A Realm OF ENGLISH B SELECTION

PROSE | POETRY | PLAY

XI and XII

West Bengal Council of Higher Secondary Education

A REALM
ENGLISH (B)

Prose, Poetry, Play – (Second Language)

XI & XII

With financial aid from the Government of West Bengal,
this book is to be distributed to students of XI
free of cost. This book is not for sale.

West Bengal Council of Higher Secondary Education

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THE CONSTITUTION OF INDIA

PREAMBLE

WE, THE PEOPLE OF INDIA, having solemnly resolved to constitute India into a **SOVEREIGN SOCIALIST SECULAR DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC AND TO SECURE TO ALL ITS CITIZENS :**

JUSTICE, social, economic and political;

LIBERTY of thought, expression, belief, faith and worship;
EQUALITY of status and of opportunity and to promote among them all;

FRATERNITY assuring the dignity of the individual and the unity and integrity of the Nation;

IN OUR CONSTITUENT ASSEMBLY this twenty-sixth day of November 1949, do **HEREBY ADOPT, ENACT AND GIVE TO OURSELVES THIS CONSTITUTION.**

PREFACE

West Bengal Council of Higher Secondary Education (WBCHSE) has taken initiative to revise the curriculum/syllabus of all the subjects with the introduction of Semester System with 2024-2025 academic year. In this direction WBCHSE has formed individual subject committees by inducting faculty members from various schools/colleges/universities.

The WBCHSE has developed *A Realm of English B Selection* as English (Second Language) textbook for Classes XI and XII to be studied in all Government, Government Sponsored, Government Aided and Government Affiliated Schools of West Bengal.

The delight of meeting great minds, the discovery of new worlds, the excitement of facing different real-life situations and characters and the sensitising of the mind while the soul comes to us through the experience of reading and responding to good literature. That is what the selections in *A Realm of English B Selection* aim to do.

In *A Realm of English B Selection*, learners are exposed to a wide range of literary English texts.

The texts are an interesting mix of classic and contemporary selections of prose and poetry. There is an assortment of Indian and global texts in a variety of genres so that students can enjoy the richness of literature in its various forms. A play has also been included in the syllabus for class XII, where serious thought has gone into ensuring that the choice of texts are sensitive, relevant and thought provoking so that students become more insightful and responsive in their reading of literature.

The Government has decided to distribute this book free of cost. We are grateful to Prof. Bratya Basu, the Minister-In-Charge, Department of School and Higher Education, Government of West Bengal, for his initiative.

Suggestions, views and comments to improve the book are welcome.

May, 2024
Vidyasagar Bhavan

Chiranjib Bhattacharjee
President
West Bengal Council of
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CONTENTS

CLASS XI
SEMESTER I

Prose

Verse

SEMESTER II

Prose

Verse

CLASS XII
SEMESTER III

Prose

SEMESTER IV

CLASS XI
SEMESTER I

An Astrologer's Day

R.K. Narayan

Punctually at midday he opened his bag and spread out his professional equipment, which consisted of a dozen cowrie shells, a square piece of cloth with obscure mystic charts on it, a notebook and a bundle of palmyra writing. His forehead was resplendent with sacred ash and vermilion, and his eyes sparkled with a sharp abnormal gleam which was really an outcome of a continual searching look for customers, but which his simple clients took to be a prophetic light and felt comforted.

The power of his eyes was considerably enhanced by their position – placed as they were between the painted forehead and the dark whiskers which streamed down his cheeks: even a half-wit's eyes would sparkle in such a setting. To crown the effect he wound a saffron-colored turban around his head. This colour scheme never failed.

People were attracted to him as bees are attracted to cosmos or dahlia stalks. He sat under the boughs of a spreading tamarind tree which flanked a path running through the Town Hall Park. It was a remarkable place in many ways: a surging crowd was always moving up and down this narrow road morning till night. A variety of trades and occupations was represented all along its way: medicine-sellers, sellers of stolen hardware and junk, magicians and, above all, an auctioneer of cheap cloth, who created enough din all day to attract the whole town. Next to him in vociferousness came a vendor of fried groundnuts, who gave his ware a fancy name each day, calling it Bombay Ice-Cream one day, and on the next Delhi Almond, and on the third Raja's Delicacy, and so on and so forth, and people flocked to him. A considerable portion of this crowd dallied before the astrologer too. The astrologer transacted his business by the light of a flare which crackled and smoked up above the groundnut heap near by.

Half the enchantment of the place was due to the fact that it did not have the benefit of municipal lighting. The place was lit up by shop lights. One or two

had hissing gaslights, some had naked flares stuck on poles, some were lit up by old cycle lamps and one or two, like the astrologer's, managed without lights of their own. It was a bewildering criss-cross of light rays and moving shadows. This suited the astrologer very well, for the simple reason that he had not in the least intended to be an astrologer when he began life, and he knew no more of what was going to happen to others than he knew what was going to happen to himself next minute. He was as much a stranger to the stars as were his innocent customers. Yet he said things which pleased and astonished everyone: that was more a matter of study, practice and shrewd guesswork. All the same, it was as much an honest man's labour as any other, and he deserved the wages he carried home at the end of a day.

He had left his village without any previous thought or plan. If he had continued there he would have carried on the work of his forefathers – namely, tilling the land, living, marrying and ripening in his cornfield and ancestral home. But that was not to be. He had to leave home without telling anyone, and he could not rest till he left it behind a couple of hundred miles. To a villager it is a great deal, as if an ocean flowed between.

He had a working analysis of mankind's troubles: marriage, money and the tangles of human ties. Long practice had sharpened his perception. Within five minutes he understood what was wrong. He charged three pice per question and never opened his mouth till the other had spoken for at least ten minutes, which provided him enough stuff for a dozen answers and advices. When he told the person before him, gazing at his palm, "In many ways you are not getting the fullest results for your efforts," nine out of ten were disposed to agree with him. Or he questioned: "Is there any woman in your family, maybe even a distant relative, who is not well disposed towards you?" Or he gave an analysis of character: "Most of your troubles are due to your nature. How can you be otherwise with Saturn where he is? You have an impetuous nature and a rough exterior." This endeared him to their hearts immediately: for even the mildest of us loves to think that he has a forbidding exterior.

The nuts-vendor blew out his flare and rose to go home. This was a signal for the astrologer to bundle up too, since it left him in darkness except for a little shaft of green light which strayed in from somewhere and touched the ground before him. He picked up his cowrie shells and paraphernalia and was putting them

back into his bag when the green shaft of light was blotted out; he looked up and saw a man standing before him. He sensed a possible client and said: "You look so careworn. It will do you good to sit down for a while and chat with me." The other grumbled some vague reply. The astrologer pressed his invitation; whereupon the other thrust his palm under his nose, saying: "You call yourself an astrologer?" The astrologer felt challenged and said, tilting the other's palm towards the green shaft of light: "Yours is a narrow ..." "Oh, stop that," the other said. "Tell me something worthwhile. ..."

Our friend felt piqued. "I charge only three pice per question, and what you get ought to be good enough for your money ..." At this the other withdrew his arm, took out an anna and flung it out to him, saying: "I have some questions to ask. If I prove you are bluffing, you must return that anna to me with interest."

"If you find my answers satisfactory, will you give me five rupees?"

"No."

"Or will you give me eight annas?"

"All right, provided you give me twice as much if you are wrong," said the stranger. This pact was accepted after a little further argument. The astrologer sent up a prayer to heaven as the other lit a cheroot. The astrologer caught a glimpse of his face by the matchlight. There was a pause as cars hooted on the road, jutka drivers swore at their horses and the babble of the crowd agitated the semi-darkness of the park. The other sat down, sucking his cheroot, puffing out, sat there ruthlessly. The astrologer felt very uncomfortable. "Here, take your anna back. I am not used to such challenges. It is late for me today. ..."

He made preparations to bundle up. The other held his wrist and said, "You can't get out of it now. You dragged me in while I was passing." The astrologer shivered in his grip; and his voice shook and became faint. "Leave me today. I will speak to you tomorrow." The other thrust his palm in his face and said, "Challenge is challenge. Go on." The astrologer proceeded with his throat drying up. "There is a woman ..."

"Stop," said the other. "I don't want all that. Shall I succeed in my present search or not? Answer this and go. Otherwise I will not let you go till you disgorge all your coins." The astrologer muttered a few incantations and replied, "All right, I will speak. But will you give me a rupee if what I say is convincing? Otherwise I

will not open my mouth, and you may do what you like." After a good deal of haggling the other agreed. The astrologer said, "You were left for dead. Am I right?"

"Ah, tell me more."

"A knife has passed through you once?" said the astrologer.

"Good fellow!" He bared his chest to show the scar. "What else?"

"And then you were pushed into a well nearby in the field. You were left for dead."

"I should have been dead if some passerby had not chanced to peep into the well," exclaimed the other, overwhelmed by enthusiasm. "When shall I get at him?" he asked, clenching his fist.

"In the next world," answered the astrologer. "He died four months ago in a far-off town. You will never see any more of him." The other groaned on hearing it. The astrologer proceeded :

"Guru Nayak—"

"You know my name!" the other said, taken aback.

"As I know all other things, Guru Nayak, listen carefully to what I have to say. Your village is two days' journey due north of this town. Take the next train and be gone. I see once again great danger to your life if you go from home." He took out a pinch of sacred ash and held it out to him. "Rub it on your forehead and go home. Never travel southward again, and you will live to be a hundred."

"Why should I leave home again?" the other said reflectively. "I was only going away now and then to look for him and to choke out his life if I met him." He shook his head regretfully. "He has escaped my hands. I hope at least he died as he deserved." "Yes," said the astrologer. "He was crushed under a lorry." The other looked gratified to hear it.

The place was deserted by the time the astrologer picked up his articles and put them into his bag. The green shaft was also gone, leaving the place in darkness and silence. The stranger had gone off into the night, after giving the astrologer a handful of coins.

It was nearly midnight when the astrologer reached home. His wife was waiting for him at the door and demanded an explanation. He flung the coins at her and said, "Count them. One man gave all that."

"Twelve and a half annas," she said, counting. She was overjoyed. "I can buy some jaggery and coconut tomorrow. The child has been asking for sweets for so many days now. I will prepare some nice stuff for her."

"The swine has cheated me! He promised me a rupee," said the astrologer. She looked up at him. "You look worried. What is wrong?"

"Nothing."

After dinner, sitting on the pyol, he told her, "Do you know a great load is gone from me today? I thought I had the blood of a man on my hands all these years. That was the reason why I ran away from home, settled here and married you. He is alive."

She gasped, "You tried to kill!"

"Yes, in our village, when I was a silly youngster. We drank, gambled and quarrelled badly one day—why think of it now? Time to sleep," he said, yawning, and stretched himself on the pyol.

EXERCISE

Choose the correct answer from the alternatives given :

1. How does the astrologer make his living?
   a) By accurately predicting the future of his clients
   b) By selling fake horoscopes to unsuspecting customers
   c) By performing elaborate rituals to appease the Gods
   d) By offering advice on various life matters to his clients
2. What is the turning point of the story that leads to the astrologer's realisation?
   a) He finds a valuable gem stone while strolling through the market place
   b) He encounters a man from the past whom he had tried to kill
   c) He discovers that his wife has been cheating on him
   d) He meets a wealthy client who offers him a large sum of money

The Swami and Mother-Worship

Sister Nivedita

The story of the glimpses which I caught of this part of the Swami's life would be singularly incomplete, if it contained no mention of his worship of the Mother. Spiritually speaking, I have always felt that there were two elements in his consciousness. Undoubtedly he was born a *Brahmajnani*, as Ramakrishna Paramahamsa so frequently insisted. When he was only eight years old, sitting at his play, he had developed the power of entering *Samadhi*. The religious ideas towards which he naturally gravitated, were highly abstract and philosophical, the very reverse of those which are commonly referred to as 'idolatrous.' In his youth, and presumably when he had already been some time under the influence of Sri Ramakrishna, he became a formal member of the Sadharan Brahmo Samaj. In England and America he was never known to preach anything that depended on a special form. The realisation of Brahman was his only imperative, the Advaita philosophy his only system of doctrine, the Vedas and Upanishads his sole scriptural authority.

And yet side by side with this, it is also true that in India the word "Mother" was forever on his lips. He spoke of Her, as we of one deeply familiar in the household life. He was constantly preoccupied with Her. Like other children, he was not always good. Sometimes he would be naughty and rebellious. But always to Her. Never did he attribute to any other, the good or evil that befell. On a certain solemn occasion he entrusted to a disciple a prayer to Her that in his own life had acted as a veritable charm. "And mind!" he added suddenly, turning with what was almost fierceness upon the receiver, "*make* Her listen to you, when you say it! *None of that cringing* to Mother! Remember!" Every now and then he would break out with some new fragment of description. The right hand raised in blessing, the left holding the sword, — "Her curse is blessing!" would be the sudden exclamation that ended a long reverie. Or becoming half lyric in the intensity of his feeling, "Deep in the heart of hearts of Her own, flashes the blood-

red knife of Kali. Worshippers of the Mother are they from their birth, in Her incarnation of the sword." From him was gathered, in such moments as these, almost every line and syllable of a certain short psalm, called the 'Voice of the Mother,' which I wrote and published about this time. "I worship the Terrible!" he was continually saying,— and once, "It is a mistake to hold that with all men pleasure is the motive. Quite as many are born to seek after pain. Let us worship the Terror for Its own sake."

He had a whole-hearted contempt for what he regarded as squeamishness or mawkishness. He wasted few words on me, when I came to him with my difficulties about animal sacrifice in the temple. He made no reference, as he might have done, to the fact that most of us, loudly as we may attack this, have no hesitation in offering animal sacrifice to ourselves. He offered no argument, as he easily might have done, regarding the degradation of the butcher and the slaughter house, under the modern system. "Why not a little blood, to complete the picture?" was his only direct reply to my objections. And it was with considerable difficulty that I elicited from him, and from another disciple of Sri Ramakrishna, sitting near, the actual facts of the more austere side of Kali-worship, that side which has transcended the sacrifice of others. He told me however that he had never tolerated the blood offering commonly made to the "demons who attend on Kali." This was simple devil worship, and he had no place for it. His own effort being constantly to banish fear and weakness from his own consciousness and to learn to recognise THE MOTHER as instinctively in evil, terror, sorrow, and annihilation, as in that which makes for sweetness and joy, it followed that the one thing he could not away with was any sort of watering down of the great conception. "Fools!" he exclaimed once, as he dwelt in quiet talk on "the worship of the Terrible", on "becoming one with the Terrible"— "Fools! they put a garland of flowers round Thy neck, and then start back in terror, and call Thee 'the Merciful'!" And as he spoke, the underlying egoism of worship that is devoted to the Kind God, to Providence, the consoling Divinity, without a heart for God in the earthquake, or God in the volcano, overwhelmed the listener. One saw that such worship was at bottom, as the Hindu calls it, merely 'shop-keeping,' and one realised the infinitely greater boldness and truth of the teaching that God manifests through evil as well as through good. One saw that the true attitude for the mind and will that are not to be baffled by the personal self, was in fact the determination, in the stern

words of the Swami Vivekananda, 'to seek death not life, to hurl oneself upon the sword's point, to become one with the Terrible for evermore!'

It would have been altogether inconsistent with the Swami's idea of freedom, to have sought to impose his own conceptions on a disciple. But everything in my past life as an educationist had contributed to impress on me now the necessity of taking on the Indian consciousness, and the personal perplexity associated with the memory of the pilgrimage to Amarnath was a witness not to be forgotten to the strong place which Indian systems of worship held in that consciousness. I set myself therefore to enter into Kali worship, as one would set oneself to learn a new language, or take birth deliberately, perhaps, in a new race. To this fact I owe it that I was able to understand as much as I did of our Master's life and thought. Step by step, glimpse after glimpse, I began to comprehend a little. And in matters religious, he was, without knowing it, a born educator. He never checked a struggling thought. Being with him one day when an image of Kali was brought in, and noticing some passing expression, I suddenly said: 'Perhaps, Swamiji, Kali is the Vision of Siva! Is She?' He looked at me for a moment. 'Well! Well! Express it in your own way,' he said gently. 'Express it in your own way!'

Another day he was going with me to visit the old Maharshi Devendra Nath Tagore, in the seclusion of his home in Jorasanko, and before we started, he questioned me about a death-scene at which I had been present the night before. I told him eagerly of the sudden realisation that had come to me, that religions were only languages, and we must speak to a man in his own language. His whole face lighted up at the thought. 'Yes!' he exclaimed, 'And Ramakrishna Paramahamsa was the only man who taught that! He was the only man who ever had the courage to say that we must speak to all men in their own language!'

Yet there came a day when he found it necessary to lay down with unmistakeable clearness his own position in the matter of Mother-worship. I was about to lecture at the Kalighat, and he came to instruct me that if any foreign friends should wish to be present, they were to remove their shoes, and sit on the floor, like the rest of the audience. In that Presence no exceptions were to be made. I was myself to be responsible for this.[1]

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[1] In no temple anywhere, ought there to be any exception. No one has any respect for a man who cannot stand for the dignity and sacredness of his own place of worship. — Nivedita

After saying all this, however, he lingered before going, and then, making a shy reference to Colonel Hay's poem of the 'Guardian Angels', he said, "That is precisely my position about Brahman and the gods! I believe in Brahman and the gods, and not in anything else!"

He was evidently afraid that my intellectual difficulty would be where his own must have done, in the incompatibility of the exaltation of one definite scheme of worship with the highest Vedantic theory of Brahman. He did not understand that to us who stood about him, he was himself the reconciliation of these opposites, and the witness to the truth of each. Following up this train of thought, therefore, he dropped into a mood of half-soliloquy, and sat for a while talking disjointedly, answering questions, trying to make himself clear, yet always half-absorbed in something within, as if held by some spell he could not break.

"How I used to hate Kali!" he said, "And all Her ways! That was the ground of my six years' fight,–that I would not accept Her. But I had to accept Her at last! Ramakrishna Paramahamsa dedicated me to Her, and now I believe that She guides me in every little thing I do, and does with me what She will! Yet I fought so long! I loved him, you see, and that was what held me. I saw his marvellous purity! I felt his wonderful love! His greatness had not dawned on me then. All that came afterwards, when I had given in. At that time I thought him a brain-sick baby, always seeing visions and the rest. I hated it. And then I too had to accept Her!"

"No, the thing that made me do it is a secret that will die with me. I had great misfortunes at that time. It was an opportunity She made a slave of me. Those were the very words– 'a slave of you.' And Ramakrishna Paramahamsa made me over to Her... Strange! He lived only two years after doing that, and most of the time he was suffering. Not more than six months did he keep his own health and brightness.

"Guru Nanak was like that, you know, looking for the one disciple to whom he would give his power. And he passed over all his own family,—his children were as nothing to him,—till he came upon the boy to whom he gave it, and then he could die.

"The future, you say, will call Ramakrishna Paramahamsa an Incarnation of Kali? Yes, I think there's no doubt that She worked up the body of Ramakrishna for Her own ends.

"You see, I cannot but believe that there is somewhere a great Power That thinks of Herself as feminine, and called Kali, and Mother..... And I believe in Brahman too..... But is it not always like that? Is it not the multitude of cells in the body that make up the personality, the many brain-centres, not the one, that produce consciousness? .....Unity in complexity! Just so! And why should it be different with Brahman? It is Brahman. It is the One. And yet — and yet — it is the gods too!"

Similarly, he had returned from a pilgrimage in Kashmir saying "These gods are not merely symbols! They are the forms that the *Muktas* have seen!" And it is told of Sri Ramakrishna that he would sometimes speak, coming out of samadhi, of the past experience of that soul that dwelt within him. — "He who came as Rama, as Krishna, as Jesus dwells here" — and then would add playfully, turning to his chief disciple, "But not in your Vedanta sense, Naren!"

Thus we are admitted to a glimpse of the struggle that goes on in great souls, for the correlation and mutual adjustment of the different realisations of different names. On the one side the Mother, on the other side Brahman. We are reminded of the Swami's own words, heard long ago, "The impersonal God, seen through the mists of sense, is personal." In truth it might well be that the two ideals could not be reconciled. Both conceptions could not be equally true at the same time. It is clear enough that in the end, as a subjective realisation, either the Mother must become Brahman, or Brahman the Mother. One of the two must melt into the other, the question of which, in any particular case, depending on the destiny and the past of the worshipping soul.

For my own part, the conversation I have related marked an epoch. Ever since it took place, I have thought I saw in my Master's attitude a certain element of one who earned for another a trust confided to him. He would always, when asked to explain the image of Kali, speak of it as the book of experience, in which the soul turns page after page, only to find that there is nothing in it, after all. And this, to my own mind, is the final explanation. Kali the Mother is to be the worship of the Indian future. In Her name will her sons find it possible to sound many experiences to their depths. And yet, in the end, their hearts will return to the ancient wisdom, and each man will know, when his hour comes, that all his life was but as a dream.

Who does not remember the Veda-like words of the Gita? — 'Not, verily, by avoiding action, can a man rise to this inaction!' May we not, similarly, know for a certainty that not without going through this experience can we reach the realisation at the end? Through the Mother to Brahman, through new life and knowledge, and many changes, through the struggles, the victories, and the defeats of the immediate future, to that safe heaven of the soul where all is One, and all is peace? As I look more and more closely into the life of that great Teacher whom I have followed, I see each day with growing-clearness, how he himself was turning the pages of the book of experience, and that it was only when he had come to the last word that he could lie back like a weary child, in the arms of his Mother, to be wrapped away at last into the Supreme Revelation, knowing that 'all this was but a dream!'

EXERCISE

Choose the correct answer from the alternatives given :

1. **What is the Swami's attitude towards Mother worship, according to Sister Nivedita?**
   a) He advocates for the worship of all deities equally
   b) He emphasises the importance of Mother worship in spiritual life
   c) He considers it a primitive form of religious expression
   d) He discourages devotees from practicing Mother worship
2. **How does Mother worship play the role in Hinduism, as mentioned in the text?**
   a) It is an outdated tradition that the modern Hindus no longer follow.
   b) It's a superstitious practice rooted in ancient mythology
   c) It's a means of seeking material blessings and prosperity
   d) It serves a bridge between the individual Soul and the individual Spirit

Amarnath

Sister Nivedita

It was in the course of an open-air meal in the Mogul Gardens at Achhabal, that the Swami suddenly announced that he would go to Amarnath with the pilgrims, and take his daughter with him. Within our little party, there was too much feeling of delighted congratulation, for any obstacle to be put in the way of the fortunate member. And aided thus, as well as by the State officer, in charge of the journey, preparations went forward for this unique experience.

Kashmir seemed, in those weeks, to be full of pilgrims. We left Achhabal, and returned to our boats at Islamabad, for final arrangements, and everywhere we saw the march of gathering hosts. It was all very quiet and orderly and picturesque. Two or three thousand people would encamp in a field, and leave it before dawn, with no trace of their occupation, save the ashes of their cooking-fires. They carried a bazaar with them, and at each halting place, the pitching of tents, and opening of shops, took place with incredible rapidity. Organisation appeared to be instinctive. A broad street would run through the middle of one part of the camp, and here one could buy dried fruits, milk, dahls, and rice. The tent of the Tehsildar,-with that of the Swami on one side, and my own on the other,-was generally placed near some advantageous spot for the lighting of the evening fire, and thus his neighbourhood tended to form a social centre.

There were hundreds of monks, of all the orders, with their *Gerua* tents, some no larger than a good-sized umbrella, and amongst these, the Swami's influence appeared to be magnetic. The more learned of them swarmed about him at every halting place, filling his tent, and remaining absorbed in conversation, throughout the hours of day light. The talk on their side, he told us afterwards,

had been all of Siva, and they had remonstrated with him seriously, when he had insisted, occasionally, on drawing their attention to the world about them. Even foreigners, they urged, were men. Why make such distinctions between *Swadesh* and *bideshi*? Nor could many of them understand the warmth of his love and sympathy for Mohammedanism. The same other-world-liness that made *Swadesh* and *bideshi* indistinguishable, also prevented these simple souls from formally conceiving of a unity, in which Hindu and Mohammedan were but rival elements. The soil of the Punjaub, they argued, was drenched with the blood of those who had died for the faith. Here, at least, let him practise a narrow orthodoxy! In answer to this, as became one who was, in fact 'an anachronism of the future', the Swami made those practical concessions of the moment that were expressive of his love for the brethren, and drove his principles home to their minds with the greater force and vehemence. But, as he told the tale of his warm discussions, the foreign mind could not help, with some amusement, noting the paradox that the Tehsildar himself, and many officers and servants of the pilgrimage, had been Mussulmans, and that no one had dreamt of objecting to their entering the Cave with the Hindu worshippers, on the ultimate arrival at the shrine. The Tehsildar came afterwards, indeed, with a group of friends, begging formal acceptance by the Swami as disciples; and in this, no one seemed to find anything incongruous or surprising.

Leaving Islamabad, we caught up somewhere with the pilgrimage, and camped with it, for that night, at Pawan, a place famous for its holy springs. I can remember yet the brilliance of the lights reflected in the clear black waters of the tank that evening, and throngs of pilgrims proceeding in little groups from shrine to shrine.

At Pahlgam — the village of the shepherds — the camp halted for a day, to keep *shabat*. It was a beautiful little ravine floored, for the most part with sandy islands in the pebble-strewn bed of a mountain stream. The slopes about it were dark with pine-trees, and over the mountain at its head was seen, at sunset, the moon,

not yet full. It was the scenery of Switzerland or Norway, at their gentlest and loveliest. Here we saw the last of human dwellings, a bridge, a farm house, with its ploughed fields, and a few saeter-huts. And here, on a grassy knoll, when the final march began, we left the rest of our party encamped.

Through scenes of indescribable beauty, three thousand of us ascended the valleys that opened before us as we went. The first day we camped in a pine-wood; the next, we had passed the snow-line, and pitched our tents beside a frozen river. That night, the great camp-fire was made of juniper, and the next evening, at still greater heights, the servants had to wander many miles, in search of this scanty fuel. At last the regular pathway came to an end, and we had to scramble up and down, along goat-paths, on the face of steep declivities, till we reached the boulder-strewn gorge, in which the Cave of Amarnath was situated. As we ascended this, we had before us the snow-peaks covered with a white veil, newly-fallen; and in the Cave itself, in a niche never reached by sunlight, shone the great ice-lingam, that must have seemed, to the awestruck peasants who first came upon it, like the waiting Presence of God.

The Swami had observed every rite of the pilgrimage, as he came along. He had told his beads, kept fasts, and bathed in the ice-cold waters of five streams in succession, crossing the river-gravels on our second day. And now, as he entered the Cave, it seemed to him, as if he saw Siva made visible before him. Amidst the buzzing, swarming noise of the pilgrim-crowd, and the overhead fluttering of the pigeons, he knelt and prostrated two or three times, unnoticed; and then, afraid lest emotion might overcome him, he rose and silently withdrew. He said afterwards that in these brief moments he had received from Siva the gift of *Amar*, – not to die, until he himself had willed it. In this way possibly, was defeated or fulfilled that presentiment which had haunted him from childhood, that he would meet with death, in a Siva temple amongst the mountains.

Outside the Cave, there was no Brahminic exploitation of the helpless people. Amarnath is remarkable for its simplicity and closeness to nature. But the

pilgrimage culminates—on the great day of *Rakhibandhan*, and our wrists were tied with the red and yellow threads of that sacrament. Afterwards, we rested and had a meal, on some high boulders beside the stream, before returning to our tents.

The Swami was full of the place. He felt that he had never been to anything so beautiful. He sat long silent. Then he said dreamily, "I can well imagine how this Cave was first discovered. A party of shepherds, one summer day, must have lost their flocks, and wandered in here in search of them. Then, when they came home to the valleys, they told how they had suddenly come upon Mahadev!"

Of my Master himself, in any case, a like story was true. The purity and whiteness of the ice-pillar had startled and enwrapt him. The cavern had revealed itself to him as the secret of Kailas. And for the rest of his life, he cherished the memory of how he had entered a mountain-cave, and come face to face there with the Lord Himself.

EXERCISE

Choose the correct answer from the alternatives given :

1. **The soil of Punjab was flooded with the blood of the people who died for**
   a) Love
   b) The land
   c) The faith
   d) Other people
2. **The word " other worldliness " means**
   a) Animal world
   b) An other world
   c) Relating to a world other than the actual world
   d) A new world

Composed upon Westminster Bridge, September 3, 1802

WILLIAM WORDSWORTH

Earth has not any thing to show more fair:
Dull would he be of soul who could pass by
A sight so touching in its majesty:
This City now doth, like a garment, wear
The beauty of the morning; silent, bare,
Ships, towers, domes, theatres, and temples lie
Open unto the fields, and to the sky;
All bright and glittering in the smokeless air.
Never did sun more beautifully steep
In his first splendour, valley, rock, or hill;
Ne'er saw I, never felt, a calm so deep!
The river glideth at his own sweet will:
Dear God! the very houses seem asleep;
And all that mighty heart is lying still!

EXERCISE

Choose the correct answer from the alternatives given :

1. **At what time of the day did Wordsworth observe the beauty of the city of London?**

   a) At dawn b) At noon
   c) In the evening d) At night

2. **What literary device is used in the line, " The river glideth at his own sweet will"**

   a) Simile b) Metaphor
   c) Hyperbole d) Personification

The Bangle Sellers

SAROJINI NAIDU

Bangle sellers are we who bear
Our shining loads to the temple fair...
Who will buy these delicate, bright
Rainbow-tinted circles of light?
Lustrous tokens of radiant lives,
For happy daughters and happy wives.

Some are meet for a maiden's wrist,
Silver and blue as the mountain mist,
Some are flushed like the buds that dream
On the tranquil brow of a woodland stream,
Some are aglow wth the bloom that cleaves
To the limpid glory of new born leaves

Some are like fields of sunlit corn,
Meet for a bride on her bridal morn,
Some, like the flame of her marriage fire,
Or, rich with the hue of her heart's desire,
Tinkling, luminous, tender, and clear,
Like her bridal laughter and bridal tear.

Some are purple and gold flecked grey
For she who has journeyed through life midway,
Whose hands have cherished, whose love has blest,
And cradled fair sons on her faithful breast,
And serves her household in fruitful pride,
And worships the gods at her husband's side.

EXERCISE

Choose the correct answer from the alternatives given :

1. **What is the mood of the poem "The Bangle Sellers"?**
   a) Critical and questioning
   b) Romantic and passionate
   c) Happy and carefree
   d) Melancholy and reflective
2. **What is the significance of the bangles in the poem "The Bangle Sellers"?**
   a) They represent wealth
   b) They symbolise Love and Marriage
   c) They are a source of income for the sellers
   d) They represent freedom

The Second Coming

William Butler Yeats

Turning and turning in the widening gyre
The falcon cannot hear the falconer;
Things fall apart; the centre cannot hold;
Mere anarchy is loosed upon the world,
The blood-dimmed tide is loosed, and everywhere
The ceremony of innocence is drowned;
The best lack all conviction, while the worst
Are full of passionate intensity.

