

*From the author of
Lemon Girl and Dream's Sake*

HAPPINESS LIES WITHIN



JYOTI ARORA

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By: Jyoti Arora

Once upon a time, there was a miserable man. Yes, he was miserable, totally, utterly miserable. Nothing he had was of any good, as it seemed to him. He was healthy, but not good looking. He had a job, but his earning was not up to his deserving. He had a home, but it was too small. He had a wife, but she could never sympathise with him. He had two kids, and he considered them useless idiots. In short, life had given him nothing good, and he was truly miserable. So miserable was he that even God had to look down and take notice.

‘What ails you, dear child?’ He asked the miserable man.

‘My life in itself is an ailment, Lord,’ the man replied. ‘I have never ever had anything that could make me truly happy.’

‘Life is an opportunity, dear child, not an ailment. It is a chance given to you to gain wisdom and create joy and happiness for yourself and others,’ said the Almighty.

‘That is all very well to say, Lord, but very hard to remember when all life brings to you is misery. Bless me with perfect happiness, O Lord!’ urged the man.

‘That I cannot do, child. You must bear the sorrows and travails that life has marked as your share,’ said God.

‘One month, can’t you at least make me perfectly happy for one month? If only I could have everything good, everything perfect for even one month, just one month. I would then know what real happiness is. If I am truly, perfectly happy even for one month, I will tolerate the rest of my miserable life. There would at least be the memories of my one perfect month to gladden my heart with,’ said the miserable man.

‘Your wish is granted, child. You will have everything perfect for one month. Go, and find your true happiness.’ So saying, God vanished from the man’s sight, and the man’s dreams and desires unfolded. His home turned into a mansion of dreams, he became the most handsome and healthy man in the world, his wife obeyed his every desire, and his two kids became as wise as sages. There was no dearth of money, or food, or the luxuries of life.

When the month ended, God again appeared before the man and asked, ‘So, child, have you found happiness? How has your month been?’

‘Happiness? I have never been more miserable than I have been in the past month!’ cried the man.

‘Why?’ asked God. ‘Wasn’t everything perfect?’

‘Yes,’ said the man.

‘Then why didn’t it make you happy?’

‘Because I kept on thinking the happiness won’t last, and that made me even more miserable,’ the man replied.

And so the man had wasted away even his one month of perfection.

‘You had a most wonderful divine gift in your hand, and yet you wasted it away because of your own foolishness. Live a month of misery now, and let that teach you a lesson,’ said God before vanishing away.

Bitter days fell upon the miserable man. His good health left him, and he became a cripple. His home vanished from his sight, along with his wife and kids. A bitter storm bellowed up. It picked up the man and threw him in the middle of a barren desert. The sun beat down hard on him but there was not a shade to be found. He walked on and on in search of a settlement. Wherever his feet took him, there was only barren land as far as he could see. Hunger gnawed at his stomach and thirst burned his throat. Not a morsel nor a drop of water was to be had.

Far and wide he wandered, half out of his mind with despair and misery. Bitter tears fell down his cheeks. Hunger and thirst and exhaustion tortured him, and his heart ached with the worry about his family. He hoped at least they were well. He felt he would never see them again.

As he walked on in search of water and shelter, every step seemed to bring him closer to his end instead.

Finally, his strength failed him and he fell down on the hot sand.

‘Forgive, forgive, O Lord,’ his heart cried out, though no words could come out of his mouth.

Just then a bird came flapping its wings with all the vigour of its free flight. It held in its beak a small pouch. As the bird flew over the miserable man, the pouch slipped from its beak and fell down next to the man. He gathered all his strength, and with great effort picked up the pouch and opened it. It contained a piece of bread and a bottle of water. The man wasted not a moment. He gulped down the water and finished the bit of bread in a few moments.

‘Thank you, God!’ he cried out, ‘Thank you! Thank you! I’m so happy!’ He could not get up, but he started dancing where he sat. His eyes joyfully stared at the bottle that still contained some water.

God appeared before him once again.

‘You are happy, my child?’ He asked.

‘Yes, yes, God, I was sure I would die. But you sent me food and water, and I’m alive! Thank you!’

‘But you had plenty of food and water earlier too. Why weren’t you happy then?’

‘I...’ the man could not go any further. He did not know what to say.

‘You were not happy because you looked for happiness outside. But happiness has its seat within your heart, child. Only you can make yourself happy, not the treasures or splendours of the world. Regret not the past, fear not the future, cherish what you have and be happy in it because whatever you have has been sent by me. Count your blessings, not your sores because you will only see what you are focusing on. If you focus on misery, you will find only misery, and the happiness of your life will waste away.’

‘I understand, My Lord. What a fool I have been. I remained busy crying over what I may never have and forgot to enjoy the bliss of what I had.’

The man had learnt his lesson. God smiled and returned him back to his old life, to his loving wife and kids.

The man never had a perfect life. And there were many things he wanted but got not. But never again did he cry over them. Instead, he filled his heart with the happiness of what he had and spread love and happiness all around.

Ends.

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