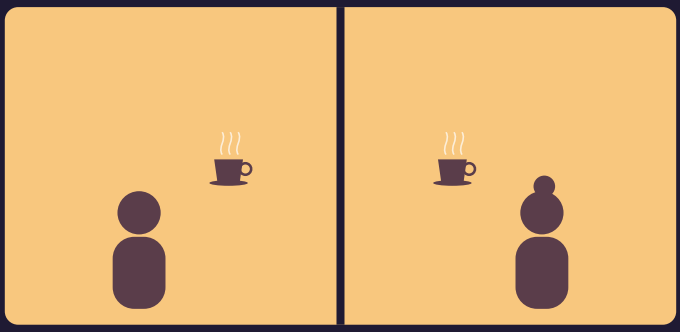
A SHORT STORY

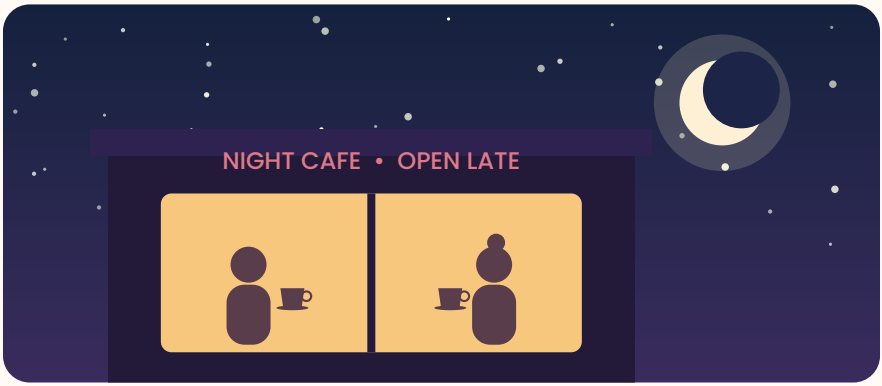
An Undestined *Romance*

The Sleepy Warrior and The Night

by Ritu Goel



momyhood.in



CHAPTER 1

The Sleepy Warrior and The Night

Aarav had been fighting sleep his whole life, until one Friday night, sleep stopped being his enemy.

It wasn't just darkness closing his eyes.

She was soft, warm, and had been waiting for him all day. Every time he fought her, she just whispered, "Why fight something that wants to hold you?"

And for the first time, he let her disturb him.

• • •

He hadn't slept properly in days. Always fighting it, always scrolling, always thinking.

Until Friday.

She was at the corner café he always went to when he couldn't sleep. Same tired eyes, same messy bun, same "I'm fighting sleep too" energy.

"You also in the war against sleep?" he asked.

She – Ira – laughed. "I surrendered years ago. You want to learn how to lose beautifully?" And these words were enough for him to lose his fight

with the pillow.

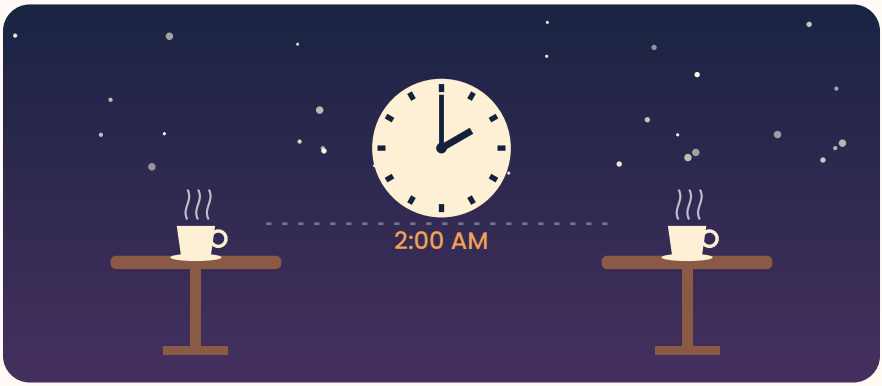
He sat down. And for the first time, being awake at night didn't feel lonely.