Surely some revelation is at hand;
Surely the Second Coming is at hand.
The Second Coming! Hardly are those words out
When a vast image out of *Spiritus Mundi*
Troubles my sight: somewhere in sands of the desert
A shape with lion body and the head of a man,
A gaze blank and pitiless as the sun,
Is moving its slow thighs, while all about it
Reel shadows of the indignant desert birds.
The darkness drops again; but now I know
That twenty centuries of stony sleep
Were vexed to nightmare by a rocking cradle,
And what rough beast, its hour come round at last,
Slouches towards Bethlehem to be born?

EXERCISE

Choose the correct answer from the alternatives given :

1. **What is the symbol of the " rough beast" as mentioned in the poem?**
   a) A monster
   b) A saviour
   c) A revolution
   d) An apocalypse
2. **"Things fall apart"... This suggests**
   a) All things are centralized
   b) Everything is defused
   c) All things are bound together
   d) All things are shattered on the ground

CLASS XI
SEMESTER II

The Garden Party

KATHERINE MANSFIELD

And after all the weather was ideal. They could not have had a more perfect day for a garden-party if they had ordered it. Windless, warm, the sky without a cloud. Only the blue was veiled with a haze of light gold, as it is sometimes in early summer. The gardener had been up since dawn, mowing the lawns and sweeping them, until the grass and the dark flat rosettes where the daisy plants had been seemed to shine. As for the roses, you could not help feeling they understood that roses are the only flowers that impress people at garden parties: the only flowers that everybody is certain of knowing. Hundreds, yes, literally hundreds, had come out in a single night; the green bushes bowed down as though they had been visited by archangels.

Breakfast was not yet over before the men came to put up the marquee.

"Where do you want the marquee put, mother?"

"My dear child, it's no use asking me. I'm determined to leave everything to you children this year. Forget I am your mother. Treat me as an honoured guest."

But Meg could not possibly go and supervise the men. She had washed her hair before breakfast, and she sat drinking her coffee in a green turban, with a dark wet curl stamped on each cheek. Jose, the butterfly, always came down in a silk petticoat and a kimono jacket.

"You'll have to go, Laura; you're the artistic one."

Away Laura flew, still holding her piece of bread-and-butter. It's so delicious to have an excuse for eating out of doors, and besides, she loved having to arrange things; she always felt she could do it so much better than anybody else.

Four men in their shirt-sleeves stood grouped together on the garden path. They carried staves covered with rolls of canvas, and they had big tool-bags slung on their backs. They looked impressive. Laura wished now that she was not holding that piece of bread-and-butter, but there was nowhere to put it, and she couldn't possibly throw it away. She blushed and tried to look severe and even a little bit short-sighted as she came up to them.

"Good morning," she said, copying her mother's voice. But that sounded so fearfully affected that she was ashamed, and stammered like a little girl. "Oh—er—have you come—is it about the marquee?"

"That's right, miss," said the tallest of the men, a lanky, freckled fellow, and he shifted his tool-bag, knocked back his straw hat and smiled down at her. "That's about it."

His smile was so easy, so friendly, that Laura recovered. What nice eyes he had, small, but such a dark blue! And now she looked at the others, they were smiling too. "Cheer up, we won't bite," their smile seemed to say. How very nice workmen were! And what a beautiful morning! She mustn't mention the morning; she must be business-like. The marquee.

"Well, what about the lily-lawn? Would that do?"

And she pointed to the lily-lawn with the hand that didn't hold the bread-and-butter. They turned, they stared in the direction. A little fat chap thrust out his under-lip, and the tall fellow frowned.

"I don't fancy it," said he. "Not conspicuous enough. You see, with a thing like a marquee," and he turned to Laura in his easy way, "you want to put it somewhere where it'll give you a bang slap in the eye, if you follow me."

Laura's upbringing made her wonder for a moment whether it was quite respectful of a workman to talk to her of bangs slap in the eye. But she did quite follow him.

"A corner of the tennis-court," she suggested. "But the band's going to be in one corner."

"H'm, going to have a band, are you?" said another of the workmen. He was pale. He had a haggard look as his dark eyes scanned the tennis-court. What was he thinking?

"Only a very small band," said Laura gently. Perhaps he wouldn't mind so much if the band was quite small. But the tall fellow interrupted.

"Look here, miss, that's the place. Against those trees. Over there. That'll do fine."

Against the karakas. Then the karaka-trees would be hidden. And they were so lovely, with their broad, gleaming leaves, and their clusters of yellow fruit. They were like trees you imagined growing on a desert island, proud, solitary, lifting their leaves and fruits to the sun in a kind of silent splendour. Must they be hidden by a marquee?

They must. Already the men had shouldered their staves and were making for the place. Only the tall fellow was left. He bent down, pinched a sprig of lavender, put his thumb and forefinger to his nose and sniffed up the smell. When Laura saw that gesture she forgot all about the karakas in her wonder at him caring for things like that — caring for the smell of lavender. How many men that she knew would have done such a thing? Oh, how extraordinarily nice workmen were, she thought. Why couldn't she have workmen for her friends rather than the silly boys she danced with and who came to Sunday night supper? She would get on much better with men like these.

It's all the fault, she decided, as the tall fellow drew something on the back of an envelope, something that was to be looped up or left to hang, of these absurd class distinctions. Well, for her part, she didn't feel them. Not a bit, not an atom. ...And now there came the chock-chock of wooden hammers. Someone whistled, someone sang out. "Are you right there, matey?" "Matey!" The friendliness of it, the—the—just to prove how happy she was, just to show the tall fellow how at home she felt, and how she despised stupid conventions, Laura took a big bite of her bread-and-butter as she stared at the little drawing. She felt just like a work-girl.

'Laura, Laura, where are you? Telephone, Laura!' a voice cried from the house.

'Coming!' Away she skimmed, over the lawn, up the path, up the steps, across the veranda, and into the porch. In the hall her father and Laurie were brushing their hats ready to go to the office.

'I say, Laura,' said Laurie very fast, 'you might just give a squiz at my coat before this afternoon. See if it wants pressing.' 'I will,' said she. Suddenly she couldn't stop herself. She ran at Laurie and gave him a small, quick squeeze. 'Oh, I do love parties, don't you?' gasped Laura.

'Rather,' said Laurie's warm, boyish voice, and he squeezed his sister too, and gave her a gentle push. 'Dash off to the telephone, old girl.'

The telephone. 'Yes, yes; oh yes. Kitty? Good morning, dear. Come to lunch? Do, dear. Delighted of course. It will only be a very scratch meal—just the sandwich crusts and broken meringue shells and what's left over. Yes, isn't it a perfect morning? Your white? Oh, I certainly should. One moment—hold the line. Mother's calling.' And Laura sat back. 'What, mother? Can't hear.'

Mrs. Sheridan's voice floated down the stairs. 'Tell her to wear that sweet hat she had on last Sunday.'

"Mother says you're to wear that sweet hat you had on last Sunday. Good. One o'clock. Bye-bye."

Laura put back the receiver, flung her arms over her head, took a deep breath, stretched and let them fall. "Huh," she sighed, and the moment after the sigh she sat up quickly. She was still, listening. All the doors in the house seemed to be open. The house was alive with soft, quick steps and running voices. The green baize door that led to the kitchen regions swung open and shut with a muffled thud. And now there came a long, chuckling absurd sound. It was the heavy piano being moved on its stiff castors. But the air! If you stopped to notice, was the air always like this? Little faint winds were playing chase-in at the tops of the windows, out at the doors. And there were two tiny spots of sun, one on the inkpot, one on a silver photograph frame, playing too. Darling little spots. Especially the one on the inkpot lid. It was quite warm. A warm little silver star. She could have kissed it.

The front door bell pealed, and there sounded the rustle of Sadie's print skirt on the stairs. A man's voice murmured; Sadie answered, careless. "I'm sure I don't know. Wait. I'll ask Mrs. Sheridan."

"What is it, Sadie?" Laura came into the hall.

"It's the florist, Miss Laura."

It was, indeed. There, just inside the door, stood a wide, shallow tray full of pots of pink lilies. No other kind. Nothing but lilies — canna lilies, big pink flowers, wide open, radiant, almost frighteningly alive on bright crimson stems.

"O-oh, Sadie!" said Laura, and the sound was like a little moan. She crouched down as if to warm herself at that blaze of lilies; she felt they were in her fingers, on her lips, growing in her breast.

"It's some mistake," she said faintly. "Nobody ever ordered so many. Sadie, go and find mother."

But at that moment Mrs. Sheridan joined them.

"It's quite right," she said calmly. "Yes, I ordered them. Aren't they lovely?" She pressed Laura's arm. "I was passing the shop yesterday, and I saw them in the window. And I suddenly thought for once in my life I shall have enough canna lilies. The garden-party will be a good excuse."

"But I thought you said you didn't mean to interfere," said Laura. Sadie had gone. The florist's man was still outside at his van. She put her arm round her mother's neck and gently, very gently, she bit her mother's ear.

"My darling child, you wouldn't like a logical mother, would you? Don't do that. Here's the man."

He carried more lilies still, another whole tray.

"Bank them up, just inside the door, on both sides of the porch, please," said Mrs. Sheridan. "Don't you agree, Laura?"

"Oh, I do, mother."

In the drawing-room Meg, Jose and good little Hans had at last succeeded in moving the piano.

"Now, if we put this chesterfield against the wall and move everything out of the room except the chairs, don't you think?"

"Quite."

"Hans, move these tables into the smoking-room, and bring a sweeper to take these marks off the carpet and--one moment, Hans--" Jose loved giving orders to the servants, and they loved obeying her. She always made them feel they were taking part in some drama. "Tell mother and Miss Laura to come here at once."

"Very good, Miss Jose."

She turned to Meg. "I want to hear what the piano sounds like, just in case I'm asked to sing this afternoon. Let's try over 'This life is Weary.'"

Pom! Ta-ta-ta Tee-ta! The piano burst out so passionately that Jose's face changed. She clasped her hands. She looked mournfully and enigmatically at her mother and Laura as they came in.

"This Life is Wee-ary, A Tear—a Sigh. A Love that Chan-ges, This Life is Wee-ary, A Tear—a Sigh. A Love that Chan-ges. And then...Good-bye!"

But at the word "Good-bye," and although the piano sounded more desperate than ever, her face broke into a brilliant, dreadfully unsympathetic smile.

"Aren't I in good voice, mummy?" she beamed.

"This Life is Wee-ary, Hope comes to Die. A Dream-a Wa-kening."

But now Sadie interrupted them. "What is it, Sadie?"

"If you please, m'm, cook says have you got the flags for the sandwiches?"

"The flags for the sandwiches, Sadie?" echoed Mrs. Sheridan dreamily. And the children knew by her face that she hadn't got them. "Let me see." And she said to Sadie firmly, "Tell cook I'll let her have them in ten minutes.

Sadie went.

"Now, Laura," said her mother quickly, "come with me into the smoking-room. I've got the names somewhere on the back of an envelope. You'll have to write them out for me. Meg, go upstairs this minute and take that wet thing off your head. Jose, run and finish dressing this instant. Do you hear me, children, or shall I have to tell your father when he comes home tonight? And—and, Jose, pacify cook if you do go into the kitchen, will you? I'm terrified of her this morning."

The envelope was found at last behind the dining-room clock, though how it had got there Mrs. Sheridan could not imagine.

"One of you children must have stolen it out of my bag, because I remember vividly—cream cheese and lemon-curd. Have you done that?"

"Yes."

"Egg and—" Mrs. Sheridan held the envelope away from her. "It looks like mice. It can't be mice, can it?"

"Olive, pet," said Laura, looking over her shoulder.

"Yes, of course, olive. What a horrible combination it sounds. Egg and olive."

They were finished at last, and Laura took them off to the kitchen. She found Jose there pacifying the cook, who did not look at all terrifying.

"I have never seen such exquisite sandwiches," said Jose's rapturous voice. "How many kinds did you say there were, cook? Fifteen?"

"Fifteen, Miss Jose."

"Well, cook, I congratulate you."

Cook swept up crusts with the long sandwich knife and smiled broadly.

"Godber's has come," announced Sadie, issuing out of the pantry. She had seen the man pass the window.

That meant the cream puffs had come. Godber's were famous for their cream puffs. Nobody ever thought of making them at home.

"Bring them in and put them on the table, my girl," ordered cook.

Sadie brought them in and went back to the door. Of course Laura and Jose were far too grown-up to really care about such things. All the same, they couldn't help agreeing that the puffs looked very attractive. Very. Cook began arranging them, shaking off the extra icing sugar.

"Don't they carry one back to all one's parties?" said Laura.

"I suppose they do," said practical Jose, who never liked to be carried back. "They look beautifully light and feathery, I must say."

"Have one each, my dears," said cook in her comfortable voice. "Yer ma won't know."

Oh, impossible. Fancy cream puffs so soon after breakfast. The very idea made one shudder. All the same, two minutes later Jose and Laura were licking their fingers with that absorbed inward look that only comes from whipped cream.

"Let's go into the garden, out by the back way," suggested Laura. "I want to see how the men are getting on with the marquee. They're such awfully nice men."

But the back door was blocked by cook, Sadie, Godber's man and Hans.

Something had happened.

"Tuk-tuk-tuk," clucked cook like an agitated hen. Sadie had her hand clapped to her cheek as though she had toothache. Hans's face was screwed up in the effort to understand. Only Godber's man seemed to be enjoying himself: it was his story.

"What's the matter? What's happened?"

"There's been a horrible accident," said Cook. "A man killed."

"A man killed! Where? How? When?"

But Godber's man wasn't going to have his story snatched from under his nose.

"Know those little cottages just below here, miss?" Know them? Of course, she knew them. "Well, there's a young chap living there, name of Scott, a carter. His horse shied at a traction-engine, corner of Hawke Street this morning, and he was thrown out on the back of his head. Killed."

"Dead!" Laura stared at Godber's man.

"Dead when they picked him up," said Godber's man with relish. "They were taking the body home as I come up here." And he said to the cook, "He's left a wife and five little ones."

"Jose, come here." Laura caught hold of her sister's sleeve and dragged her through the kitchen to the other side of the green baize door. There she paused and leaned against it. "Jose!" she said, horrified, "however are we going to stop everything?"

"Stop everything, Laura!" cried Jose in astonishment. "What do you mean?"

"Stop the garden-party, of course." Why did Jose pretend?

But Jose was still more amazed. "Stop the garden-party? My dear Laura, don't be so absurd. Of course we can't do anything of the kind. Nobody expects us to. Don't be so extravagant."

"But we can't possibly have a garden-party with a man dead just outside the front gate."

That really was extravagant, for the little cottages were in a lane to themselves at the very bottom of a steep rise that led up to the house. A broad road ran between. True, they were far too near. They were the greatest possible eyesore, and they had no right to be in that neighbourhood at all. They were little mean dwellings painted a chocolate brown. In the garden patches there was nothing but cabbage stalks, sick hens and tomato cans. The very smoke coming out of their chimneys was poverty-stricken. Little rags and shreds of smoke, so unlike the great silvery plumes that uncurled from the Sheridans' chimneys. Washerwomen lived in the lane and sweeps and a cobbler, and a man whose house-front was studded all over with minute bird-cages. Children swarmed. When the Sheridans were little they were forbidden to set foot there because of the revolting language and of what they might catch. But since they were grown up, Laura and Laurie on their proofs sometimes walked through. It was disgusting and sordid. They came out with a shudder. But still one must go everywhere; one must see everything. So through they went.

"And just think of what the band would sound like to that poor woman," said Laura.

"Oh, Laura!" Jose began to be seriously annoyed. "If you're going to stop a band playing every time someone has an accident, you'll lead a very strenuous life. I'm every bit as sorry about it as you. I feel just as sympathetic." Her eyes hardened. She looked at her sister just as she used to when they were little and fighting together. "You won't bring a drunken workman back to life by being sentimental," she said softly.

"Drunk! Who said he was drunk?" Laura turned furiously on Jose. She said just as they had used to say on those occasions, "I'm going straight up to tell mother."

"Do, dear," cooed Jose.

"Mother, can I come into your room?" Laura turned the big glass door-knob.

"Of course, child. Why, what's the matter? What's given you such a colour?" And Mrs. Sheridan turned round from her dressing-table. She was trying on a new hat.

"Mother, a man's been killed," began Laura.

"Not in the garden?" interrupted her mother.

"No, no!"

"Oh, what a fright you gave me!" Mrs. Sheridan sighed with relief, and took off the big hat and held it on her knees.

"But listen, mother," said Laura. Breathless, half-choking, she told the dreadful story. "Of course, we can't have our party, can we?" she pleaded. "The band and everybody arriving. They'd hear us, mother; they're nearly neighbours!"

To Laura's astonishment her mother behaved just like Jose; it was harder to bear because she seemed amused. She refused to take Laura seriously.

"But, dear child, use your common sense. It's only by accident we've heard of it. If someone had died there normally-and I can't understand how they keep alive in those poky little holes-we should still be having our party, shouldn't we?"

Laura had to say "yes" to that, but she felt it was all wrong. She sat down on her mother's sofa and pinched the cushion frill.

"Mother, isn't it terribly heartless of us?" she asked.

"Darling!" Mrs. Sheridan got up and came over to her, carrying the hat. Before Laura could stop her she had popped it on. "My child!" said her mother. "the hat is yours. It's made for you. It's much too young for me. I have never seen you look such a picture. Look at yourself!" And she held up her hand-mirror.

"But, mother," Laura began again. She couldn't look at herself; she turned aside.

This time Mrs. Sheridan lost patience just as Jose had done.

"You are being very absurd, Laura," she said coldly. "People like that don't expect sacrifices from us. And it's not very sympathetic to spoil everybody's enjoyment as you're doing now."

"I don't understand," said Laura, and she walked quickly out of the room into her own bedroom. There, quite by chance, the first thing she saw was this charming girl in the mirror, in her black hat trimmed with gold daisies, and a long black velvet ribbon. Never had she imagined she could look like that. Is mother right? she thought. And now she hoped her mother was right. Am I being extravagant? Perhaps it was extravagant. Just for a moment she had another glimpse of that poor woman and those little children, and the body being carried into the house. But it all seemed blurred, unreal, like a picture in the newspaper. I'll remember it again after the party's over, she decided. And somehow that seemed quite the best plan...

Lunch was over by half-past one. By half-past two they were all ready for the fray. The green-coated band had arrived and was established in a corner of the tennis-court.

"My dear!" trilled Kitty Maitland, "aren't they too like frogs for words? You ought to have arranged them round the pond with the conductor in the middle on a leaf."

Laurie arrived and hailed them on his way to dress. At the sight of him Laura remembered the accident again. She wanted to tell him. If Laurie agreed with the others, then it was bound to be all right. And she followed him into the hall.

"Laurie!"

"Hallo!" he was half-way upstairs, but when he turned round and saw Laura he suddenly puffed out his cheeks and goggled his eyes at her. "My word, Laura! You do look stunning," said Laurie. "What an absolutely topping hat!"

Laura said faintly "Is it?" and smiled up at Laurie, and didn't tell him after all.

Soon after that people began coming in streams. The band struck up; the hired waiters ran from the house to the marquee. Wherever you looked there were couples strolling, bending to the flowers, greeting, moving on over the lawn. They were like bright birds that had alighted in the Sheridans' garden for this one afternoon, on their way to-where? Ah, what happiness it is to be with people who all are happy, to press hands, press cheeks, smile into eyes.

"Darling Laura, how well you look!"

"What a becoming hat, child!"

"Laura, you look quite Spanish. I've never seen you look so striking."

And Laura, glowing, answered softly: "Have you had tea? Won't you have an ice? The passion-fruit ices really are rather special." She ran to her father and begged him. "Daddy darling, can't the band have something to drink?"

And the perfect afternoon slowly ripened, slowly faded, slowly its petals closed.

"Never a more delightful garden-party..." "The greatest success..." "Quite the most..."

Laura helped her mother with the good-byes. They stood side by side in the porch till it was all over.

"All over, all over, thank heaven," said Mrs. Sheridan. "Round up the others, Laura. Let's go and have some fresh coffee. I'm exhausted. Yes, it's been very

successful. But oh, these parties, these parties! Why will you children insist on giving parties!" And they all of them sat down in the deserted marquee.

"Have a sandwich, daddy dear. I wrote the flag."

"Thanks." Mr. Sheridan took a bite and the sandwich was gone. He took another. "I suppose you didn't hear of a beastly accident that happened today?" he said.

"My dear," said Mrs. Sheridan, holding up her hand, "we did. It nearly ruined the party. Laura insisted we should put it off."

"Oh, mother!" Laura didn't want to be teased about it.

"It was a horrible affair all the same," said Mr. Sheridan. "The chap was married too. Lived just below in the lane, and leaves a wife and half a dozen kiddies, so they say.

An awkward little silence fell. Mrs. Sheridan fidgeted with her cup. Really, it was very tactless of father...

Suddenly she looked up. There on the table were all those sandwiches, cakes, puffs, all un-eaten, all going to be wasted. She had one of her brilliant ideas.

"I know," she said. "Let's make up a basket. Let's send that poor creature some of this perfectly good food. At any rate, it will be the greatest treat for the children. Don't you agree? And she's sure to have neighbours calling in and so on. What a point to have it all ready prepared. Laura!" She jumped up. "Get me the big basket out of the stairs cupboard."

"But, mother, do you really think it's a good idea?" said Laura.

Again, how curious, she seemed to be different from them all. To take scraps from their party. Would the poor woman really like that?

"Of course! What's the matter with you today? An hour or two ago you were insisting on us being sympathetic, and now-"

Oh well! Laura ran for the basket. It was filled, it was heaped by her mother.

"Take it yourself, darling," said she. "Run down just as you are. No, wait, take the arum lilies too. People of that class are so impressed by arum lilies."

"The stems will ruin her lace frock," said practical Jose.

So they would. Just in time. "Only the basket, then. And, Laura!" - her mother followed her out of the marquee- "don't on any account-"

"What mother?"

No, better not put such ideas into the child's head! "Nothing! Run along."

It was just growing dusky as Laura shut their garden gates. A big dog ran by like a shadow. The road gleamed white, and down below in the hollow the little cottages were in deep shade. How quiet it seemed after the afternoon. Here she was going down the hill to somewhere where a man lay dead, and she couldn't realize it. Why couldn't she? She stopped a minute. And it seemed to her that kisses, voices, tinkling spoons, laughter, the smell of crushed grass were somehow inside her. She had no room for anything else. How strange! She looked up at the pale sky, and all she thought was, "Yes, it was the most successful party."

Now the broad road was crossed. The lane began, smoky and dark. Women in shawls and men's tweed caps hurried by. Mist hung over the palings; the children played in the doorways. A low hum came from the mean little cottages. In some of them there was a flicker of light, and a shadow, crab-like, moved across the window. Laura bent her head and hurried on. She wished now she had put on a coat. How her frock showed. And the big hat with the velvet streamer—if only it was another hat! Were the people looking at her? They must be. It was a mistake to have come; she knew all along it was a mistake. Should she go back even now?

No, too late. This was the house. It must be. A dark knot of people stood outside. Beside the gate an old, old woman with a crutch sat in a chair, watching. She had her feet on a newspaper. The voices stopped as Laura drew near. The group parted. It was as though she was expected, as though they had known she was coming here.

Laura was terribly nervous. Tossing the velvet ribbon over her shoulder, she said to a woman standing by, "Is this Mrs. Scott's house?" and the woman, smiling queerly, said, "It is, my lass."

Oh, to be away from this! She actually said, "Help me, God," as she walked up the tiny path and knocked. To be away from those staring eyes, or be covered up in anything, one of those women's shawls even. I'll just leave the basket and go, she decided. I shan't even wait for it to be emptied.

Then the door opened. A little woman in black showed in the gloom.

Laura said, "Are you Mrs. Scott?" But to her horror the woman answered, "Walk in, please, miss," and she was shut in the passage.

"No," said Laura. "I don't want to come in. I only want to leave this basket. Mother sent—"

The little woman in the gloomy passage seemed not to have heard her. "Step this way, please, miss," she said in an oily voice, and Laura followed her.

She found herself in a wretched little low kitchen, lighted by a smoky lamp. There was a woman sitting before the fire.

"Em," said the little creature who had let her in. "Em! It's a young lady." She turned to Laura. She said meaningly, "I'm 'er sister, miss. You'll excuse 'er, won't you?"

"Oh, but of course!" said Laura. "Please, please don't disturb her. I - I only want to leave."

But at that moment the woman at the fire turned round. Her face, puffed up, red, with swollen eyes and swollen lips, looked terrible. She seemed as though she couldn't understand why Laura was there. What did it mean? Why was this stranger standing in the kitchen with a basket? What was it all about? And the poor face puckered up again.

"All right, my dear," said the other. "I'll thank the young lady."

And again she began, "You'll excuse her, miss, I'm sure," and her face, swollen too, tried an oily smile.

Laura only wanted to get out, to get away. She was back in the passage. The door opened. She walked straight through into the bedroom where the dead man was lying.

"You'd like a look at 'im, wouldn't you?" said Em's sister, and she brushed past Laura over to the bed. "Don't be afraid, my lass," - and now her voice sounded fond and sly, and fondly she drew down the sheet- "'e looks a picture. There's nothing to show. Come along, my dear."

Laura came.

There lay a young man, fast asleep — sleeping so soundly, so deeply, that he was far, far away from them both. Oh, so remote, so peaceful. He was dreaming. Never wake him up again. His head was sunk in the pillow, his eyes were closed; they were blind under the closed eyelids. He was given up to his dream. What did garden-parties and baskets and lace frocks matter to him? He was far from all those things. He was wonderful, beautiful. While they were laughing and while the band was playing, this marvel had come to the lane. Happy...happy...All is well, said that sleeping face. This is just as it should be. I am content.

But all the same you had to cry, and she couldn't go out of the room without saying something to him. Laura gave a loud childish sob.

"Forgive my hat," she said.

And this time she didn't wait for Em's sister. She found her way out of the door, down the path, past all those dark people. At the corner of the lane she met Laurie.

He stepped out of the shadow. "Is that you, Laura?"

"Yes."

"Mother was getting anxious. Was it all right?"

"Yes, quite. Oh, Laurie!" She took his arm, she pressed up against him. "I say, you're not crying, are you?" asked her brother.

Laura shook her head. She was.

Laurie put his arm round her shoulder. "Don't cry," he said in his warm, loving voice. "Was it awful?"

"No," sobbed Laura. "It was simply marvellous. But Laurie-" She stopped, she looked at her brother. "Isn't life," she stammered, "isn't life-" But what life was she couldn't explain. No matter. He quite understood.

"Isn't it, darling?" said Laurie.

EXERCISE

1. Describe the role of Laura's mother in shaping Laura's perception in The Garden Party?..... (2)
2. How does the garden reflect the contemporary society?..... (2)
3. Explore the symbolism of the Sheridan family 's Garden in the story..... (6)
4. Discuss the various themes as exhibited in The Garden Party..... (6)

Jimmy Valentine

O. Henry

A guard came to the prison shoe-shop, where Jimmy Valentine was assiduously stitching uppers, and escorted him to the front office. There the warden handed Jimmy his pardon, which had been signed that morning by the governor. Jimmy took it in a tired kind of way. He had served nearly ten months of a four year sentence. He had expected to stay only about three months, at the longest. When a man with as many friends on the outside as Jimmy Valentine had is received in the stir it is hardly worth while to cut his hair. "Now, Valentine," said the warden, "you'll go out in the morning. Brace up, and make a man of yourself. You're not a bad fellow at heart. Stop cracking safes, and live straight." "Me?" said Jimmy, in surprise. "Why, I never cracked a safe in my life." "Oh, no," laughed the warden. "Of course not. Let's see, now. How was it you happened to get sent up on that Springfield job? Was it because you wouldn't prove an alibi for fear of compromising somebody in extremely high-toned society? Or was it simply a case of a mean old jury that had it in for you? It's always one or the other with you innocent victims." "Me?" said Jimmy, still blankly virtuous. "Why, warden, I never was in Springfield in my life!"

"Take him back, Cronin!" said the warden. "and fix him up with outgoing clothes. Unlock him at seven in the morning, and let him come to the bull-pen. Better think over my advice, Valentine." At a quarter past seven on the next morning Jimmy stood in the warden's outer office. He had on a suit of the villainously fitting, ready-made clothes and a pair of the stiff, squeaky shoes that the state furnishes to its discharged compulsory guests. The clerk handed him a railroad ticket and the five-dollar bill with which the law expected him to rehabilitate himself into good citizenship and prosperity. The warden gave him a cigar, and shook hands. Valentine, 9762, was chronicled on the books, "Pardoned by Governor," and Mr. James Valentine walked out into the sunshine. Disregarding the song of the birds, the waving green trees, and the smell of the flowers, Jimmy headed straight for a restaurant. There he tasted the first sweet joys of liberty in the shape of a broiled chicken and a bottle of white wine followed by a cigar a

grade better than the one the warden had given him. From there he proceeded leisurely to the depot. He tossed a quarter into the hat of a blind man sitting by the door, and boarded his train. Three hours set him down in a little town near the state line. He went to the cafe of one Mike Dolan and shook hands with Mike, who was alone behind the bar. "Sorry we couldn't make it sooner, Jimmy, me boy," said Mike. "But we had that protest from Springfield to buck against, and the governor nearly balked. Feeling all right?" "Fine," said Jimmy. "Got my key?" He got his key and went upstairs, unlocking the door of a room at the rear. Everything was just as he had left it. There on the floor was still Ben Price's collar-button that had been torn from that eminent detective's shirt-band when they had overpowered Jimmy to arrest him. Pulling out from the wall a folding-bed, Jimmy slid back a panel in the wall and dragged out a dust-covered suitcase. He opened this and gazed fondly at the finest set of burglar's tools in the East. It was a complete set, made of specially tempered steel, the latest designs in drills, punches, braces and bits, jimmies, clamps, and augers, with two or three novelties, invented by Jimmy himself, in which he took pride. Over nine hundred dollars they had cost him to have made at —, a place where they make such things for the profession. In half an hour Jimmy went down stairs and through the cafe. He was now dressed in tasteful and well-fitting clothes, and carried his dusted and cleaned suitcase in his hand. "Got anything on?" asked Mike Dolan, genially. "Me?" said Jimmy, in a puzzled tone. "I don't understand. I'm representing the New York Amalgamated Short Snap Biscuit Cracker and Frazzled Wheat Company." This statement delighted Mike to such an extent that Jimmy had to take a seltzer-and-milk on the spot. He never touched "hard" drinks. A week after the release of Valentine, 9762, there was a neat job of safeburglary done in Richmond, Indiana, with no clue to the author. A scant eight hundred dollars was all that was secured. Two weeks after that a patented, improved, burglar-proof safe in Logansport was opened like a cheese to the tune of fifteen hundred dollars, currency, securities and silver untouched. That began to interest the rogues-catchers. Then an old-fashioned bank-safe in Jefferson City became active and threw out of its crater an eruption of bank-notes amounting to five thousand dollars. The losses were now high enough to bring the matter up into Ben Price's class of work. By comparing notes, a remarkable similarity in the methods of the burglaries was noticed. Ben Price investigated the scenes of the robberies, and was heard to remark: "That's Dandy Jim Valentine's autograph. He's resumed business. Look at that combination knob—jerked out as easy as pulling up a radish in wet weather. He's got the only clamps that can do it. And look how clean those tumblers were punched out! Jimmy never has to drill but one hole.

