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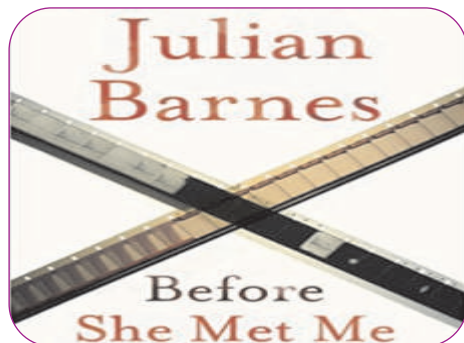
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LOVE IN THE NOVEL *BEFORE SHE MET ME* BY JULIAN BARNES

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**ABSTRACT :**

Actually, when we fall in love, it provides us a very wonderful feeling and a highest kind of pleasure. The human beings' life is full of with various shades of emotions and feelings such as – joy, affection, intense desire, lust, greed, jealousy, boredom, great sorrow and anger. Julian Barnes has touched and presented the various kinds of relations through the use of the concept of 'love.' When the concept of 'love' used in a common sense, it means liking for a certain activity, a sense of value one offers to a thing or a person, offering love to other person may make his or her life worth-living. The greatest virtue of the concept of love is that love is always directed towards what is the good, and really that goodness is the only object of love.

The author Julian Barnes focuses upon the two triangulars of love that comes in the novel. The first one is - Graham - the protagonist of the novel, Barbara - his wife and Ann - former starlet of B-movies. The second triangular of love is such as Graham - Jack Graham's friend and a novelist - and Ann, now Graham's wife. The main protagonist of the novel is Graham Hendrick, an academician who teaches history at London University. In his thirties he got married with a girl named Barbara and bore a baby child named, Alice. But he supposes his life is uneventful, boring and unattractive in the company of Barbara. Later on he meets a woman, Ann at a party at Jack Lupton's place. Ann is very exciting and beautiful woman. Graham falls in the love of Ann. He gives divorce to his first wife, Barbara and gets married with Ann to lead very exciting and delightful life.

**KEYWORDS:** Concept of Love, Love Triangles, Graham-Barbara-Ann, Graham-Jack-Ann.

**INTRODUCTION**

After his marriage Graham starts watching all the films of Ann has made in the past, no matter how bad, and becomes obsessed by the relationships she had before he met her, both on and off the screen. Thus it is a very surprising shock to Graham to see that Ann is committing adultery in the movie. Because formerly Ann was having a short career as an actress in the British B-movies. Thus Graham is fascinated and tracks down all over the city to see the movies with Ann in it. In this way step by step his fascination turns into an obsession. And after seeing such a type of movies Graham has become very upset and various questions have occurred in his mind. He is unable to keep his mind stable and in such a kind of condition of mind he goes to Jack for an advice. Such a kind of mental condition is termed by Dorothy Tennov as Limerence. It is described as:

"Those whose limerence was replaced by affectional bonding with the same partner might say ..... we were much in love when we married; today we love each other very much"<sup>1</sup>

Actually it is also a big question in front of Ann, how to keep away Graham from this kind of fascination. She does not know what to do and what to not. So she also goes to Jack for advice. And here Graham suspects that Jack who is a real womanizer has had an affair with Ann as well. And Graham's inquisitiveness becomes here

active and he studies all of Jack's novels and he finds a lot of 'toasts' about Ann. And another thing is that Jack always puts these 'toasts' and 'teases' in his novels.

And because of his suspicion, he recognises certain behaviours and other things that revered to Ann in persons. When these persons appear in the novel there is always talk of sex. And all these things have created an obsession in the mind of Graham. He thinks that they still have a relationship. Then he meets to the wife of Graham, sue, to be sure of his discoveries. His obsession gradually deepens until he becomes convinced that Ann also had an affair with his friend Jack. It created deep wound to his mind. One day he visits to Jack and stabs him to death. His wife is worried about him because he didn't come home. She rings everybody to know about her husband. Eventually she goes to Jack's place. Graham ties her up and commits suicide.