Now..... Then...

Every night he looked at his phone, eagerly waiting for it to be 2 AM. The café was about to close and she would come, but neither of them wanted to leave.

Sitting at different tables, they would just stare silently...

Then one night – or probably morning, one may call it.....



CHAPTER 2

Silence Broke

Courage gathered…

“So… same time tomorrow?” she asked.

“I’m done fighting sleep,” he said, “but for you, I’ll stay awake a little longer.”

And she smiled. The kind of smile that makes you forget you were ever tired.

— To be continued when you’re not sleepy?

He waited and waited……

Silence once again broke.

Liar liar, pillow on fire.
Your eyes are literally like “bro, please.”
But okay okay, you’re NOT sleepy. You’re a fully charged warrior.
So what are we doing, Mr Not Sleepy?

Aarav was impressed with these words of Ira’s and said, “Impressive!!”

Ira: “That’s it????”

“Ye… okay, Miss Ye – let’s continue.”

And Ira blushes…. Aarav hesitates.

(Both depart)

• • •

Next morning.

He woke up and his first thought wasn’t coffee. It was her.

He went back to the same café at the same time. She wasn’t there.

He waited. One hour. Two. Three….. and all the while fought the urge to leave.

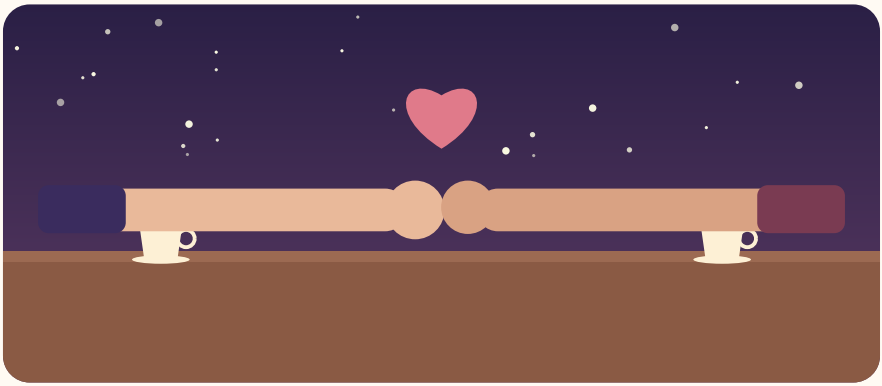
Just when he thought he had imagined her, the door opened – wind in her hair, slightly out of breath.

“Sorry, I actually slept last night,” she said. “You ruined my insomnia.”

He wasn’t listening, just looking at her, confused whether he was angry or he had been missing her….

Holding himself to be thoughtful and realistic…

He grinned. “Good. Let’s be ruined together.”



CHAPTER 3

The Confession

The Move

Third night. Same café. This time they didn't even order. They just had their own table.

"You know what's funny?" he said.

"What?"

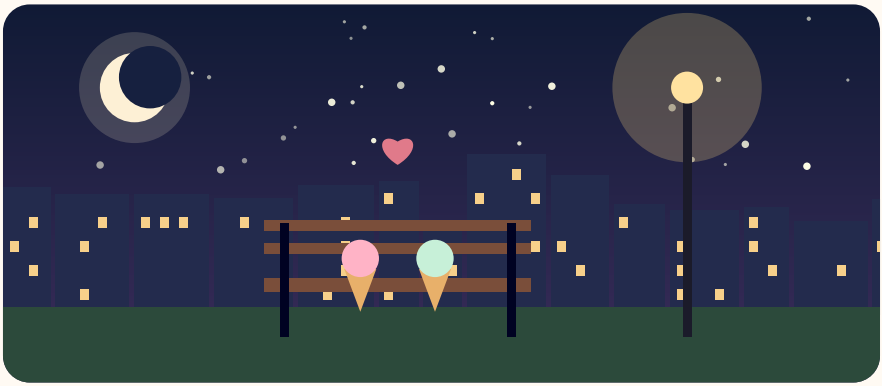
"I spent my whole life fighting sleep because I thought I was missing something. Turns out I was just waiting to be tired with someone else."

