



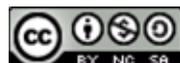
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“Quarantine Love”

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“I am out of pick-up lines but I want to start a conversation” took a moment, message delivered.
What else do you write to a stranger in other time zone?
He turned off his internet, well each byte counts and above all rejection is heart breaking.
A minute passed.
He switched on the internet, refreshed the chat window.
Turned off the internet again.
Seemed as if he was in a loop.
Five times, eight times and goes on.
He crashed on the bed with disappointment just after refreshing it for the last time.
Woke up to Imagine Dragon’s Demon. Dreaming about this stranger all night.
Out of his habit, half opened eyes looking for the phone. Falling in the loop. He got a reply. Eyes wide open, Adrenaline rush moves out of it.
He reads “Haha, not a good way to slide in someone’s DM”.
People say starting a conversation is hard but the thing is keeping a conversation moving is harder.
“What in the Gods name should I say now?” he mumbled to himself while writing and deleting random texts.
“How are you doing? I see I hit the lower bars really quick, Haha.” message delivered.
With the reply time moved slow, slower than he ever witnessed. He had to wait for hours to receive text from her.
“With this presence of mind, you can move bars high-low. I’m impressed and I’m fine. Haha.”
She texted.
All we have are questions when we meet a person for the first time.
A lot of them.
“Annalisa isn’t your name complicated, I can call you by your last name, Brooks if it’s ok with you. Isn’t this hard to say all the time. Like it’s a beautiful name but I am just saying” He said
“haha I’ll take this as a compliment but my friends call me Annie. You can call me Annie too”
She said.
“So, what does that mean are we friends now?” He said
Both chuckled, On this side of the globe to the other.
“Yes” She said and sent a wink emoji along.
Replying in the morning and receiving texts at night was eventually a habit.
“What zone you belong to? I see messages moving pretty slow” message delivered.
“Chicago it is.” She replied

“Well that’s 10.30 hours behind us.” He said

“Indeed” She said.

They started talking from occasionally to frequently. Until a day they crossed the time zone and started talking beyond time.

“What song do you love?” She said

“ummm! Hard question but yes any song that reminds me of you” He mentioned.

“haha that’s cheesy. I am not falling for this.” She insisted.

They shared playlists and touched each other.

They shared movies and imagined each other.

They shared stuff and fell for each other.

But they never said what they felt for each other.

“Last night I saw a shooting star.” He said

“People say if you wish to a shooting star it gets fulfilled” She said

“I heard the same,” He said

“So, Did you wish for anything?” She asked.

“Yes, I certainly did.” He said.

“Do you mind telling me?” She asked out of curiosity.

“I wished I could meet you someday.” He said

Words do touch more than the hands could ever do. She felt love.

He had fire in his emotion and it melted her away.

“Hey can I please facetime you right now?” She said

“Absolutely yes, I always wanted to say this in the first place,” He said.

Where do you run when you ask someone for a video call?

Not for the earphones at least.

Both checked for the nearest mirror possible.

Yes, the front camera.

Both wanted to look good.

She went for her round rim spectacles in which she had collected a lot of compliments.

He quickly brushed his hairs and texted her.

“So, who’s going to call? Ahah”

“Lol, I am waiting for yours” She nervously mentioned.

Both nervous as they were looking at each other for the very first time.

Call connected.

Both blushed.

“You look beautiful than the moon outside.” He exclaimed in nervousness and excitement.

“I was expecting a Hi in the beginning, well this was quick. Thank You.” She said blushing.

“You look red as a tomato, Haha” she said.

“You said you wanted to see me in the first place but why didn’t you mention it?” She questioned.

“I thought you won’t agree” he said.

“Don’t mind but you’re stupid” she said

“Are you going to look at the screen only?” She questioned

“So, are we supposed to say something?” He said sarcastically

Both chuckled.

It was from text to video calls.

“Hey are you still up?” She said in excitement.

“Yes, I’ve been waiting for you, I do this every night” He said

It was word, He was all good with.

“So, what is up?” She said.

“I read some NEWS of a virus outbreak in your city.” he said.

“Yes right, it is some contagious thing. We are scared to be honest authorities told us to stay home” she said.

“Please take precautions. Stay home as much possible and take care of yourself.” He said out of care.

“Thank You and I’ll.” She mentioned.

“So, what are you doing right now?” He questioned.

“Just working with some papers and creating the best out of it. I have to work on my hobbies in this amount of time.” She said.

“What exactly? Writing or origami?” He questioned further.

“I am writing, Calligraphy to be precise” She mentioned.

“Aha! That’s great and there is me with no hobby lol.” He said.

“I am doing this from a very young age. Not bragging but I write good, haha” She flexed

“You’re making me jealous now” He said

“But can I learn this too?” He questioned

“Yes, you can but you need a good teacher like me” She texted with a wink emoji

“Yeah teach me master” He said

She suggested him to buy few calligraphy pens set with different nib size.

He was not even sure that these tools existed but eventually they had to.

He placed an order with the same set of specification she told him in the first place.