Yes, I guess I want Mr. Valentine. He'll do his bit next time without any short-time or clemency foolishness."

Ben Price knew Jimmy's habits. He had learned them while working on the Springfield case. Long jumps, quick get-aways, no confederates, and a taste for good society—these ways had helped Mr. Valentine to become noted as a successful dodger of retribution. It was given out that Ben Price had taken up the trail of the elusive cracksman, and other people with burglar-proof safes felt more at ease.

One afternoon Jimmy Valentine and his suitcase climbed out of the mail-hack in Elmore, a little town five miles off the railroad down in the black-jack country of Arkansas. Jimmy, looking like an athletic young senior just home from college, went down the board side-walk toward the hotel. A young lady crossed the street, passed him at the corner and entered a door over which was the sign, "The Elmore Bank." Jimmy Valentine looked into her eyes, forgot what he was, and became another man. She lowered her eyes and coloured slightly. Young men of Jimmy's style and looks were scarce in Elmore. Jimmy collared a boy that was loafing on the steps of the bank as if he were one of the stockholders, and began to ask him questions about the town, feeding him dimes at intervals. By and by the young lady came out, looking rosily unconscious of the young man with the suitcase, and went her way. "Isn't that young lady Polly Simpson?" asked Jimmy, with specious guile. "Now," said the boy, "She's Annabel Adams. Her pa owns this bank. Why'd you come to Elmore for? Is that a gold watch-chain? I'm going to get a bulldog. Got any more dimes?" Jimmy went to the Planters' Hotel, registered as Ralph D. Spencer, and engaged a room. He leaned on the desk and declared his platform to the clerk. He said he had come to Elmore to look for a location to go into business. How was the shoe business, now, in the town? He had thought of the shoe business. Was there an opening? The clerk was impressed by the clothes and manner of Jimmy. He, himself, was something of a pattern of fashion to the thinly gilded youth of Elmore, but he now perceived his shortcomings. While trying to figure out Jimmy's manner of tying his four-in-hand he cordially gave information.

Yes, there ought to be a good opening in the shoe line. There wasn't an exclusive shoe store in the place. The dry goods and general stores handled them. Business in all lines was fairly good. Hoped Mr. Spencer would decide to locate in Elmore. He would find it a pleasant town to live in, and the people very sociable. Mr. Spencer thought he would stop over in the town a few days and look over the

situation. No, the clerk needn't call the boy. He would carry up his suitcase, himself; it was rather heavy. Mr. Ralph Spencer, the phoenix that arose from Jimmy Valentine's ashes--ashes left by the flame of a sudden and alterative attack of love--remained in Elmore, and prospered. He opened a shoe store and secured a good run of trade. Socially he was also a success, and made many friends. And he accomplished the wish of his heart. He met Miss Annabel Adams, and became more and more captivated by her charms. At the end of a year the situation of Mr. Ralph Spencer was this: he had won the respect of the community, his shoe-store was flourishing, and he and Annabel were engaged to be married in two weeks. Mr. Adams, the typical, plodding, country banker, approved of Spencer. Annabel's pride in him almost equalled her affection. He was as much at home in the family of Mr. Adams and that of Annabel's married sister as if he were already a member. One day Jimmy sat down in his room and wrote this letter, which he mailed to the safe address of one of his old friends in St. Louis.Dear Old Pal,I want you to be at Sullivan's place, in Little Rock, next Wednesday night, at nine o'clock. I want you to wind up some little matters for me. And, also, I want to make you a present of my kit of tools. I know you'll be glad to get them--you couldn't duplicate the lot for a thousand dollars. Say, Billy, I've quit the old business--a year ago. I've got a nice store. I'm making an honest living, and I'm going to marry the finest girl on earth two weeks from now. It's the only life, Billy--the straight one. I wouldn't touch a dollar of another man's money now for a million. After I get married I'm going to sell out and go West, where there won't be so much danger of having old scores brought up against me. I tell you, Billy, she's an angel. She believes in me; and I wouldn't do another crooked thing for the whole world. Be sure to be at Sully's, for I must see you. I'll bring along the tools with me.

Your old friend, Jimmy.On the Monday night after Jimmy wrote this letter, Ben Price jogged unobtrusively into Elmore in a livery buggy. He lounged about town in his quiet way until he found out what he wanted to know. From the drug-store across the street from Spencer's shoe-store he got a good look at Ralph D. Spencer. "Going to marry the banker's daughter are you, Jimmy?" said Ben to himself, softly. "Well, I don't know." The next morning Jimmy took breakfast at the Adamses. He was going to Little Rock that day to order his wedding-suit and buy something nice for Annabel. That would be the first time he had left town since he came to Elmore. It had been more than a year now since those last professional "jobs," and he thought he could safely venture out. After breakfast quite a family party went downtown together--Mr. Adams, Annabel, Jimmy,

and Annabel's married sister with her two little girls, aged five and nine. They came by the hotel where Jimmy still boarded, and he ran up to his room and brought along his suitcase. Then they went on to the bank. There stood Jimmy's horse and buggy and Dolph Gibson, who was going to drive him over to the railroad station. All went inside the high, carved oak railings into the banking room—Jimmy included, for Mr. Adams's future son-in-law was welcome anywhere. The clerks were pleased to be greeted by the good-looking, agreeable young man who was going to marry Miss Annabel. Jimmy set his suitcase down. Annabel, whose heart was bubbling with happiness and lively youth, put on Jimmy's hat, and picked up the suitcase. "Wouldn't I make a nice drummer?" said Annabel. "My! Ralph, how heavy it is? Feels like it was full of gold bricks." "Let of nickel-plated shoe-horns in there," said Jimmy, coolly. "But I'm going to return. Thought I'd save express charges by taking them up. I'm getting awfully economical." The Elmore Bank had just put in a new safe and vault. Mr. Adams was very proud of it, and insisted on an inspection by every one. The vault was a small one, but it had a new, patented door. It fastened with three solid steel bolts thrown simultaneously with a single handle, and had a time lock. Mr. Adams beamingly explained its workings to Mr. Spencer, who showed a courteous but not too intelligent interest. The two children, May and Agatha, were delighted by the shining metal and funny clock and knobs. While they were thus engaged Ben Price sauntered in and leaned on his elbow, looking casually inside between the railings. He told the teller that he didn't want anything; he was just waiting for a man he knew. Suddenly there was a scream or two from the women, and a commotion. Unperceived by the elders, May, the nine-year-old girl, in a spirit of play, had shut Agatha in the vault. She had then shot the bolts and turned the knob of the combination as she had seen Mr. Adams do. The old banker sprang to the handle and tugged at it for a moment. "The door can't be opened," he groaned. "The clock hasn't been wound nor the combination set." Agatha's mother screamed again, hysterically. "Hush!" said Mr. Adams, raising his trembling hand. "All be quite for a moment, Agatha!" he called as loudly as he could. "Listen to me." During the following silence they could just hear the faint sound of the child wildly shrieking in the dark vault in a panic of terror. "My precious darling!" wailed the mother. "She will die of fright! Open the door! Oh, break it open! Can't you men do something!" "There isn't a man nearer than Little Rock who can open that door," said Mr. Adams, in a shaky voice. "My God! Spencer, what shall we do? That child—she can't stand it long in there. There isn't enough air, and, besides, she'll go into convulsions from fright."

Agatha's mother frantic now, beat the door of the vault with her hands. Somebody wildly suggested dynamite. Annabel turned to Jimmy, her large eyes full of anguish, but not yet despairing. To a woman nothing seems quite impossible to the powers of the man she worships. "Can't you do something, Ralph—try, won't you?" He looked at her with a queer, soft smile on his lips and in his keen eyes. "Annabel," he said, "give me that rose you are wearing, will you?" Hardly believing that she heard him aright, she unpinned the bud from the bosom of her dress, and placed it in his hand. Jimmy stuffed it into his vest-pocket, threw off his coat and pulled up his shirtsleeves. With that act Ralph D. Spencer passed away and Jimmy Valentine took his place. "Get away from the door, all of you," he commanded, shortly. He set his suitcase on the table, and opened it out flat. From that time on he seemed to be unconscious of the presence of any one else. He laid out the shining, queer implements swiftly and orderly, whistling softly to himself as he always did when at work. In a deep silence and immovable, the others watched him as if under a spell. In a minute Jimmy's pet drill was biting smoothly into the steel door. In ten minutes—breaking his own burglarious record—he threw back the bolts and opened the door. Agatha, almost collapsed, but safe, was gathered into her mother's arms. Jimmy Valentine put on his coat, and walked outside the railings towards the front door. As he went he thought he heard a far-away voice that he once knew call "Ralph!" But he never hesitated. At the door a big man stood somewhat in his way. "Hello, Ben!" said Jimmy, still with his strange smile. "Got around at last, have you? Well, let's go. I don't know that it makes much difference, now." And then Ben Price acted rather strangely. "Guess you're mistaken, Mr. Spencer," he said. "Don't believe I recognize you. Your buggy's waiting for you, ain't it?" And Ben Price turned and strolled down the street.

EXERCISE

1. What did Jimmy's suitcase contain?.... (2)
2. How did Jimmy enjoy the freedom immediately after being released from jail?..... (2)
3. Briefly narrate in your own words the conversation between Jimmy and the Warden inside the jail? Did Jimmy follow the advice of the Warden? (3+3)
4. Who was Ben Price? Why did he ignore to recognise Jimmy at the end of the story? (1+5)

Of Studies

FRANCIS BACON (1625)

Studies serve for delight, for ornament, and for ability. Their chief use for delight is in privateness and retiring; for ornament, is in discourse; and for ability, is in the judgment and disposition of business. For expert men can execute, and perhaps judge of particulars, one by one; but the general counsels, and the plots and marshalling of affairs, come best from those that are learned. To spend too much time in studies is sloth; to use them too much for ornament, is affectation; to make judgment wholly by their rules, is the humor of a scholar. They perfect nature, and are perfected by experience: for natural abilities are like natural plants, that need pruning, by study; and studies themselves do give forth directions too much at large, except they be bounded in by experience. Crafty men condemn studies, simple men admire them, and wise men use them; for they teach not their own use; but that is a wisdom without them, and above them, won by observation. Read not to contradict and confute; nor to believe and take for granted; nor to find talk and discourse; but to weigh and consider. Some books are to be tasted, others to be swallowed, and some few to be chewed and digested; that is, some books are to be read only in parts; others to be read, but not curiously; and some few to be read wholly, and with diligence and attention. Some books also may be read by deputy, and extracts made of them by others; but that would be only in the less important arguments, and the meaner sort of books, else distilled books are like common distilled waters, flashy things. Reading maketh a full man; conference a ready man; and writing an exact man. And therefore, if a man write little, he had need have a great memory; if he confer little, he had need have a present wit; and if he read little, he had need have much cunning, to seem to know that he doth not. Histories make men wise; poets witty; the mathematics subtle; natural philosophy deep; moral grave; logic and rhetoric able to contend. *Abeunt studia in mores* [Studies pass

into and influence manners]. Nay, there is no stone or impediment in the wit but may be wrought out by fit studies; like as diseases of the body may have appropriate exercises. Bowling is good for the stone and reins; shooting for the lungs and breast; gentle walking for the stomach; riding for the head; and the like. So if a man's wit be wandering, let him study the mathematics; for in demonstrations, if his wit be called away never so little, he must begin again. If his wit be not apt to distinguish or find differences, let him study the Schoolmen; for they are *cymini sectores* [splitters of hairs]. If he be not apt to beat over matters, and to call up one thing to prove and illustrate another, let him study the lawyers' cases. So every defect of the mind may have a special receipt.

EXERCISE

1. What is meant by the phrase ' cymini sectors '? ... (2)
2. What is meant by " Studies serve for Ability "?.....(2)
3. Comment on the style of the essay Of Studies..... (6)
4. What is the use of studies, as propagated by Bacon in his Of Studies?.... (6)

Nobel Lecture

Mother Teresa

As we have gathered here together to thank God for the Nobel Peace Prize I think it will be beautiful that we pray the prayer of St. Francis of Assisi which always surprises me very much — we pray this prayer every day after Holy Communion, because it is very fitting for each one of us, and I always wonder that 4 — 500 years ago as St. Francis of Assisi composed this prayer that they had the same difficulties that we have today, as we compose this prayer that fits very nicely for us also. I think some of you already have got it - so we will pray together.

Let us thank God for the opportunity that we all have together today, for this gift of peace that reminds us that we have been created to live that peace, and Jesus became man to bring that good news to the poor. He being God became man in all things like us except sin, and he proclaimed very clearly that he had come to give the good news. The news was peace to all of good will and this is something that we all want — the peace of heart — and God loved the world so much that he gave his son — it was a giving — it is as much as if to say it hurt God to give, because he loved the world so much that he gave his son, and he gave him to Virgin Mary, and what did she do with him?

As soon as he came in her life — immediately she went in haste to give that good news, and as she came into the house of her cousin, the unborn child in the womb of Elizabeth leapt with joy. That little unborn child was the first messenger of peace. He recognised the Prince of Peace, he recognised that Christ has come to bring the good news for you and for me. And as if that was not enough — he died on the cross to show that greater love, and he died for you and for me and for that leper and for that man dying of hunger and that naked person lying in the street not only of Calcutta, but of Africa, and New York, and London, and Oslo — and insisted that we love one another as he loves each one of us. And we read that in the Gospel very clearly — love as I have loved you-as I love you — as the Father has

proclaimed: declared

loved me, I love you – and the harder the Father loved him, he gave him to us, and how much we love one another, we, too, must give each other until it hurts. It is not enough for us to say: I love God, but I do not love my neighbour. St John says you are a liar if you say you love God and you won't love your neighbour. How can you love God whom you do not see, if you do not love your neighbour whom you see, whom you touch, with whom you live. And so this is very important for us to realise that love, to be true, has to hurt. It hurt Jesus to love us, it hurt him. And to make sure we remember his great love he made himself the bread of life to satisfy our hunger for his love. Our hunger for God, because we have been created for that love. We have been created in his image. We have been created to love and be loved, and then he has become man to make it possible for us to love as he loved us. He makes himself the hungry one – the naked one – the homeless one – the sick one – the one in prison – the lonely one – the unwanted one – and he says: You did it to me. Hungry for our love, and this is the hunger of our poor people. This is the hunger that you and I must find, it may be in our own home.

I never forget an opportunity I had in visiting a home where they had all these old parents of sons and daughters who had just put them in an institution and forgotten maybe. And I went there, and I saw in that home they had everything, beautiful things, but everybody was looking towards the door. And I did not see a single one with their smile on their face. And I turned to the Sister and I asked: How is that? How is it that the people they have everything here, why are they all looking towards the door, why are they not smiling? I am so used to see the smile on our people, even the dying one smile, and she said: This is nearly every day they are expecting, they are hoping that a son or daughter will come to visit them. They are lost because they are forgotten, and see this is where love comes. That poverty comes right there in our own home, even neglect to love. Maybe in our own family we have somebody who is feeling lonely, who is feeling sick, who is feeling worried, and these are difficult days for everybody. Are we there, are we there to receive them, is the mother there to receive the child?

I was surprised in the West to see so many young boys and girls given into drugs, and I tried to find out why – why is it like that, and the answer was: Because there is no one in the family to receive them. Father and mother are so busy they have no time. Young parents are in some institution and the child takes back to the street and gets involved in something. We are talking of peace. These are things that break peace, but I feel the greatest destroyer of peace today is abortion, because it is a direct war, a direct killing – direct murder by the mother herself. And we

read in the Scripture, for God says very clearly: Even if a mother could forget her child-I will not forget you-I have carved you in the palm of my hand. We are carved in the palm of His hand, so close to Him that unborn child has been carved in the hand of God. And that is what strikes me most, the beginning of that sentence that even if a mother could forget something impossible – but even if she could forget – I will not forget you. And today the greatest means – the greatest destroyer of peace is abortion. And we who are standing here – our parents wanted us. We would not be here if our parents would do that to us. Our children, we want them, we love them, but what of the millions. Many people are very, very concerned with the children in India, with the children in Africa where quite a number die, maybe of malnutrition, of hunger and so on, but millions are dying deliberately by the will of the mother. And this is what is the greatest destroyer of peace today. Because if a mother can kill her own child – what is left for me to kill you and you kill me-there is nothing between. And this I appeal in India, I appeal everywhere. Let us bring the child back, and this year being the child's year: What have we done for the child? At the beginning of the year I told, I spoke everywhere and I said: Let us make this year that we make every single child born, and unborn, wanted. And today is the end of the year, have we really made the children wanted? I will give you something terrifying. We are fighting abortion by adoption, we have saved thousands of lives, we have sent words to all the clinics, to the hospitals, police stations-please don't destroy the child, we will take the child. So every hour of the day and night it is always somebody, we have quite a number of unwedded mothers – tell them come, we will take care of you, we will take the child from you, and we will get a home for the child. And we have a tremendous demand from families who have no children, that is the blessing of God for us. And also, we are doing another thing which is very beautiful – we are teaching our beggars, our leprosy patients, our slum dwellers, our people of the street, natural family planning.

And in Calcutta alone in six years – it is all in Calcutta – we have had 61,273 babies less from the families who would have had, but because they practise this natural way of abstaining, of self-control, out of love for each other. We teach them the temperature meter which is very beautiful, very simple, and which our poor people understand. And you know what they have told me? Our family is healthy, our family is united, and we can have a baby whenever we want. So dear – those people in the street, those beggars – and I think that if our people can do like that how much more you and all the others who can know the ways and means without destroying the life that God has created in us.

Scripture: holy manuscript
abstaining: choosing not to

The poor people are very great people. They can teach us so many beautiful things. The other day one of them came to thank and said: You people who have vowed chastity you are the best people to teach us family planning. Because it is nothing more than self-control out of love for each other. And I think they said a beautiful sentence. And these are people who maybe have nothing to eat, may be they have not a home where to live, but they are great people. The poor are very wonderful people. One evening, we went out and we picked up four people from the street. And one of them was in a most terrible condition — and I told the Sisters: You take care of the other three, I take of this one that looked worse. So I did for her all that my love can do. I put her in bed, and there was such a beautiful smile on her face. She took hold of my hand, as she said one word only: Thank you — and she died.

I could not help but examine my conscience before her, and I asked what would I say if I was in her place. And my answer was very simple. I would have tried to draw a little attention to myself. I would have said I am hungry, that I am dying, I am cold, I am in pain, or *something*, but she gave me much more — she gave me her grateful love. And she died with a smile on her face. As that man whom we picked up from the drain, half eaten with worms, and we brought him to the home. I have lived like an animal in the street, but I am going to die like an angel, loved and cared for. And it was so wonderful to see the greatness of that man who could speak like that, who could die like that without blaming anybody, without cursing anybody, without comparing anything. Like an angel — this is the greatness of our people. And that is why we believe what Jesus had said: I was hungry — I was naked — I was homeless — I was unwanted, unloved, uncared for — and you did it to me.

I believe that we are not real social workers. We may be doing social work in the eyes of the people, but we are really contemplatives in the heart of the world. For we are touching the Body of Christ 24 hours. We have twenty-four hours in this presence, and so you and I. You too try to bring that presence of God in your family, for the family that prays together stays together. And I think that we in our family don't need bombs and guns, to destroy to bring peace — just get together, love one another, bring that peace, that joy, that strength of presence of each other in the home. And we will be able to overcome all the evil that is in the world.

There is so much suffering, so much hatred, so much misery, and we with our prayer, with our sacrifice are beginning at home. Love begins at home, and

contemplative: here, people who think deeply

it is not how much we do, but how much love we put in the action that we do. It is to God Almighty — how much we do it does not matter, because He is infinite, but how much love we put in that action. How much we do to Him in the person that we are serving.

Some time ago in Calcutta we had great difficulty in getting sugar, and I don't know how the word got around to the children, and a little boy of four years old, a Hindu boy, went home and told his parents: I will not eat sugar for three days, I will give my sugar to Mother Teresa for her children. After three days his father and mother brought him to our home. I had never met them before, and this little one could scarcely pronounce my name, but he knew exactly what he had come to do. He knew that he wanted to share his love.

And that is why I have received such a lot of love from you all. From the time that I have come here I have simply been surrounded with love, and with real, real understanding love. It could feel as if everyone in India, everyone in Africa is somebody very special to you. And I felt quite at home. I was telling Sister today, I feel in the Convent with the Sisters as if I am in Calcutta with my own Sisters. So completely at home here, right here.

And so here I am, talking with you — I want you to find the poor here, right in your own home first. And begin love there. Be that good news to your own people. And find out about your next-door neighbour — do you know who they are? I had the most extraordinary experience with a Hindu family that had eight children. A gentleman came to our house and said: "Mother Teresa, there is a family with eight children, they have not eaten for so long — do something." So I took some rice and I went there immediately. And I saw the children — their eyes shining with hunger. I don't know if you have ever seen hunger — but I have seen it very often. And the lady of the house took the rice, divided it, and went out. When she came back I asked her — where did you go, what did you do? And she gave me a very simple answer. They are hungry too. What struck me most was that she knew and who are they, a Muslim family — and she knew. I didn't bring more rice that evening because I wanted them to enjoy the joy of sharing. But there were those children, radiating joy, sharing the joy with their mother because she had the love to give. And you see this is where love begins — at home. And I want you — and I am very grateful for what I have received. It has been a tremendous experience and I go back to India — I will be back by next week, the 15th I hope — and I will be able to bring your love.

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radiating = lighting brightly

And I know well that you have not given from your abundance, but you have given until it has hurt you. Today the little children they have – I was so surprised there is so much joy for the children that are hungry. That the children like themselves will need love and care and tenderness, like they get so much from their parents. So let us thank God that we have had this opportunity to come to know each other, and this knowledge of each other has brought us very close. And we will be able to help not only the children of India and Africa, but will be able to help the children of the whole world, because as you know our Sisters are all over the world. And with this prize that I have received as a prize of peace, I am going to try to make the home for many people that have no home. Because I believe that love begins at home, and if we can create a home for the poor—I think that more and more love will spread. And we will be able through that understanding love to bring peace, be the good news to the poor. The poor in our own family first, in our country and in the world.

To be able to do this, our Sisters, our lives have to be woven with prayer. They have to be woven with Christ to be able to understand, to be able to share. Because today there is so much suffering—and I feel that the passion of Christ is being relived all over again—are we there to share that passion, to share that suffering of people. Around the world, not only in the poor countries, but I found the poverty of the West so much more difficult to remove. When I pick up a person from the street, hungry, I give him a plate of rice, a piece of bread, I have satisfied; I have removed that hunger. But a person that is shut out, that feels unwanted, unloved, terrified, the person that has been thrown out from society—that poverty is so hurtable and so much, and I find that very difficult. Our Sisters are working amongst that kind of people in the West. So you must pray for us that we may be able to be that good news, but we cannot do that without you, you have to do that here in your country. You must come to know the poor, maybe our people here have material things, everything, but I think that if we all look into our own homes, how difficult we find it sometimes to smile at each other, and that the smile is the beginning of love.

And so let us always meet each other with a smile, for the smile is the beginning of love, and once we begin to love each other naturally we want to do something. So you pray for our Sisters and for me and for our Brothers, and for

abundance : plenty

our Co-Workers that are around the world. That we may remain faithful to the gift of God, to love Him and serve Him in the poor together with you. What we have done we should not have been able to do if you did not share with your prayers, with your gifts, this continual giving. But I don't want you to give me from your abundance. I want that you give me until it hurts.

The other day I received 15 dollars from a man who has been on his back for twenty years, and the only part that he can move is his right hand. And the only companion that he enjoys is smoking. And he said to me: I do not smoke for one week, and I send you this money. It must have been a terrible sacrifice for him, but see how beautiful, how he shared, and with that money I bought bread and I gave to those who are hungry with a joy on both sides, he was giving and the poor were receiving. This is something that you and I—it is a gift of God to us to be able to share our love with others. And let it be as it was for Jesus. Let us love one another as he loved us. Let us love Him with undivided love. And the joy of loving Him and each other – let us give now – that Christmas is coming so close. Let us keep that joy of loving Jesus in our hearts. And share that joy with all that we come in touch with. And that radiating joy is real, for we have no reason not to be happy because we have no Christ with us. Christ in our hearts. Christ in the poor that we meet. Christ in the smile that we give and the smile that we receive. Let us make that one point: That no child will be unwanted, and also that we meet each other always with a smile, especially when it is difficult to smile.

I never forget some time ago about fourteen professors came from the United States from different universities. And they came to Calcutta to our house. Then we were talking about that they had been to the home for the dying. We have a home for the dying in Calcutta, where we have picked up more than 36,000 people only from the streets of Calcutta, and out of that big number more than 18,000 have died a beautiful death. They have just gone home to God; and they came to our house and we talked of love, of compassion, and then one of them asked me: Say, Mother, please tell us something that we will remember, and I said to them: Smile at each other, make time for each other in your family. Smile at each other. And then another one asked me: Are you married, and I said: Yes, and I find it sometimes very difficult to smile at Jesus because he can be very demanding sometimes. This is really something true, and there is where love comes—when it is demanding, and yet we can give it to Him with joy. Just as I

have said today. I have said that if I don't go to Heaven for anything else I will be going to Heaven for all the publicity because it has purified me and sacrificed me and made me really ready to go to Heaven. I think that this is something, that we must live life beautifully, we have Jesus with us and He loves us. If we could only remember that God loves me, and I have an opportunity to love others as he loves me, not in big things, but in small things with great love, then Norway becomes a nest of love. And how beautiful it will be that from here a centre for peace has been given. That from here the joy of life of the unborn child comes out. If you become a burning light in the world of peace, then really the Nobel Peace Prize is a gift of the Norwegian people. God bless you!

Notes

The text of the prayer which Mother Teresa used, is attributed to St. Francis. It reads as follows:

Lord, make a channel of Thy peace that, where there is hatred, I may bring love; that where there is wrong, I may bring the spirit of forgiveness; that, where there is discord, I may bring harmony; that, where there is error, I may bring truth; that, where there is doubt, I may bring faith; that, where there is despair, I may bring hope; that, where there are shadows, I may bring light; that, where there is sadness, I may bring joy.

Lord, grant that I may seek rather to comfort than to be comforted, to understand than to be understood; to love than to be loved; for it is by forgetting self that one finds; it is forgiving that one is forgiven; it is by dying that one awakens to eternal life.

EXERCISE

1. How did Mother Teresa want to fight abortion?..... (2)
2. What did Mother Teresa want to suggest when she comments that poor people are very great people?.. (2)
3. Narrate the experience Mother Teresa had when there was a great difficulty in getting sugar.....(6)
4. Narrate the experience and the feelings of Mother when she visited an Old Age Home?.... (6)

My Last Duchess

Robert Browning, 1812 - 1889

FERRARA

That's my last Duchess painted on the wall,
Looking as if she were alive. I call
That piece a wonder, now: Fra Pandolf's hands
Worked busily a day, and there she stands.
Will 't please you sit and look at her? I said
"Fra Pandolf" by design, for never read
Strangers like you that pictured countenance,
The depth and passion of its earnest glance,
But to myself they turned (since none puts by
The curtain I have drawn for you, but I)
And seemed as they would ask me, if they durst,
How such a glance came there; so, not the first
Are you to turn and ask thus. Sir, 'twas not
Her husband's presence only, called that spot
Of joy into the Duchess' cheek: perhaps
Fra Pandolf chanced to say, "Her mantle laps
Over my lady's wrist too much," or "Paint
Must never hope to reproduce the faint
Half-flush that dies along her throat:" Such stuff.
Was courtesy, she thought, and cause enough
For calling up that spot of joy. She had
A heart—how shall I say? too soon made glad,
Too easily impressed; she liked whate'er
She looked on, and her looks went everywhere.
Sir, 'twas all one! My favour at her breast,
The dropping of the daylight in the West,
The bough of cherries some officious fool
Broke in the orchard for her, the white mule

She rode with round the terrace — all and each
Would draw from her alike the approving speech,
Or blush, at least. She thanked men, — good! but thanked
Somehow — I know not how — as if she ranked
My gift of a nine-hundred-years-old name
With anybody's gift. Who'd stoop to blame
This sort of trifling? Even had you skill
In speech — (which I have not) — to make your will
Quite clear to such an one, and say, "Just this
Or that in you disgusts me; here you miss,
Or there exceed the mark" — and if she let
Herself be lessoned so, nor plainly set
Her wits to yours, forsooth, and made excuse —
E'en then would be some stooping; and I choose
Never to stoop. Oh, sir, she smiled, no doubt,
Whene'er I passed her; but who passed without
Much the same smile? This grew; I gave commands;
Then all smiles stopped together. There she stands
As if alive. Will't please you rise? We'll meet
The company below, then. I repeat,
The Count your master's known munificence
Is ample warrant that no just pretence
Of mine for dowry will be disallowed;
Though his fair daughter's self, as I avowed
At starting, is my object. Nay, we'll go
Together down, sir. Notice Neptune, though,
Taming a sea-horse, thought a rarity,
Which Claus of Innsbruck cast in bronze for me!.

EXERCISE

1. What type of a lady was the Duchess? .... (2)
2. What characteristic trait of the Duke's character can be discerned when he refers to the bronze statue of Neptune?... (2)
3. Analyse My Last Duchess as a dramatic monologue?... (6)
4. How is power syndrome conveyed in My Last Duchess?... (6)

Still I Rise

Maya Angelou

You may write me down in history
With your bitter, twisted lies,
You may trod me in the very dirt
But still, like dust, I'll rise.

Does my sassiness upset you?
Why are you beset with gloom?
'Cause I walk like I've got oil wells
Pumping in my living room.

Just like moons and like suns,
With the certainty of tides,
Just like hopes springing high,
Still I'll rise.

Did you want to see me broken?
Bowed head and lowered eyes?
Shoulders falling down like teardrops,
Weakened by my soulful cries?

Does my haughtiness offend you?
Don't you take it awful hard
'Cause I laugh like I've got gold mines
Diggin' in my own backyard.

