





# **JANOO**

**A Love Story**

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# **JANOO**

How are you?  
My Janoo.  
My sweet love,  
How are you?

A lifetime ago, in a faraway land,  
You held my hand.  
A lifetime ago, in a faraway land,  
I held your hand.

Born was our love, born was our bond,  
Never to be broken.

Your sweet kisses, in my memory,  
My Janoo,  
Kept me going,  
Through all places,  
I have been,  
All those years.

My heart, so lonely and sad, Missing  
The only true love  
I have ever had.

I have been missing,  
Your sweet kissing  
My lips.  
Your gentle love,  
My sweet Janoo,  
I have never forgotten you.

**Until again, we have found each other,  
A lifetime later.**

**Much has changed since then,  
But my heart is filled with joy,  
You again held my hand,  
Like you did before.**

**Our bond, forever made, so long ago,  
So strong between you and me,  
Yet remained.**

**Joined together, we will always be.  
My sweet Janoo,  
I love you.**

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# ***PROLOGUE***

## ***DINA, PUNJAB, PAKISTAN***

***DECEMBER 1980***

It was warm for the time of year in the region of Punjab in northern Pakistan. It had rained the night before and this was quite unusual as in the month of December it was normally dry and dusty. The rain had left the narrow lanes and alleyways of the town of Dina in the green hills of Punjab muddy as they were not paved like the main roads through the town. The rainwater ran through the gutters taking with it the rubbish that was thrown out of the houses and made it difficult to walk as it became very slippery. But today the sun shone brightly in the morning and it was quite pleasant.

Seven-year-old Shehryar was excited. He had jumped out of bed as soon as he had heard the first train pass through the town in the distance. It was still very early in the morning and he was not normally such an early riser, but he knew that today was a very special day. He could not sleep any longer and as soon as he jumped out of bed, he had woken his younger brother Amir too, who was not

very pleased about being dragged out of bed at this early hour.

The reason for Shehryar's excitement was that the day before his father had told him the good news. His baby sister Ayesha had been born a couple of days before and today his mother would bring her home from the hospital in Jhelum where he had also been born.

Ayesha was the first girl to be born after him, the eldest child, and his brother Amir, who was two years younger than him. Shehryar could not wait to see his baby sister soon. He was wondering how she looked, how tiny she was, the colour of her hair and her eyes. He would play with her in the courtyard of their house, love her with all his heart, make her laugh with his jokes and teach her everything he knew at his early age.

Shehryar loved his family very much. He was very lucky to have been born into a family where love was one of the most important things they were taught. Although they were not rich, but they managed well enough and many times he had gone with his father to the town's bazaar close to their home where he had his own successful garment business.

Shehryar loved his father dearly. He was a supportive, modern man who wanted all his children to go to school and study. Shehryar was a bright child. He would not disappoint his father. He loved every minute of school and he was already a popular boy in his class. This year he was allowed to take up a martial art and he was excited about this new sport

he was allowed to learn. He practised at home with his brother.

And he had a great passion for something else. Even at his young age he knew he wanted to read many books when he was older. He dreamed of writing stories and poems, maybe even books some day, and become a writer. One day in the future he would find a nice girl who he would love and make her happy with writing poems of love and affection for her.

His eyes shone as a smile crossed his handsome face, and his young heart filled with joy at those thoughts as he pushed open the heavy white steel door of his parents' house and looked outside up the alleyway for the ten's time this morning to see if his mother was approaching the house with his baby sister in her arms.

When his father realised what he was doing, he pulled him back gently into the house and promised him that he would meet his sister after school that day.

So Shehryar would have to wait for a little longer and the excitement in his heart grew when he packed his school bag and set off into the sunshine to attend his morning class.

## ***ZURICH, SWITZERLAND***

***DECEMBER 1980***

Betty was staring out of her bedroom window, day-dreaming. It was cold outside and it had snowed heavily the night before. She watched the other children, who were living in her modest neighbourhood, having fun with their sledges. Some of them were building a snowman and she could hear their laughter from across the field. She felt imprisoned. A tear ran down her cheek. Why was she not allowed to play with them? She wanted to help build that snowman and try out her sledge. She had already finished all her homework as her mother told her to. Why was she never allowed to have fun?

