

## **It Takes Courage**

Aarti, a beautiful yet simple, dedicated and hardworking girl, worked as a Personal Assistant to Jivan, an upcoming, innovative and an ambitious businessman. A few months after having come to know each other, they were head over ears in love. Both, their work and love for one another were blossoming. And two years later, the Church bells rang as Aarti and Jivan made their final commitment to make their bond even stronger, through the sacrament of marriage.

They now lived together under the same roof. The business was now flourishing and Jivan moved heaven and earth to climb the steps of success. He had a big dream of becoming very rich. To achieve this, they both worked hard. They were mature enough to balance their blooming career and love life very well.

One fine day, as Jivan was sipping his coffee, Aarti came out of the bathroom all excited and hugged him tight, “Vow Jivan! I just can’t believe it. Finally! It’s the fruit of our love.”

Jivan didn’t have even the foggiest idea of what Aarti was saying. So he asked her what she meant.

“Dumbo, you’re gonna be a father!” Aarti said shyly and kissed him.

“What?! Tell me what you’ve said is not true? I mean, how? ... Why now?” Jivan looked all alarmed.

“What nonsense, dear. It is our first child to make our holy family complete,” Aarti explained to him.

There was absolute silence for a long time. Jivan walked up and down in the room and finally, breaking the silence, he said, “Look Aarti, I don’t know what you feel, but I’m not ready to shoulder this responsibility. You very well know that the business is just coming up and we are not very rich either to give our child all the luxuries I’d thought of. It’s too early.”

“What do you mean?” she questioned him straight.

“Nothing, I’m only saying it’s too early to have a child.”

“So what do I do now?” Aarti asked him all worried and quiet disappointed.

“Abort it. That’s all!”

“I think you’re not in your proper senses. I don’t think you mean it. Do you?”

“Yes, I do. And I’m serious about it. I just don’t understand why you can’t see things straight.” And he walked out to go to work.

The fruit of their love had become a bone of contention between the two. There was a great struggle going on within Aarti. She didn’t know how to react or respond to Jivan. On one side it was her husband whom she loved more than anything in the world and on the other, her conscience - the promise made to God on their marriage day. There was a great tension pulling her on both sides. But still she hoped against hope that things would fall into place. She felt she could convince Jivan.

Jivan, on the other hand, now began to spend more time in the office. He dedicated himself completely to work. He would speak the bare minimum to Aarti. After working the whole day, to calm down his nerves, he took up to drinking. The house that once resounded with laughter, happiness and love, now had a terrifying silence with tensions increasing day by day. Unfortunately, one night in his state of drunkenness he blurted out, “If you think I’m gonna change my mind, its wrong. I still stand by my word. If I’m important to you, abort the child or else the door is open to leave my house.”

Aarti just could not believe her ears. She was struck dumb with the drastic change business had made in Jivan’s attitude towards her. Still, she loved him very much, but she was afraid to answer her conscience at the same time. Aarti had to go through this trauma for months together and day by day it became worse. There was not the slightest of hope in Jivan’s changing his mind. She had tried hard but all her attempts had ended in smoke.

One night Aarti sat before the altar, with tear-filled eyes and cried bitterly, “Why should this happen to me?” She was frustrated and bitterly upset with Jivan. She did not know what to do next, when suddenly she felt a tiny voice speak within her, “Mamma, I can feel your fears, anxieties, sorrows, sufferings and pains. I know it is a difficult choice to make between Daddy and me. Yet Mamma, I’d love to live just to tell you how much I love you and what you mean to me. Please let me live.”

And as Aarti listened to the tiny voice speak full of love, she had made up her mind. With her bag and baggage, she left the house for good. She braced herself to face the inevitable.

She faced it all with courage and vowed to move forward. She found a job for herself and a new place to live. She worked hard to make ends meet. She knew that she had to rough it out to support her child and it would not be easy at all. All her friends stood by her in the wise decision she had made.

It was the ninth month and she was still working. One day in the afternoon, when Aarti was working in the office, she began to get labour pains. Her friends rushed her to the hospital and were standing out as she was admitted.

An hour later, the red light went off and everyone heard a squeaky cry. Minutes later a nurse came out to announce: “Congrats! It’s a baby girl.”

Meanwhile Jivan received a text from Aarti’s friends saying – “*The baby girl is just like you!*” – His eyes welled up with tears and his heart with remorse. He could not face the bitter reality that he had been blinded by ambition and had been so disgusting. At once he rushed to the hospital.

After a little while, Aarti and her child were shifted to their room in the maternity ward. An innocent angel with a cute face was fast asleep. Aarti could not stop admiring her. She saw a figure standing by the door and, as she looked up, she could not believe her eyes. It was Jivan.

Jivan came and sat besides Aarti and gazed deeply into her eyes with tears rolling from his own and said, “Aarti, my love, I’m really sorry. I always wanted to

give you happiness. I never thought I would one day leave you in the lurch to suffer. Forgive me if you can, dear. But you've shown indomitable courage and stood by the truth."

Aarti was overcome with elation on seeing the transformation in Jivan. She placed his palm into hers and caressing it with the other hand said, "It's alright, all of us falter. We are human after all." She wiped his tears and looking at the baby, said "Our daughter looks perfectly like her father."

"Sure, she does." Said Jivan and kissing the forehead of the child added, "But I pray that she gets the virtues of her mother."

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