

It was a hard day at the office, with people throwing jibes at him and irritating the hell out of him. He boarded the bus as he did everyday and-
Ugh. Why doesn't this guy take his hand off me?
He felt his face go red. His breathing was back to normal only after the stranger had decided that somebody else had a more comfortable shoulder.

"Ticket! Ticket! Ticket! Ticket!"

"I took mine," he said even though he knew that the bus conductor was not shouting at him. But why did this guy have to shout it right into his ears?

He pressed the familiar calling bell - with a little red light - that he had been ringing every evening after work for the past few years. Nobody opened.
A second press. Nothing. Not even the scraping of a chair.
A third press. Longer this time. He cursed under his breath as he waited. Where the hell was she?

The sudden noise of footsteps. She was running. It became louder and closer-

"I'm so-"

"How long shall I wait for your arrival, madam?"

Eyes fixed on the floor, she opened the door wide and let her husband in.

As the cold water rushed all over his body, he wondered why he had been so rude to her. He switched off the shower and thought. She might have been in the washroom. He shouldn't have said that after all.

That night as he lay next to his sleeping wife, regret flooded him. No, he hadn't apologized. It would feel awkward and he didn't know how to do it. He'd buy her something instead. But was it enough for all that she had to go through because of him?

A little boy cowering in fear as his father thundered at his mother for serving the dinner late. His father's sound becoming louder and louder, his mother's sobs in the background. He woke up sweating, the third time that night. No, he didn't want to be his father. But was it too late?

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A beautiful Thursday night. She had said she would be home late from office that day. He straightened the bright red flower in the vase, only to see it fall on its side the very next moment. Turning on the fairy lights, he looked at his own reflection in the mirror and smiled a nervous smile. Just the right time to give her the present. He opened the case and looked at the necklace studded with rubies for the hundredth time that

evening. Perfect.

After discarding hundreds of ideas on how to ultimately hand over the gift, he simply placed the case on the table for her to see when she turned.

"Oh." A pause. He looked up. Didn't she like it? "WOW!!!"

He heaved a sigh of relief and smiled.

"But when did you-? I mean why? I- I don't know what to-". She made no sense other than that she had loved it.

"Did you like it?" he asked, knowing full well what her answer would be.

"Of course, it's perfect. It's the best piece of ornament I've ever seen!"

"Glad."

"When did you-"

His phone rang. He gestured that he'll be back in a minute and turned, answering the call.

"WHAT?" His Junior had forgotten to submit the work which had to be sent to the boss that evening.

"What the hell do you mean by you forgot? Just get lost, ok. Next day, steer clear of me, Lawrence. Stay the hell away from me or you're done for!" He had spent too many hours on it. Red hot anger brewed within him. And he made no attempt to contain it within himself.

"Stop cooking up tales. So what if your daughter had a program that day? Does a primary school annual day sound more important to you than this?" He felt so much superior to the other man and yes, stronger.

She smiled as he turned to face her after cutting the call. And when he saw the tears in her eyes, he took them to be shed out of happiness.

And that night too he knew that his shouting had ruined the moment. Was she actually crying? He had no idea. She always said he wasn't understanding. But what could he do? He tried his best. Well, at least he tried a bit.

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The shopping mall was more crowded than usual. Her red top went well with the ruby necklace he had gifted her. She looks very happy, he thought. She was even humming very softly. Maybe she was happy that they had at last earned some quality time together. He was just as happy about-

Thud. Somebody had run so fast by him that he had been shoved aside by the stranger.

"Watch where you are going. Hey you! Come back here!"

"I'm sorry, sir. I'm very sorry. I'm in a hurry. My son-"

"Sorry? That's it? And everything's alright?"

"Sir... Please listen to me-"

He raised a fist to silence the stranger. Just as he did with his wife. It worked all the time. He felt powerful, as if he was in control. He didn't know that he was too weak that he couldn't even control his own emotions.

People had gathered. Some to watch, some to pacify the angry young man. And as he jerked them away, he saw something out of the corner of his eye. He saw his wife look at him and shudder. He froze.

The crowd had ebbed away, muttering amongst themselves and some even telling others how the guy had knocked over the angry young man in his hurry, causing some others to fall as well. The stranger had apologized again and rushed away in the opposite direction. He turned to his wife and as he walked close to her, he felt she was trying to walk a bit apart. Was he imagining it or was his wife afraid of him?

The shudder and the fear he saw in his wife's eyes seemed very familiar. As if he had been seeing it from his childhood. But yes, he had been seeing it since then. Only then the frightened eyes were different and he wasn't the reason, he had watched it from the corner. But here, he had become the reason. No, this wasn't right.

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After parking the car across the street from the pinkish red building, he sat drumming his fingers on the steering wheel. The road beyond was too uninteresting to look at for more than a few minutes.

Why wasn't she here yet? What was it that they did this importantly at the parlor? They were getting late for the movie.

After a few more unrhythmic drummings on the steering wheel, he picked up his phone and dialled her for the fifth time in the last ten minutes.

"CELIN!" He shouted into the phone as soon as she picked up.

And as always, she shuddered. She forgot everything and shuddered. She didn't see anything. She didn't even notice the red truck that was hurtling towards her.

A car was shooting at rocket speed and the driver was thinking furiously, angrily. Why weren't they answering his call? An angry growl was slowly taking birth as he vented his feelings on the accelerator.

What was that young man doing in the middle of the road? Move away, blockhead.

SCREECH.

They said the man was running towards his wife who had been hit by a truck just then. She had died on the spot. If he had slowed down a bit, at least the man would have been alive. If only he had not taken out his anger on the accelerator. If only he had control over his temper. If only...