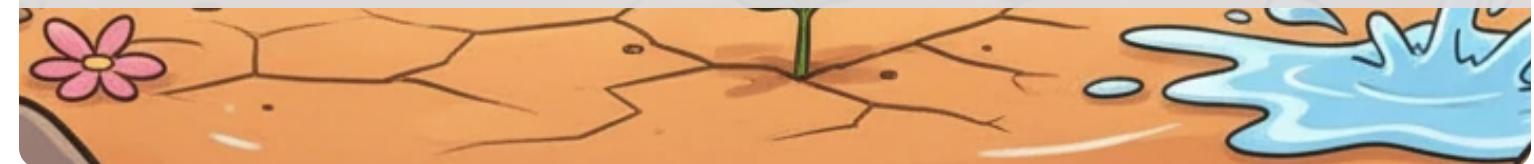




Rain in the Desert

Bangalore days





Arjun, a whirlwind of nervous energy, meticulously smoothed his linen pants and checked his hair one last time. He booked an auto, his heart thumping like a drum, eager yet slightly terrified for the much-awaited meeting. The clock on the wall seemed to tick extra loudly, amplifying his excitement for the afternoon ahead.



He arrived at Zudio earlier than planned, trying to look casual as he ambled through the aisles. Arjun pretended to browse, even calling a friend to pass the time, all while secretly peeking towards the entrance. Playful clothes hangers seemed to wink at him, sharing in his secret anticipation.



Suddenly, she appeared, a vision on a bright yellow Rapido bike taxi, her white top with leaf designs fluttering gently. A blue surgical mask covered her face, but her tied-up hair and cream-colored shawl gave her an air of quiet elegance. Arjun's heart skipped a beat as he saw her through the glass, about to dial his number.



Quick as a flash, Arjun stepped outside, a wide, genuine smile spreading across his face, leaving no room for awkwardness. He waved a friendly greeting, feeling a warmth spread through him as they met face-to-face. The city sounds seemed to fade into a gentle hum around them.



Inside Zudio, Arjun couldn't help but grin at his reflection in every mirror, feeling light and happy. She led him to the girls' section, carefully looking at clothes but deciding not to spend too much. They shared a knowing glance, realizing a shopping spree wasn't on the cards today.



With a shared laugh, they abandoned the clothing mission and set off towards the famous food street. The thought of delicious treats replaced any lingering shopping desires. A playful arrow sign above them seemed to point directly to their next adventure.



Crossing the chaotic Bangalore road was a true adventure, with Arjun bravely signaling vehicles to stop. Inside, he was a bundle of nerves, but on the outside, he wore a confident smile. Cars with exaggerated, surprised faces seemed to screech to a halt just for them.



Walking along the bustling footpath, she shared stories of living alone in Bangalore for three years, her scooter traveling by train, and her practical cooking habits. Arjun listened intently, charmed by her independence and candidness. The street vendors' calls formed a lively backdrop to their conversation.



They turned a corner, and there it was: the vibrant, aromatic food street, stretching out before them like a delicious dream. Stalls overflowed with colorful snacks, and the air buzzed with happy chatter and tantalizing smells. It was a feast for the senses, a true urban wonderland.



A shared smile lit up their faces as they gazed at the bustling food street, a perfect end to their first meet. The promise of hot tea and tasty treats hung in the air, a sweet punctuation mark to a day filled with unexpected joy. This was indeed, rain in the desert.