You may shoot me with your words,
You may cut me with your eyes,
You may kill me with your hatefulness,
But still, like air, I'll rise.

Does my sexiness upset you?
Does it come as a surprise
That I dance like I've got diamonds
At the meeting of my thighs?

Out of the huts of history's shame
I rise
Up from a past that's rooted in pain
I rise
I'm a black ocean, leaping and wide,
Welling and swelling I bear in the tide.

Leaving behind nights of terror and fear
I rise
Into a daybreak that's wondrously clear
I rise
Bringing the gifts that my ancestors gave,
I am the dream and the hope of the slave.
I rise
I rise
I rise.

EXERCISE

1. What reflection of the society do we find in the poem?...(2)
2. Who is YOU addressed in the poem? Who is "I"?.... (2)
3. How is Identity presented in Still I Rise?.....(6)
4. Analyse the various images as found in Still I Rise.....(6)

CLASS XII
SEMESTER III

The Night Train at Deoli

RUSKIN BOND

When I was at college I used to spend my summer vacations in Dehra, at my grandmother's place. I would leave the plains early in May and return late in July. Deoli was a small station about thirty miles from Dehra; it marked the beginning of the heavy jungles of the Indian Terai.

The train would reach Deoli at about five in the morning, when the station would be dimly lit with electric bulbs and oil-lamps, and the jungle across the railway tracks would just be visible in the faint light of dawn. Deoli had only lone platform, an office for the stationmaster and a waiting room. The platform boasted a tea stall, a fruit vendor, and a few stray dogs; not much else, because the train stopped there for only ten minutes before rushing on into the forests.

Why it stopped at Deoli, I don't know. Nothing ever happened there. Nobody got off the train and nobody got in. There were never any coolies on the platform. But the train would halt there a full ten minutes, and then a bell would sound, the guard would blow his whistle, and presently Deoli would be left behind and forgotten.

I used to wonder what happened in Deoli, behind the station walls. I always felt sorry for that lonely little platform, and for the place that nobody wanted to visit. I decided that one day I would get off the train at Deoli, and spend the day there, just to please the town.

I was eighteen, visiting my grandmother, and the night train stopped at Deoli. A girl came down the platform, selling baskets.

It was a cold morning and the girl had a shawl thrown across her shoulders. Her feet were bare and her clothes were old, but she was a young girl, walking gracefully and with dignity.

When she came to my window, she stopped. She saw that I was looking at her intently, but at first she pretended not to notice. She had a pale skin, set off by shiny black hair, and dark, troubled eyes. And then those eyes, searching and eloquent, met mine.

She stood by my window for some time and neither of us said anything. But when she moved on, I found myself leaving my seat and going to the carriage door, and stood waiting on the platform, looking the other way. I walked across to the tea stall. A kettle was boiling over on a small fire, but the owner of the stall was busy

serving tea somewhere on the train. The girl followed me behind the stall.

'Do you want to buy a basket?' she asked. 'They are very strong, made of the finest cane ...'

'No,' I said. 'I don't want a basket.'

We stood looking at each other for what seemed a very long time, and she said, 'Are you sure you don't want a basket?'

'All right, give me one,' I said, and I took the one on top and gave her a rupee, hardly daring to touch her fingers.

As she was about to speak, the guard blew his whistle; she said something, but it was lost in the clanging of the bell and the hissing of the engine. I had to run back to my compartment. The carriage shuddered and jolted forward.

I watched her as the platform slipped away. She was alone on the platform and she did not move, but she was looking at me and smiling. I watched her until the signal-box came in the way and then the jungle hid the station, but I could still see her standing there alone.

I sat up awake for the rest of the journey; I could not rid my mind of the picture of the girl's face and her dark, smouldering eyes.

But when I reached Delhi the incident became blurred and distant, for there were other things to occupy my mind. It was only when I was making the return journey, two months later, that I remembered the girl.

I was looking out for her as the train drew into the station, and I felt an unexpected thrill when I saw her walking up the platform. I sprang off the footboard and waved to her.

When she saw me, she smiled. She was pleased that I remembered her. I was pleased that she remembered me. We were both pleased, and it was almost like a meeting of old friends.

She did not go down the length of the train selling baskets, but came straight to the tea stall; her dark eyes were suddenly filled with light. We said nothing for some time but we couldn't have been more eloquent.

I felt the impulse to put her on the train there and then, and take her away with me; I could not bear the thought of having to watch her recede into the distance at Deoli station. I took the baskets from her hand and put them down on the ground. She put out her hand for one of them, but I caught her hand and held it.

'I have to go to Delhi,' I said.

She nodded. 'I do not have to go anywhere.'

The guard blew his whistle for the train to leave and how I hated the guard for doing that.

'I will come again,' I said. 'Will you be here?'

She nodded again, and, as she nodded, the bell clanged and the train slid forward. I had to wrench my hand away from the girl and run for the moving train.

This time I did not forget her. She was with me for the remainder of the journey and for long after. All that year she was a bright, living thing. And when the college term finished I packed in haste and left for Dehra earlier than usual. My grandmother would be pleased at my eagerness to see her.

I was nervous and anxious as the train drew into Deoli, because I was wondering what I should say to the girl and what I should do. I was determined that I wouldn't stand helplessly before her, hardly able to speak or do anything about my feelings.

The train came to Deoli, and I looked up and down the platform, but I could not see the girl anywhere.

I opened the door and stepped off the footboard. I was deeply disappointed, and overcome by a sense of foreboding. I felt I had to do something, and so I ran up to the station master and said, 'Do you know the girl who used to sell baskets here?'

'No, I don't,' said the station-master. 'And you'd better get on the train if you don't want to be left behind.'

But I paced up and down the platform, and stared over the railings at the station yard: all I saw was a mango tree and a dusty road leading into the jungle. Where did the road go? The train was moving out of the station, and I had to run up the platform and jump for the door of my compartment. Then, as the train gathered speed and rushed through the forests, I sat brooding in front of the window.

What could I do about finding a girl I had seen only twice, who had hardly spoken to me, and about whom I knew nothing - absolutely nothing - but for whom I felt a tenderness and responsibility that I had never felt before?

My grandmother was not pleased with my visit after all, because I didn't stay at her place more than a couple of weeks. I felt restless and ill-at-ease. So I took the train back to the plains, meaning to ask further questions of the station-master at Deoli.

But at Deoli there was a new station master. The previous man had been transferred to another post within the past week. The new man didn't know anything about the girl who sold baskets. I found the owner of the tea stall, a small, shrivelled-up man, wearing greasy clothes, and asked him if he knew anything about the girl with the baskets.

'Yes, there was such a girl here. I remember quite well,' he said. 'But she has stopped coming now.'

'Why?' I asked. 'What happened to her?'

'How should I know?' said the man. 'She was nothing to me.'

And once again I had to run for the train.

As Deoli platform receded, I decided that one day I would have to break journey there, spend a day in the town, make enquiries, and find the girl who had stolen my heart with nothing but a look from her dark, impatient eyes.

With this thought I consoled myself throughout my last term in college. I went to Dehra again in the summer and when, in the early hours of the morning, the night train drew into Deoli station, I looked up and down the platform for signs of the girl, knowing I wouldn't find her but hoping just the same.

Somehow, I couldn't bring myself to break journey at Deoli and spend a day there. (If it was all fiction or a film, I reflected, I would have got down and cleared up the mystery and reached a suitable ending for the whole thing). I think I was afraid to do this. I was afraid of discovering what really happened to the girl. Perhaps she was no longer in Deoli, perhaps she was married, perhaps she had fallen ill ...

In the last few years I have passed through Deoli many times, and I always look out of the carriage window, half expecting to see the same unchanged face smiling up at me. I wonder what happens in Deoli, behind the station walls. But I will never break my journey there. It may spoil my game. I prefer to keep hoping and dreaming, and looking out of the window up and down that lonely platform, waiting for the girl with the baskets.

I never break my journey at Deoli, but I pass through as often as I can.

EXERCISE

Choose the correct answer from the alternatives given :

1. **Where does the narrator meet the young girl in the story?**
   a) On a crowded bus stop
   b) In a bustling marketplace
   c) On the railway platform at Deoli
   d) In a quiet park

2. **What is the narrator captivated by in the young girl?**
   a) Her bright and cheerful personality
   b) Her loud and assertive voice
   c) Her quiet dignity and dark, troubled eyes
   d) Her expensive and colorful clothes

3. **What does the narrator's repeated visits to Deoli station suggest?**
   a) He needs to catch a train there frequently.
   b) He enjoys the scenery of the place.
   c) He hopes to meet the young girl again.
   d) He has business dealings in the town.

Strong Roots

APJ Abdul Kalam

I was born into a middle-class Tamil family in the island town of Rameswaram in the erstwhile Madras state. My father, Jainulabdeen, had neither much formal education nor much wealth; despite these disadvantages, he possessed great innate wisdom and a true generosity of spirit. He had an ideal helpmate in my mother, Ashiamma. I do not recall the exact number of people she fed every day, but I am quite certain that far more outsiders ate with us than all the members of our own family put together.

My parents were widely regarded as an ideal couple. My mother's lineage was the more distinguished, one of her forebears having been bestowed the title of 'Bahadur' by the British.

I was one of many children—a short boy with rather undistinguished looks, born to tall and handsome parents. We lived in our ancestral house, which was built in the middle of the 19th century. It was a fairly large pucca house, made of limestone and brick, on the Mosque Street in Rameswaram. My austere father used to avoid all inessential comforts and luxuries. However, all necessities were provided for, in terms of food, medicine or clothing. In fact, I would say mine was a very secure childhood, materially and emotionally.

I normally ate with my mother, sitting on the floor of the kitchen. She would place a banana leaf before me, on which she then ladled rice and aromatic sambar, a variety of sharp, home-made pickle and a dollop of fresh coconut chutney.

The Shiva temple, which made Rameswaram so famous to pilgrims, was about a ten-minute walk from our house. Our locality was predominantly Muslim, but there were quite a lot of Hindu families too, living amicably with their Muslim neighbours. There was a very old mosque in our locality where my father would take me for evening prayers. I had not the faintest idea of the meaning of the Arabic prayers chanted, but I was totally convinced that they

predominantly: mostly
amicably: in a friendly manner

reached God. When my father came out of the mosque after the prayers, people of different religions would be sitting outside, waiting for him. Many of them offered bowls of water to my father, who would dip his fingertips in them and say a prayer. This water was then carried home for invalids. I also remember people visiting our home to offer thanks after being cured. Father always smiled and asked them to thank Allah, the merciful.

The high priest of Rameswaram temple, Pakshi Lakshmana Sastry, was a very close friend of my father's. One of the most vivid memories of my early childhood is of the two men, each in traditional attire, discussing spiritual matters. When I was old enough to ask questions, I asked my father about the relevance of prayer. My father told me there was nothing mysterious about prayer. Rather, prayer made possible a communion of the spirit between people. "When you pray," he said, "you transcend your body and become a part of the cosmos, which knows no division of wealth, age, caste, or creed."

My father could convey complex spiritual concepts in very simple, down-to-earth Tamil. He once told me, "In his own time, in his own place, in what he really is, and in the stage he has reached – good or bad – every human being is a specific element within the whole of the manifest divine Being. So why be afraid of difficulties, sufferings and problems? When troubles come, try to understand the relevance of your sufferings. Adversity always presents opportunities for introspection."

"Why don't you say this to the people who come to you for help and advice?" I asked my father. He put his hands on my shoulders and looked straight into my eyes. For quite some time he said nothing, as if he was judging my capacity to comprehend his words. Then he answered in a low, deep voice. His answer filled me with a strange energy and enthusiasm: "Wherever human beings find themselves alone, as a natural reaction they start looking for company. Wherever they are in trouble, they look for someone to help them. Wherever they reach an impasse, they look to someone to show them the way out. Every recurrent anguish, longing, and desire finds its own special helper. For the people who

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mystic: people with insight/vision
communion: a special communication
adversity: hardship
introspection: thinking deeply about oneself
impasse: a situation which allows no progress
distress: sadness

come to me in distress, I am but a go-between in their effort to propitiate demonic forces with prayers and offerings. This is not a correct approach at all and should never be followed. One must understand the difference between a fear-ridden vision of destiny and the vision that enables us to seek the enemy of fulfilment within ourselves."

I remember my father starting his day at 4 am by reading the namaz before dawn. After the namaz, he used to walk down to a small coconut grove we owned, about four miles from our home. He would return with about a dozen coconuts tied together thrown over his shoulder, and only then would he have his breakfast. This remained his routine even when he was in his late sixties.

I have, throughout my life, tried to emulate my father in my own world of science and technology. I have endeavoured to understand the fundamental truths revealed to me by my father, and feel convinced that there exists a divine power that can lift one up from confusion, misery, melancholy and failure, and guide one to one's true place. And once an individual severs his emotional and physical bond, he is on the road to freedom, happiness and peace of mind.

EXERCISE

Choose the correct answer from the alternatives given :

1. **What is the significance of the title "Strong Roots" in this extract?**
   a) It refers to the author's family tree
   b) It symbolizes the important values instilled in the author during his childhood
   c) It describes the strong trees near his childhood home
   d) It foreshadows the author's future achievements
2. **Who is Jainulabdeen in the extract?**
   a) A close friend of the author's father
   b) The author's grandfather
   c) The author's father
   d) A teacher of the author
3. **What lesson does the author learn from his father's words about troubles and sufferings?**
   a) To avoid difficulties at all costs.
   b) To view challenges as opportunities for growth and self-discovery.
   c) To rely on others for help during difficult times.
   d) To blame God for misfortune.

propitiate : appease
namaz : Urdu word for prayer

From A Room of One's Own

[SHAKESPEARE'S SISTER][1]

VIRGINIA WOOLF

It was disappointing not to have brought back in the evening some important statement, some authentic fact. Women are poorer than men because- this or that. Perhaps now it would be better to give up seeking for the truth, and receiving on one's head an avalanche of opinion hot as lava, discoloured as dish-water. It would be better to draw the curtains; to shut out distractions; to light the lamp; to narrow the enquiry and to ask the historian, who records not opinions but facts, to describe under what conditions women lived, not throughout the ages, but in England, say in the time of Elizabeth[2].

For it is a perennial puzzle why no woman wrote a word of that extraordinary literature when every other man, it seemed, was capable of song or sonnet. What were the conditions in which women lived, I asked myself; for fiction, imaginative work that is, is not dropped like a pebble upon the ground, as science may be; fiction is like a spider's web, attached ever so lightly perhaps, but still attached to life at all four corners. Often the attachment is scarcely perceptible: Shakespeare's plays, for instance, seem to hang there complete by themselves. But when the web is pulled askew, hooked up at the edge, torn in the middle, one remembers that these webs are not spun in midair by incorporeal creatures, but are the work of suffering human beings, and are attached to grossly material things, like health and money and the houses we live in.

I went, therefore, to the shelf where the histories stand and took down one of

1. *The selection is drawn from Chapter Three and from the conclusion to the final chapter. In Chapter Two, Woolf has been to the library of the British Museum, trying in vain to find answers to questions about the different roles of men and women.*

2. *She reigned from 1558 to 1603.*

the latest, Professor Trevelyan's History of England[3]. Once more I looked up Women, found "position of," and turned to the pages indicated.

"Wife-beating," I read, "was a recognised right of man, and was practised without shame by high as well as low.... Similarly," the historian goes on, "the daughter who refused to marry the gentleman of her parents' choice was liable to be locked up, beaten and flung about the room, without any shock being inflicted on public opinion. Marriage was not an affair of personal affection, but of family avarice, particularly in the 'chivalrous' upper classes.... Betrothal often took place while one or both of the parties was in the cradle, and marriage when they were scarcely out of the nurses' charge." That was about 1470, soon after Chaucer's time. The next reference to the position of women is some two hundred years later, in the time of the Stuarts.[4] "It was still the exception for women of the upper and middle class to choose their own husbands, and when the husband had been assigned, he was lord and master, so far at least as law and custom could make him. Yet even so," Professor Trevelyan concludes, "neither Shakespeare's women nor those of authentic seventeenth-century memoirs, like the Verneys and the Hutchinsons,[5] seem wanting in personality and character." Certainly, if we consider it, Cleopatra must have had a way with her; Lady Macbeth, one would suppose, had a will of her own; Rosalind,[6] one might conclude, was an attractive girl. Professor Trevelyan is speaking no more than the truth when he remarks that Shakespeare's women do not seem wanting in personality and character. Not being a historian, one might go even further and say that women have burnt like beacons in all the works of all the poets from the beginning of time–Clytemnestra, Antigone, Cleopatra, Lady Macbeth, Phèdre, Cressida, Rosalind, Desdemona, the Duchess of Malfi, among the dramatists:

3. *G. M. Trevelyan's History of England (1926) long held its place as the standard one-volume history of the country.*

4. *I.e., during the reign of the British house of Stuart (1603–49, 1660–1714).*

5. *"The ideal family life of the period (1640–56) that ended in such tragic political distress has been recorded once for all in the Memoirs of the Verney Family" (Trevelyan, History of England). Lucy Hutchinson (1620–after 1673) wrote the biography of her husband, Col. John Hutchinson (1615–1664); it was first published in 1806.*

6. *These three Shakespearean heroines are, respectively, in Antony and Cleopatra, Macbeth, and As You Like It.*

then among the prose writers: Millamant, Clarissa, Becky Sharp, Anna Karenina, Emma Bovary, Madame de Guermantes[7]—the names flock to mind, nor do they recall women "lacking in personality and character." Indeed, if woman had no existence save in the fiction written by men, one would imagine her a person of the utmost importance, very various: heroic and mean, splendid and sordid; infinitely beautiful and hideous in the extreme; as great as a man, some think even greater.[8] But this is woman in fiction. In fact, as Professor Trevelyan points out, she was locked up, beaten and flung about the room.

A very queer, composite being thus emerges. Imaginatively she is of the highest importance; practically she is completely insignificant. She pervades poetry from cover to cover; she is all but absent from history. She dominates the lives of kings and conquerors in fiction; in fact she was the slave of any boy whose parents forced a ring upon her finger. Some of the most inspired words, some of the most profound thoughts in literature fall from her lips; in real life she could hardly read, could scarcely spell, and was the property of her husband.

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7. *Characters in, respectively, Aeschylus's Agamemnon; Sophocles' Antigone; Shakespeare's Antony and Cleopatra and Macbeth; Racine's Phèdre; Shakespeare's Troilus and Cressida, As You Like It, and Othello; Webster's The Duchess of Malfi; Congreve's Way of the World; Richardson's Clarissa; Thackeray's Vanity Fair; Tolstoy's Anna Karenina; Flaubert's Madame Bovary; and Proust's À la Recherche du Temps Perdu (In Search of Lost Time).*

8. *"It remains a strange and almost inexplicable fact that in Athens's city, where women were kept in almost Oriental suppression as odalisques or drudges, the stage should yet have produced figures like Clytemnestra and Cassandra, Atossa and Antigone, Phèdre and Medea, and all the other heroines who dominate play after play of the 'misogynist' Euripides. But the paradox of this world where in real life a respectable woman could hardly show her face alone in the street, and yet on the stage woman equals or surpasses man, has never been satisfactorily explained. In modern tragedy the same predominance exists. At all events, a very cursory survey of Shakespeare's work (similarly with Webster, though not with Marlowe or Jonson) suffices to reveal how this dominance, this initiative of women, persists from Ophelia to Lady Macbeth. So too in Racine; six of his tragedies bear their heroines' names; and what male characters of his shall we set against Hermione and Andromaque, Bérénice and Roxane, Phèdre and Athalie? So again with Ibsen; what men shall we match with Solveig and Nora, Hedda and Hilda Wangel and Rebecca West?"—F. L. Lucas, Tragedy, pp. 114n5 [Woolf's note].*

It was certainly an odd monster that one made up by reading the historians first and the poets afterwards-a woman winged like an eagle; the spirit of life and beauty in a kitchen chopping up suet. But those monsters, however amusing to the imagination, have no existence in fact. What one must do to bring her to life was to think poetically and prosaically at one and the same moment, thus keeping in touch with fact-that she is Mrs Martin, aged thirty-six, dressed in blue, wearing a black hat and brown shoes, but not losing sight of fiction either-that she is a vessel in which all sorts of spirits and forces are coursing and flashing perpetually. The moment, however, that one tries this method with the Elizabethan woman, one branch of illumination fails; one is held up by the scarcity of facts. One knows nothing detailed, nothing perfectly true and substantial about her. History scarcely mentions her. And I turned to Professor Trevelyan again to see what history meant to him. I found by looking at his chapter headings that it meant:

'The Manor Court and the Methods of Open-field Agriculture . . . The Cistercians and Sheep-farming . . . The Crusades . . . The University . . . The House of Commons . . . The Hundred Years' War . . . The Wars of the Roses . . . The Renaissance Scholars . . . The Dissolution of the Monasteries . . . Agrarian and Religious Strife . . . The Origin of English Sea-power . . . The Armada . . .' and so on. Occasionally an individual woman is mentioned, an Elizabeth or a Mary; a queen or a great lady. But by no possible means could middle-class women with nothing but brains and character at their command have taken part in any one of the great movements which, brought together, constitute the historian's view of the past. Nor shall we find her in any collection of anecdotes. Aubrey[9] hardly mentions her. She never writes her own life and scarcely keeps a diary; there are only a handful of her letters in existence. She left no plays or poems by which we can judge her. What one wants, I thought-and why does not some brilliant student at Newnham or Girton[10] supply it? – is a mass of information; at what age did she marry; how many children had she as a rule; what was her house like; had she a room to herself; did she do the cooking; would she be likely to have a servant? All these facts lie somewhere, presumably, in parish registers and account books; the life of the average Elizabethan woman

9. *John Aubrey (1626–1697), English writer, especially of short biographies.*

10. *The two women's colleges at Cambridge, where Woolf first delivered a version of A Room of One's Own.*

must be scattered about somewhere, could one collect it and make a book of it. It would be ambitious beyond my daring, I thought, looking about the shelves for books that were not there, to suggest to the students of those famous colleges that they should re-write history, though I own that it often seems a little queer as it is, unreal, lop-sided; but why should they not add a supplement to history? calling it, of course, by some inconspicuous name so that women might figure there without impropriety? For one often catches a glimpse of them in the lives of the great, whisking away into the background, concealing, I sometimes think, a wink, a laugh, perhaps a tear. And, after all, we have lives enough of Jane Austen;[11] it scarcely seems necessary to consider again the influence of the tragedies of Joanna Baillie upon the poetry of Edgar Allan Poe;[12] as for myself, I should not mind if the homes and haunts of Mary Russell Mitford[13] were closed to the public for a century at least. But what I find deplorable, I continued, looking about the bookshelves again, is that nothing is known about women before the eighteenth century. I have no model in my mind to turn about this way and that. Here am I asking why women did not write poetry in the Elizabethan age, and I am not sure how they were educated; whether they were taught to write; whether they had sitting-rooms to themselves; how many women had children before they were twenty-one; what, in short, they did from eight in the morning till eight at night. They had no money evidently; according to Professor Trevelyan they were married whether they liked it or not before they were out of the nursery, at fifteen or sixteen very likely. It would have been extremely odd, even upon this showing, had one of them suddenly written the plays of Shakespeare, I concluded, and I thought of that old gentleman, who is dead now, but was a bishop, I think, who declared that it was impossible for any woman, past, present, or to come, to have the *genius* of Shakespeare. He wrote to the papers about it. He also told a lady who applied to him for information that cats do not as a matter of fact go to heaven, though they have, he added, souls of a sort. How much thinking those old gentlemen used to save one! How the borders of ignorance shrank back at their approach! Cats do not go to heaven. Women cannot write the plays of Shakespeare.

11. *English novelist (1775–1817).*

12. *American poet and fiction writer (1809–1849). Joanna Baillie English poet and dramatist (1762–1851).*

13. *Poet and novelist (1787–1855); best known for sketches of country life.*

Be that as it may, I could not help thinking, as I looked at the works of Shakespeare on the shelf, that the bishop was right at least in this: it would have been impossible, completely and entirely, for any woman to have written the plays of Shakespeare in the age of Shakespeare. Let me imagine, since facts are so hard to come by, what would have happened had Shakespeare had a wonderfully gifted sister, called Judith.[14] Let us say, Shakespeare himself went, very probably his mother was an heiress to the grammar school where he may have learnt Latin: Ovid, Virgil and Horace and the elements of grammar and logic. He was, it is well known, a wild boy who poached rabbits, perhaps shot a deer, and had, rather sooner than he should have done, to marry a woman in the neighbourhood, who bore him a child rather quicker than was right. That escapade sent him to seek his fortune in London. He had, it seemed, a taste for the theatre; he began by holding horses at the stage door. Very soon he got work in the theatre, became a successful actor, and lived at the hub of the universe, meeting everybody, knowing everybody, practising his art on the boards, exercising his wits in the streets, and even getting access to the palace of the queen. Meanwhile his extraordinarily gifted sister, let us suppose, remained at home. She was as adventurous, as imaginative, as agog to see the world as he was. But she was not sent to school. She had no chance of learning grammar and logic, let alone of reading Horace and Virgil. She picked up a book now and then, one of her brother's perhaps, and read a few pages. But then her parents came in and told her to mend the stockings or mind the stew and not moon about with books and papers. They would have spoken sharply but kindly, for they were substantial people who knew the conditions of life for a woman and loved their daughter indeed, more likely than not she was the apple of her father's eye. Perhaps she scribbled some pages up in an apple loft on the sly, but was careful to hide them or set fire to them. Soon, however, before she was out of her teens, she was to be betrothed to the son of a neighbouring wool stapler.[15] She cried out that marriage was hateful to her, and for that she was severely beaten by her father. Then he ceased to scold her. He begged her instead not to hurt

14. *Shakespeare had a daughter named Judith.*

15. *A stapler is a dealer in staple goods (i.e., established goods in trade and marketing); hence a wool-stapler is a dealer in wool (one of the "staple" products of fifth-century England).*

him, not to shame him in this matter of her marriage. He would give her a chain of beads or a fine petticoat, he said; and there were tears in his eyes. How could she disobey him? How could she break his heart? The force of her own gift alone drove her to it. She made up a small parcel of her belongings, let herself down by a rope one summer's night and took the road to London. She was not seventeen. The birds that sang in the hedge were not more musical than she was. She had the quickest fancy, a gift like her brother's, for the tune of words. Like him, she had a taste for the theatre. She stood at the stage door; she wanted to act, she said. Men laughed in her face. The manager—a fat, loose-lipped man—guffawed. He bellowed something about poodles dancing and women acting—no woman, he said, could possibly be an actress. He hinted—you can imagine what. She could get no training in her craft. Could she even seek her dinner in a tavern or roam the streets at midnight? Yet her genius was for fiction and lusted to feed abundantly upon the lives of men and women and the study of their ways. At last—for she was very young, oddly like Shakespeare the poet in her face, with the same grey eyes and rounded brows—at last Nick Greene the actor-manager took pity on her; she found herself with child by that gentleman and so—who shall measure the heat and violence of the poet's heart when caught and tangled in a woman's body?—killed herself one winter's night and lies buried at some cross-roads where the omnibuses now stop outside the Elephant and Castle.[16]

That, more or less, is how the story would run, I think, if a woman in Shakespeare's day had had Shakespeare's genius. But for my part, I agree with the deceased bishop, if such he was—it is unthinkable that any woman in Shakespeare's day should have had Shakespeare's genius. For genius like Shakespeare's is not born among labouring, uneducated, servile people. It was not born in England among the Saxons and the Britons. It is not born today among the working classes. How, then, could it have been born among women whose work began, according to Professor Trevelyan, almost before they were out of the nursery, who were forced to it by their parents and held to it by all the power of law and custom? Yet genius of a sort must have existed among women as it must have existed among the working classes. Now and again an Emily Brontë or a Robert Burns[17] blazes out and proves its presence. But certainly it

16. *Suicides were buried at cross-roads. The Elephant and Castle was a tavern south of the river Thames, where roads went off to different parts of southern England.*

17. *Scottish poet (1759–1796).*

never got itself on to paper. When, however, one reads of a witch being ducked, of a woman possessed by devils, of a wise woman selling herbs, or even of a very remarkable man who had a mother, then I think we are on the track of a lost novelist, a suppressed poet, or some mute and inglorious[18] Jane Austen, some Emily Brontë who dashed her brains out on the moor or mopped and mowed about the highways crazed with the torture that her gift had put her to. Indeed, I would venture to guess that Anon, who wrote so many poems without signing them, was often a woman. It was a woman Edward Fitzgerald,[19] I think, suggested who made the ballads and the folk-songs, crooning them to her children, beguiling her spinning with them, or the length of the winter's night.

This may be true or it may be false—who can say?—but what is true in it, so it seemed to me, reviewing the story of Shakespeare's sister as I had made it, is that any woman born with a great gift in the sixteenth century would certainly have gone crazed, shot herself, or ended her days in some lonely cottage outside the village, half witch, half wizard, feared and mocked at. For it needs little skill in psychology to be sure that a highly gifted girl who had tried to use her gift for poetry would have been so thwarted and hindered by other people, so tortured and pulled asunder by her own contrary instincts, that she must have lost her health and sanity to a certainty. No girl could have walked to London and stood at a stage door and forced her way into the presence of actor-managers without doing herself a violence and suffering an anguish which may have been irrational—for chastity may be a fetish invented by certain societies for unknown reasons—but were none the less inevitable. Chastity had then, it has even now, a religious importance in a woman's life, and has so wrapped itself round with nerves and instincts that to cut it free and bring it to the light of day demands courage of the rarest. To have lived a free life in London in the sixteenth century would have meant for a woman who was poet and playwright a nervous stress and dilemma which might well have killed her. Had she survived, whatever she had written would have been twisted and deformed, issuing from a strained and morbid imagination. And undoubtedly, I thought, looking at the shelf where there are no plays by women, her work would have gone unsigned. That refuge she would

18. *An echo of Thomas Gray's "Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard" (1751), line 59: "Some mute inglorious Milton here may rest."*

19. *Poet and translator (1809–1883).*

have sought certainly. It was the relic of the sense of chastity that dictated anonymity to women even so late as the nineteenth century. Currer Bell, George Eliot, George Sand,[76] all the victims of inner strife as their writings prove, sought ineffectively to veil themselves by using the name of a man. Thus they did homage to the convention, which if not implanted by the other sex was liberally encouraged by them (the chief glory of a woman is not to be talked of, said Pericles,[77] himself a much-talked-of man), that publicity in women is detestable. Anonymity runs in their blood. The desire to be veiled still possesses them. They are not even now as concerned about the health of their fame as men are, and, speaking generally, will pass a tombstone or a signpost without feeling an irresistible desire to cut their names on it, as Alf, Bert or Chas must do in obedience to their instinct, which murmurs if it sees a fine woman go by, or even a dog, Ce chien est a moi.[78] And, of course, it may not be a dog, I thought, remembering Parliament Square, the Sieges Allee[79] and other avenues; it may be a piece of land or a man with curly black hair. It is one of the great advantages of being a woman that one can pass even a very fine negress without wishing to make an Englishwoman of her.

