

Hide

My wife used to be afraid of me for some reason.

Ever since the beginning of our marriage, Shoili has been doing everything by the book. I now know that it's because of her strong sense of responsibility but back then it felt like she was downright afraid of me. Plus, ours was an arranged marriage, that's why I never had the privilege of getting to know much about her beforehand. On the very first day of our marriage, I had learnt that she wasn't just a reserved person, she was shy, and quiet as well. She would barely talk if I didn't. It was as if there were walls built around her that were too hard for me to break down.

However, it was *after* I broke down those walls that I realised how easy it was.

This one is a favourite story of mine from the early days of our marriage. It's about how an insignificant, silly and petty matter brought us close.

Back in those early days, when our financial standing was rather frail, Shoili had accidentally torn a Saree that I bought for her on her birthday. Shoili believed that I didn't know that she tore it. So, trying to keep it a secret, she kept it hidden inside a suitcase where she kept some of our old clothes. And she kept it hidden for two weeks straight.

During one of those days, we went to visit my hometown together. There, one of my elder relatives made a comment about Shoili's rather dark skin tone right in front of us. Being the rebellious child of my family, I hardly ever cared about what others thought of my actions. As I was about to get back to that relative and defend my wife, one small thing stopped me in my tracks. I noticed Shoili's 'rather dark' coloured cheeks redden up as if she was the fairest woman in the world. It wasn't just the colour of her blood rushed cheeks, it was the expression in her eyes, the slight bow of her head, her tightly pursed lips that gave away the embarrassment she felt. That sight of her stirred something in my heart. I forgot my anger. Everything around me except her felt like the blurred background of a movie. My head was in the clouds for the rest of the day.

Wanting to revisit that memory, I decided to mess with Shoili. The next morning, I purposefully woke up late, rushed to go to office, and while getting ready, asked Shoili for an old pair of pants that I very well knew were kept in the suitcase. By her quick response, I could tell that she herself forgot that she had kept the saree in there. She rushed to get it from the suitcase and I went with her.

As she was about to open it, I grabbed her hand and said in a rushed, casual tone, "Oh wait! don't open it in front of me, you hid that saree in here, remember?"

The look on her face made me wish she had torn multiple sarees and kept them hidden so that I could play the same trick on her over and over again. Mouth agape in surprise, her wide, doe

eyes, slightly afraid, searched my face for any hint of anger. A smile crept onto my face as she kept staring at me like that for longer than I expected her to. As soon as she realised that her fear was unreasonable, somehow managing to make the word around me spin and my heart flutter with joy, she laughed. I stared at her, eyes wide and mouth agape, just the way she had, moments before.

As simple as that, from that day onwards, the walls Shoili had built around her slowly began to break down. A small tear, a piece of clothing, an insignificant hidden matter, a single laughter, brought us close.