She was a big girl now. She was 10 years old last July, being lucky enough that her birthday always fell into the summer holidays. And she now liked to be called Betty, not Elisabeth, as her mother christened her. When she had mentioned a birthday party she wanted so much to her mother, she was told that they could not afford it, and that had been it. She was wondering, if she had a father, if he would have turned her wish down as well? But there was no father, and her stepfather had died two years before. It was going to be Christmas shortly and they would be all by themselves. Why was this place so boring? She felt a sudden sadness in her heart. Why did she not have any siblings she could have fun playing or even fighting with? She kept

seeing her friend, who lived downstairs in the same block of flats, who apparently had a loving family, a very devoted mother and two big brothers who gave their little sister a lot of attention. Betty didn't even have a brother or sister and she felt almost jealous of her other friends who had a normal family.

She remembered an incident that happened a couple of months ago when she had to go shopping for her mother. She wanted to make her happy and bought her a bunch of flowers. It was not expensive and she just wanted to put a smile on her mother's usually sad face. When she returned home and presented the flowers to her mother with a smile, she slapped her across the face and told her never to use her money to buy anything that she was not told to. She ran back to her room, tears streaming down her young face. Why did her mother not love her? What had she done wrong in her life that she could not make her mother happy?

The world outside looked neat and clinical. Everything always looked neat and clinical in Switzerland. She watched the big snowflakes settle and form a thick blanket of snow on the low hill opposite their block of flats where they lived in their small two-bedroom apartment on the outskirts of Zurich. It was then, in her little room, that she swore with all her intensity she could feel in her heart, that one day she would leave Switzerland for good and travel and live abroad. She would be an explorer! She would work abroad! She would see places and travel the world! Nothing, and nobody, would stop her from doing that.

She day-dreamed on. One day, she was going to meet a handsome, dark stranger, who would love her unconditionally. He would sweep her off her feet and look after her. He would take her to a far-away land to live there with her happily ever after. Oh yes, she was going to be very happy!

The day before, Betty had gone shopping with her mother and on the way to the grocery store they had passed the local travel agency. As always, when she had walked past that agency, she had been magically drawn to it. Despite her mother's objection, she had stopped in front of the window and had stared at the attractive posters in the window showing photos of some exotic places: India, Australia, South America, Madagascar.

One day, she was day-dreaming, mesmerized by those attractive photos, she would travel the world and see all those places. One day she would do what *she* wanted. One day she would be happy.

One day.

# ***SHEHRYAR***

## ***RETURN TO DUBAI***

### ***MAY 2000***

Shehryar had woken up to a warm and sunny day. It was mid-May in Dina, in northern Punjab. Today, he felt, was the first day of the rest of his life. Just after midday Shehryar saw his friend Omar's father drive up the road who was coming to pick him up for the two-hour drive to the airport of Islamabad. With his friend waiting in the car, he hugged his parents and brothers and sisters in his parents' house good-bye and packed his heavy suitcase into the boot of the little van and climbed in with his friend. Smiling, they hugged each other. It was very busy on the roads and they were worried to miss the plane they had to catch if the heavy traffic continued. They arrived at Islamabad airport just in time to check in and run to the gate. But they had made it. Laughing and out of breath, they both collapsed into their seats in the departure lounge where they had to wait for a few minutes until they could board the plane that would take them to Dubai, in the United Arab Emirates.

Soon their flight with Bhoja Air was announced and they were queueing at the gate for the boarding. It was the first time that Shehryar and Omar travelled with this airline and luckily, they had been given a seat next to each other. Shehryar stowed

his holdall bag in the overhead locker and settled into his window seat. He checked his watch and saw it was nearly 4pm. They would shortly take off. Feeling relaxed, he closed his eyes and let his mind wander. His thoughts took him back to his first time when he was living in the Emirates. He had been a young man, only 19 years old, when he first ventured out to the UAE to live there with his uncle and cousins. His purpose was to save up money to complete his studies as a journalist in Pakistan. He had ended up spending six years in Dubai before returning to Pakistan to finish his last year at the University of Punjab. He graduated with flying colours and enjoyed the feeling of having achieved something important.

With a smile on his face Shehryar remembered his first six years in Dubai with fondness. Some incidents came to his mind when he was his friend Omar's boss and they were sharing a place together for a year in Fujairah. They were both working in his uncle's shops before he kicked Shehryar out because he had a fight with an Arab guy at the centre and he was subsequently forced to work in a factory. How boring that was and a waste of time! What was going to happen this time round, he wondered? His intuition told him that something was soon going to change his life in a very big way.

Soon after the take-off the plane suddenly started shaking violently. Shehryar's eyes opened at once, terrified. "What's wrong?" he whispered and looked over to his friend who looked very pale and just shook his head.

“What happened? There was no announcement of anything being wrong with the plane before we boarded!” he said.