That woman, then, who was born with a gift of poetry in the sixteenth century, was an unhappy woman, a woman at strife against herself. All the conditions of her life, all her own instincts, were hostile to the state of mind which is needed to set free whatever is in the brain. But what is the state of mind that is most propitious to the act of creation, I asked. Can one come by any notion of the state that furthers and makes possible that strange activity? Here I opened the volume containing the Tragedies of Shakespeare. What was Shakespeare's state of mind, for instance, when he wrote Lear and Antony and Cleopatra? It was certainly the state of mind most favourable to poetry that there has ever existed. But Shakespeare himself said nothing about it. We only know casually and by chance

76. *Male pseudonyms, respectively, of Charlotte Brontë, Marian Evans, and Amandine Aurore-Lucie Dupin (1804–1876).*

77. *Athenian statesman (ca. 495–429 B.C.E.).*

78. *This dog is mine (French).*

79. *Avenue of Victory, a busy thoroughfare in Berlin. "Parliament Square": London intersection.*

that he "never blotted a line."[24] Nothing indeed was ever said by the artist himself about his state of mind until the eighteenth century perhaps. Rousseau[25] perhaps began it. At any rate, by the nineteenth century self consciousness had developed so far that it was the habit for men of letters to describe their minds in confessions and autobiographies. Their lives also were written, and their letters were printed after their deaths. Thus, though we do not know what Shakespeare went through when he wrote Lear, we do know what Carlyle went through when he wrote the French Revolution; what Flaubert went through when he wrote Madame Bovary; what Keats was going through when he tried to write poetry against the coming of death and the indifference of the world.

And one gathers from this enormous modern literature of confession and self-analysis that to write a work of genius is almost always a feat of prodigious difficulty. Everything is against the likelihood that it will come from the writer's mind whole and entire. Generally material circumstances are against it. Dogs will bark; people will interrupt; money must be made; health will break down. Further, accentuating all these difficulties and making them harder to bear is the world's notorious indifference. It does not ask people to write poems and novels and histories; it does not need them. It does not care whether Flaubert finds the right word or whether Carlyle[26] scrupulously verifies this or that fact. Naturally, it will not pay for what it does not want. And so the writer, Keats,[27] Flaubert, Carlyle, suffers, especially in the creative years of youth, every form of distraction and discouragement. A curse, a cry of agony, rises from those books of analysis and confession. "Mighty poets in their misery dead"[28]—that the burden of their song. If anything comes through in spite of all this, it is a miracle, and probably no book is born entire and uncrippled as it was conceived.

24. *Ben Jonson, Timber* (1640): "I remember, the players have often mentioned it as an honour to Shakespeare that in his writing (whatsoever he penned) he never blotted out a line."

25. *Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712–1778), early Romantic French fiction-born philosopher and memoirist.*

26. *Thomas Carlyle (1795–1881), Scottish writer and historian. Gustave Flaubert (1821–1880), French novelist who believed the literary artist should find "the right word" to suit paths.*

27. *John Keats (1795–1821), English poet.*

28. *From William Wordsworth's "Resolution and Independence" (1807), line 116.*

But for women, I thought, looking at the empty shelves, these difficulties were infinitely more formidable. In the first place, to have a room of her own, let alone a quiet room or a sound proof room, was out of the question, unless her parents were exceptionally rich or very noble, even up to the beginning of the nineteenth century. Since her pin money, which depended on the good will of her father, was only enough to keep her clothed, she was debarred from such alleviations as came even to Keats or Tennyson[28] or Carlyle, all poor men, from a walking tour, a little journey to France, from the separate lodging which, even if it were miserable enough, sheltered them from the claims and tyrannies of their families. Such material difficulties were formidable; but much worse were the immaterial. The indifference of the world which Keats and Flaubert and other men of genius have found so hard to bear was in her case not indifference but hostility. The world did not say to her as it said to them, Write if you choose: it makes no difference to me. The world said with a guffaw, Write? What's the good of your writing?

* * * *

Young women, I would say, and please attend, for the peroration is beginning, you are, in my opinion, disgracefully ignorant. You have never made a discovery of any sort of importance. You have never shaken an empire or led an army into battle. The plays of Shakespeare are not by you, and you have never introduced a barbarous race to the blessings of civilisation. What is your excuse? It is all very well for you to say, pointing to the streets and squares and forests of the globe swarming with black and white and coffee-coloured inhabitants, all busily engaged in traffic and enterprise and love-making, we have had other work on our hands. Without our doing, those seas would be unsailed and those fertile lands a desert. We have borne and bred and washed and taught, perhaps to the age of six or seven years, the one thousand six hundred and twenty-three million human beings who are, according to statistics, at present in existence, and that, allowing that some had help, takes time.

There is truth in what you say. I will not deny it. But at the same time may I remind you that there have been at least two colleges for women in existence in England since the year 1866; that after the year 1880 a married woman was

28. *Alfred, Lord Tennyson (1809–1892), English poet.*

allowed by law to possess her own property; and that in 1919–which is a whole nine years ago–she was given a vote? May I also remind you that the most of the professions have been open to you for close on ten years now? When you reflect upon these immense privileges and the length of time during which they have been enjoyed, and the fact that there must be at this moment some two thousand women capable of earning, over five hundred a year in one way or another, you will agree that the excuse of lack of opportunity, training, encouragement, leisure and money no longer holds good. Moreover, the economists are telling us that Mrs Seton has had too many children. You must, of course, go on bearing children, but, so they say, in twos and threes, not in tens and twelves.

Thus, with some time on your hands and with some book learning in your brains, you have had enough of the other kind, and are sent to college partly, I suspect, to be uneducated–surely you should embark upon another stage of your very long, very laborious and highly obscure career. A thousand pens are ready to suggest what you should do and what effect you will have. My own suggestion is a little fantastic, I admit; I prefer, therefore, to put it in the form of fiction.

I told you in the course of this paper that Shakespeare had a sister; but do not look for her in Sir Sidney Lee's[10] life of the poet. She died young–alas, she never wrote a word. She lies buried where the omnibuses now stop, opposite the Elephant and Castle. Now my belief is that this poet who never wrote a word and was buried at the crossroads still lives. She lives in you and in me, and in many other women who are not here tonight, for they are washing up the dishes and putting the children to bed. But she lives; for great poets do not die; they are continuing presences; they need only the opportunity to walk among us in the flesh. This opportunity, as I think, it is now coming within your power to give her. For my belief is that if we live another century or so–I am talking of the common life which is the real life and not of the little separate lives which we live as individuals–and have five hundred a year each of us and rooms of our own; if we have the habit of freedom and the courage to write exactly what we think; if we escape a little from the common sitting-room and see human beings not always in their relation to each other but in relation to reality; and the sky, too,

10 *Biographer and Shakespeare scholar (1859–1926), author of Life of William Shakespeare (1898).*

and the trees or whatever it may be in themselves; if we look past Milton's bogey,[31] for no human being should shut out the view; if we face the fact, for it is a fact, that there is no arm to cling to, but that we go alone and that our relation is to the world of reality and not only to the world of men and women, then the opportunity will come and the dead poet who was Shakespeare's sister will put on the body which she has so often laid down. Drawing her life from the lives of the unknown who were her forerunners, as her brother did before her, she will be born. As for her coming without that preparation, without that effort on our part, without that determination that when she is born again she shall find it possible to live and write her poetry, that we cannot expect, for that would be impossible. But I maintain that she would come if we worked for her, and that so to work, even in poverty and obscurity, is worth while.

EXERCISE

Choose the correct answer from the alternatives given :

1. **What is the primary purpose of Virginia Woolf creating the fictional character of Judith Shakespeare?**
   a) To provide a historical account of William Shakespeare's family.
   b) To highlight the societal limitations faced by women in pursuing creative endeavors.
   c) To rewrite the history of Elizabethan theater.
   d) To offer a lighthearted exploration of sibling rivalry.
2. **What obstacle(s) does Judith, Shakespeare's hypothetical sister, face in her desire to write?**
   a) A lack of inspiration and talent
   b) Limited access to educational resources
   c) Discouragement from her family
   d) All of the above
3. **What can be inferred from the fate of Judith Shakespeare in the story?**
   a) Women with talent eventually overcome societal restrictions
   b) True genius can flourish regardless of circumstances
   c) The limitations placed on women stifle their creative potential
   d) Only men are capable of achieving literary greatness

31. *Cf. Milton's unhappy first marriage, his campaign for freedom of divorce, and his deliberate subordination of Eve to Adam in Paradise Lost. L. A paper read to the Women's Service League [Woolf's note]. Woolf here echoes her points in A Room of One's Own about a woman's needing money (specifically, five hundred British pounds) and a room in which to write.*

Our Casuarina Tree

Toru Dutt

Like a huge Python, winding round and round
The rugged trunk, indented deep with scars,
Up to its very summit near the stars,
A creeper climbs, in whose embraces bound
No other tree could live. But gallantly
The giant wears the scarf, and flowers are hung
In crimson clusters all the boughs among,
Whereon all day are gathered bird and bee:
And oft at nights the garden overflows
With one sweet song that seems to have no close,
Sung darkling from our tree, while men repose.
When first my casement is wide open thrown
At dawn, my eyes delighted on it rest;
Sometimes, and most in winter, — on its crest
A gray baboon sits statue-like alone
Watching the sunrise; while on lower boughs
His puny offspring leap about and play;
And far and near kokilas hail the day;
And to their pastures wend our sleepy cows;
And in the shadow, on the broad tank cast
By that hoar tree, so beautiful and vast,
The water-lilies spring, like snow enmassed.
But not because of its magnificence
Dear is the Casuarina to my soul:
Beneath it we have played; though years may roll,
O sweet companions, loved with love intense,
For your sakes, shall the tree be ever dear.
Blent with your images, it shall arise
In memory, till the hot tears blind mine eyes!
What is that dirge-like murmur that I hear
Like the sea breaking on a shingle-beach?
It is the tree's lament, an eerie speech,
That haply to the unknown land may reach.

Unknown, yet well-known to the eye of faith!
Ah, I have heard that wail far, far away
In distant lands, by many a sheltered bay,
When slumbered in his cave the water-wraith
And the waves gently kissed the classic shore
Of France or Italy, beneath the moon,
When earth lay tranced in a dreamless swoon:
And every time the music rose, — before
Mine inner vision rose a form sublime,
Thy form, O Tree, as in my happy prime
I saw thee, in my own loved native clime.
Therefore I fain would consecrate a lay
Unto thy honor, Tree, beloved of those
Who now in blessed sleep, for aye, repose,
Dearer than life to me, alas! were they!
Mayst thou be numbered when my days are done
With deathless trees — like those in Borrowdale,
Under whose awful branches lingered pale
"Fear, trembling Hope, and Death, the skeleton,
Source URL: https://poets.org/poem/our-casuarina-tree
And Time the shadow;" and though weak the verse
That would thy beauty fain, oh fain rehearse,
May Love defend thee from Oblivion's curse.

EXERCISE

Choose the correct answer from the alternatives given :

1. **Who is the speaker in the poem?**
   a) A gardener tending the Casuarina tree
   b) A bird singing in the branches of the tree
   c) A person reminiscing about childhood memories under the tree
   d) A traveler admiring the beauty of the tree
2. **What feeling(s) does the speaker associate with the Casuarina tree?**
   a) Fear and danger
   b) Indifference and boredom
   c) Comfort, security, and happy memories
   d) Loneliness and isolation
3. **What is the tone of the poem "Our Casuarina Tree"?**
   a) Angry and resentful
   b) Sarcastic and mocking
   c) Bittersweet and nostalgic
   d) Playful and lighthearted

Ulysses

ALFRED, Lord Tennyson

It little profits that an idle king,
By this still hearth, among these barren crags,
Match'd with an aged wife, I mete and dole
Unequal laws unto a savage race,
That hoard, and sleep, and feed, and know not me.
I cannot rest from travel: I will drink
Life to the lees: All times I have enjoy'd
Greatly, have suffer'd greatly, both with those
That loved me, and alone, on shore, and when
Thro' scudding drifts the rainy Hyades
Vext the dim sea: I am become a name;
For always roaming with a hungry heart
Much have I seen and known; cities of men
And manners, climates, councils, governments,
Myself not least, but honour'd of them all;
And drunk delight of battle with my peers,
Far on the ringing plains of windy Troy.
I am a part of all that I have met;
Yet all experience is an arch wherethro'
Gleams that untravell'd world whose margin fades
For ever and forever when I move.
How dull it is to pause, to make an end,
To rust unburnish'd, not to shine in use!
As tho' to breathe were life! Life piled on life
Were all too little, and of one to me
Little remains: but every hour is saved

From that eternal silence, something more,
A bringer of new things; and vile it were
For some three suns to store and hoard myself,
And this gray spirit yearning in desire
To follow knowledge like a sinking star,
Beyond the utmost bound of human thought.

This is my son, mine own Telemachus,
To whom I leave the sceptre and the isle,—
Well-loved of me, discerning to fulfil
This labour, by slow prudence to make mild
A rugged people, and thro' soft degrees
Subdue them to the useful and the good.
Most blameless is he, centred in the sphere
Of common duties, decent not to fail
In offices of tenderness, and pay
Meet adoration to my household gods,
When I am gone. He works his work, I mine.

There lies the port; the vessel puffs her sail:
There gloom the dark, broad seas. My mariners,
Souls that have toil'd, and wrought, and thought with me—
That ever with a frolic welcome took
The thunder and the sunshine, and opposed
Free hearts, free foreheads-you and I are old;
Old age hath yet his honour and his toil;
Death closes all: but something ere the end,
Some work of noble note, may yet be done,
Not unbecoming men that strove with Gods.
The lights begin to twinkle from the rocks:
The long day wanes: the slow moon climbs: the deep
Moans round with many voices. Come, my friends,
'T is not too late to seek a newer world.

Push off, and sitting well in order smite
The sounding furrows; for my purpose holds
To sail beyond the sunset, and the baths
Of all the western stars, until I die.
It may be that the gulfs will wash us down:
It may be we shall touch the Happy Isles,
And see the great Achilles, whom we knew.
Tho' much is taken, much abides; and tho'
We are not now that strength which in old days
Moved earth and heaven, that which we are, we are;
One equal temper of heroic hearts,
Made weak by time and fate, but strong in will
To strive, to seek, to find, and not to yield.

EXERCISE

Choose the correct answer from the alternatives given :

1. **What is the speaker in "Ulysses" longing for?**
   a) A peaceful and quiet retirement
   b) New adventures and experiences
   c) The comfort of his family
   d) Forgiveness for past mistakes
2. **What phrase from the poem best reflects Ulysses' restless spirit?**
   a) "Grow old along with me"
   b) "Much have I seen and known"
   c) "I yearn for the old familiar ways"
   d) "To strive, to seek, to find, and not to yield"
3. **What is the significance of the "far-off lands" mentioned in the poem?**
   a) They represent a lost love.
   b) They symbolize the speaker's regrets.
   c) They represent the unknown and the call for continued exploration.
   d) They represent the speaker's yearning for death

Tara

MAHESH DATTANI

A NOTE ON THE PLAY

Mahesh Dattani frequently takes as his subject the complicated dynamics of the modern urban family. His characters struggle for some kind of freedom and happiness under the weight of tradition, cultural constructions of gender, and repressed desire. Their dramas are played out on multi-level sets where interior and exterior become one, and geographical locations are collapsed: in short, his settings are as fragmented as the families who inhabit them.

In his plays, Dattani takes on what he calls the 'invisible issues' of Indian society. In an interview, Dattani says, 'you can talk about feminism, because in a way that is accepted. But you can't talk about gay issues because that's not Indian, [that] doesn't happen here. You can't talk about a middle-class housewife fantasizing about having sex with the cook or actually having a sex life-that isn't Indian either-that's confrontational even if it is Indian.' By pulling taboo subjects out from under the rug and placing them on stage for public discussion, Dattani challenges the constructions of 'India' and 'Indian' as they have traditionally been defined in modern theatre. He encourages other playwrights to do the same: 'Our culture is so rich with tradition, and that's a great advantage and a great disadvantage as well, because ... we're living in the present and there are so many challenges facing us-you just have to cross the road and you have an issue.... I think it is very important for our country to spawn new playwrights ... who reflect honestly and purely our lives, because ... that is our contribution to the world.'

Tara centres on the emotional separation that grows between two conjoined twins following the discovery that their physical separation was manipulated by their mother and grandfather to favour the boy (Chandan) over the girl (Tara). Tara, a fiesty girl who isn't given the opportunities given to her brother (although

she may be smarter) eventually wastes away and dies. Chandan escapes to London, changes his name to Dan, and attempts to repress the guilt he feels over his sister's death by living without a personal history. Woven into the play are issues of class and community, and the clash between traditional and modern lifestyles and values.

Dattani sees Tara as a play about the gendered self, about coming to terms with the feminine side of oneself in a world that always favors what is 'male', but many people in India see it as a play about the girl child. I included Tara on my syllabus for a class on Indian Performance at New York University. My students loved Dattani's work in general, and Tara in particular–several of them became so excited about the play that they wrote their final papers on it. One student pointed out that Tara and Chandan are two sides of the same self rather than two separate entities and that Dan, in trying to write the story of his own childhood, has to write Tara's story. Dan writes Tara's story to rediscover the neglected half of himself as a means of becoming whole. Another student pointed out that Dattani focuses on the family as a microcosm of society in order to dramatize the ways we are socialized to accept certain gendered roles and to give preference to what is male.

It is important to note that all of Dattani's plays, including Tara, are first workshopped with his company Playpen in Bangalore. Dattani puts the finishing touches on his dialogue only when it is spoken aloud by actors in rehearsal. In other words, Dattani writes plays to be seen and heard, not literature to be read. After its Bangalore premiere, Tara was produced in Mumbai and Delhi, where it received rave reviews. It will be included in a volume of contemporary Indian plays, titled Drama Contemporary: India, to be published in the US by Performing Arts Journal in late 2000. My hope is that it will go on to have many more productions both in India and in the United States.

Erin Mee

(Erin Mee is a theatre director who has worked extensively with K.N. Panikkar and the so-called 'Kalarippayat' in Kerala.)

All quotations are from an interview titled 'Mahesh Dattani: Invisible Issues', published in Performing Arts Journal (55).

Tara was first performed as Twinkle Tara at the Chowdiah Memorial Hall, Bangalore, on 23 October 1990 by Playpen Performing Arts Group. The cast was as follows:

BHARAH	Akila Thandur
TARA	Neha Sharma
CHANDAN	Salim Sheriff
PATEL	Ajit Bhide
RGOPA	Madhavi Rao
DR THAKKAR	Chippy Gangjee
Director	Mahesh Dattani
Lighting Pradeep	Belawdai
Stage Management	Narendra
Sound	M. Bhaskar

The play was subsequently performed as Tara at Sophia Bhabha Hall by Theatre Group, Bombay, on 9 November 1991, with Rocky Dadachanji, Anju Bedi, Tarini Bedi, Asif Ali Beg, 'Bugs' Bhargava Krishna, Aadya Bedi and Protap Roy, directed by Alyque Padamsee.

ACT I

A multi-level set. The lowest level occupies a major portion of the stage. It represents the house of the Patels. It is seen only in memory and may be kept as stark as possible.

The next level represents the bedsitter of the older Chandan (referred to as Dan for clarity) in a suburb of London. There is a small bed, and, in the foreground, a small writing table with a typewriter and a sheaf of papers. A part of a wall covered with faded wallpaper can also be seen. This is the only realistic level.

Behind, on a higher level, is a chair in which Dr Thakkar remains seated throughout the play. Although he doesn't watch the action of the play, his connection is asserted by his sheer God-like presence.

On the stage level, running along the cyclorama and in an L-shape, downstage right, is the gulli outside the Patels' house, which can be suggested by cross-lighting.

The play starts without any music. A spot picks up Dan at his writing table. He is typing furiously. He stops and removes the sheet from his typewriter. He looks up and speaks to the audience.

DAN: In poetry, even the most turbulent emotions can be recollected when one is half asleep. But in drama! Ah! Even tranquillity has to be recalled with emotion. Like touching a bare live wire. Try distancing yourself from that experience and writing about it! A mere description will be hopelessly inadequate. And for me ... I have to relive that charge over and over again. (Pause.) Excuse me while I recharge myself.

Goes to a cabinet, pulls out a bottle of liquor, pours some into a glass and drinks.

Yes, I have my memories. Locking myself in a bedsitter in a seedy suburb of London, thousands of miles from home hasn't put enough distance between us. (Holds up his glass.) My battery charger helps on some occasions. But now I want them to come back. To masticate my memories in my mind and spit out the result to the world in anger. (Picks up the sheet he has been typing.) My progress, so far, I must admit, has been zero. But I persist with the comforting thought that things can't get any worse. I keep staring at my typewriter every day, wondering how best to turn my anguish into drama. All I find every day, without fail, is one typewritten sheet with the title of the play, my name and address and the date. Nothing changes- except the date. (Reads from the paper.) Twinkle Tara. A drama in two acts by Chandan Patel. Copyright, Chandan Patel, 93 Fishpond's Road, Tooting, London SW17 7LJ. Today I made some progress. I even typed my phone number. (Puts down the paper.) Not to say that I don't have anything to show to the world yet, I do. For instance, these. (Picks up a manuscript.) Random Raj. Short stories on the British Raj. Still hounding publishers. The publishers here ignore them because none of them deal with sati, dowry deaths or child marriages-all subjects guaranteed to raise the interest of the average Western intellectual. And back home, of course, Indo-Anglian literature isn't worth toilet paper. (Throws the manuscript away.)

But that's all done with. Tonight I drop everything I've desperately wanted to be in my years in England. (Mimes removing a mask and throwing it away.) The handicapped intellectual's mask. (Mimes removing another mask.) The desperate immigrant. (Mimes removing yet another.) The mysterious brown with the phoney accent. The last being the hardest to drop having spent two whole years in acquiring it. And what remains is what I intend making capital of. My

freakishness. I am a freak. (Pause.) Now, a freak doesn't have to look very far for inspiration. (Moves to his table.) But what is hard is to let go. Allow the memories to flood in. (Winds another sheet on the typewriter and then stops.) To tell you the truth, I had even forgotten I had a twin sister. (Music fades in slowly.) Until I thought of her as subject matter for my next literary attempt. Or maybe I didn't forget her. She was lying deep inside, out of reach ...

A spot on the stage level Chandan and Tara walk into it. They both have a limp, but on different legs.

TARA. : And me. Maybe we still are. Like we've always been. Inseparable. The way we started in life. Two lives and one body, in one comfortable womb. Till we were forced out...

Patel and Bharati are seen.

And separated.

The lights cross-fade to the Patels' living room. Chandan and Tara are playing a game of cards. It is obvious Tara is winning. Bharati has finished her morning pooja. Patel is checking the contents of his briefcase and is ready to leave for work.

BHARATI. : Tara, drink your milk, amma! TARA. Sorry, new places slow down my peristalsis. CHANDAN. New pinch for a new word. TARA. Where are thatha's brass tumblers? BHARATI. They have yet to be unpacked.

PATEL. : It's getting late for me. (Gets up and moves to the children to pat them goodbye.)

BHARATI. : Your father doesn't want us to use them. (Patel looks at her.) He doesn't want us to use any of your grandfather's things.

PATEL. : What are you saying, Bharati?

BHARATI. : Now that we've moved out of his house, he doesn't...

PATEL. : Just a minute. It was you who didn't want to unpack them. You said so yourself. You said ...

BHARATI. : Me? Why would I not want to use my own father's gifts to us?

Pause.

PATEL (quietly, controlling himself). Let me make this clear. I have no reason to tell you not to use your late father's ... gifts. You're free to do as you please. In fact, it was you who didn't want to unpack them, so why are you ... ?

BHARATI (to Tara). Finish your milk.

TARA : I won't! Stop shoving it down my throat.

BHARATI : Tara!

PATEL (to Bharati). Why d'you serve her so much if she doesn't want to ...

BHARATI : But she must put on more weight! PATEL. She's fine.

BHARATI : No! She's much too thin! She ... she must put on more weight. This morning at the clinic, Dr. Kapoor checked their charts. She's lost half a pound in one week.

PATEL : Half a pound isn't much ...

BHARATI (over him). In one month she will lose a kilo! (Getting worked up.) If I don't force her to eat, how will she gain weight? She will keep getting thinner till she's all shrivelled and she is only ... skin and bones! It's bad enough that she ... they ... (Moves to Tara.) Tara. Please!

PATEL : Tara will be fine. They are both going to ... They'll be fine. BHARATI. The doctors are concerned about. ..

PATEL (testily). : I know what the doctors said! (More calmly.) Dr. Kapoor was surprised at their progress and ...

BHARATI : Surprised? Did you say ...? PATEL. I meant to say he was happy to note ... BHARATI. You said surprised!

PATEL (testily again). I know I did but I meant he was happy ... CHANDAN (offering a suggestion). Or happily surprised? TARA. Now don't start on your sidey jokes! CHANDAN. Or he was surprised that he was happy. TARA. Enough, enough!

PATEL : (after a while, quietly). He was pleased with their progress. Beyond everyone's expectations. He is going to mention them in a medical journal.

BHARATI. : No! I don't want my children being mentioned in any medical journal!

PATEL. : Why, what's the harm? It will only be read by other doctors. It might help them with other such ...

BHARATI. : I just don't, that's all! I don't want all that publicity to start again.

PATEL. : It's only a journal. It won't... (Resigned.) All right.

BHARATI. : You will put on more weight, won't you Tara?

TARA. : I'll do anything you say, mummy. Except drink this milk.

BHARATI (vaguely). Anything you say, Tara. Anything.

: The lights cross-jade to the street. Roopa, a girl of fifteen, is seen. She calls towards a house.

ROOPA. : Prema! Prema-a! (No response.) Prema-a! Oh, hello, aunty. (In broken Gujarati.) Kem chcho? Majhjha ma? Is Prema in? (Listens.) Good. May she come out? Oh, nowhere special. I thought we could maybe go over to Yankee Doodle's for an ice cream or something. (Listens.) A cold? That's okay. I'll come up and keep her company. (Listens and reacts with mock-surprise.) She told you that I was taking her to see Fatal Attraction? No, that's not true at all! Well, I did say we will see the movie at Eros, but I meant Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs. What? (Listens.) Oh, Fatal Attraction is playing there. Well, you see, they show Snow White in the mornings. Well, I didn't want to tell you, you see, after all she is my best friend and all that, but actually it was her idea to see both. Look, I'm sorry she has a cold. On second thoughts, I'd better not see her. I might catch it

myself. So, if you don't mind, I won't come up. Tell her not to feel bad. So sorry. Thank you. Avjo.

She keeps grinning until the supposed aunty is out of sight. Then she sticks her rear out in aunty's direction and makes a rude sound. She hesitantly walks towards the Patels' house.

(Calls.) Hello. (No response. Louder.) Hello. Tara!

The lights cross-fade again to the living room. Bharati has exited to the kitchen.

PATEL. : Chandan.

CHANDAN (*dealing the cards*). : Ya.

PATEL. : I was just thinking ... It may be a good idea for you to come to the office with me. (*Glances surreptitiously towards the kitchen.*)

CHANDAN. : What for?

PATEL. : Just to get a feel of it.

CHANDAN. : You can take Tara. She'll make a great business woman.

TARA. : How do you know?

CHANDAN. : Because you always cheat at cards!

TARA : (*crossly, throwing her cards at Chandan*). Just because I win doesn't mean I cheat, okay!

PATEL (firmly). : Chandan, I think I must insist that you come.

CHANDAN. : We'll both come with you.

PATEL. : No!

Tara looks at Patel, slightly hurt. (Softens.) Yes. You may both come-if you want to.

Roopa has been sterling at fie door.

ROOPA. : Hello!

TARA. : Oh, hi, Roopa. Come on in.

ROOPA (falsely). : Sorry! Hello, uncle. Sorry! Am I disturbing you?

TARA. : Not at all. The men in the house were deciding on whether they were going to go hunting while the women looked after the cave.

CHANDAN. : I haven't decided yet. (Looks at Patel.) I might stay back in the cave and do my jigsaw puzzle.

TARA. : Or carve another story on the walls. (To Roopa.) He's a writer, you know.

ROOPA. : Ooh! How nice. What kind of writing? I love stories with ghosts and monsters.

PATEL (to Bharati). Is there anything you need? BHARATI (off). No. Nothing you can get. Fate picks up his briefcase from the coffee table.

PATEL (to Chandan). : Well, take care. If you two need to go out anywhere, just call the office. I'll send the car. (Pats Tara.) Take care.

He exits to the street. He is fixed in a spot. He mimes conversing with a neighbour.

ROOPA. : Oh, good, at least you two are at home. Let's all sit down. Maybe we can watch a movie.

She makes herself comfortable on the sofa. Tara and Chandan stand beside her. Spot on them.

PATEL. : Hello, Narayan saab. How is your health today? Dr. Kapoor was enquiring after you.

ROOPA (to Chandan). : Or tell us one of your stories. A monster story. You know, like oglers.

TARA. : Oglers?

ROOPA. : You know, those monsters with one big eye in the middle of their foreheads.

CHANDAN. : Ogres.

ROOPA (defensively). : Well, they took like they are ogling.

PATEL : I don't look well because I'm not... Frankly I'm worried ... about her.

CHANDAN. : I haven't written any story about monsters yet.

ROOPA. : Really? How disappointing. What do you write about?

TARA. : He writes about people he knows.

ROOPA. : Really? How interesting.

TARA. : Yes, he is going to write a story-about me.

PATEL. : She needs help. I am not so sure-maybe some kind of therapy ... or counselling.

TARA. : About me. Strong. Healthy. Beautiful.

ROOPA. : That's not you! That's me! He is writing a story about me. Aren't you, Chandan?

CHANDAN (seriously). : Yes. You will be in the story too. As the ogler.

PATEL. : Maybe I need some advice ... or counselling. I don't know... whether I am prepared for the worst.

TARA. : I am strong. My mother has made me strong. Spot on the three fades out.

PATEL. : Maybe I'm expecting the worst. It may never happen-no. Things are getting out of hand. I must worry about her. Yes. I am worried-about my wife. Cross-cut to Dan who suddenly jerks as if woken from a nightmare.

