

Zero Squad Issue #1

The scene opens with clear blue skies fitting perfect enough to bring a smile and whistle a tune. The absence of road noise is a welcome vacuum almost unbelievable for an Indian setting unless it's a India versus Pakistan Cricket finals.

The only sounds are faint and owed to the wind like the occasional flapping of cloth in a quick burst off screen .

The silence indicates a gathering ready to receive a performance in a hall. This is no suspense as we hear the crackle of a bullhorn loud speaker disturbed from its slumber with the tapping of a mike off screen. As a confident voice of a young girl breaks the silence reciting from Tagore " *Where the mind is without fear and the head is held high, Where knowledge is free* " ..

An ominous rumble builds from far . The voice continues to recite not one bit deterred "*Where the world has not been broken into fragments by narrow domestic walls..*"

The rumble is not distant anymore , it seems to be traveling across the skies like a cloak, both high pitched and a deep rumble at the same time.

we can hear the girl's voice recite steadily but for a long almost deafening heartbeat it is muted as all one can hear is a loud howling of the wind as Three low flying LCA (Light Combat Aircraft) TEJAS swoop up in the Famous Trident formation with their Jet trail alone to follow against the big blue in seconds flat.

The LCA split and loop the loop in a wide arc as the one in the center alone seems to be hanging for a bit and as a raised hands to the sky traces the loop the TEJAS seem to explode in color and climb again this time flying across and far draping the entire Blue Mile with the Tri colors of the Indian Flag .

As the Camera pans down a flag flaps on to it and through light filtering its apparent that its an Independence day celebration underway. **India's Landmark 70th ID.**

Girl continues to recite as camera pans down to her .."*Where the mind is led forward by thee into ever widening thought and action.*"

On the other side of the panel, another voice cuts in. This belongs to DVITA, who says -

DVITA

Poetry is wonderful. But this isn't me.

Cut to a girl -

- DVITA, seated between TWO GIRLS on a stage divided into two teams. A CLOTH BANNER says "Science and Math Quiz Finals." Between the two teams is a pedestal with a TROPHY on it. Behind her, a voice is continuing, like a background noise.

GIRL ON STAGE

"Into that heaven of freedom, My father, Let my country awake".

DVITA (narrative thought)

This is me. And this is my moment.

Dvita's POV of the opposing team of boys sitting across her. They all wear confident and excited SMILES and are giving each other low FIST BUMPS. Dvita narrows her eyes.

DVITA

I cannot lose this. Not to them. Not to *him*.

The QUIZ MASTER clears his throat and shuffles his cards. He steps up to the mic.

QUIZ MASTER

Ladies and gentlemen, I've never seen a closer final. Our two teams are tied on the same points!

Hush falls, followed by EXCITED CHATTER from the crowd.

QUIZ MASTER

The last round is a Speed round. I have three questions. The first team to answer two correctly, wins.

Dvita takes a deep breath.

QUIZ MASTER

It's winner take all. Are you ready?

Dvita has her hand already raised above the bell.

QUIZ MASTER

When does February have 29 days?

DVITA bangs on a bell which is on the table, and thinks out loud saying

DVITA

During a leap year! Once every four years, an extra day is added to February.

The Quizmaster pauses...then points in her direction.

QUIZMASTER

That's...absolutely correct! The last leap year was in 2016, so the next one is in...

DVITA (interrupts)

2020!

QUIZMASTER

Brilliant! This round's points go to the girl's team!

APPLAUSE, DVITA grins across at the boys team.

QUIZMASTER

You should be able to solve the next question in a jiffy. But the question is...

QUIZMASTER

What is a jiffy?

A boy from the opposing team slams down on the bell on his table before Dvita can. This is -

EKA, who answers proudly.

EKA

A jiffy means a really small unit of time - exactly 1/100th of a second!

QUIZMASTER

That is...Absolutely correct! We have a tie *again*, with one point for each team. This can only mean one thing: A Sudden Death round. Whoever answers this question, wins the championship.

Dvita and Eka have their gazes locked on each other with the smallest smiles playing about their lips, like a classic cowboys standoff. The audience is on the edge of their seats.

QUIZMASTER

What is the significance of the numbers 21.1498 and 79.0806?

An ALMOST AUDIBLE BEAT goes by, with a shot of Dvita and Eka facing off against each other. Then with and as little volume as just a quick swallow of air would allow, the answer escapes them in unison.

DVITA
The Zero Mile!

EKA (softer)
The Zero Mile...

DVITA
It's the latitude...

EKA
And longitude...

DVITA
Of the center of India.

EKA
The point from which distances are measured.

DVITA
Where journeys begin.

Eka and Dvita lock eyes. Silence.

QUIZMASTER

That is...absolutely correct! The Zero Mile, located in Nagpur, is the central point of India.

The audience EXPLODES into applause and CHEERING. The two teams CONGRATULATE each other as the Quizmaster announces -

QUIZMASTER

And that's it, ladies and gentlemen! We have not one, but
TWO winners
who are equally matched!

The children of interest from both teams descend the steps into the crowd. The TROPHY is UNTOUCHED. Back mid shot of a couple calling out to their children.

COUPLE

Dvita! Eka!

CUT TO Dvita and Eka in the back seat of a CAR. They are SMILING as their parents ask what they want as a treat. ("Ice-cream? Chocolate?") Dvita and Eka exchange a look of appreciation for each other.

Outside, the car is passing RUMI DARWAZA. DVITA looks out at it, thinking.

DVITA

It wasn't always like this. It wasn't always this easy.

Cut to memory 1, and the stories of how they met.

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