She went quiet.

Then she reached across the table, held his hand, and said, "Then stop fighting it. With me."

And somewhere between the cold coffee and the warm hands, romance finally stopped being a story.

It started being theirs.



CHAPTER 4

The First Real Date

“So… What Now?”

A week later.

No café. No “I can’t sleep.” Just two people who had finally figured out how to be awake together.

He picked her up and was nervous. Like, *bad* nervous. Dropped his keys. Twice.

“Are you always this smooth?” she teased.

“Only on days I meet the girl who ruined my insomnia,” he shot back.

They didn’t do anything big. Just walked. Talked. Laughed at dumb stuff. Got ice cream at 11 pm. Sat on a park bench and watched the city go quiet.

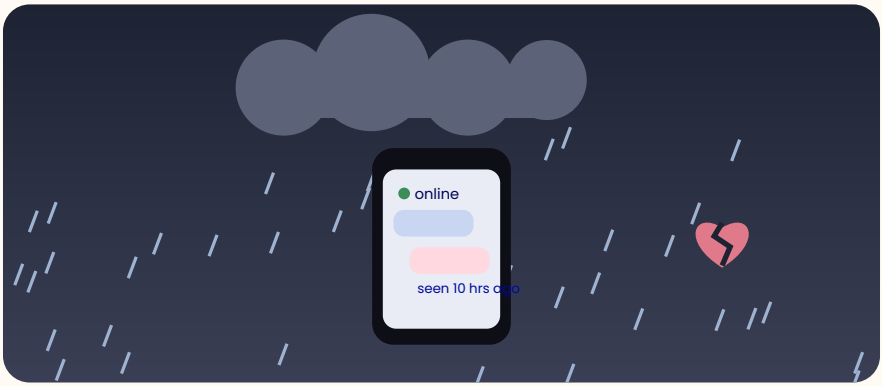
At the end, she stopped at her door.

“So… what now?” she asked.

“Now,” he said, “we stop pretending we’re just ‘night café buddies’.”

She smiled. “Took you long enough, Sleepy Warrior.”

He didn’t fight it. He leaned in.



CHAPTER 5

The Fight

Okay. Buckle up. Drama time.

Two weeks of being perfect. Then reality showed up.

He didn't reply for 10 hours. She saw him online.

The next night at the café, she was already there. But cold. Distant.

"You good?" he asked.

"I'm fine," she said. The classic *I'm not fine* fine.

"Did I do something?"

"You tell me. Too busy?"

He sighed. "Work was hell. My phone died. I passed out."

"And you couldn't tell me after? I thought… you know, I thought you fought sleep. For me."

"I did. I do. But sometimes I just – I crash. I'm human."

Silence. That heavy silence.

She stood up. "Maybe we rushed this. The whole café thing, the romance… maybe it was just late-night talk."

He looked up at her, tired again. But not sleepy-tired. Heart-tired.

“Don’t do that,” he whispered. “Don’t turn us into a ‘just’.”

She left.

He stayed at their table. Awake.



CHAPTER 6

The End

Ouch. Okay. Break-up it is.

He didn't chase her that night. Maybe he should have.

Next day, no text.

The day after, he went to the café. A different waiter. "The girl who used to come with you? She came yesterday. Picked up her stuff. Said she won't be back."

He stared at their table. Empty.

He finally texted her: "Can we talk?"

She replied, hours later: "I think it's better if we don't. You fight sleep, I fight feelings. We're both tired. Let's just leave it as a nice memory."

He typed. Deleted. Typed again. "Okay."

No goodbyes. No closure. Just two people who were once each other's reason to stay awake, now learning how to sleep alone again.

The café still opens at night. The table is still there. But now only one coffee gets cold.

That hit, huh?



The End

Some people are the reason we stay awake.
Some teach us how to sleep again.

A SHORT STORY BY RITU GOEL

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