



7 OCTOBER 2026 / FOR HARSHITA

*Twenty-two.*

Happy birthday, baby. I wrote you something.

From Shaurya, with love.

THIS ONE'S YOURS

# Hi, birthday girl.

Happy birthday, baby. Twenty-two. I know you've been more excited about the letters than the birthday itself, so I wanted to give you one you could properly sit with. After dinner, once you're home, when you finally get to open that pile you've been collecting. Or before all of that, if you've already given in. Fair enough.

I keep thinking about what I want you to hear today. Obviously that I love you. Obviously that I wish I could see you in your birthday dress, in person, and spend an unreasonable amount of time looking at you. But there's quite a bit more than that. I want to talk about you. The person I've been getting to know in between everything else we talk about. Your work, your very specific opinions, the things you make, the things you quietly do for people, and how much I like being let into all of it.

You asked for words you could keep. Here are mine. Read them slowly if you want. Come back to them whenever. There's no good reply you have to think of at the end.

*(And yes, there are brackets. Obviously.)*

THE THINGS YOU MAKE

# I've been paying attention.

One of my favourite things about you is that you'll have a thought about someone and then actually do something with it. You'll write the letter. You'll make the thing. You'll go and learn enough to turn what's in your head into something another person can hold, or open, or look at. I remember you writing those appreciation letters to women you thought deserved to hear it. You notice people, baby. And then you make sure they know.

I think about the moon you painted for me. The lights. The shirt. How much of you was in that parcel before I even opened it. You could have picked something and been done, but you went and made it yours. I still think the shirt was a particularly unfair advantage. You knew exactly what you were doing there.

And then you made me a website. You were learning things, figuring things out, trying to get it right because you wanted to make me happy. I love being on the receiving end of that brain of yours. I love that you can get so involved in an idea. I want you to keep making things that you're excited about, including things that are just for you. I'd like to see those too.

*(The shirt remains a very strong contender. I don't think that's changing.)*

YOUR WORK

# Look at what you're building.

I like talking work with you. Properly talking about it, getting into an idea, hearing you work something out. I've watched you figure out clients, change how you do things, try to put better processes in place, and decide what you want your work to look like. You have opinions about it. You're willing to try something and then change your mind when you've learnt more. I respect that a lot.

When your client wanted more of your work, and told you how well you'd understood her voice, I was so happy for you. That's your skill being recognised, cutu. You paid attention and made something that sounded right to her. The new enquiries, the referrals, the conversations where people start trusting you with more: I want you to actually enjoy those when they happen. Tell me. I want the full update, including the part you think might be too small to mention.

And I remember what I told you about being proud of you. It doesn't depend on how many clients you have. I like seeing you build because I can see how much you care about doing this your way. You don't have to bring me a better number every time we talk for me to think you're doing something worth doing. I already do. I'm so glad I get to know you while you're figuring it out.

*(Your Mac was a big deal, by the way. I'm still counting that.)*

AWAY FROM THE LAPTOP

## Also, this side of you.

I loved hearing about your dad wearing the watch you got him, showing it to people at work. I can imagine how good that must have felt. Being able to do something for him, and then seeing him so pleased with it. You were excited telling me, and I was excited listening. I want you to have so many more moments where you get to stop and think, I did that.

I also like hearing that you went for a run simply because you wanted to try. That you bought the top you'd been wanting. That a bag arrived and suddenly you had something very important to show me. Your excitement is so easy to get caught up in. One minute we're talking about something completely different and then I'm invested in a tote bag arriving safely. This is apparently who I am now.

I want more of your dance updates, more things you've made, more outfits you really like yourself in. I want there to be room in your days for the things you do because they're fun. You with no call to get on, no work to finish first, just getting ready to go somewhere you're looking forward to. I like knowing that version of your day exists too.

