



Topic - IN THE ABSENCE OF ANSWERS

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"Oh Mrs. Sea, give me an answer, won't you?"
pleaded Sana.

The twenty-two year old girl sat on the seashore. A cool wind was rustling the leaves of a palm tree nearby. As she sat, her hijab scarf fell forwards. As she carelessly threw it back over her shoulder, she stared at the sea, one of her best friends.

Sana was distressed. The problem being, her boyfriend Ajay. Both their parents disapproved of their "love" towards each other. But she knew, it wasn't just a phase, they loved each other dearly. And now, she didn't know what to do.



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The seashore was a place ~~her~~ Sana frequented, either with her parents or with Ajay. Mrs. Sea, as she fondly called it, had always been a true friend to her, providing her with answers when she couldn't find one. But now, she seemed to be taking her own time.

Sana put her head in her hands, feeling helpless. She had taken care to sit as close to the sea without ~~get~~ the waves getting her wet. Still, a few minutes later, the water rushed forwards, wetting her feet.

Sana received the answer. The sea had confirmed her love for Ajay. She jumped up.

"I've got it! Thank you, Mrs. Sea!" She exclaimed.

"Mrs. Sea? That's funny." Sana turned to see the source



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of the voice to find a young boy around nine,
building a sandcastle.

"Yeah, I've called the sea that for years now..." she replied.

"That's cool..." he ~~to~~ said.

At that moment, a huge wave came and
swept away the castle, destroying it. Sana felt
sad for the boy.

"Oh no! Maybe try building them farther away from
the sea." Sana advised.

"No, miss. I like building castles close to the water.
That way, it reminds me, each time it breaks,
that I can always build a better, stronger one."

"That's a wonderful concept..." she said.



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"Thank you. I have to go now." he said, beginning to run. "Bye!" he yelled.

"See you!" Sana yelled back. She was now sure of her decision. Dusting the sand off her jeans, she headed home.

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"My girl, why do you want that boy? We can show you better people from our own religion, can't we?" said Abdul, Sana's father.

They were seated on the dining table, eating dinner. Sana's mother, Mariam, was preparing chapatis in the kitchen.

"I don't want anyone else, Papa." she said.

"But that boy is a doctor, isn't he? He won't have



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time to take care of you, Sana." Abdul tried to reason

"You're only saying that because he is Hindu. If he was a Muslim, you wouldn't have a problem with him being a doctor. Stop making lame excuses." She snapped.

"Abdul, it's like that old proverb-" said Mariam, placing a chapati onto Sana's plate, "- 'You can lead a horse to water, but you can't make it drink.' How many boys have come for her hand in marriage? Has she accepted any of them?" she questioned.

"I have eyes only for Ajay." Sana said, quietly.

"That damned Hindu boy again! Why can't you follow the rules for once, girl? Why can't you just marry a Muslim?" Mariam exploded.

Abdul intervened: "Mariam, calm down. Sana, if you



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will not marry that boy. This decision is final." He got up from the dining table.

Sana stayed silent. Later that night, she called Ajay and told him what happened.

"So what do you want to do?" he asked.

"I know it's cliché, but let's run away," she said.

"What?!"

"If you're not ready, it's fine -" she started, but he replied.

"No, no, I am. Just... why all of a sudden?" he was puzzled.

"Let's just say, the sea gave me an answer," Sana chuckled and continued, "Text me when you can arrange a house and the legal documents for marriage, okay?"

"Alright. Good night, then." Ajay hung up.

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Six months later, Sana reopened the topic,



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ready for anything that may come her way.

"IF YOU MARRY THAT BOY, YOU WILL BE FORFEITED BY HIM AND DISOWNED BY US!"

Abdul bellowed.

Once again, Sana stood silent.

The next morning commenced with a scream from Mariam, on reading the letter her daughter left for them, which stated that Sana was leaving to be with Ajay. Paranoid, she begged and begged Abdul to accompany her to Ajay's house, to see if Sana would be there. Abdul refused to budge, and Mariam went alone.

Ajay's parents were also in shock, having read a similar letter from Ajay. Together, they went to the police station to file a complaint. The police found.



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them a day later, but were unable to do anything as they were both of age and had mutual consent.

"Fine, I don't have a daughter anymore." Mariam wailed.

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A year later, Mariam expressed her desire to meet Sana.

"What daughter? I don't have any daughter! If you want to meet her so badly, go alone." Abdul retorted.

The next day, Mariam asked to go and see Sana once again. Abdul yelled, but Mariam carefully noted that his volume was lower. After a week of coaxing, he finally agreed, grumbling.

They piled into the car. Even though Mariam had Sana's address memorized, she noticed that Abdul knew



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exactly where to go. Smiling to herself, she stared out the window.

Soon, they reached Sama's house. It was noon, and the sun blazed over their heads. Mariam walked in the front, but froze when she got to the doorway.

"Go on!" Abdul urged, feeling anxious.

The door was slightly ajar. Mariam knocked, and just then, they heard something, shocking them to the core, one they weren't expecting -- a child's cry.

The next second, Sama came to the door; it hit them like a bolt from the blue. The stunned parents stared at Sama's visibly pregnant belly, and Mariam fainted.



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When Mariam regained her senses, she was being fanned by Sana on one side and Abdul b. mumbling on the other side. Ajay emerged from behind the front door, holding a glass of water, which he handed to Mariam, and a little boy of around five years, ~~in the other~~

"Is that child yours?" Mariam enquired, panting.

"No. Mamma, he's Ajay's nephew, Rohit. His parents passed away in a car accident two months ago, and we've been taking care of him ever since. We ~~do~~ reconciled with Ajay's parents then." Sana quickly added,

"I'm sorry I didn't tell you about this." she pointed to her stomach, "- I wasn't sure how you would react. I was scared. I'm sorry." her words trailed off.

"Oh my daughter, you're a mother now!" Abdul exclaimed and pulled Sana into a tight embrace.



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"I was going to do that..." protested Mariam, and they all laughed together.

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A little later, they all went to the seashore, for a bit. While the boys splashed around in the water, Mariam and Sana sat huddled together in the sand. Sana looked around for the young boy she had seen that day, but he wasn't there. She thanked him silently in her heart, and gazed at the sea.

"My beloved friend, thank you for everything," she thought.

Mariam put an arm around her daughter, and Sana did the same. Resting her head on Mariam's shoulder, she last but not least, she thanked God for providing solutions and solace in the absence of answers, through his creations. Finally, at peace, she closed her eyes.