

Chapter 1: Kritika – The Girl Who Loved Too Much

A Heart Full of Dreams

The scent of **freshly printed notebooks and sharpened pencils** filled the small room as **Kritika flipped through her old diary**. Each page was filled with lyrics from **90s Bollywood songs**, half-written love letters to a boy who didn't exist, and **sketches of nameless faces**—portraits of someone she wished would step into her life.

She sighed, **tapping her pen against the paper**, lost in thought.

Kritika had always been a **dreamer**. Not the kind who simply fantasized but one who **believed in the magic of love, in grand romantic gestures, in the way old Bollywood movies painted love—pure, passionate, and everlasting**.

But reality? Reality was nothing like the movies.

At **sixteen**, Kritika had never had a boyfriend. In a world where her classmates **giggled over text messages, showed off Valentine's Day gifts, and whispered secrets about stolen kisses**, she felt like **an outsider**.

She wasn't ugly. No, Kritika knew she had **kind eyes, soft features, and a smile that could light up a dull afternoon**. But she was **quiet, reserved**, more interested in writing poetry in the margins of her schoolbooks than discussing boys over lunch.

And that made her **invisible**.

A Family That Loved, But Didn't Understand

Her mother's voice broke her thoughts.

"Kritika! Stop daydreaming and help me in the kitchen!"

Sighing, she shut her diary and headed toward the tiny but cozy kitchen, where her mother was stirring tea in a **steel saucepan**. The aroma of **cardamom and ginger** filled the air.

"You need to stop wasting time writing those silly love stories," her mother scolded playfully, handing her a cup.

Kritika smiled, taking a sip. **Her mother never understood her fascination with love**. To her, love was **practical—a duty, a responsibility**. But for Kritika, love was **everything**.

Her father, a **quiet, hardworking man**, only nodded at her from behind his newspaper, while her **maternal grandparents adored her unconditionally**. It was a simple household, filled with routine and warmth, yet something inside her always craved more.

The Loneliness of School Hallways

School was supposed to be a **place of friendships, laughter, and unforgettable moments**. For Kritika, it was just another place where she felt **like she didn't belong**.

As she walked through the hallway, she saw groups of girls huddled together, **giggling over something on a phone screen**. She wanted to be part of that. She wanted to sit in a circle and laugh over silly love stories, to have someone to share secrets with.

But instead, she was always on the **outside, looking in**.

Her classmates never **bullied** her, but they never truly **saw** her either.

The Lie That Started Everything

It started with a **simple question**.

That day, during lunch, Kritika sat with **Moni, Priya, and Neha**, the only girls she spoke to occasionally.

Moni, the **queen bee** of the group, leaned forward, her eyes gleaming with mischief. **"So, Kritika... do you have a boyfriend?"**

Kritika's **heart pounded**. The truth was a simple 'No.' But **her mind screamed at her not to say it**.

She saw the way Priya and Neha **smiled knowingly**, expecting the usual **shy shake of her head**.

But before she could stop herself, she **lied**.

"Yes."

The word felt **strange on her tongue**, but the moment it was out, it was too late to take it back.

Moni's eyes **widened in surprise**, while Priya and Neha **exchanged glances**.

"Really?" Moni smirked. "Tell us about him."

Kritika swallowed hard. She could feel her heart hammering in her chest. **What had she done?**

But as she looked into their curious, impressed eyes, she realized something.

For the first time, she **wasn't invisible**.

For the first time, she **was interesting**.

And that's when she knew — **this lie was just the beginning**.