No more Good Morning

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Introduction: The Architecture of Solitude

The city of glass and steel did not care for the lonely; it only reflected them. As the late autumn sun dipped below the jagged skyline, it cast long, bruising shadows of violet and indigo across the congested streets of the downtown core. For Sunil Sharma, the transition from day to night was always the hardest part of the diurnal cycle. During the day, the blinding, synthetic daylight of the Baba Bank office—a stark, shadowless white that smelled faintly of ozone and floor wax—kept the ghosts at bay. The rhythmic, percussive clatter of hundreds of keyboards, the low, synchronized hum of the climate control systems, and the sharp, caffeinated banter of his colleagues formed a protective acoustic shell around

him. Within that shell, he was a master builder, a solution architect who could seamlessly bridge disparate data ecosystems, mapping invisible, flawless pathways of logic across the cloud.

But when 6:00 PM arrived, that protective architecture dissolved into the damp, chilling evening air.

The commute home to the western suburbs was a daily descent into a sensory overload that somehow only amplified his internal silence. The train carriage always smelled of wet wool, stale breath, and the faint, acrid tang of friction from the steel wheels grinding against the tracks. Fluorescent tubes flickered overhead, casting a sickly, jaundiced yellow light over the exhausted faces of his fellow commuters. Everyone was plugged in, their faces bathed in the cold, blue luminescence of their smartphones, isolated in their own digital silos. Sunil would sit by the scratched window, watching the vibrant, chaotic graffiti of the inner city give way to the monotonous, muted grey concrete of the suburban sprawl. The rhythmic *clack-clack* of the tracks sounded like a metronome ticking away the remaining seconds of his youth.

He was forty-eight. The number tasted like dry ash in his mouth. Since the divorce, a cataclysmic event that had ripped the foundation from beneath his life years ago, he had existed in a state of suspended emotional animation.

His rented apartment was a physical manifestation of his internal void. When he turned the key in the lock each evening, the door creaked open to release a breath of stale, trapped air that smelled distinctly of lemon-scented wood polish and profound emptiness. There were no residual scents of cooking spices—no blooming cumin or crackling mustard seeds—no lingering fragrance of a woman's perfume, no chaotic, vibrant noises of a family settling in for the

night. There was only the high-pitched, asthmatic whine of the refrigerator in the kitchenette and the heavy, suffocating ticking of the cheap plastic wall clock in the hallway.

The visual palette of his home was aggressively neutral: beige carpets, off-white walls, and a faded brown sofa that seemed to swallow the meager light from his single floor lamp. The only splashes of color came from the digital screens he surrounded himself with, an artificial vibrancy that hurt his eyes after an hour.

It was on one of these indistinguishable, suffocatingly quiet evenings that the dam finally broke. The rain had started to fall outside, a heavy, driving downpour that lashed against his thin windowpanes. The sound was rhythmic and mournful, smelling of wet asphalt and crushed leaves. Sunil sat on his sofa, nursing a cup of tea that had long gone cold, its surface covered in a thin, bitter-tasting film. He looked at his reflection in the dark, powered-down television screen across the room—a shadowy, solitary figure blending into the beige furniture. The silence in the room was no longer just an absence of noise; it had become a physical weight pressing down on his chest, making it difficult to draw a full breath.

Driven by a sudden, desperate urge to hear a voice, to see a notification that wasn't an automated server alert or a spam email, he reached for his tablet. The screen flared to life, a blinding rectangle of brilliant white light that forced him to squint. He navigated to the app store, his thumb hovering over the glass. The air in the room felt suddenly charged, the metallic scent of the device's heated battery mingling with his own nervous sweat.

He typed the words into the search bar: *Matrimonial*.

The results populated instantly in a grid of bright, cheerful pinks and reds—colors of manufactured romance and algorithmic hope.

He downloaded the most popular platform, the progress circle filling with a terrifying speed. When he opened the app, he was greeted by a highly polished, frictionless interface that demanded he quantify his existence.

Creating the profile was a bizarre, almost out-of-body sensory experience. He had to distill forty-eight years of complex human history, the sting of a failed marriage, the pride of raising a son, and his deep, poetic melancholia into a series of sterile drop-down menus. *Height. Income bracket. Diet. Complexion. Marital Status: Divorced.* Selecting that last option always felt like pressing a bruise.

He scrolled through his camera roll to find a suitable photo, bypassing the blurry landscapes and pictures of his son. He settled on one taken at a corporate retreat—he was wearing a crisp, pale blue shirt, the fabric smooth against his skin, the bright afternoon sun highlighting the silver at his temples. He looked competent, solvent, and entirely alone. He uploaded it, watching his face become a tiny, compressed thumbnail in a vast, sprawling digital marketplace.

For the "About Me" section, his fingers hovered over the digital keyboard. He wanted to write about how he loved the smell of old books, the intricate, mathematical beauty of a perfectly designed database, and the way the sky looked just before a thunderstorm. Instead, guided by the app's sterile prompts, he typed a sanitized, flavorless summary of his professional title, his non-smoking status, and his desire for a "simple, understanding companion."

When he finally hit "Publish," the tablet emitted a cheerful, synthetic chime. The sound echoed loudly in the quiet apartment. He placed the device down on the glass coffee table. The screen