DAN. : NO! NO! That won't do. I can't have all that just swimming in my mind. The mind wanders too much. Unnecessary details, irrelevant characters which do not figure anywhere. I've got to put it all down. I've got to make a start. (Goes to the cabinet for a refill and takes a swig.) Now steady, Dan boy. One thing at a time. Get to the desk. (Moves to the table.) Sit on the chair. (Sits.) Put your fingers on the keys. (Does so.) And type. (Cannot type.) Well, you can't have everything. No, wait-let me think. What is Tara? Kind, gentle, strong, her mother has given her strength. And daddy? Silent? Angry? And-mummy. (Breaks away from his thoughts.) This isn't fair to Tara. She deserves something better. She never got a fair deal. Not even from nature. Neither of us did. Maybe God never wanted us to be

separated. Destiny desires strange things. We were meant to die and our mortal remains preserved in formaldehyde for future generations to study. Our purpose in life was maybe that. Only that. But even God does not always get what he wants. Conflict is the crux of life. A duel to the death between God and nature on one side and on the other-the amazing Dr. Thakkar. (Smiles.) Yes. You will be pleased to know that I have found my beginning.

A television show Lype signature tune fades in while the spot fades out. Although Dan is interviewing Dr Thakkar, he remains where he is, in darkness. The tune ends and a spot picks up Dr Thakkar, seated as if being interviewed in a studio.

DAN (mock-cheerful). : Good evening, viewers, and welcome to another edition of Marvels in the World of Medicine. We have with us this evening at our studio Dr. Umakant Thakkar who has been in the news lately for his outstanding work at the Queen Victoria Memorial Hospital in Bombay. Dr. Thakkar has been associated with many major hospitals in the USA, most notably the Children's Hospital in Philadelphia. Daring his stay at the Queen Victoria Hospital, he was surgeon-in-chief to a most unique and complex surgery, the first of its kind in India. Dr. Thakkar, could you tell us what was so special aboat this surgery?

DR THAKKAR. : To start with, the patients were only a few months old and ...

DAN : How old were they exactly?

DR THAKKAR. : Oh, three months.

DAN (mock-surprised). : Three months? Was the surgery really necessary?

DR THAKKAR. : Yes, absolutely. Surgery was their only chance of survival. You see, they were twins, conjoined from the chest down.

DAN. : Siamese twins?

DR THAKKAR : Yes. That is the common term used for them.

DAN : Is it a rare phenomenon?

DR THAKKAR. : Twins as such are not so rare, the chances ...

DAN : What about Siamese twins?

DR THAKKAR. : Conjoined twins are quite rare. I think one in every fifty thousand twin conceptions could have a probability of containing this ... defect.

DAN : How does it happen?

DR THAKKAR. : Sometimes-we don't know why-a fertilized egg, destined to separate and develop into two different embryos, fails to do so fully. The result is a conjoinment-in this case from the breastbone down through the pelvic area. It is indeed a miracle that they were born alive. Twins with a conjunction of such complexity are, in most cases, stillborn.

DAN : How many twins of this kind have actually survived through birth?

DR THAKKAR. : There are, I think, seven recorded cases in medical literature, but...

DAN : And how many are still alive?

DR THAKKAR.: In all cases, so far, one twin has always died by the age of four.

DAN : Dr. Thakkar, what is your opinion on the Patel twins? Will they survive?

DR THAKKAR : You see, there is something even more remarkable about this case, DAN. And what is that?

DR THAKKAR : Conjoined twins-your Siamese twins-developing from one fertilized ovum are invariably of the same sex. Well, almost invariably. But here these two were obviously from different fertilized eggs.

DAN : SO?

DR THAKKAR : The twins are of different sexes. Very, very rare. DAN (aside). A freak among freaks. Now I know I'll be a really brilliant writer. Spot fades out on Dr. Thakkar as we hear the explosive opening of Brahms' First Concert.

The street area is lit. Tara enters the street. She misses meeting someone and smiling, starting a conversation. After a while, she slowly lifts the leg of her trousers to reveal her artificial limb. She laughs in an ugly way. Then she says goodbye and enters the living room as the lights cross-fade.

Chandan is lying on his back on the floor, listening to the music and conducting an imaginary orchestra in the heavens.

TARA : Oh, I hate those girls!

CHANDAN : (waving his hands to the music). What? Made friends already?

TARA : You must be joking. (Listens to the music) Oh! I love this part.

CHANDAN : How was physio?

TARA : Nice doctor. Rotten nurse. Not like Bangalore.

CHANDAN (jovially). : Doctors. Nurses. A painful necessity in our lives. (Referring to the music.) Now comes the best part.

TARA : Mind you, some of the doctors aren't so painful to look at. This one's called Dr. Gokhale. He's handsome in a 'ghati' sort of way. I love Maharashtrians!

CHANDAN : In London you swore you were going to marry that Irish doctor, whats- his-name. And we were only twelve then.

TARA : That was London. This is Bombay. One learns to love the natives. I know.

CHANDAN : How can you know at twelve? How can you know at sixteen?

TARA : We women mature fast. Speaking of maturity, you better not skip any physiotherapy sessions. Daddy wants you to be big and sturdy. He will find out from the hospital and... This music is so ... I don't know.

CHANDAN : It has passion.

TARA : Yes. Beethoven must have been a passionate man.

CHANDAN : Brahms.

TARA : Yes, and ... what?

CHANDAN : Brahms. Not Beethoven. Brahms' First Concerto.

TARA : Are you sure?

CHANDAN : Of course. His very first.

TARA : Stop it. Turn it off. I thought that was Beethoven.

CHANDAN (stops the music) : You've heard this so often.

TARA : Yes. But I always thought it was Beethoven.

CHANDAN : Well, they do sound similar. But this one is unmistakably Brahms. It has his quality of high tragedy and romance-of youth bursting forth in the world with all its claims. A spring-like freshness ...

TARA : Do me a favour. When you become a writer, stay away from poetry.

CHANDAN : It's written on the record cover.

TARA : You mean you can feel all that in the music?

CHANDAN (thinks about it): Well, his music is so ... I don't know....

They both laugh.

TARA : Where's mummy?

CHANDAN : In the kitchen, where else? Showing the new cook how to make your favourite dishes.

TARA : I think I'm going to like Bombay. It's all so new and different!

CHANDAN : We've been here before.

TARA : When? Oh, you mean ...

CHANDAN : Yes. The surgery was done here. (Tara giggles.) What's so funny?

TARA : You could say that we were 'separated' when we were babies in Bombay.

CHANDAN : Separated? (Understanding.) Oh-right! And we find each other again in Bombay.

TARA (mock-film style) : Bhaiya! (Hugs him.)

CHANDAN : Careful, we are in Bombay. You just called me a doodhwalla.

TARA : Oh, Chandu. What would I do without you?

CHANDAN : Tara, stop saying such things.

TARA (slaps his back): I'd probably have a ball, that's what I would do. Having both mummy and daddy dancing around me. 'Yes, Tara!' 'No, Tara!' 'Anything you say, Tara!'

CHANDAN : They do that now.

TARA : Well, mummy, yes. It's all right. I can take it. I'm a big girl now.

CHANDAN : No, it's not all right. You can't take it, you're still a little girl with a wild imagination.

TARA : Women have an instinct for these things.

CHANDAN : Women, not girls.

TARA : It's innate! We are born with it!

CHANDAN (easing off): Okay, okay! I leave you with your instincts. The world of Brahms awaits me.

He leans over and plays it softly. They both listen to the music which has lost its effect since it is played softly this time. Pause.

TARA : You know who I met? The ugliest girls in the whole world. Prema and Nalini. They live in the building opposite. They had a friend with them. Equally ugly. They were all running across the street, laughing their ugly heads off over something. When they saw me get off the car, they stopped. They stopped running and they stopped laughing. And they waited, watching me get off and walk across the footpath towards them. Embarrassing me, making me go slower than I would. When I reached them, they grinned. Nalini whispered something to her ugly friend. I knew what was coming. Might as well play along, I thought. I smiled and introduced myself. We exchanged names. Nalini and Prema. The other one just tittered. I smile to her as well. Then I showed it to them. The duckling couldn't believe her

eyes. She stared at my leg. She felt it and knocked on it. Silly as well as ugly, I thought. 'The very best from Jaipur,' I said. 'We get them in pairs. My twin brother wears the other one.'

CHANDAN (laughs). : You didn't.

TARA : Then they ran off. Pleased with themselves, laughing even harder. Their day was made. One of these days I'm going to tell them exactly how frightful they look.

CHANDAN : Maybe they already know.

TARA : Still, it would be nice to see their reaction. Oh, play the music real loud. Beethoven was never as good as this.

Chandan turns up the volume.

With the next phrase of music, Roopa is seen at the street as she hesitantly walks towards the Patels' house. She enters and stands near the door, not knowing what to do.

Chandan notices her first. He stops the music.

TARA : Why did you do that? I was just enjoying ...

CHANDAN : Hello.

TARA (turns around). Oh, hello.

ROOPA : Hello.

TARA : Won'T you come in? We were just talking about you.

ROOPA (gushing) : Oh, really? We've only just met!

TARA : Yes. I was just telling Chandu about how you were admiring my leg.

ROOPA : Oh that! I'm sorry, I hope you didn't mind.

TARA : Mind? Why should I mind?

ROOPA : Oh it's just that... I thought you might feel... you know.

TARA : Hurt? Embarrassed? Not at all. You can say it sort of 'runs' in the family- this leg. Chandu-show her yours.

Chandu proudly shows his Jaipur leg to her.

ROOPA : Oh, wow! I can't believe it. Both of you! I don't get it. How? When?

TARA : We don't get it either. And we didn't get your name.

ROOPA : Oh. Didn't I tell you? Nalini and Prema didn't give me half a chance. You know, those two love to gas about. If I were you, I would stay away from them. They'll talk behind your back and all that. Real bitches. They'll think of all kinds of names to call you. That Bugs Bunny and that drumstick. Some people are like that. You know.

TARA : Yes. I know. I still haven't got your name.

ROOPA : Oh-oh. I'm

ROOPA : Hi, you're Tara, I know and ...,

TARA : This is Chandan.

CHANDAN : Hi.

ROOPA : Hi. And you're twins? Funny, you don't resemble each other.

CHANDAN : Not all twins are peas in pods.

ROOPA (not understanding). Huh?

CHANDAN. : Two peas in a pod. That's something we aren't.

ROOPA : Uh, yes. Yes. Very funny.

CHANDAN : Is it? I didn't think so.

ROOPA : You know-two peas in a pot. Isn't that funny?

TARA (observes she hasn't understood) : Oh, yes, of course. (Nudges Chandan.) Very funny. Two peas in a (distinctly) pot.

CHANDAN (catching on): Yes. Very funny.

Roopa and Chandan laugh.

TARA (laughs as well) : Hysterical.

Tara and Chandan burst into genuine laughter. Roopa realizes that things aren't quite as lucid as they seem. She stops laughing.

ROOPA. : Well, I didn't think it was that funny.

CHANDAN (controlling his laughter) : Excuse me. (Gets up.) I think I must write something down.

He moves towards his room. He can't control himself any longer and bursts out laughing. He exits muttering 'Tooposo in a pot!'

ROOPA (visibly annoyed). : Well!

TARA. : Oh, don't mind. It's just some silly family joke.

ROOPA : Very silly, if you ask me.

TARA : Yes. Yes. So tell me about yourself. Which standard are you in?

ROOPA : I've finished my ninth. And you?

TARA : We've just completed our tenth. The results aren't out yet.

ROOPA : Where are you from?

TARA : Bangalore.

ROOPA : Oh really? We're Kannadigas too. My mum's from Bangalore.

TARA : Which part?

ROOPA (a little crashed) : Well, Tumkur really. But I was born here.

TARA : My mother is from Bangalore. My dad's Gujarati.

ROOPA : Oh, an inter-caste marriage! Was it a love marriage? Tell. Tell.

TARA : Yes. My father had to leave his parents because of the marriage, if you really want to know.

ROOPA : No! I didn't mean to be nosy or anything! But don't stop now.

TARA : There's nothing much to tell. My grandfather, my mother's father, was a very influential person. But my dad didn't take any help from. him. Today my dad is the general manager of Indo-Swede Pharmacia, the biggest pharmaceutical company in the country. Heard of it?

ROOPA : Yes. I love their cough syrup!

TARA : He will soon be one of the directors.

ROOPA : Oh, that's great. So you're going to do your plus two here in Bombay.

TARA (pause) : Well, I don't know.

ROOPA : What d'you mean? Aren't you going to live here?

TARA : Yes. But I will soon be going in for surgery.

ROOPA : Oh, how sad! On, your leg.

TARA : No. A kidney transplant.

ROOPA : Gosh!

TARA : We knew it was going to happen. I was prepared.

ROOPA : And your brother? Will he also...?

TARA : Oh, no. He's fine. Thank God for that.

ROOPA : Don't you need someone to-you know-give you a kidney.

TARA : A donor. Yes. I've got one.

ROOPA : Your brother?

TARA : No.

ROOPA : Your dad?

TARA : No.

ROOPA : Then your...?

BHARATI (enters). Tara, I hope you'll like Chinese for dinner. Ida says chow mein is her speciality. Oh, how I miss Gopi. Maybe I should call Vadivu Akka and ask her to send him after all. Hello-I see you've made friends already.

ROOPA (grins and speaks in her best Kannada) : Hello, aunty. Heg iddira?

BHARATI : Oh, we have a Kannadiga for a neighbour in Bombay. How refreshing! Specially since we had all those Gujarati neighbours in Bangalore.

ROOPA : Oh, we have them here too.

Pause, while Bharati hesitates and observes Roopa.

BHARATI : Sit down-Er... TARA, Roopa.

BHARATI : Roopa. (Pause.) I-I mustn't interrupt you two from... Tara, what's Chandan up to?

TARA : I think he's writing.

BHARATI : That boy! Let me see if he needs anything. (Exits to Chandan's room.)

ROOPA : I think I better get going.

TARA : Well, I'll see you later. If you need my old notes or textbooks or anything, just

ROOPA : Right. And remember to stay away from that Prema and Nalini. They will be nasty to you.

TARA : That's okay. I can handle them.

ROOPA : That's what you think. Besides, they are not really our standard, you know. Their English isn't that good. They won't understand your jokes like peas in pots and all that.

TARA (smiling) : Well, we'll teach them.

ROOPA : You will be wasting your time on them. They are, you know, (crinkles her nose in disgust) wandh tarah.

TARA : One tarah?

ROOPA : Odd types. Don't you know Kannada?

TARA (understanding) : Oh! Wandu tarah! (Meaninghully.) Yes, I know what you mean.

ROOPA : Well forewarned is forehanded. So. Take care. Bye.

BHARATI (enters): Tara! You haven't finished unpacking. The green suitcase is still lying there.

TARA : It's got all my old things. I don't...

BHARATI : Do it now!

Tara moves to her room.

TARA : That will take the whole day! Okay, bye,

Roopa : Come any time.

ROOPA : Bye!

Tara exits. There is an awkward moment of silence between Bharati and Roopa.

ROOPA : Well, bartheeni, aunty. BHARATI. No. No. Stay for a while. Please.

ROOPA : No. You must be having a lot of work to do.

BHARATI : Sit down.

ROOPA (grinning in embarrassed manner) : No. It's okay.

BHARATI (with an element of sternness) : Sit down.

ROOPA (laughs uncomfortably). If you say so. (Sits.)

BHARATI. Tara is a very nice girl.

ROOPA (stunned at first, then) : Yes! An extremely nice girl.

BHARATI : Good. I'm glad you think so.

ROOPA (nervously) : Yes.

BHARATI : And you will be her friend?

ROOPA : Yes. Yes! Certainly. Such a nice girl.

BHARATI : She ... she must make more friends. Chandan is all right-he has his writing, but she ... He is different, he is sort of self-contained, but Tara ... She can be very good company and she has her talents. She can be very witty and of course she is intelligent. I have seen to it that she ... more than makes up in some ways for what she ... doesn't have.

ROOPA (nods violently) : Oh, yes! That she does.

BHARATI : You will be her friend?

ROOPA (hesitantly). Well, yes. If you say so.

BHARATI : You will be her best friend?

ROOPA (now playing hard to get): Welt, I don't know. Nalini and Prema are my best friends.

BHARATI : If you promise to be her best friend-what I mean is if you would like to be her friend-I will be most grateful to you and I will show it... in whatever way you want me to.

ROOPA : I don't think I... understand. (Pause.)

BHARATI (suddenly): Do you have a VCR at home?

ROOPA (puzzled). Yes?

BHARATI (disappointed) : Oh. And you see a lot of films?

ROOPA : Not a lot. My mother only allows me to watch a movie on Sunday afternoons.

BHARATI : So-there must be a lot of films you are dying to see.

ROOPA : Yes. Plenty.

BHARATI : You can see them here, any time you want to. No restrictions.

ROOPA (guardedly). I don't know what my mother would say.

BHARATI : How will she know?

ROOPA (thinks about it, then) : Can I watch Fatal Attraction?

BHARATI (sharply) : You can watch whatever you want! (More subdued.) Just be my Tara's friend.

ROOPA : Yes. May I go now?

BHARATI : Yes. First promise me that you will be her friend.

ROOPA : I don't know. Can I think about it?

BHARATI (hissing). Promise me now!

ROOPA : Look. I-I will come back later. Okay?

BHARATI (recovering) : Yes. Of course. I'm sorry I didn't mean to ... force anything on you.

ROOPA (BACKING towards the door) : It's okay. I understand. I will come again.

BHARATI : Yes. Please! Do come!

ROOPA : I will. Bye.

She scoots down to the street. Spot on the street and on Bharati in the living room.

ROOPA (calling to her friends urgently): Prema! Premaa! Come quick! Where's Nalini? Never mind, you come here! My God! Oh, my God! Guess what? I went to her house! Yes. Right inside! I met everyone there. She is a real freak of nature all right, but wait till you see her mother! Oh God! I can't tell you-she is really... wandh tarah. Oh God! I'll never go there again.

Spot off on the street and Bharat. Cross-fade to Dr Bakkar who is still in the middle of his interview.

DR THAKKAR : The parents were warned of the odds against survival. They were, understandably, totally disheartened in the beginning. But, soon, even the remotest chance for survival was received with hope once they were made aware of the facilities offered by modern technology. I had a conference with the resident doctors at the Victoria Hospital. A very efficient and competent team of doctors. I was shown the test reports. X-rays, scan results from the Bangalore hospital. There were many points to be reconfirmed and further observations were necessary before any decision on surgery could be taken. The twins were flown in from Bangalore and were moved immediately to the intensive care unit for observation and tests. It was two weeks of exhaustive work. The results were encouraging. The twins did not share any vital organ. There were two hearts clearly indicated by two electrocardiograms. There were two livers, although joined. Each twin would have one kidney- all this meant that there was a very strong possibility of both twins surviving. What we needed to know more about was the pelvic region and the extent of conjoinment there ...

Lights cross-fade to Patel on the phone. Bharat is tense and listens to him intently.

PATEL : Yes, Dr Kapoor. I am happy to hear that... Indeed she is a very lucky girl... Yes. As soon as possible. Well, after what she has been through so far... Anyway, she will be glad she won't have to go for her dialysis after the surgery. Don't worry, doctor, she is a very high-spirited girl. Knowing her, she will probably joke about it. And her brother gives her enough moral support. Yes, I will call you tomorrow. Thank you, doctor. Thank you. (Hangs up.)

BHARATI (excitedly) : So? Everything is all right? We are compatible? I think God wanted it this way ...

PATEL (quietly) : Bharati. You cannot give her your kidney.

BHARATI : But just now — on the phone — you were making preparations.

PATEL : Tara is very lucky. She has found another donor.

BHARATI : A commercial donor?

PATEL : Yes.

BHARATI : Why? What is wrong if... Why can't she have mine?

PATEL : You can't, that's all.

BHARATI : You won't let me! I am going to call Dr. Kapoor right away and tell him to make the ...

PATEL : It's no use, Bharati.

BHARATI : You can't stop me from doing what I want! (Dialing.) 6438 ...

PATEL : Bharati, put down that phone!

BHARATI : How dare you run my life!

PATEL : Oh, for God's sake! You are getting out of hand!

BHARATI : Oh, God! What's his number? 64 ...

PATEL : Bharati, calm down.

BHARATI : His number! (Hysterically.) Give me his phone number!

PATEL : I will not.

BHARATI : Very well. I will look it up in the ...

PATEL : You don't even know his full name.

BHARATI : I-I can call...

PATEL : Who? Bharati, stop pretending. You are in no condition to be taking major decisions.

BHARATI (quietens down) : Give me his number.

PATEL : I can give you his number. But I will not let you donate your kidney to her.

BHARATI (crying) : The tests showed that I could do it. There ... there is nothing wrong in it.

PATEL : Yes. It is wrong. Now that we have a donor, I will not let you do it.

BHARATI : Think of the expenses involved.

PATEL : When have expenses ever bothered you? Your father's wealth has always been your strength against me. Don't talk about expenses to me!

BHARATI (pleadingly): Why won't you let me do it?

PATEL (controlling): Because ... need I tell you? Because I do not want you to have the satisfaction of doing it.

BHARATI : I will do it!

PATEL : You will have to obey me. It's my turn now.

BHARATI : I want to give her a part of me!

PATEL (holds her roughly) : Now listen! You need help. I'm going to arrange for a doctor to examine you thoroughly.

BHARATI : I am fine. I don't need a doctor. My blood pressure is under control and ...

PATEL : I mean a psychiatrist.

BHARATI : I don't need one!

PATEL : It can't do you any harm.

BHARATI : I tell you I don't need one! You ... you are wasting your time. Think about Tara and Chandan.

PATEL : I am thinking about them. That's why I need to make you more stable.

BHARATI (calms down) : Look, don't worry about me. I am perfectly all right.

PATEL : I cannot handle your moods any longer. Have you looked at yourself recently? Look at the way you behave, the way you react to ...

BHARATI : I promise to control myself in future. Just...

PATEL : I know you want to, but can you?

BHARATI : Just, just let me do what I want to.

PATEL : Anything but allow you to ...

BHARATI : Who are you to stop me? Just who do you think you are?

PATEL : Sit down, Bharati.

BHARATI : This is no way to treat me.

PATEL (pushes her down) : Sit down. Now listen. I am going to fix an appointment for you and you are going to see that doctor.

BHARATI : I don't want to. I don't need to!

PATEL : You will. I demand it from you.

BHARATI : All right! You want me to be all right? Yes, I will do it.

PATEL : Good. I will call him right now.

BHARATI : I will tell her.

Patel stops. 'I will tell them everything.'

Patel goes to her and slaps her. The moment she recovers, Bharati looks at him with some triumph.

PATEL : You wouldn't dare tell them. Not you. Please, don't! Not yet!

BHARATI : Then let me do what I want to do.

PATEL (defeated) : You cannot tell them. For their sake, don't! (Looks at her suddenly with determination.) If at all they must know, it will be from me. Not from you.

Cross-fade to Dan who is busy typing. He stops and reads out his last line.

DAN : 'If at all they must know, it will be from me. Not from you.'

Dan continues to type as the lights cross-fade to the living room. Roopa, Tara and Chandan are watching a movie. Bharati is knitting. As the movie ends.

ROOPA : Oh, that was wonderful! Wasn't it? I love surprise endings.

CHANDAN : It was very predictable.

TARA : I didn't think so. I feel sorry for that woman.

ROOPA : What a nice title! The Mirror Cracked. Very dramatic.

TARA : Imagine not being able to have children because somebody gave her German measles when she was pregnant.

ROOPA : How does the poem go?

CHANDAN : 'The curse has come upon me! Cried the Lady of Shallot.'

ROOPA : I feel sorry for the Lady of Shallot. Locked up. Not being able to see the world, you know. Just sitting and weaving a tapestry or something. And having a cracked mirror.

TARA : The mirror cracks later.

ROOPA : But still. Seven years' bad luck and all that.

BHARATI : More coffee for you Roopa? (Picks up their mugs.)

ROOPA : No, thank you, aunty. (To Chandan.) Your mother's coffee is really something.

Bharati exits to the kitchen.

CHANDAN : Ida makes it.

ROOPA : Really? But it has that typical Southie flavour. I think it's the-you know-concoction.

CHANDAN : Concoction?

TARA : She means decoction.

ROOPA : Decoction-yes, of course! How silly of me. A concoction is something you have when you get hit on the head. Anyway, I'm glad I can have coffee here. My mother only gives me milk. (To Tara.) You would have had plenty of milk being a Patel and all that. (Laughs as if she has made a joke.)

TARA (to Chandan) : Did you get that?

CHANDAN. No: Did she?

ROOPA : You mean you don't know about Patels?

TARA : Don't know what?

ROOPA : Oh, so you don't know!

CHANDAN : Unless you tell us what it is, how will we know whether we know?

ROOPA : It's probably not true. It's just an old saying. Prema told me when she came to know you were Patels. It's about milk.

Bharati enters.

TARA : What is?

ROOPA : They drown them in milk.

BHARATI (terse) : Are you sure you wouldn't like another cup of coffee?

ROOPA (in Kannada). Beda, aunty, thanks.

TARA : They drown what in milk?

BHARATI : Well then, don't you think it's time you went home? Your mother might be worried.

ROOPA : Oh, I don't think she will be.

BHARATI : She might be concerned about how much video you are watching here.

ROOPA (understanding) : Oh. Yes, I didn't think of that. Well, I'd better go home then.

TARA : I'll come out with you.

They both move to the door.

ROOPA (to Bharati) : Well. Thanks for the coffee, aunty, and the movies.

BHARATI (loaded). Don't mention it!

ROOPA : Bye, Chandan. Let me read your story some time. I hope I'm in it.

CHANDAN : Don't worry. You are.

Tara and Roopa go out to the street. Bharati joins Chandan on the sofa.

BHARATI : Chandan, what's your story about?

CHANDAN : It's called 'The Ogler Next Door'.

BHARATI : It's ... it's not about anything else?

CHANDAN : Like what?

TARA : Well, Roopa, what's all this about drowning them in milk?

ROOPA : Oh-nothing, I don't think I will tell you.

TARA : Well-all right.

ROOPA : Aren't you dying to know?

BHARATI : I wish your father would pay more attention to Tara.

CHANDAN : He does. He doesn't like to show his affection.

BHARATI : Don't tell me about your father. He is more worried about your career than hers.

CHANDAN : That's because I'm more sure of what I want. She is just... playing it cool.

TARA : Yes, I am. But you don't have to tell me if you don't want to.

ROOPA : I don't want to!

TARA : Rubbish! You are dying to tell me.

BHARATI : It's time Tara decided what she wants to be. Women have to do that as well these days. She must have a career.

CHANDAN : She can do whatever she wants. Grandfather's trust will leave us both money, isn't it?

BHARATI : Yes. But she must have something to do! She can't be ... aimless all her life.

CHANDAN : There is nothing aimless about Tara's life.

TARA : Go home! It's probably something you haven't fully understood yourself.

ROOPA : I beg your pardon! Don't think you are very smart.

TARA : Only in comparison.

BHARATI : It's alright while she is young. It's all very cute and comfortable when she makes witty remarks. But let her grow up. Yes, Chandan. The world will tolerate you. The world will accept you-but not her! Oh, the pain she is going to feel when she sees herself at eighteen or twenty. Thirty is unthinkable. And what about forty and fifty! Oh God!

CHANDAN : Mummy, Tara is my sister. Everything will be fine.

ROOPA : Since you insist, I will tell you. It may not be true. But this is what I have heard. The Patels in the old days were unhappy with getting girl babies-you know dowry and things like that-so they used to drown them in milk. Pause.

TARA : In milk?

ROOPA : So when people asked about how the baby died, they could say that she choked while drinking her milk. Pause.

TARA (laughs suddenly) : How absurd!

ROOPA (laughing). Silly, isn't it?

TARA (laughing). Absolutely hilarious.

ROOPA : What a waste of milk!

TARA : Is that what mummy was trying to stop you from telling me?

BHARATI : Your father has a lot of plans for you.

CHANDAN : I have a lot of plans for me.

BHARATI : And Tara?

CHANDAN : I'll always be there if she needs my help. But I don't think she will.

BHARATI : She will. She doesn't know it but she will.

CHANDAN : Do you have plans for her?

BHARATI : Yes. I plan for her happiness. I mean to give her all the love and affection which I can give. It's what she ... deserves. Love can make up for a lot.

TARA : Mummy is so cute-sometimes.

ROOPA (disagreeing) : Yes.

TARA : When we were young, I used to be quite a sick child.

ROOPA : What with all your problems.

TARA : And it was always I who got her attention and care.

ROOPA : That must have made Chandan quite jealous.

TARA : A little bit, I suppose. But he has always been so ... He has never really asked for much. He is so happy with so little. I have always demanded more and more.

ROOPA : It pays sometimes to be the sickly one.

TARA : I really used to play hard to get. Sulking all the time. And when I smiled, it made everyone quite ... relieved! As if... if I didn't smile I would just curl up and die! Mummy said my eyes really twinkled when I smiled.

ROOPA (not happy at hearing such a cheerful story) : Twinkle Tara-that's really cute. And what about your father? Did he spoil you just as much?

TARA (after a while) : I don't remember.

Spot fades out on Tara and Roopa.

CHANDAN : Is that a sweater you are knitting for Tara?

BHARATI : Yes.

CHANDAN : You've dropped a stitch.

Lights cross-fade to street. Roopa has gone. Tara talks to Patel as they come home.

TARA : Oh, nothing much, we've been watching movies the whole day.

PATEL : The whole day? And Chandan?

TARA : Him too.

PATEL : And your mother?

TARA : Well, you know how she is. You can't tell exactly what she is doing.

They enter. Both Bharati and Chandan are busy unravelling the knitting. Chandan is trying to keep the wool in order. Bharati is a bit more frantic.

PATEL : Hello.

CHANDAN : Hi, daddy.

PATEL : What are you two doing?

CHANDAN : Mummy's knitting and I'm helping her sort out her mistake.

PATEL : Let Tara do it.

CHANDAN : It's okay.

PATEL : Give it to her.

CHANDAN : Why?

BHARATI : It's all right, I'll manage. Leave it.

CHANDAN : I will just roll all this and ...

PATEL : Chandan, leave that damn thing alone!

BHARATI (frantically): Go! Chandan, just go!

PATEL (to Bharati): How dare you do this to him?

CHANDAN : Wait a minute, daddy, she never asked me to do any ...

PATEL : Can't you even look after the children?

CHANDAN : Look, daddy, it's ...

PATEL : What did you do the whole day, huh? Watch video?

BHARATI : I can't think of things for them to do all the time!

PATEL : But you can think of turning him into a sissy-teaching him to knit!

CHANDAN : Daddy, that's unfair.

BHARATI : Chandan, please go to your room!

CHANDAN : All I'm doing is helping mummy to ...

PATEL : I am disappointed in you. From now on you are coming to the office with me. I can't see you rotting at home!

CHANDAN : I don't want to go to the office!

PATEL : You will come with me to the office until your college starts.

