

I FIND PEACE IN HER NIGHTS

- By Kshiteej Kabra

“And there you are...” I whispered, pulling her into an embrace, a hug so tight it felt as though I could shield her from the world. Her bag clung to her shoulder, a silent witness to her day’s battles. She looked weary—her face etched with exhaustion, irritation, and the unspoken weight of countless emotions.

Her sigh escaped like a soft plea. **“Wait... Can we just not do... today?”**
I teased, grinning. **“Oh, come on. Of course, we can.”**

“No, Kshiteej,” she countered, her voice edged with fatigue. **“Not today. I’m so tired...”**

But I didn’t listen.

Without hesitation, I swept her off her feet, my arms instinctively wrapping around her delicate waist, lifting her as though she weighed nothing more than a whisper. Her hands reflexively grasped at my shoulders as I carried her, her tired eyes closed in a surrender to the exhaustion that had taken over her body. The weight of the world seemed to rest on her shoulders, but as I held her, I could feel the heaviness of it fading, replaced by the gentleness of the moment. Her face nestled against my chest, and for a second, I paused to savor the warmth of her breath against my skin.

With each step, I made my way towards the room, the soft swish of my steps breaking the silence that had settled over us. The air felt still, save for the rhythmic sound of my heart beating steadily beneath her. She leaned into me, comforted by the security of being in my arms. I gently nudged the door open with my foot, and before I could even think, I whispered, **“We’re almost there, Baby. Just a little longer.”**

“Arre, why don’t you understand?” she started, frustration spilling over. But the moment we crossed the threshold, she fell silent—not startled by any grand gesture, but by the simplicity. The room was untouched, just as we had left it. It wasn’t adorned with lights or petals.

“You said we’d decorate together,” she murmured, a pang of guilt in her voice.

“And we will,” I replied, since we had planned to decorate our room together, but her hectic days had stolen her time.

I handed her a bundle of clothes, soft and familiar.

“Here, your shorts and top. The maid washed your nightdress, but it didn’t dry in this cold. So, I folded these and got them ready, and” I added, with a knowing smile, **“I bought your new**

face wash—it's by the sink. I know you're tired but wash up. You'll only complain next week about the pimple if you don't."

She scowled, half-amused, half-annoyed, but did as I asked, disappearing into the bathroom. Ten minutes later, she emerged, her face freshly cleansed and her eyes heavy with weariness.

Her tiredness was palpable, and the weight of her exhaustion lingered in her eyes, but I could see her soft smile – the smile of knowing that finally, she can fall, lay, and sleep on the bed. However, as she approached the bed, ready to collapse, I caught her hand, pulling her close.

Her breath hitched as I reached for a loose strand of her hair, my fingers brushing against the silky strands. She held her breath as I gently tucked it behind her ear, our usual prelude before each kiss. Then I repeated the gesture behind her other ear.

It was a simple gesture, but it was our unspoken ritual. With a delicate touch, I used to cup her face in my hands, her eyes locked on mine. Then, she instinctively used to rise on her toes, lifting her heels to match my height, and in that moment, everything used to feel suspended in time. There was a knowing between us—this was how we always began, with a shared smile and the soft press of our lips against each other, lingering in a passionate kiss that spoke volumes.

However today, just as I moved my fingers through her strands, she whispered, **"Not today, Kshiteej. I'm exhausted..."**

But before she could finish, I placed my finger softly on her lips. **"Shh. No words. Not now."** There was a tenderness in my voice that stilled her protests.

"Why waste your breath when I'm here to take care of everything?"

I retrieved her night cream from my pocket, dabbing it gently onto her cheeks, my fingers tracing the faint shadows of her day. Kneeling before her, I massaged lotion into her tired feet.

"Ahhh, that tickles!" she exclaimed, breaking into a reluctant laugh.

I chuckled. **"I know. But look at that—you're smiling now. You look pretty when you smile."**

She gazed at me, her annoyance melting into affection.

"By the way," I added, keeping her leg cradled in my lap, **"I've put your phone on charge. I'll unplug it in an hour. Your laptop is backing up and charging, so it'll be ready for tomorrow. And your watch—I'll charge it in the morning. Oh, and for the casual Friday tomorrow, I've set out your blue denim and pink shirt."**

She sighed, a mix of exasperation and adoration. **"Kshiteej?"**
"Yes?"