*(And the butter-yellow top? Excellent decision. Already said it. Saying it again.)*

QUITE THOROUGHLY, ACTUALLY

# You got into my everyday.

Somewhere along the way, Ahmedabad became a city I check the weather for. I started having things to say in Sindhi, with varying degrees of success. I started looking forward to telling you about a day while it was still happening. Something would happen and I'd already know I wanted your reaction to it. I like how normal that feels now.

I like our long conversations, but I also like the completely unremarkable ones. What you ate. Something that happened on a call. A photo you send because you're getting ready. You asking what I'm doing, me having an unnecessarily detailed answer. I like when we have enough time to wander off into four different subjects and neither of us needs to wrap it up yet. I miss that when we haven't had enough of it.

And I think about the emails. Having that much to say to each other, then somehow still finding more. I like that we're interested in each other's minds. That I can tell you something I'm excited about and you want to understand it. That you can tell me something you're working through and let me be there with you. I want to keep learning you, baby. I don't think knowing someone's usual coffee or favourite colour is where that stops.

*(I do, however, intend to keep getting the Sindhi right.)*

A LITTLE ROOM, PLEASE

# About twenty-two.

I know you've thought a lot about this birthday and what you want this year to look like. I want good things for you too. Work you're pleased with. More independence. Things you've wanted for yourself becoming things you actually get to have. I want to hear the excitement in your voice when something works out, and I want to be able to celebrate it with you.

But I also want you to have an ordinary Tuesday where nothing particularly impressive happens and you still have a nice day. Breakfast you enjoy, some work that goes well, enough time to go out, a coffee that is actually hot. A plan you make because you feel like it. A day where you aren't measuring how far away you are from something. I think you deserve quite a few of those.

You can want a lot for yourself. I like that you do. You can also take your time deciding what that looks like. If you change your mind about something, I want to hear why. If something takes longer, we can talk about that too. I don't need a prediction for the whole year tonight. I just want you to get to enjoy some of it while you're living it, *cutu*. There's a lot about you, right now, that I'm very happy to celebrate.

*(A birthday is allowed to involve cake without a five-year plan.)*

WITH YOU

# I would like more of this.

I'd like more time with you without us having to calculate how much of it is left. To finish a conversation and start another because we're still there. To sit somewhere, order food, have you tell me what's been going on properly. To see the expression that goes with what you're saying instead of trying to guess it from a message. I'd really like that.

There are all these perfectly ordinary things I haven't got to do enough of with you yet. Watching you pick something from a menu. Getting distracted while we're supposed to be going somewhere. Seeing something in a shop and making you come look at it. Knowing you're enjoying yourself without having to ask for an update. I don't need every day together to be an occasion. Being able to have the time would be quite enough.

Until then, I like being the person you send things to. Keep showing me what caught your eye, what's making you laugh, what you're proud of, what you're considering. I like getting your whole thought. The version with the extra explanation, the second message, and the thing you remembered just after you said you were done. I love you, Harshita. I'm interested.

*(And yes, I would still spend too much of dinner looking at you.)*

ALL OF THIS, FOR YOU

# Happy birthday, jaan.

I hope you have the loveliest time at dinner. I hope you feel really, really pretty in that green dress. I hope people tell you things about yourself that make you happy, and that you let yourself believe them. And when you're home with your letters, I hope there's something in every one that you want to keep.

This is mine. A little long, yes. There was quite a bit to say. I wanted you to have something that was about you, and that you could come back to without having to search through months of messages to find it. You can read it on a very good day or on a completely uneventful one. It will still be how I see you.

I love your mind. I love talking to you. I love that I get to hear the small updates as well as the big ones. And I love you, baby. Properly. I hope twenty-two is very good to you. I'm very happy you're here.

*Maan ton sa pyaar kayan to.*

## Shaurya

7 OCTOBER 2026



P.S.

*Yes. That smile.*

I'd like to see a lot of it this year.

*(You sent me this one and said to add it. Very happy to oblige,  
birthday girl.)*

Happy 22nd, jaan.