CHANDAN : I don't want to go to college! (Fighting his fears.) Not without Tara! If she is going in for surgery, I'll miss a year too!

PATEL : You will not. I won't allow it.

CHANDAN : I will not go to college without Tara!

PATEL : That would make me very unhappy.

CHANDAN (shouting). : Well, that's too bad! (Backs to his room.) That's just too bad! (Exits.)

BHARATI : Say it! Go on, say it-that it's alt my fault! That I am turning the children against you.

Tara stands back, frightened

PATEL : You are turning them against the whole world.

BHARATI : I am doing that?

PATEL : Yes! Look at the way you treat Tara. As if she is made of glass. You coddle her, you pet her, you spoil her. She's grown up feeling she doesn't need anyone but you!

BHARATI : What d'you want me to do? Just tell me in plain simple words what you want me to do and I'll do it!

PATEL : Let go. Just let go. And let me handle them.

BHARATI : All right. You stay at home then! You stay at home and watch what they can do and what they can't. You remind them of what they can't be. It's easy for you to talk about their future and your plans. But tell them what they should do now. This day, this hour, this minute. Tell them! I want to hear!

PATEL : Chandan is going to study further and he will go abroad for his higher studies.

BHARATI : And Tara?

PATEL : When have you ever allowed me to make any plans for her?

BHARATI : I'm stopping you from making plans for my daughter?

PATEL : Don't lie, Bharati! You don't want me to, and you know It. You have told me so a dozen times.

BHARATI : That's not true!

PATEL : You have to face it. You want her to believe you are the only one who loves her!

BHARATI : Why? Why would I want that?

PATEL (quietly) : You don't want me to say it, do you? And you threaten me that you will tell them. But you won't. You can't. You don't know what you want.

BHARATI : Just leave me alone with my daughter.

PATEL : Is that what you want? To love her. You said your love will make up for a lot, didn't you?

BHARATI : Ask her! Ask her what she wants and give it to her!

PATEL : You know she loves you. You're sure of that. Don't make her choose between us, for God's sake! You're ruining her life because you are sick. I want to help you, Bharati, please allow me to help you.

BHARATI : I don't need your help.

PATEL : Look at you. Do you ever go out? No. Have you made any friends? We've been here for two months and you haven't even talked to anyone. You just sit here rotting.

BHARATI : I don't need anyone!

PATEL : Exactly! That's what I want from you. Don't make my children say that.

BHARATI : I'm not doing that! I've always made sure that Tara has had friends. I go out of my way to ... Why that Roopa ... she ... she ... What you're saying just isn't true! You-you can't lie about me like that in front of my children. Now that they are at an impressionable age and might take your words very seriously.

PATEL : Oh! How deviously clever you are! I'm the liar and I'm the one who is feeding them with lies when they're at an impressionable age? I am the violent one and you are the 'victim' of my wrath. You don't go out because I don't let you. Go on, say it.

BHARATI : Stop it! Stop this madness and let me live in peace!

PATEL : How can I? Not now, when you are turning my own children against me.

BHARATI : You said it! (Laughs.) I knew you would say it! Say it again. I don't care- after all these lies you've said about me!

PATEL : Yes, call me a liar, a wife-beater, a child abuser. It's what you want me to be! And you. You want them to believe you love them very much.

BHARATI : Yes!

PATEL (grabs Tara) : Look at her, Bharati. And tell her that you love her very much.

BHARATI : Tara knows it. Leave her alone!

TARA : Daddy ...

PATEL : Tara, please believe me when I say that I love you very much and I have never in all my life loved you less or more than I have loved your brother. But your mother...

BHARATI (hysterically) : Stop it! Don't fill her with nonsense about me.

PATEL : But your mother would like you to believe that it's not true. I love you. (Looks at Bharati.) We both do.

TARA : I never doubted it, daddy. I... I don't feel too ... (Slumps like a rag doll into Pate's arms.)

PATEL : Oh God! Her insulin. No! Get the sugar!

BHARATI (rooted to the spot) : She is dying! My Tara is dying!

PATEL (shouts): Get the sugar! (Bharati doesn't move.) Didn't you hear me? Get me some sugar before she ...

He realizes he will have to do it himself and carries Tara to the kitchen. Bharati sits on the sofa and sobs. Spot on her.

The spot on Dan fades in as he unwinds the sheet on his typewriter.

DAN (reads aloud) : 'Bharati sobs. Patel brings in the revived Tara. Patel picks up the phone and dials the hospital. The act ends with the explosive opening of Brahms' First Concerto.'

Dan stretches himself while the concerto plays. Slow fade out on Bharati.

EXERCISE

Choose the correct answer from the alternatives given :

1. **What is the relationship between Chandan and Tara?**
   a) Close friends
   b) Distant cousins
   c) Conjoined twins (separated after birth)
   d) Employer and employee
2. **What detail from Act I suggests that Tara might have been more intelligent than Chandan?**
   a) Chandan is praised for his academic achievements.
   b) Tara is shown to be more physically active.
   c) Tara is the one who suggests a way to communicate with the doctor.
   d) Chandan is the one who remembers their childhood memories more vividly.
3. **What is a source of conflict between Chandan and his parents in Act I?**
   a) Chandan's rebellious behavior
   b) Chandan's struggles to adjust to life after separation
   c) Chandan's choice of career path
   d) Chandan's lack of interest in marriage
4. **What is the significance of the photograph shown in Act I?**
   a) It foreshadows a future romantic relationship for Chandan.
   b) It serves as a constant reminder of Tara's absence.
   c) It represents a happy memory from Chandan's childhood.
   d) It introduces a new character who will play a major role in the story.
5. **What is the overall mood or atmosphere created in Act I?**
   a) Lighthearted and comedic
   b) Suspenseful and mysterious
   c) Melancholy and filled with a sense of loss
   d) Optimistic and hopeful for the future

CLASS XII
SEMESTER IV

Down The Rabbit-Hole.

LEWIS CAROLL

ALICE was beginning to get very tired of sitting by her sister on the bank, and of having nothing to do: once or twice she had peeped into the book her sister was reading, but it had no pictures or conversations in it, "and what is the use of a book," thought Alice, "without pictures or conversations?"

So she was considering in her own mind, (as well as she could, for the hot day made her feel very sleepy and stupid,) whether the pleasure of making a daisy-chain would be worth the trouble of getting up and picking the daisies, when suddenly a white rabbit with pink eyes ran close by her.

There was nothing so very remarkable in that; nor did Alice think it so very much out of the way to hear the Rabbit say to itself, "Oh dear! Oh dear! I shall be too late!" (when she thought it over afterwards, it occurred to her that she ought to have wondered at this, but at the time it all seemed quite natural); but when the Rabbit actually took a watch out of its waistcoat-pocket, and looked at it, and then hurried on, Alice started to her feet, for it flashed across her mind that she had never before seen a rabbit with either a waistcoat-pocket, or a watch to take out of it, and, burning with curiosity, she ran across the field after it, and was just in time to see it pop down a large rabbit-hole under the hedge.

In another moment down went Alice after it, never once considering how in the world she was to get out again.

The rabbit-hole went straight on like a tunnel for some way, and then dipped suddenly down, so suddenly that Alice had not a moment to think about stopping herself before she found herself falling down what seemed to be a very deep well.

Either the well was very deep, or she fell very slowly, for she had plenty of time as she went down to look about her, and to wonder what was going to happen next. First, she tried to look down and make out what she was coming to, but it was too dark to see anything; then she looked at the sides of the well, and noticed that they were filled with cupboards and bookshelves; here and there she saw maps and pictures hung upon pegs. She took down a jar from one of the shelves as she passed; it was labelled "ORANGE MARMALADE," but to her great disappointment it was empty: she did not like to drop the jar for fear of killing somebody underneath, so managed to put it into one of the cupboards as she fell past it.

"Well!" thought Alice to herself, "after such a fall as this, I shall think nothing of tumbling down stairs! How brave they'll all think me at home! Why, I wouldn't say anything about it, even if I fell off the top of the house!" (Which was very likely true.)

Down, down, down. Would the fall never come to an end? "I wonder how many miles I've fallen by this time?" she said aloud. "I must be getting somewhere near the centre of the earth. Let me see: that would be four thousand miles down, I think—" (for, you see, Alice had learnt several things of this sort in her lessons in the schoolroom, and though this was not a very good opportunity for showing

off her knowledge, as there was no one to listen to her, still it was good practice to say it over) –yes, that's about the right distance – but then I wonder what Latitude or Longitude I've got to?' (Alice had not the slightest idea what Latitude was, or Longitude either, but she thought they were nice grand words to say.)

Presently she began again. 'I wonder if I shall fall right through the earth! How funny it'll seem to come out among the people that walk with their heads downwards! The Antipathies, I think—' (she was rather glad there was no one listening, this time, as it didn't sound at all the right word) '–but I shall have to ask them what the name of the country is, you know. Please, Ma'am, is this New Zealand or Australia?' (and she tried to curtsey as she spoke – fancy curtseying as you're falling through the air! Do you think you could manage it?) 'And what an ignorant little girl she'll think me for asking! No, it'll never do to ask: perhaps I shall see it written up somewhere.'

Down, down, down. There was nothing else to do, so Alice soon began talking again. 'Dinah'll miss me very much to-night, I should think!' (Dinah was the cat.) 'I hope they'll remember her saucer of milk at tea-time. Dinah, my dear! I wish you were down here with me! There are no mice in the air, I'm afraid, but you might catch a bat, and that's very like a mouse, you know. But do cats eat bats, I wonder?' And here Alice began to get rather sleepy, and went on saying to herself, in a dreamy sort of way, 'Do cats eat bats? Do cats eat bats?' and sometimes, 'Do bats eat cats?' for, you see, as she couldn't answer either question, it didn't much matter which way she put it. She felt that she was dozing off, and had just begun to dream that she was walking hand in hand with Dinah, and was saying to her very earnestly, 'Now, Dinah, tell me the truth: did you ever eat a bat?' when suddenly, thump! thump! down she came upon a heap of sticks and dry leaves, and the fall was over.

Alice was not a bit hurt, and she jumped up on to her feet in a moment: she looked up, but it was all dark overhead: before her was another long passage, and the *White Rabbit* was still in sight, hurrying down it. There was not a moment to be lost: away went Alice like the wind, and was just in time to hear it say, as it turned a corner, 'Oh my ears and whiskers, how late it's getting!' She was close behind it when she turned the corner, but the Rabbit was no longer to be seen: she found herself in a long, low hall, which was lit up by a row of lamps hanging from the roof.

There were doors all round the hall, but they were all locked, and when Alice had been all the way down one side and up the other, trying every door, she walked sadly down the middle, wondering how she was ever to get out again.

Suddenly she came upon a little three-legged table, all made of solid glass; there was nothing on it but a tiny golden key, and Alice's first idea was that this might belong to one of the doors of the hall; but, alas! either the locks were too large, or the key was too small, but at any rate it would not open any of them. However, on the second time round, she came upon a low curtain she had not noticed before, and behind it was a little door about fifteen inches high: she tried the little golden key in the lock, and to her great delight it fitted!

Alice opened the door and found that it led into a small passage, not much larger than a rat-hole: she knelt down and looked along the passage into the loveliest garden you ever saw. How she longed to get out of that dark hall, and wander about among those beds of bright flowers and those cool fountains, but she could not even get her head through the doorway; "and even if my head would go through," thought poor Alice, "it would be of very little use without my shoulders. Oh, how I wish I could shut up like a telescope! I think I could, if I only knew how to begin." For, you see, so many out-of-the-way things had happened lately that Alice had begun to think that very few things indeed were really impossible.

There seemed to be no use in waiting by the little door, so she went back to the table, half hoping she might find another key on it, or at any rate a book of rules for shutting people up like telescopes: this time she found a little bottle on it, ("which certainly was not here before," said Alice,) and tied round the neck of the bottle was a paper label with the words "DRINK ME" beautifully printed on it in large letters.

It was all very well to say "Drink me," but the wise little Alice was not going to do that in a hurry. "no, I'll look first," she said, "and see whether it's marked 'poison' or not;" for she had read several nice little stories about children who had got burnt, and eaten up by wild beasts, and other unpleasant things, all because they would not remember the simple rules their friends had taught them: such as, that a red-hot poker will burn you if you hold it too long; and that if you cut your finger very deeply with a knife, it usually bleeds; and she had never forgotten that, if you drink much from a bottle marked "poison," it is almost certain to disagree with you, sooner or later.

However, this bottle was not marked "poison," so Alice ventured to taste it, and finding it very nice, (it had, in fact, a sort of mixed flavour of cherry-tart, custard, pine-apple, roast turkey, toffy, and hot buttered toast,) she very soon finished it off.

"What a curious feeling!" said Alice. "I must be shutting up like a telescope."

And so it was indeed: she was now only ten inches high, and her face brightened up at the thought that she was now the right size for going through the little door into that lovely garden. First, however, she waited for a few minutes to see if she was going to shrink any further: she felt a little nervous about this: "for it might end, you know," said Alice to herself, "in my going out altogether, like a candle. I wonder what I should be like then?" And she tried to fancy what the flame of a candle looks like after the candle is blown out, for she could not remember ever having seen such a thing.

After a while, finding that nothing more happened, she decided on going into the garden at once; but, alas for poor Alice! when she got to the door, she found she had forgotten the little golden key, and when she went back to the table for it, she found she could not possibly reach it: she could see it quite plainly through the glass, and she tried her best to climb up one of the legs of the table, but it was too slippery; and when she had tired herself out with trying, the poor little thing sat down and cried.

'Come, there's no use in crying like that!' said Alice to herself, rather sharply. 'I advise you to leave off this minute!' She generally gave herself very good advice, (though she very seldom followed it,) and sometimes she scolded herself so severely as to bring tears into her eyes, and once she remembered trying to box her own ears for having cheated herself in a game of croquet she was playing against herself, for this curious child was very fond of pretending to be two people. 'But it's 110 use now,' thought poor Alice, 'to pretend to be two people! Why, there's hardly enough of me left to make one respectable person!'

Soon her eye fell on a little glass box that was lying under the table: she opened it, and found in it a very small cake, on which the words 'EAT ME' were beautifully marked in currants. 'Well, I'll eat it,' said Alice, 'and if it makes me grow larger, I can reach the key ; and if it makes me grow smaller, I can creep under the door; so either way I'll get into the garden, and I don't care which happens!'

She ate a little', bit, and said anxiously to herself 'Which way? Which way?' holding her hand on the top of her head to feel which way it was growing, and she was quite surprised to find that she remained the same size: to be sure, this is what generally happens when one eats cake, but Alice had got so much into the way of expecting nothing but out-of-the-way things to happen, that it seemed quite dull and stupid for life to go on in the common way.

So she set to work and very soon finished off the cake.

EXERCISE

1. What had seemed natural to Alice when she should have wondered about it? (2 marks)
2. What did Alice notice at the side of the well? (2 marks)
3. What happens when Alice jumps down the rabbit hole both in physical and psychological aspect? (6 marks)

Three Questions

LEO TOLSTOY

It once occurred to a certain Tsar, that if he always knew the right time to begin everything; if he knew who were the right people to listen to, and whom to avoid; and, above all, if he always knew what was the most important thing to do, he would never fail in anything he might undertake.

And this thought having occurred to him, he had it proclaimed throughout his kingdom that he would give a great reward to anyone who would teach him what was the right time for every action, and who were the most necessary people, and how he might know what was the most important thing to do.

And learned men came to the Tsar, but they all answered his questions differently.

In reply to the first question, some said that to know the right time for every action, one must draw up in advance, a table of days, months and years, and must live strictly according to it. Only thus, said they, could everything be done at its proper time.

Others declared that it was impossible to decide beforehand the right time for every action; but that, not letting oneself be absorbed in idle pastimes, one should always attend to all that was going on, and then do what was most needful. Others, again, said that however attentive the Tsar might be to what was going on, it was impossible for one man to decide correctly the right time for every action, but that he should have a Council of wise men, who would help him to fix the proper time for everything.

But then again others said there were some things which could not wait to be laid before a Council, but about which one had at once to decide whether to undertake them or not. But in order to decide that, one must know beforehand what was going to happen. It is only magicians who know that; and, therefore, in order to know the right time for every action, one must consult magicians.

Tsar : title of a Russian ruler

Equally various were the answers to the second question. Some said, the people the Tsar most needed were his councillors; others, the priests; others, the doctors; while some said the warriors were the most necessary.

To the third question, as to what was the most important occupation: some replied that the most important thing in the world was science. Others said it was skill in warfare: and others, again, that it was religious worship.

All the answers being different, the Tsar agreed with none of them, and gave the reward to none. But still wishing to find the right answers to his questions, he decided to consult a hermit, widely renowned for his wisdom.

The hermit lived in a wood which he never quitted, and he received none but common folk. So the Tsar put on simple clothes, and before reaching the hermit's cell dismounted from his horse, and, leaving his body-guard behind, went on alone.

When the Tsar approached, the hermit was digging the ground in front of his hut. Seeing the Tsar, he greeted him and went on digging. The hermit was frail and weak, and each time he stuck his spade into the ground and turned a little earth, he breathed heavily.

The Tsar went up to him and said: "I have come to you, wise hermit, to ask you to answer three questions: How can I learn to do the right thing at the right time? Who are the people I most need, and to whom should I, therefore, pay more attention than to the rest? And, what affairs are the most important, and need my first attention?"

The hermit listened to the Tsar, but answered nothing. He just spat on his hand and recommenced digging.

"You are tired," said the Tsar, "let me take the spade and work awhile for you."

"Thanks!" said the hermit, and, giving the spade to the Tsar, he sat down on the ground.

When he had dug two beds, the Tsar stopped and repeated his questions. The hermit again gave no answer, but rose, stretched out his hand for the spade, and said: "Now rest awhile-and let me work a bit."

But the Tsar did not give him the spade, and continued to dig. One hour passed, and another. The sun began to sink behind the trees, and the Tsar at last stuck the spade into the ground, and said: "I came to you, wise man, for an answer to my questions. If you can give me none, tell me so, and I will return home."

dismounted: got down

"Here comes someone running," said the hermit. "let us see who it is."

The Tsar turned round, and saw a bearded man come running out of the wood. The man held his hands pressed against his stomach, and blood was flowing from under them. When he reached the Tsar, he fell fainting on the ground moaning feebly. The Tsar and the hermit unfastened the man's clothing. There was a large wound in his stomach. The Tsar washed it as best he could, and bandaged it with his handkerchief and with a towel the hermit had. But the blood would not stop flowing, and the Tsar again and again removed the bandage soaked with warm blood, and washed and rebandaged the wound.

When at last the blood ceased flowing, the man revived and asked for something to drink. The Tsar brought fresh water and gave it to him. Meanwhile the sun had set, and it had become cool. So the Tsar, with the hermit's help, carried the wounded man into the hut and laid him on the bed. Lying on the bed the man closed his eyes and was quiet; but the Tsar was so tired with his walk and with the work he had done, that he crouched down on the threshold, and also fell asleep–so soundly that he slept all through the short summer night. When he awoke in the morning, it was long before he could remember where he was, or who was the strange bearded man lying on the bed and gazing intently at him with shining eyes.

"Forgive me!" said the bearded man in a weak voice, when he saw that the Tsar was awake and was looking at him.

"I do not know you, and have nothing to forgive you for," said the Tsar.

"You do not know me, but I know you. I am that enemy of yours who swore to revenge himself on you, because you executed his brother and seized his property. I knew you had gone alone to see the hermit, and I resolved to kill you on your way back. But the day passed and you did not return. So I came out from my ambush to find you, and I came upon your body-guard, and they recognised me, and wounded me. I escaped from them, but should have bled to death had you not dressed my wound. I wished to kill you, and you have saved my life. Now, if I live, and if you wish it, I will serve you as your most faithful slave, and will bid my sons do the same. Forgive me!"

The Tsar was very glad to have made peace with his enemy so easily, and to have gained him for a friend, and he not only forgave him, but said he would send his servants and his own physician to attend him, and promised to restore his property.

executed : took the life of
resolved : decided

Having taken leave of the wounded man, the Tsar went out into the porch and looked around for the hermit. Before going away he wished once more to beg an answer to the questions he had put. The hermit was outside, on his knees, sowing seeds in the beds that had been dug the day before.

The Tsar approached him, and said: "For the last time, I pray you to answer my questions, wise man."

"You have already been answered!" said the hermit, still crouching on his thin legs, and looking up at the Tsar, who stood before him.

"How answered? What do you mean?" asked the Tsar.

"Do you not see," replied the hermit. "If you had not pitied my weakness yesterday, and had not dug those beds for me, but had gone your way, that man would have attacked you, and you would have repented of not having stayed with me. So the most important time was when you were digging the beds; and I was the most important man; and to do me good was your most important business. Afterwards when that man ran to us, the most important time was when you were attending to him, for if you had not bound up his wounds he would have died without having made peace with you. So he was the most important man, and what you did for him was your most important business. Remember then: there is only one time that is important—Now! It is the most important time because it is the only time when we have any power. The most necessary man is he with whom you are, for no man knows whether he will ever have dealings with anyone else; and the most important affair is, to do him good, because for that purpose alone was man sent into this life!"

EXERCISE

1. Why did the Tsar want to have the answer to the Three questions? .... (2)
2. What was the third question and what was the answer?... (2)
3. How did the Tsar and the hermit nurse the wounded man?.... (6)
4. State the modern relevance of the story Three Questions..... (6)

crouching : bending the knees and the upper body forward

Hawk Roosting

TED HUGHES

I sit in the top of the wood, my eyes closed.
Inaction, no falsifying dream
Between my hooked head and hooked feet:
Or in sleep rehearse perfect kills and eat.

The convenience of the high trees!
The air's buoyancy and the sun's ray
Are of advantage to me;
And the earth's face upward for my inspection.

My feet are locked upon the rough bark.
It took the whole of Creation
To produce my foot, my each feather:
Now I hold Creation in my foot

Or fly up, and revolve it all slowly -
I kill where I please because it is all mine.
There is no sophistry in my body:
My manners are tearing off heads -

The allotment of death.
For the one path of my flight is direct
Through the bones of the living.
No arguments assert my right:

The sun is behind me.
Nothing has changed since I began.
My eye has permitted no change.
I am going to keep things like this.

EXERCISE

1. Comment on the physical features and prowess of the hawk. Discuss their significance. (6 marks)
2. Discuss the significance of the title of the poem. (2 marks)
3. What does the poet means by 'Now I hold the creation in my foot'? (2 marks)

Sonnet 73

William Shakespeare

That time of year thou mayst in me behold,
When yellow leaves, or none, or few do hang
Upon those boughs which shake against the cold,
Bare ruined choirs, where late the sweet birds sang.
In me thou seest the twilight of such day,
As after sunset fadeth in the west,
Which by and by black night doth take away,
Death's second self that seals up all in rest.
In me thou seest the glowing of such fire,
That on the ashes of his youth doth lie,
As the death-bed, whereon it must expire,
Consumed with that which it was nourished by.
This thou perceiv'st, which makes thy love more strong,
To love that well, which thou must leave ere long.

EXERCISE

1. Discuss the various images drawn by Shakespeare in Sonnet 73... (6)
2. Explain how does the Sonnet form help the sonneteer to expand the theme in Sonnet 73

The Greenhouse Effect

Carl Dennis

The gradual warming trend will likely go on
And the grain belts begin to slide closer to the poles.
The Plains States will be abandoned as giant dust bowls,
Greenland and Antarctica will join the new Great Powers.
Even if we play them off against each other
For more aid, we'll still be poorer than we are now.
Life will be different, good tillable land so dear
The suburbs will give way to farms, the cities
Fill up again with people too poor to own cars.
Walking to work or crowding on trollies,
We'll move down streets lined with practical nut trees,
Not elms and oaks, with vegetables crowding the front lawns.
The tax base will be too small to support the public buildings.
We'll have to donate hours after work each week
To rake the lawn of the Library and City Hall.
To tuckpoint the chimney of the Federal Building
If we don't want the place to fall like temples in Rome.
Don't want sheep to graze in our squares

As they grazed in the Forum for a thousand years.

With a little effort the country will go on.

So what if we've lost our high place to stronger Carthages

Whose far-flung fleets will be loaded with merchandise

Cheaper than ours. We'll be glad to watch from the beach

As the lights from Korean armadas pass

On their endless patrols around the world.

Let them have their little time in the sun,

We'll say to ourselves as we begin to sway

To the strains of our native beach band.

Ignoring the hits from the Arctic on the radio.

EXERCISE

1. What events will supposedly take place according to the poet in the poem 'The Greenhouse Effect'? (6 marks)
2. What does the poet mean by the words 'Let them have their little time in the sun'? (2 marks)
3. How will it affect the public? Mention any four events. (2 marks)

Tara

ACT II

Spot on Bharati and Tara. Music. There is a certain beatitude in Bharati's demonstration of affection for Tara.

BHARATI : Tara! My beautiful baby! You are my most beautiful baby! I love you very much.

TARA : (enjoying his affection). Yes, mummy. I know that.

BHARATI : I want you to remember that, Tara.

TARA : I will.

BHARATI : Everything will be all right. Now that I am giving you a part of me. Everything will be all right.

TARA : Do you really want to do that, mummy?

BHARATI : Very much.

TARA : Because you love me so much.

BHARATI : Yes. That's why. Don't worry. You will be fine. After the operation, we will all be happy together. And I will make up for... for... your father, and I will make up for all the things God hasn't given you.

TARA : I have plenty. I have you.

BHARATI : Yes. Thank you, Tara! Thank you.

Bharati is overwhelmed and they embrace. Cross-fade to Dan, who is looking at a book.

DAN : I was looking through this old scrap book. A present daddy gave me just before I left. It's got all our news cuttings. Dr Thakkar is in the headlines. Then there are interviews with my mom and dad. And worst of all a hideous photograph of us. Before and after. I don't think the Elephant Man got so much publicity ... Two tiny smaller-than-life babies, hugging

each other. Only a closer look ... Here's the one I'm looking for. Tatel twins still twinkling. The Patel twins made medical history today by being the longest surviving pair of Siamese twins ... Tara Patel, who underwent her seventh prosthesis and a kidney transplant in the same month, was smiling and jovial within hours of a complex surgery. "Surgery for us is like brushing our teeth," joke the twins. Tara Patel, whose recovery was nothing less than a miracle, states that her source of strength was her mother, and of course, her brother and father. Mrs Bharati Patel, however, was too indisposed to give an interview. A distraught Mr Patel explained that this has been a trying time for her.

For, in spite of the brave facade put up by her, Tara has far too many complications to be completely out of danger. However, the will to survive has proved to work more miracles than the greatest of science' ... etc., etc. (Thinks about it.) Poor Tara. Even nature gave her a raw deal.

Cross-fade to Dr Thakkar.

DR THAKKAR : Complications were expected. Our team of doctors were aware of that. The pelvic region, as I had mentioned before, was a problem. There was only one bladder and it belonged to the boy. So did the rectum. We would have to have an artificial one made for the girl. Later on, when she grows up, we can fashion one from her intestinal tissues. And the boy's lungs aren't fully developed. However, considering the magnitude of the work involved, this was a minor detail. The prognosis, on the whole, was favourable to both. Nature had done a near-complete job. Medical science could finish it for her. Theoretically, the separation was possible.

The second movement of Brahms' First Concerto starts. The lights come up on the street as Patel slowly walks in with Tara. The beauty of a special bond between parent and child is created by their movements, the lighting and the music. As they enter, their living room is flooded with light and Chandan and Roopa spring from behind the sofa. They have modest bouquets with them. The music stops.

CHANDAN : Welcome back!

ROOPA : Welcome back, Tara!

They give her the flowers. She accepts grandly.

TARA : Thank you, good people. (*Imitates an Oscar winner.*) First of all, I would like to thank my agent. And those wonderful people, my mum and dad. And my wonderful brother (*hugs him*) without whose glorious presence this operation would never have been made.

ROOPA (*gleefully*): How true! How true!

TARA (*turns to Roopa*): And to my friend out there, Roopa. (*Waves the bouquet.*) I am winning this Oscar for you!

PATEL : Careful! I have an allergy to your Oscar!

ROOPA : As a special treat for you, I got Children of a Lesser God. I'll go get it.

PATEL : Oh, no, thanks. Video services have been terminated ....

ROOPA and CHANDAN (*disappointed*) : Oh!

PATEL : For the day.

CHANDAN : Oh, great! We'll watch something better tomorrow, like Twins.

TARA : Where's mummy? Still after Ida, I suppose, making something special for us.

PATEL (*gives Tara her bag*) : Now take this to your room and wash up. You can chat with your friend later.

TARA : My, oh my! You sound just like mummy! (*Goes towards her room.*) You men can imitate us so well if you want to, Pity we can't return the compliment. (*Exits.*)

PATEL : We'll tell her after she settles down.

ROOPA : Oh! You mean she doesn't know?

CHANDAN : We haven't told her yet.

ROOPA : Surely she must have asked for her.

CHANDAN : It happened while she was undergoing surgery.

PATEL : Roopa, I think it will be better if you left. Just for now. You are most welcome to come back later.

ROOPA : Oh, sure! If she needs my company, just give me a shout. Or send her over, I'll comfort her.

CHANDAN : Thanks.

ROOPA : Bye. (*To Patel.*) Bye bye, uncle.

PATEL : Bye.

Roopa exits. Street lights. She scoots towards Prema's house.

ROOPA : Psst! Prema! Are you there?

TARA (*coming out*): Oh, this is terrific. Mummy doesn't even come to say hello.

PATEL : Tara.

Patel leads her to the sofa. She sits down. Spot on them. Their conversation and Tara's reactions are mimed over Roopa's speech.

ROOPA (*as if to Prema*) : Yes. She is back. Can you believe it? They haven't told her about her mother yet. Well, they are telling her now.

Tara looks up at her father. A look of pain.

I tell you that whole family is crazy. And I always knew that mother of hers was bonkers. They say she had a nervous breakdown. I think she has finally gone completely loony. Stark naked mad.

Patel comforts Tara. Chandan sits beside her.

This is no surprise to me. I had told you she was really wand tarah.

Spot on Roopa fades out. The spot on Tara lingers jiisL a little longer. The spot on Dr Thakkar fades in.

DR THAKKAR : It took us a further ten days just for planning. We couldn't afford to make any miscalculations. There would be separate teams for each twin. Two operation tables were to be joined together. When the separation was done, the tables would be pushed apart and each twin was to receive individual attention.

Cross-fade to the living room. Tara is seated, looking very depressed. Chandan is trying to cheer her up.

CHANDAN : And then this socialite lady at the physio tells me that she had worked with mobility-impaired children before. 'Mobility impaired?' I asked. She pointed to my leg and shrugged her shoulders. And you know what I said? (No response.) Come on, take a guess! (Taps her.) Go on, guess.

TARA (irritated) : I don't want to guess.