“Why do you do all this?”

“Do what, love?”

The little things—my nightdress, my outfits, my accessories. Why?”

I raised an eyebrow. **“Don’t you like it?”**

“I do... But it’s always you who does these things.”

“Simple,” I teased. **“Tomorrow onwards, you start doing it for me.”**

She laughed, shaking her head. **“Maybe I will... someday.”**

I helped her settle into bed, pulling the quilt snugly around her, just the way she liked. Turning off the lights, I slid in beside her.

She settled beside me, asking with a tired sigh, **“Can you open your arms wide, please?”** Her voice held the weight of a thousand unspoken words, a silent request for safety and warmth.

Though I wanted to know every unspoken word that yearned to escape her lips, I understood—perhaps, not today.

I stretched my arms wide, ready to enfold her in a comforting embrace. She nestled her head on my arm, her face facing mine, her breath soft against my skin.

For a while, we stayed in that position, but after some time, I felt her shifting, fidgeting in search of comfort. I heard the subtle rustling of the sheets as she tried to find the right angle. My arm, though warm and protective, wasn’t quite the pillow she needed. And after a few moments of restless movement, I could see it in her eyes—she was uncomfortable.

She took a deep breath, and I gently stroked her hair, whispering, **“It’s okay, Baby.”**

I shifted to face her, my voice steady and reassuring. **“Your comfort matters more than anything else right now. If you need to sleep looking the other way, that’s okay. I’ll still be here.”**

Her gaze softened, and she let out a little sigh of relief. She shifted once more, her body finding solace in a new position, this time with her back to me. But even with the distance, I could still feel the warmth of her presence. I smiled, knowing that her comfort was the only thing I cared about. I wrapped my arm around her waist, pulling her closer, as the room fell into silence again.

Minutes later, when she stirred, she caught me watching her.

“Why are you staring at me like that?” she asked softly.

“Because,” I said, brushing a kiss across her forehead, **“I love seeing you sleep peacefully.”**

Her lips curved into a shy smile as she leaned in, placing a gentle kiss on mine. **“Good night, baby.”**

“Good night, princess,” I whispered, tucking the quilt tighter around us. And in no time, she was fast asleep.

As the night deepened, a chilly breeze blew through the window, and the sound of it whispered through the room, carrying with it the coolness of the winter night. The air was crisp, and it felt as though the world was held in a gentle embrace by the wind.

Her breath, soft and slow, began to quicken. It was as if the tiredness and exertion of her day were slowly seeping out of her body. Her chest rose and fell with each breath, and I could almost feel the rhythm of it blending with the flow of the cold breeze. It was as though the warmth of her body, her day’s fatigue, was diffusing into the night, dissolving in the air like the process of osmosis.

She was finally at peace, and I could feel the weight of her exhaustion leaving her—fading into the stillness of the night, just like the last remnants of warmth slipping away with the breeze.

I watched her, utterly mesmerized by the simplicity of the moment. There was no need for words, no need for grand gestures. Just the quiet of her presence beside me, the warmth of her breath mingling with the cool air, and the steady beat of my heart as I lay beside her. This—this peace, this serenity—was everything.

As the hours deepened, a chill cold crept through the room, weaving its way beneath the quilt. Her breath grew warmer against my chest, her body shifting slightly as if instinctively searching for heat. Without waking, she inched closer, her hand brushing against my chest, curling there in search of solace.

The faint fragrance of her hair wafted toward me, a comforting mix of her favorite shampoo and conditioner. Beneath it, however, lingered the earthy, faintly salty scent of her sweat—a quiet reminder of the day’s stress that had worn her down.

Her closeness made my space tighter, leaving me slightly breathless, but I adjusted without hesitation. Sliding my arm beneath her, I pulled the quilt tighter around us, letting the blend of her fragrances wrap around me like a memory I didn’t want to let go of.

Moments later, she turned away, taking the blanket with her, leaving me exposed to the crisp air.

I shivered and reached out, tugging gently to reclaim my share of the quilt. But even in her sleep, her grip tightened, clutching the quilt as though it were a lifeline.

“Even in sleep, you’re stubborn,” I murmured, a soft chuckle escaping my lips.