Each day poured water to the flower of their bond.

It was growing stronger and beautiful.

“Hi!!” He texted.

“Hi there” She replied

“Just letting you know that I ordered the calligraphy set.” He said in excitement

“That’s nice. Make sure you’ve some A4 sheets too ;-)” She replied

“I can’t wait to get my hands on. I hope you’re a good teacher” He said

“Yes, we will see.” She said with a wink emoji

“Anyways I have to go. Talk to you later. Bye” She replied

He played some songs in the background.

With it he slept in no time.

“Hi there” He texted her the next day.

He started waiting for her reply with it he played songs from jazz to pop, he slept.

Only good thing about that day was the order, he received it. What he didn't receive was her texts.

So, all he did was message her again with excitement.

“Hi there.”

“I just received my order today. To be honest I don't know how to work with it. So, yes I'll be waiting”

With the rhythm of the songs he drowned in sleep;

“Hi there???” He messaged

He was excited to work with it, this thing made him impatient all he could do was think about things that don't even exist.

He was having a lot of negative thoughts in one way or the other.

“She must have someone in her life, someone more important than me.” He mumbled

People, they come easily in life.

People, they go easily from life.

But staying is the hardest.

“We never talked about anything else other than our own stuff and she is hiding all this.” he thought.

He started assuming things on his own. Whether they made sense at that time or not.

“We were not strangers at least. She could've told me all this” he said to himself

Feeling left out is the worse after jealousy. The negative thoughts turned him all angry.

“I shouldn't be ignored like this. I deserve to know what is happening between them” Saying this to himself

He stopped texting her and his anger helped him pull it for a few days.

He had his days normal but deep down he was thinking about her.

It was all for a week and so.

His emotions changed.

Angry to Concerned.

“This is not a time to stay angry on her. She might be in some trouble I guess”

He said this to himself and started texting her.

“Hi” Message sent

A couple of messages sent

Another night

And another day

He heard nothing from her.

“What possibly could be the problem?” He questioned himself.

He never imagined a day without her messages but now he had to live a week without her buzz.

One to one and a half week
One and a half week to two.
He couldn't carry his ego any further.
"Hey Annie!!"
"Where are you?". Message sent.
He was worried and all he could think was texting her, calling her.
As he was sitting and eating a NEWS title caught his eyes.

DEATH TOLL RISES TO 15,879 IN CHICAGO AND 75000+ AFFECTED

It was just the moment when the glass fell from his hand. Same as the panic from his head to whole body. His mind changed states from on and off and back off and on. If only his brain could work, he would have found a solution. But brain had some other plans.

Opened his eyes and he saw himself lying on a hospital bed. A nurse came and told him because of panic he fell and few other medical terms. All he could remember was that he was trying to find a way to get in contact with her.

Something struck his mind. He thought he should get in contact with someone in her friend-list and ask them about her. This is possibly the best he could do to kill this distance.

His search was on. He went through her list and added the first person to the last person in a hope that someone out in this ocean would know where his water drop is.

There was nothing he could do, to fly straight to her. Only thing that's flying was time.

Few requests accepted, he started writing to them.

"Hi, actually I haven't heard from Annie lately do you know how's she doing? and where is she?" message sent.

Not all people reply to strangers and not all people give up on each other.

Sent this again to other set down the list and he waited yet again as wait was his only friend here.

Phone buzzed; message received.

"Hi there, I haven't heard from her either. Will let you know if I get any sort of update from her side." some stranger replied this.

Yet another day passed with disappointment, sadness and heart break.

So, when he was in all his senses, he saw a Brooks as last name of a user. He could possibly see a connection. He gathered words and texted her

"Hi, I know this is weird that I'm texting you but I am really worried and I haven't heard anything from Annie lately. Last time we talked she told me that she had to shift somewhere else and but I heard nothing from her after few days of talking. If you have any idea where she is and how is she please tell me." message sent.

This message was sadder with each line. He was pouring his emotions in it.

He crossed his fingers in hope for a positive reply but who knew what was in the box for him.

She was her elder sister.

“Hello, I am saying this with a very heavy heart that it was just last night she was with us. She got affected somehow and really, they couldn’t save her. She was in isolation for 2-3 weeks and it was just last night.” she exclaimed in sadness.

His negative thoughts connected together and he was in all tears.

He couldn’t stand properly;

“She was sick for past 2-3 weeks and she didn’t even tell me.” He said to himself

He had given her a part in his life and she didn’t feel telling him such a big thing.

She ended everything on her own terms.

He was now sad and angry that she stole from him the last good bye.

In all anger he threw his phone on the wall he broke down on his bed and started sobbing.

All he could think about was her and how all this started, beautiful moments flashed in front of him.

Between all this mess he was going through her sister sent him another message that he didn’t read.

“She had a letter written for you and it’s packed, I didn’t know what to do with it. Only thing she told me was that he will text you, I am sure she was talking about you. I’m glad you did. She never talked about anyone like she did for you. Please text me your address I’ll send this to you” she said.