CHANDAN : I said, 'Well, I haven't worked with brain cell impaired people, so I'm sorry, we cannot have a true cultural exchange.' (*Laughs.*)

Tara remains silent. Chandan shrugs his shoulders.

PATEL *(enters from the kitchen)* : Tara, what would you like for dinner? *(No response.)* Will Kanchipuram idlis do? *(No response.)* Tara! Ida is waiting.

CHANDAN : Knock, knock!

TARA *(suddenly acting cheerful)* : Right! Let's get the act going. Come on, Chandu, let's hear some more of your gags. I promise to laugh at all of them, even if I've heard them before. I promise to be cheerful all the time. I promise I will eat whatever Ida cooks for us, and I promise, I promise not, to mention mummy at all.

CHANDAN : You don't have to do anything you don't want to do.

TARA *(in tears)* : Very well. I don't want to go to college. I don't want to listen to your wisecracks. And I don't want to eat dinner. All I want is to stay with mummy at the hospital.

PATEL : No.

TARA : Why not?

Pause.

PATEL : There will be no more discussion on that. Now, I do hope you plan to go to physiotherapy tomorrow.

CHANDAN : If she isn't, I'm not going either.

TARA : It doesn't make any difference to me whether you go or not.

CHANDAN : Very well. *(Gets up and goes to her.)* We will both stay at home as usual. Watch video and turn into blobs of nothing. Or maybe the bodysnatchers will invade this house and get our bodies.

TARA : They won't get much, will they?

PATEL *(to Chandan)*: You filled up your forms?

CHANDAN : Tara?

TARA : Of course not. There's no point in my going to college if I have to drop out halfway through or stay away for days not knowing when ... No!

PATEL : I understand. *(Goes to Tara.)* But we have a problem here. Chandan refuses to join college without you.

TARA : Look, I'm not going to go to college for his sake. So tell him not to not go to college for my sake.

CHANDAN : Don't be ridiculous. I just don't feel like joining without you. I'm not doing anything for your sake.

TARA : Oh, for God's sake!

PATEL : You two are old enough to sort this out amongst yourselves. I won't interfere. But this is certain. Chandan has to join. I have plans for him. Your Praful uncle will help him get into a good university in England. I know he can get a scholarship on his own if he tries. But Praful will take care of the... special requirements for him. With a solid education you just can't fail. Not to say that Chandan will have to work for a living. Your grandfather has left all his wealth to you. Since your mother was his only child, you and Tara inherit their home in Bangalore.

CHANDAN : That huge house. It gave me the creeps, I remember.

PATEL : He left you a lot of money.

CHANDAN : And Tara?

PATEL : Nothing.

CHANDAN : Why?

PATEL : It was his money. He could do what he wanted with it.

TARA : And the house? Are we going to live there later on?

Pause.

PATEL : Do me a favour. Both of you. Don't ever go there. Just lock it up. Or better still, burn the whole place down! (*Exits to his bedroom.*)

CHANDAN : Poor daddy.

TARA : Chandu. Why?

CHANDAN : He most have had some misunderstanding ...

TARA : No. I mean, why don't you join college?

CHANDAN : Without you?

TARA : Yes!

CHANDAN (*gets up*): Goodnight.

TARA : You're scared. You're scared you'll find out you can't do very much on your own!

CHANDAN : Nice try.

TARA : Oh, you can't hide behind your jokes all the time! Face it. You're a coward.

CHANDAN (*angrily*): Well, I'm sorry. Not everyone has your strength!

TARA : You are afraid. Afraid of meeting new people. People who don't know you. Who won't know how clever you are. You are afraid they won't see beyond your...

CHANDAN : That's not true ...

TARA : Who do you know in this city? Except that silly Roopa?

CHANDAN : Who do you know?

TARA : I don't. It's all the same. You. Me. There's no difference.

CHANDAN : No difference between you and me?

TARA : No! Why should there be?

CHANDAN : That's the nicest thing you've ever said to me.

TARA : I'm scared as hell too! I wish I was back with our schoolmates. It took me years to show them how stupid they were!

CHANDAN : So we'll start all over again in college! You will join!

TARA (*laughs*) : Bastard!

CHANDAN : Vulgar girl! Calling yourself names!

They both laugh. Chandati moves towards the main door.

TARA : Where are you going?

CHANDAN : Come!

TARA : You're going out?

CHANDAN (*goes to her and takes her hand in his*): For some fresh air.

He takes her out on the street. The lights cross-fade.

TARA : You might get an infection. Wear a muffler. (*He leads her down the street.*) At least take your bronchodilator.

CHANDAN : If I need it, you can run and get it for me.

TARA: Very funny.

They stop, facing the audience. Spot on them.

CHANDAN : The ogiers are all asleep. Nalini, Roopa, Prema.

TARA : Oh, quite a clear sky. No moon, no ...

CHANDAN : No shooting stars to make wishes on!

TARA : How true. Oh, I wish there was one!

CHANDAN : Make your wish anyway.

TARA : What would you wish for?

CHANDAN : Oh, I would wish for the stars! And you?

Music: Chopin's Prelude No. 2 in minor.

TARA : Me?

CHANDAN : Yes.

Pause.

TARA : I would wish for both ... I would wish for two of them.

CHANDAN : Two Jaipur legs?

TARA : No, silly, the real ones.

Pause.

CHANDAN : Tara?

TARA : Yes?

CHANDAN : Don't cry.

Pause.

TARA : I miss mummy so much.

They stand with their arms interlocked while the spot slowly fades out. The music carries on, while the spot comes on Dan.

DAN (*making notes*) : Chopin's Prelude No. 2 in A minor. If possible Dinu Lipatti's version. (To audience.) People who know they are dying have such a deep understanding of life. And a sense of attachment to it.

Music stops. Cross-fade to Dr Thakkar.

DR THAKKAR : The separation itself was quite complicated. The pelvis had to be fractured in several places to facilitate separation. Cutting the two livers apart was an extremely delicate job. We had to be careful not to damage the bile ducts. We had had about six

rehearsals with dummies to make sure that every detail was considered. In terms of the physical movements of the surgeons during the operation as well as surgical procedure.

Cross-fade to Chandan listening to music. Roopa is at the door. She steps in very slowly, watching Chandan lost in the music. She has a video cassette with her. She sneaks up behind him.

ROOPA : Boo!

CHANDAN (*looks up at her in mock-horror*) : Aaagh! The ogler has come to get me! Help!

ROOPA (*annoyed*) : Very funny!

Chandan turns down the music.

It's okay. Listen to your music. I'll go if you don't want me around. (*Pause.*) But since you are all alone, I'll stay and keep you company.

CHANDAN : Where would we be without you?

ROOPA : I'm glad you appreciate my coming here. Nalini and Prema always crib that I spend less time with them now.

CHANDAN : How heartless of you.

ROOPA : Anyway, who cares? I've got a lovely film we can watch. Don't worry. It's not Fatal Attraction or anything like that. It's one of those class films with Meryl Streep.

CHANDAN : She-Devil?

ROOPA : No, one of her older ones. Sophie's Choice. Have you seen it?

CHANDAN : Yes.

ROOPA (*disappointed*) : Oh! You don't mind seeing it again?

CHANDAN : I do.

ROOPA : Oh. Well, tell me what it's about.

CHANDAN : I can't remember.

ROOPA (*brightening*) : Then shall we see it? Just to jog your memory?

CHANDAN : No, I think I remember. It's about this Polish immigrant.

ROOPA : Sophie.

CHANDAN : Yes.

ROOPA : And?

CHANDAN : That's it.

ROOPA : Well, what's her choice?

CHANDAN : She didn't have a choice, you see.

ROOPA : Oh. Then why is it called Sophie's Choice?

CHANDAN : It sounds better than Sophie Had No Choice.

ROOPA : Yes, I see what you mean. But what was the choice she didn't have?

CHANDAN (*thinks about it*): Actually, she did have a choice. (*Suddenly.*) What would you do if you had to choose between a boy and a girl? Who would you choose?

ROOPA : A boy definitely!

CHANDAN : Definitely?

ROOPA : Yes. It's bad enough studying in an all-girls' school. I would definitely want a boyfriend.

CHANDAN : No, No, I didn't mean that!

ROOPA : Then what did you mean?

CHANDAN : I meant a son and a daughter.

ROOPA : Oh, boy child and girl child. Say that!

CHANDAN : What would your choice be?

ROOPA : Mmm ... I would be happy with either one.

CHANDAN : That's not the point. In the film, I mean. The Nazis will only allow her to keep one child. The other one would be taken away to a concentration camp or something.

ROOPA : How nasty of the Nazis!

CHANDAN : Would you send your girl child to the concentration camp?

ROOPA : Definitely not! I think it's more civilized to drown her in milk, if you ask me. Anyway, there's plenty of time to think about all that. I'm only fifteen, you know.

For now I would settle for a boyfriend. Chandan, do you have any girlfriends?

CHANDAN : No.

ROOPA : Would you want one?

CHANDAN : I don't know. What will I do with one?

ROOPA : I don't believe this! Didn't you go to a co-ed school in Bangalore?

CHANDAN : Yes.

ROOPA : Well, wasn't there any one girl you were close to? Someone whom you shared homework with? Or someone you sat next to in class?

CHANDAN : Yes.

ROOPA : Yes, you did?

CHANDAN : Of course, Tara!

ROOPA : She doesn't count.

CHANDAN : What did you say?

ROOPA : I said she doesn't count. She is your sister. What I mean is she doesn't count in this department.

CHANDAN : I understand.

ROOPA : For a minute I was wondering ... (*Pause.*) Where is she?

CHANDAN : She has gone for her physiotherapy.

ROOPA : What about you? Don't you need to go as well?

CHANDAN : I do. But I don't.

ROOPA : Why?

CHANDAN : I just don't, that's all (*Pause.*) Hospitals depress me. (*Goes to the music system.*)

ROOPA : I know what you mean. My cousin Saraswati had her appendix removed. I had to spend the night with her at the hospital, you know. Her mum was tired and that's the least I could do. God! The smells! The chloroform and D.D.T. and what not. I just threw up. Poor Saraswati, she had to help me go to the bathroom. After that, I swore I will never go to a hospital.

Chandan inserts a cassette and plays it.

How's your mother?

Chopin's Prelude No. 25 Opus 45 in A flat plays halfway through.

When is she coming back? (No reply.) Is she going to be all right?

CHANDAN (*vaguely*): I hate hospitals. The smells. The people. The sterility.

He lies on the ground or on a gadda near the music system. He is soon engrossed in the music. Roopa slowly comes to him and lies down or sits beside him. She slyly looks at him. He feels her presence. He looks at her. She pretends to be with the music. He cannot ignore her now. He slowly puts his hand on her shoulder. She freezes. He very awkwardly moves his hand till it is almost on her breast. The music ends.

ROOPA (*rises immediately*) : Aagh! Stay away from me! Stay away from me, you horrible thing!

CHANDAN : You led me on!

ROOPA : How dare you say that!

Tara enters in the street.

CHANDAN (*fighting tears*): You were leading me on all the time!

ROOPA : You actually believe that I would want you to... You have some hopes!

CHANDAN : You are a cheat! A fraud!

Tara is at the door.

ROOPA (*tearfully*): Oh, Tara! You've come just in time!

CHANDAN : Tara, don't listen to anything she . ..

ROOPA : Oh, my God! How can I even begin to ...?

CHANDAN : Shut up!

ROOPA : Your brother is a real... a real monster!

CHANDAN : Stop cooking up lies!

ROOPA : He ... he ... Why he practically raped me! He's a raper.

TARA : Rapist.

CHANDAN : Don't listen to her. She's lying!

ROOPA : How dare you call me a liar!

CHANDAN : How dare you call me a rapist!

ROOPA : You are. You ... you creepy thing!

CHANDAN : Get lost! You wanted me to do it!

ROOPA : What rubbish! I only wanted to keep you company but you took advantage- you ..... you... (*At a loss.*) Oh! All men are like that.

TARA : Like what?

ROOPA : Like that! You know-after one thing.

CHANDAN : I wasn't after one thing.

ROOPA : Well, I'm sorry. I'm just not that type. And personally I don't think we are- you know-combatible. If you get what I mean.

CHANDAN : You're right we aren't... combatible.

ROOPA : And if you really want someone who is–you should meet Freni Narangiwalla I think you will get along fine. She is mentally retarded! *Pause.*

TARA : You are right. They would be quite... combatible.

Chandan, who has been suppressing his laughter, giggles a little. Roopa looks at him, then at Tara. Tara giggles. Chandan bursts out laughing. Tara laughs too. Roopa thinks it is another joke she has missed. She shifts uncomfortably.

ROOPA : Well, I better get going.

TARA : No, stay. Keep us company.

CHANDAN : Yes. Please stay.

ROOPA : Well, if you need me, how can I say no?

TARA : Sit down.

ROOPA (*sits down*): What shall we do? See a movie? (*To Tara.*) I've got this great cassette....

TARA : No. Let me tell you a story, about my friend Deepa.

ROOPA : Deepa?

TARA : My classmate in school.

CHANDAN (*to Roopa*): Standard VIII. Her best friend.

TARA (*with a harshness she has not shown before*): Not in the beginning, she wasn't. Used to sit next to me in class because Mrs Ramanathan, our science teacher, told her to. Never talked to me. Until Ratbag-Mrs Ramanathan-paired us off for some stupid project. Wanted us to make a model of the solar system

or something as our homework. I decided I would rather go over to her house than call her home. She didn't like the idea, but Ratbag decided for us. So Deepa had to take me home with her. We sat on her bed, making our model with rubber balls and wires. Her bed felt different somehow. I put my hand under the cover, and guess what?

ROOPA : What?

TARA : There was a rubber sheet underneath! Imagine. Thirteen years old and she was wetting her bed. I laughed. I laughed out loud. She went red.

ROOPA : And she became your best friend?

TARA : I never told anyone at school. But she knew I could easily have done so-at the slightest provocation. I soon had her doing all my homework.

ROOPA (*uneasily*): I don't think that's ... why are you telling me this.

TARA (*looks at-her*): It's good to know what hurts other people.

ROOPA (*laughs nervously*): I suppose so.

TARA : Comes in handy.

ROOPA : Well-yes.

TARA : Knowing their secrets is useful.

ROOPA : I suppose so.

Pause.

TARA : So how does it feel having one tit smaller than the other?

Roopa is stunned. She rises, her mouth open.

Don't worry-it's not very noticeable, except from a certain angle. Then it's very noticeable.

ROOPA : How dare you! You one-legged thing!

TARA : I'd sooner be one-eyed, one-armed and one-legged than be an imbecile like you. An imbecile with uneven tits.

ROOPA : And to think I pitied you! Oh! I think you are disgusting! I only come here because your mother asked me to. No, she didn't ask me, she bribed me to be your best friend. Yes, your loony mother used to give me things. Charlie bottles, lipsticks,

magazines. Now that she's finally gone crazy, I guess she won't be giving me much. So goodbye. (*Exits.*)

TARA (*shouts after her*): Get lost! And please ask Nalini and Prema to come here. I have something to say to them-about you! Oh, wait till they hear this! They will love it. They are going to look at your tits the same way they looked at my leg! Let me see how you can face them ogling at you! You won't be able to come out of your house, you horrible creature! You are ugly and I don't want ugly people in my house! So get lost! (*Moves to the sofa, gasping.*)

Pause.

CHANDAN : They are not the ugly ones. We are. Horrible one-legged creatures.

TARA (*angrily*) : Yes, but you don't have to say it!

CHANDAN (*moves to her*): I'm sorry. You mustn't mind very much.

TARA : What?

CHANDAN : Being one-legged.

TARA : What makes you think I mind?

CHANDAN (*softly*): I feel your pain.

TARA : Yes, I do mind. I mind very much.

Cross-fade to Dr Thakkar.

DR THAKKAR : That's a very interesting question. You see, due to the complex conjoinment at the pelvis, it is very difficult to say how their reproductive organs will develop. A lot depends on the hormone levels their bodies will be able to produce. Imbalances are highly probable. But enough research has been made on the subject. With the necessary supplements it isn't unreasonable to expect them to have a fairly normal growth otherwise. Of course, it would be impossible for either of them to be able to reproduce. They are completely sterile.

Cross-fade to Tara and Chandan.

TARA : Oh, what a waste! A waste of money. Why spend all the money to keep me alive? It cannot matter whether I live or die. There are thousands of poor sick people on the roads who could be

given care and attention, and I think I know what I will make of myself. I will be a carer for those people. I ... I will spend the rest of my life feeding and clothing those ... starving naked millions everyone is talking about. Maybe I can start an institution that will... do all that. Or I could join Mother Teresa and sacrifice myself to a great cause. That may give ... purpose to my ... existence. I can do it. I can do it, can't I? I will be very happy if I could, because that is really what I want. That is really ... (*With emotion.*) Oh, bullshit! I don't care! I don't care for anyone except mummy!

Pause.

CHANDAN : It's somehow wrong.

TARA : I don't care!

CHANDAN : You should. You should care ... for people around you.

TARA : How do you expect me to feel anything for anyone if they don't give me any feeling to begin with? Why is it wrong for me to be without feeling? Why are you asking me to do something that nobody has done for me?

CHANDAN : I don't know. Somehow, it is wrong, to be so ... selfish.

TARA : Selfish? Yes. I am. I have the right to be selfish, like everyone else!

CHANDAN : No, you don't! We don't. We are not everyone else.

TARA : I think that bothers you more than it bothers me.

CHANDAN : I'm not being bothered by anything.

TARA : But it bothers me to hear you preaching to me what's wrong and what isn't.

CHANDAN : All right, I won't! You can do whatever you want and ... just ... maybe ... I will help you do whatever you want. Okay?

TARA: Oh, don't bother. You're not my big brother, okay? I can teach you a trick or two if I want to.

CHANDAN (*annoyed*): Oh, sure! Women mature faster!

TARA : Yes! We do. We do! And we are more sensitive, more intelligent, more compassionate human beings than creeps like you and ... and ...

CHANDAN : And?

TARA : Daddy!

Cross-fade to Dan, who is on the telephone.

DAN : Hello. (*Louder*). Hello, Dad? Can you hear me? Dad? (*Dials again.*) Hello? Operator, I'm having trouble getting to Bombay. Could you give me India 0226574423 please? ... I will hold, thank you. (*Pause.*) Hello? Dad? This is Chandan. Praful uncle called me. I believe you had called him ... Yes, I received your letter. Mummy was admitted again. I know. If you have anything to say to me, you should call me and not uncle ... Well, sometimes I take it off the hook, when I'm writing ... What is it, dad? How is mummy, now? (*Pause.*) How? ... (*Pause.*) When was this? ... Oh, was it... sudden? ... I'm sorry, dad. But I can't help but feel... relieved that it's all over... No. No, I don't think I can come. I'm sorry. Look, I can understand how you feel and I know I should be with you now–but please dad, don't ask me to come back ... Well, I'm in the middle of writing something, but that's not it. It's just that I don't think I can face life there anymore... Why don't you come here? ... I just thought that now since you are all alone. You've got your brothers over here. And me. Not that I would be able to give you much. I never was a giver... You misunderstood, dad. I never held you responsible for what happened... How can you feel that it was your fault? No. Don't talk about her. It's not fair to me... Tara has been dead for six years and now that mummy has gone as well, there's nothing left for me to come back to... Yes, maybe I'm hurting you deliberately. I don't know why, but I can't help the way I feel... Either you come here or you live in Bombay all by yourself... Well, that's too bad! That's just too bad! (*Hangs up.*)

Cross-fade to Tara and Chandan.

TARA : When did you last visit mummy? You didn't come with us last Sunday.

CHANDAN : I don't like hospitals.

TARA (*sarcastically*): I know. They depress you!

CHANDAN : I'll go. Soon.

TARA : You've only come with us once.

CHANDAN : I will come this Sunday. She isn't any better, I know. You can visit her more often if you want to.

TARA : I want to.

CHANDAN : Who's stopping you?

Pause.

TARA : Daddy.

CHANDAN : Why? (*No reply.*) I think you're being unfair.

TARA : You are always defending him.

CHANDAN : I'm not. He's not what you make him out to be.

TARA : You say that because he's nice to you.

CHANDAN : He's nice to you.

TARA : He talks to you more often.

CHANDAN : All right. He talks to me, but he's nice to you.

TARA : I tell you, he hates me!

CHANDAN : Nobody hates you.

Pause.

TARA : I hate him.

CHANDAN : Why?

Pause.

TARA : Chandan, I did not go to the physiotherapist today.

CHANDAN : Where did you go then?

TARA : To the hospital.

CHANDAN : What? Why didn't you tell me?

TARA : I just decided on the way. I asked the driver to take me there instead ... I wanted to meet her. Alone.

CHANDAN : Well? What happened?

TARA : Chandan, I must meet her alone.

CHANDAN : Didn't you meet her?

TARA : They wouldn't let me!

CHANDAN : They who?

TARA : The hospital staff. At the reception, they asked me who I wanted to see. I told them. They asked me to wait. One of the nurses passing by recognized me. She drew the receptionist

aside and spoke to her in a low voice. She thought I couldn't hear what she was saying. But I heard! She told her that she had received strict instructions from our father that I shouldn't on any account be allowed to see mummy on my own. (*Pause.*) Now tell me I'm imagining things. Tell me that he doesn't hate me!

CHANDAN : Don't be stupid. There must be a reason. Maybe he feels that your presence upsets mummy some way...

TARA : I would upset mummy?

CHANDAN : Just a possibility. I didn't mean...

TARA : Oh, so it's me, is it? I'm the one upsetting her. Your daddy is blameless. Maybe I am stupid. I must be, complaining to the allied party!

CHANDAN : Maybe you should be the writer, with your wild imagination!

TARA : Chandan, I need your help.

CHANDAN : Don't expect me to take your side and quarrel on your behalf. I don't think I should encourage you.

TARA : Okay, don't believe me. All I want is your help in getting me alone with mummy so I can talk to her!

CHANDAN : How can I do that?

TARA : I don't know, maybe next time we visit her you could distract daddy. Pretend you are getting another attack or something.

CHANDAN : Hmm. And then she will disclose her dark secret to you. What do you think she will tell you?

TARA : She will tell me about him.

Pause.

CHANDAN : I don't think I can do it. Maybe it's all for the best.

TARA : What?

CHANDAN : If daddy wants to stop her from saying something to us, maybe it's not good for us to hear it.

TARA : And who decides what's good for us to hear and what isn't?

CHANDAN : Whatever it is, if at all it exists, he will tell us himself when he thinks we are good and ready.

TARA : Will he?

CHANDAN : Trust him. He will.

TARA : What if the secret concerns him? Will he tell us then? Chandan, she is desperately trying to tell me something, and I want to know!

CHANDAN : I don't understand. It's not like daddy to withhold anything from us. I think, you are just... well, making a mountain of it.

TARA : I don't think you care for us!

CHANDAN : Wait a minute. That's silly!

TARA : You don't care about me, you don't care about mummy. You don't even want to see her. As far as you are concerned, she is already dead!

CHANDAN : That's not true!

Cross-fade to Dr Thakkar.

PR THAKKAR : Post-operative care needed just as much planning. Other operations may have to be made when the twins grow up. But the important thing is... the separation was a complete success.

Cross-fade to Tara and Chandan. Patel is coming up the street.

CHANDAN : Not now please, we will ask him tomorrow.

TARA : Tomorrow may be too late!

CHANDAN : Don't. He's disturbed enough by mummy's...

TARA : I'm disturbed! How dare he stop us? (*Patel enters.*) Daddy...

CHANDAN : You look tired, dad.

PATEL : Oh, it's just the heat, and the traffic... Nothing to...

CHANDAN : Are you feeling all right?

PATEL (*sits down*): Oh, don't worry about me. Did you two go to physiotherapy?

CHANDAN : Well, I didn't. Sorry.

PATEL : And Tara?

CHANDAN : She ... she did go, I think.

PATEL : Did she or didn't she? I had sent the car for both of you.

CHANDAN : Oh, yes. The car came, she went.

PATEL : What's wrong with her? Can't she speak for herself? (*No response.*) Did you go to physiotherapy? (*No response.*) Tara, I'm talking to you.

TARA : No, I didn't go. I went to the hospital.

PATEL : Don't ever go there without my permission.

TARA : Very well. I'm asking for your permission to go tomorrow.

PATEL : We will all go.

TARA : On my own.

PATEL : Never.

TARA : Oh, it's no use! I'm going to hate you anyway!

Lights on the street. Roopa is already there.

ROOPA : Prema! Nalini! Are you ready? Let's teach that bitch a lesson!

The lights on the street remain low in intensity, perhaps from only one side, creating a grotesque shadow of Roopa.

TARA : We will go without your permission.

PATEL : You will not!

TARA : Chandan, will you come with me?

PATEL : Chandan, you can't!

TARA : Chandan?

PATEL : No! Don't go!

TARA : Will you come with me or do I have to go alone?

Pause.

CHANDAN : We'll both go.

A very low light on Dr Thakkar, which remains till the end.

DR THAKKAR : Our greatest challenge would be to keep the girl alive. Nature wanted to kill her. We couldn't allow it.

ROOPA (*shouting*): Tara! Come on out! We want to talk to you!

PATEL : All right.

CHANDAN : You mean we can go?

PATEL : No, I don't want to give her the satisfaction of confessing. Oh, why didn't I have the strength to stop her then?

ROOPA : What's the matter? Are you scared? Come on out!

PATEL : I suppose we were both to blame. Your mother and I. And your grandfather. Her father was a wealthy man. An industrialist and an MLA. He might have become chief minister if he had lived. He had power. My parents were more ... orthodox, and didn't approve of our marriage. I broke away from them. Ours was a happy marriage. We were all overjoyed when we came to know Bharati would have twins. Until certain tests revealed the ... complications.

ROOPA : You can't hide in your house forever! You have to come out!

PATEL : We didn't expect you to survive. But you did. When I first saw you ... you looked like two babies hugging each other. It was only at a closer look ... We were now prepared for the worst. Until we came to know of Dr Thakkar who was visiting India. He had done research abroad on such ... cases. I came here to Bombay to meet him ... and discussed your case. There was hope.

DR THAKKAR : Both twins have only one leg each. The artificial limb centre at Jaipur was contacted and suitable flexible legs will be provided when they are slightly older. They will have to be changed from time to time as the twins grow up ...

ROOPA *(shouting)*: What's the matter, you freak? Are you deaf as well?

PATEL : Your grandfather got involved personally in our discussions with the doctor. The separation would be done in Bombay, it was decided. Some tests had to be carried out immediately. There were problems, you know them. But there was one complication which hadn't been discussed. There were three legs.

ROOPA : All right. Stay inside! We're going to get a present for you! *(Exits.)*

The street lights fade out.

PATEL : A scan showed that a major part of the blood supply to the third leg was provided by the girl. Your mother asked for a reconfirmation. The result was the same. The chances were slightly better that the leg would survive ... on the girl. Your grandfather and your mother had a private meeting with Dr Thakkar. I wasn't asked to come. That same evening, your mother told me of her decision. Everything will be done as planned. Except—I couldn't believe what she told me—that they would risk giving both legs to the boy ... Maybe if I had protested more strongly! I tried to reason with her that it wasn't right and that even the doctor would realize it was unethical! The doctor had agreed, I was told. It was only later I came to know of his intention of starting a large nursing home-the largest in Bangalore. He had acquired three acres of prime land-in the heart of the city-from the state. Your grandfather's political influence had been used. A few days later, the surgery

was done. As planned by them, Chandan had two legs for two days. It didn't take them very long to realize what a grave mistake they had made. The leg was amputated. A piece of dead flesh which could have might have been Tara. Because of the unusual nature of the operation, it was easy to pass it off as a natural rejection. I-I was meaning to tell you both when you were older, but...

A special spot on Bharti. Music.

BHARATI (*as if to an infant in her arms*): Tara! My beautiful little girl. Look at her smile! Smile, Tara. Smile again for me! Oh! See how her eyes twinkle. You are my most beautiful baby!

The spot fades out with the music. Silence. The street area is lit. Roopa has brought on a poster, saying 'We don't want freaks', which she places prominently against a wall or post.

ROOPA (*shouting*): There. At least you are not blind! Do you get the message? Freaks. (*Exits.*)

Tara stands alone in a spot, in a daze. Chandan moves to her and gestures to her to hold his hand. Tara turns away from him. Chandan is crushed.

TARA : And she called me her star!

Lights off on Tara. Patel and Chandan. The poster remains lit.

DR THAKKAR : Yes. Indeed, it was a complex case. But modern technology has made many things possible, and we are not very far behind from the rest of the world. In fact, in ten years' time we should be on par with the best in the west.

Dan's area is lit. He applauds mechingly.

DAN : Thank you very much, Dr Thakkar! It has been a real pleasure. Now go, just... go away. (*Breaks down.*) Get out of my mind, you horrible creature! You are ugly and I don't want ugly people in my memories! (*Pause. Dr Thakkar's spot fades out.*) Give me a moment and the pain will subside. Then I can function again. (*Pause, more controlled now.*) Yes. The material is there. But the craft is yet to come. Like the amazing Dr Thakkar, I must take something from Tara-and give it to myself. Make capital of my trauma, my anguish, and make it my tragedy. To masticate them in my mind and spit out the result to the world, in anger. (*Slowly, as if in a trance, picks up his typed sheets and starts tearing them as he speaks.*) My

progress so far- I must admit-has been zero ... But I persist with the comforting thought that things can't get any worse. All I find every day is one typewritten sheet... with the title of the play, my name and address, and the date. Nothing changes ... except the date ...

His voice-over fades in as the spot fades out.

(*Voice-over.*) Someday, after I die, a stranger will find this recording and play it. The voice is all that will remain. No writing. No masterpiece. Only a voice-that once belonged to an object. An object like other objects in a cosmos, whose orbits are determined by those around. Moving in a forced harmony. Those who survive are those who do not defy the gravity of others. And those who desire even a moment of freedom, find themselves hurled into space, doomed to crash with some unknown force. (*Pause.*) I no longer desire that freedom. I move, just move. Without meaning. I forget Tara. I forget that I had a sister-with whom I had shared a body. In one comfortable womb. Till we were forced out... and separated.

A spot fades in-empty

But somewhere, sometime, I look up at a shooting star... and wish. I wish that a long-forgotten person would forgive me. Wherever she is.

Tara walks into the spot without limping. Dan also appears without the limp.

And will hug me. Once again.

They kneel, face to face.

Forgive me, Tara. Forgive me for making it my tragedy.

Tara embraces Dan as the music starts. The explosive opening of Brahms' First Concerto. They hug each other tightly.

Slow fade out.

EXERCISE

1. Who is the protagonist of the play Tara? Why do you consider so? (1+5)
2. Justify the title of the play Tara.... (6)

A Realm OF

ENGLISH B SELECTION

PROSE | POETRY | PLAYS

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