Relenting to her silent insistence, I slid closer, wrapping my arm over her and sharing the little warmth we had. The faint smell of her hair drew me even closer to her. Despite the chill, I found myself smiling, content in her presence.

As the room fell quiet once more, she shifted again, turning towards me, and burrowing her face against my chest. For a moment, her skin brushed against the edge of the chain I wore around my neck. She stirred slightly, the small sting of the metal waking her just enough to seek comfort.

Her hand sought mine, her fingers lightly grazing until I entwined them with my own. I kissed the top of her head and whispered, **“Sorry, Baby.”**

Her breath softened again, her small movement settling into an unspoken forgiveness, and my heart swelled at how much trust and love she carried, even in her unconsciousness.

Sometime in the quietest hours of the night, she stirred abruptly. Her body tensed, her breath quickened, and a faint tremor ran through her. **“No... please don’t...”** she mumbled in her sleep, her voice trembling with an edge of fear. The words were fragmented but carried the unmistakable weight of distress. Her brow furrowed deeply, and her hands clenched the edge of the quilt as though it were her shield against something dangerous.

I immediately reached out, cupping her face with both hands, my thumbs brushing softly against her cheeks. **“Hey, hey,”** I whispered, my voice low but steady, trying to anchor her in the present. **“It’s just a dream. I’m here.”**

Her eyes fluttered open, glistening with the remnants of her nightmare. For a moment, she looked around, disoriented, her gaze darting across the room until it landed on me. **“It was... something... something bad chasing me,”** she murmured, her voice shaky and barely audible. **“I was running...I was lost.”**

I pulled her closer, cradling her against my chest as I ran my fingers through her hair in soothing strokes. **“Shh... it’s over now,”** I murmured into her ear. **“Nothing’s chasing you. I’m right here, Baby. You’re safe with me.”**

I felt her body relax slowly, the tension melting away as my arms tightened around her. I pressed a soft kiss to her temple and began humming a melody we both loved—one that always brought her comfort. Her breathing steadied, and I felt her fingers lightly grip my shirt, as if holding on to me made the fears dissipate entirely.

“Whenever you’re scared, just remember,” I whispered, my lips brushing her forehead, **“No matter what, I’ll always be here to find you. Even in your dreams.”**

She exhaled deeply, a quiet sigh of relief, and her head settled back against my chest. The nightmare seemed to fade into the stillness of the night as she slipped back into a peaceful slumber. For the rest of the night, I held her close, a silent promise etched in every beat of my heart: no harm would ever reach her—not even in her dreams.

As the morning broke softly over the horizon, the first light crept through the curtains, painting the room in hues of gold and rose. She stirred again, this time curling into herself, her legs brushing against mine. The faint contact sent an unexpected shiver through me, a warmth that left me momentarily aroused.

For a fleeting moment, a thought surfaced—a desire to kiss her awake, to hold her close, and to make her blissfully tired again, the kind of tired that would make her sleep away the entire day in my arms. The thought made me chuckle softly to myself. Instead, I reached out gently, brushing a stray strand of hair from her serene face.

“Looks like someone had a peaceful sleep through the night, eh?” I teased; my voice laced with warmth.

She smiled, her voice tender as she replied, **“Just because someone was there beside me, taking care of me throughout the entire night!”**

I grinned, leaning closer. **“And what will this someone of yours get as his reward?”**

She tilted her head playfully. **“What does this someone of mine want as his reward?”**

Without hesitation, I whispered, **“I want you.”**

Her cheeks flushed as she teased back, **“Aha, for that, you’ll need to be around for a lot more nights!”**

I matched her playful tone, my smile widening. **“Done! Give me all your nights and let me wake you every morning with a smile.”**

She blushed deeper, the rosy hue of her cheeks matching the morning light. Then, with a shy yet mischievous glint in her eyes, she murmured, **“That, you’ll surely get. But for now, I want to give you this...”**

She stretched slightly, her lips curling into a soft, endearing smile before leaning closer. Her lips met mine in a tender, lingering kiss, a gentle whisper of affection that sent warmth flooding through me. As she pulled back, her voice was a delicate melody against the quiet.

“Good morning, Kshiteej.”

I smiled, savoring the moment as I pulled her into a brief embrace, my lips brushing against her temple. **“Good morning, Sunshine.”**

- *That’s me, KRK, signing off!*