewhere?"

"Still you could come right?!"

"Yes, yes, I could... We could fly kites together..., I'll make the biggest one for you.."

I nodded., we watched the sun set and wished the day never end., "I'll come back Ali.. For you.. I will.."

I got up, the kites were lying down on the ground. I wiped the tears from my cheek.