Then everything happened at once. The air conditioning stopped working as one of the engines failed. The plane lost altitude quickly and the oxygen masks dropped out. An urgent announcement came over the loudspeaker by the captain, telling them to stay put, not to leave their seats, and because of lack of oxygen they would have to put on the oxygen mask at once. Some people were throwing up on the floor and started panicking. Many children screamed in distress. Omar was still very pale and terrified, his eyes wide open and he sat in his seat as if he was frozen clutching the armrests.

“Oh hell, what was that?” he asked his Shehryar clutching the arm of his friend. “Are we going to die? I’m so scared.”

“Don’t worry, Omar,” Shehryar replied, feeling strangely calm, “just put the oxygen mask on and follow their instructions. They know what to do. We will be all right, Inshallah.”

Then, after another 30 minutes a further announcement came that nobody should panic and everything was under control. Because of a technical failure they were going to have to return to Islamabad for an emergency landing. Shehryar sent a silent prayer to heaven but he knew intuitively that they were going to be okay and he assisted his fellow passengers to keep calm and told them to follow the instructions.

It was like a miracle. The pilot did a very good job keeping the plane under control and they landed safely and without any other problems at Islamabad airport. Everybody was evacuated and told to wait in the lounge for further instructions. After a long and boring wait of six hours and feeling extremely exhausted, another plane was brought up from Karachi and they could finally board the flight to continue their journey to Dubai. But shortly before landing at Dubai airport they experienced another problem with the tiles of the doors of the plane as they were stuck. But the pilot managed again to land safely after a very eventful journey and the doors were finally opened and the passengers emerged from the plane with great relief.

Shehryar's brother Amir, who was living in the Emirates as well, was waiting anxiously for them at the airport. They all hugged.

Amir exclaimed: "wow, that was quite a journey for you guys! I was so worried sick about you! I came here before and had to go all the way back to Fujairah and come again after six hours. I literally called the airport every hour to check if the plane was leaving. I'm so glad to have you here now!"

"I know, it was horrible, never experienced anything like it before. I'm so glad we have arrived safely and nothing happened. Now let's go home, we're so tired. I could fall asleep right here," Shehryar said when they made their way to the car for their one-and-a-half-hour drive to the Emirate of Fujairah to his uncle's place.

In the following weeks Shehryar had settled in again at his uncle's place and was looking for a job as a Sales Manager in Fujairah. He was also looking forward to organising some events for Pakistani expats in the Emirates which he loved doing. The next few weeks passed very quickly.

Then, one sweltering morning in June, Shehryar woke with a start. The heat in the bedroom was solid and stifling, his skin sweaty. Outside the house it was quiet, not a sound could be heard. His alarm clock had woken him early, but he was still feeling tired. It was getting hotter in the Emirates now as they were going into summer where the temperatures could easily rise up to 45, even 50 degrees C.

Groaning, he pulled his pillow over his face to block off the noise of the alarm clock. Suddenly his phone started ringing and at the same time the doorbell rang. Man, what was going on today? Too much action for this early in the morning! He jumped out of bed and quickly pulled on his trousers and a T-shirt, then rushed out of the room and into the courtyard of his uncle's house to answer the door. When Shehryar opened the door he was staring into the grinning face of his former boss Marvin. He had not seen him since he had returned to Fujairah a few weeks ago.

"Assalam alaikum Shehryar, how is it going? Good to see you back here!" Marvin said and shook Shehryar's hand.

But before Shehryar could answer, Marvin continued: "Listen, I have a job for you! Go and have a

shower quickly and get ready, then meet me back here. We have a couple of tourists to take on a sight-seeing tour to Dubai today. They stay at the *Al-Hamra* hotel in Raz-Al-Khaimah. You know the one that looks like a castle? We will have to pick them up there at 10am, which means we will have to get going quickly. It is an all-day tour and they might book more tours with us if they are happy with our service.”

Shehryar, still feeling a little bit sleepy, managed to say, “okay, right, well, give me a minute to get ready. I will be back shortly. Please wait for me here and, oh, thanks for thinking of me regarding the job. I appreciate it.”

“No worries, I’ll wait right here. Hurry up!” Marvin said and got back into his car where the air conditioning gave off some welcoming cool air.

Shehryar turned around and went back into the house. Ah, well, that was good news, he thought, a bit of money in my pocket won’t hurt. Although Marvin was not his favourite person in the world, he did appreciate his job offer.

Twenty minutes later, and feeling a lot more refreshed after a welcoming shower, he emerged again from his uncle’s house into the hot morning air. The sun was already high up in the sky and the heat was intense, even for this time of day. He wedged himself behind the steering wheel of Marvin’s new car and put the seatbelt on. He was the designated driver today. The car still had that distinct leather smell that only new cars had. They