Julian Barnes depicted the theme of 'Love' throughout the novel. What kind of love is reflected throughout the novel and its impression upon the various major characters and in their lives. Because Julian Barnes has particularly focused upon the triangles of love as Graham-Barbara-Ann and Graham-Ann-Jack. Here Barbara is Graham's first wife who created a stale married life for Graham and one day in Jack's party Graham was introduced with Ann - a former Starlet of British B-movies. Graham falls in love with her and starts his life. Another triangle of love is Graham-Ann and Jack. Jack is a friend of Graham and novelist. After getting married with Ann, Graham discovers that Ann and Jack were having a love affair. And with these relations the story runs throughout the novel.

Graham Hendrick is a main protagonist of this novel. He is an intellectual person who teaches history at London University. But his married life is not interesting as it is uneventful. So he is very unsatisfied in his married life with his wife, Barbara. But the pleasurable and honey time occurs in his life on April 22nd, 1977, at Repton Gardens, where Jack Lupton gave a party. During that party Graham is introduced by Jack with a woman, Ann who is a parachutist. It was a warm April night and Graham was very happy in the company of Ann. He was attracted towards the personality as well as dressing of Ann very much.

Now it is the beginning of the love-story of Graham and Ann. Because Graham is intensively fascinated by the personality of Ann. Her every activity creates interest and satisfaction in the mind of Graham:

"She smiled; he smiled. She wasn't just pretty; she was friendly as well.

'I'm a buyer', she said, 'I buy clothes.'

'I'm an academic', he said. 'I teach history at London University.'

'I'm a magician', said Jack Lupton, loafing at the edge of their conversation and now canting a bottle into the middle of it. 'I teach magic at the University of Life. Wine or wine?'

'Go away, Jack' said Graham, firmly for him. And Jack had gone away." (BSMM: 13)

Now this conversation shows here that Graham has become very enthusiastic to know more about the life of Ann. He is not ready to have a little bit disturbances even from Jack also. Now he is fascinated by Ann's appearance as well as friendliness. He tries to know more about Ann and to pass his time, more and more in her company. Robert H. Johnson comments here about the state of mind when we feel that, we are in love as:

"For romantic love doesn't just mean loving someone; it means being in "love". This is a psychological phenomenon that is very specific. When we are "in love" we believe we have found the ultimate meaning of life, revealed in another human being. We feel we are finally completed, that we have found the missing parts of ourselves."<sup>2</sup>

Thus after falling in love one is taking an experience of it, life changes suddenly towards completeness and wholeness that lifts us high above the ordinary plain of an existence. These are the signs of true love, we feel.

Now Graham is about Thirty Eight years old and he supposes himself retired in his life. Because for himself to lead a life which is an uneventful and his wife is unable to create an interest in his life. So that he has become upset, uninteresting, nervous and cold about his life. But the party which has been organized by Jack has changed his total life as well as his thinking about the life. How he is impressed with the personality of Ann and of her company, Julian Barnes expresses here as:

"But when he met Ann - not that first moment at Repton Gardens, but later, after he'd conned himself

into asking her out - he began to feel as if some long-broken line of communication to a self of twenty years ago had suddenly been restored. He felt once more capable of folly and idealism. He also felt as if his body had begun to exist again. By this he didn't just mean that he was seriously enjoying sex (though of course he did mean this too), but that he had stopped picturing himself as merely a brain lodged within a container." (BSMM: 14)

It all indicates here that the meeting of Ann and her personality has created some feelings of interest about life in his mind. Actually the appearance of Ann and her every activity touched to the mind of Graham. He is more attracted physically and sexually towards Ann. Meeting Ann first time and falling in love with her at first sight is something amazing. But mentally, anyway he has become ready to form relationships with Ann. A great thinker and psychologist, Dorothy Tennov expressed her view about falling in love in her book *Love and Limerence* as we fall in love when we are ready. It means we cannot decide to fall in love; it's a simple process that occurs in our life when a passionate love occurs in the mind. To fall in love at first is a very happiest state that provides the lovers relaxation and release from the monotonousness of everyday life activities.

Thus it is a particular kind of condition of the mind of Graham after attraction to Ann. It is called as limerence. One of the writers has defined the concept of limerence as

"an involuntary interpersonal state that involves intrusive, obsessive, and compulsive thoughts, feelings, and behaviours that are contingent on perceived emotional reciprocation from the object of interest."<sup>3</sup>

Really and definitely Ann has the qualities which are varied and different from Barbara. May be she has filled her own ideas and point of views about different things in the life of a human being. No doubt Graham has spontaneity and directness in his living style but Ann introduced him not just to pleasure but to its intricate approaches and confused enjoyment. She has even managed to freshen for him the memories of pleasure. And such a pattern of love is observed by Graham very minutely through each and every activity of Ann, such as how she ate; makes love, talk, walk etc. He is very much grateful of her for teaching him and approving as he did of her having found out first. Actually he is seven years older than her but her knowledge in every activity of life is quite surprising for him,

"In bed, for instance, her confident easiness often seemed to him to be showing up (criticizing, mocking almost) his own cautious, stiff-jointed awkwardness. 'Hey, stop, wait for me,' he thought; and at other times, with more resentment, 'Why didn't you learn this with me?'" (BSMM: 16)

Actually the personality and outward appearance of Ann very much fascinated to Graham. He has become very romantic in the company of Ann. She is very confident in every activity with Graham. That's the different and amazing thing for Graham in Ann's personality. Though it's a sexual love and attraction towards Ann yet her confidence in bed also one of the fascinating activities and things for Graham. Ann is also aware of all these things and she has also made Graham aware of it, as soon as she sensed it. Because she supposes here that she might have some different qualities within her personality but there is also a quality and knowledge that dwells in the personality of Graham that his knowledge of history. Because, "History was a library of closed books to her." (BSMM: 17)

Nathaniel Branden expresses here as:

"In its union of physical with spiritual pleasure in sex and love as well as in its union of romance and daily life, romantic love is a passionate commitment to this earth and to the exalted happiness that life on earth can offer."<sup>4</sup>

Actually Graham is deeply in love with Ann. He has spent nights with Ann. It's a question for Barbara, what is the meaning of staying out throughout night of Graham she is thinking about it seriously. But Graham is also having a thought which he is interested to disclose in front of Barbara. And he has also recognized one thing that Barbara has kept him away from Alice and herself also. Now Graham has discussed his affair in front of Barbara, "I'm having an affair. I'm leaving you." (BSMM: 23) By listening this, it has created a shock on the mind of Barbara. She has not expressed any word. And again Graham, supposing his turn expressed, "I'm having affair. I don't love you any more I'm leaving you." (BSMM: 23) These expressions indicate here that Graham is very deeply in love with Ann. His mind is obsessed with the personality of Ann. Now he doesn't think about Barbara or Alice, his daughter. Thus by listening the expressions of Graham, Barbara has screamed very loudly. But Graham doesn't believe her. When she has stopped her screaming, he has expressed, "I think you've probably got Alice on

your side anyway, without all that." (BSMM: 23) Already there is an attachment between Barbara and Alice though Graham is very happy in the company of Alice. He has realized that there is a deep love and attachment between Barbara and Alice. Now it has become very clear that Graham has taken decision to leave Barbara and lead the life in the company of Ann. All these feelings and thoughts created some kind of tension and confusion in the mind of Barbara. She has screamed again just as loud and for just as long. But anyway Graham again expressed himself in front of her as,

"Graham felt unmoved, almost cocky. He wanted to leave; he was going to leave; he was going to love Ann. No, he did love Ann already. He was going to go on loving Ann." (BSMM: 23)

Thus Graham is in love with Ann. His feelings about love for Ann have become very intensive. And now he is very deep in love with Ann.

Actually Graham is totally under the impression of Ann's personality. He wanted to become one with Ann. Aristophanes comments about this condition of mind as, it is from this distant epoch. Then we may date the innate love which human beings feel for one another.

"The love which restores us to our ancient states by attempting to weld two beings into one and to heal the wounds which humanity suffered."<sup>5</sup>

Thus everyone is in search of our true half. So everyone is expecting to be welded together again with his true half. He or she does not like to remain as separate but wants to be one whole.

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