

**Feminist Writings**  
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**A Temporary Matter - Part 4**

So, hi and welcome to NPTEL course entitled Feminist Writings. So, we're looking at Jhumpa Lahiri's short story, A Temporary Matter. We are about to still wind up with the story and we stopped at a point in the last lecture where the two people, two protagonists in the story Shukumar and Shobha, they find themselves in a power cut situation in America for one hour, and they about to have dinner and there is this candlelight dinner they have crafted out of something.

Now, they decide to tell each other, they play a little game, drawing on experiences that Shobha had during the long power cuts in Calcutta when she visited as a child. So, drawing of that experience, they decide to play a game and they tell each other that we should play a game, where we tell each other things we have never told before.

So interestingly, this becomes a very, sort of, special conversation between people who don't have any conversations any more. So, they tell each other things, they converse about things that they have never conversed before. That becomes very symbolic conversation in a way, because they are essentially telling about the absent conversations.

They are essentially talking about the non-conversations, conversation never happened and are coming in. So, there is nothing new that they are talking about. So, drawing on the talks that never took place and they combining those together into this playful game during this darkness of power cut.

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Shukumar hadn't spent as much time in India as Shoba had. His parents, who settled in New Hampshire, used to go back without him. The first time he'd gone as an infant he'd nearly died of amoebic dysentery. His father, a nervous type, was afraid to take him again, in case something were to happen, and left him with his aunt and uncle in Concord. As a teenager he preferred sailing camp or scooping ice cream during the summers to going to Calcutta. It wasn't until after his father died, in his last year of college, that the country began to interest him, and he studied its history from course books as if it were any other subject. He wished now that he had his own childhood story of India.

"Let's do that," she said suddenly.

"Do what?"

"Say something to each other in the dark."

"Like what? I don't know any jokes."

"No, no jokes." She thought for a minute. "How about telling each other something we've never told before."

"I used to play this game in high school," Shukumar recalled. "When I got drunk."

"You're thinking of truth or dare. This is different. Okay, I'll start." She took a sip of wine. "The first time I was alone in your apartment, I looked in your address book to see if you'd written me in. I think we'd known each other two weeks."



So, this is what a Shobha tells to Shukumar.

"Let's do that," she said suddenly.

"Do what?"

"Say something to each other in the dark."

And again it becomes a very interesting symbolic kind of a statement "say something to each other in the dark". So, they are in the dark, so darkness obviously is, physically speaking the darkness of the power cut, but equally and importantly it becomes a darkness, an existential darkness. So, they seem to be experiencing over here.

"Like what?" I don't know any jokes."

"No, no jokes." She thought for a minute. "How about telling each other something we've never told before."

"I used to play this game in high school," Shukumar recalled. "When I got drunk".

"You're thinking of truth and dare. This is different. Okay, I'll start." She took a sip of wine. "The first time I was alone in your apartment, I looked in your address book to see if you had written me in. I think we had known each other for two weeks."

So, you know, this is something she tells him, something she had never told before. “That the first time I was in your apartment I looked in your new address book to see if you have noted down my address and we've known each other for two weeks.”

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“Do what?”

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“I used to play this game in high school,” Shukumar recalled. “When I got drunk.”

“You're thinking of truth or dare. This is different. Okay, I'll start.” She took a sip of wine. “The first time I was alone in your apartment, I looked in your address book to see if you'd written me in. I think we'd known each other two weeks.”

“Where was I?”

“You went to answer the telephone in the other room. It was your mother, and I figured it would be a long call. I wanted to know if you'd promoted me from the margins of your newspaper.”

“Had I?”

“No. But I didn't give up on you. Now it's your turn.”

He couldn't think of anything, but Shoba was waiting for him to speak. She hadn't appeared so determined.



“Where was I?”

“You went to answer the telephone in the other room. It was your mother, and I figured it would be a long call. I wanted to know if you had promoted me from the margins of your newspaper”.

So you know, if I had been promoted in your notebook, if from the margins of the newspaper, that is something that she wanted to find out.

“Had I?”

“No. But I did not give up on you. Now it's your turn”.

So, she tells him something for the first time. She tells something that she did for the first time, obviously about him. So the conversation is going to take place with little information about the other person, which other person did not know before. So, Shobha tells him something that she had done, that Shukumar did not know, and this obviously this related to Shukumar and now it is his turn to say something.

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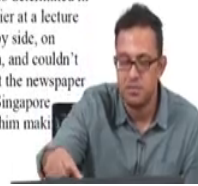
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He couldn't think of anything, but Shoba was waiting for him to speak. She hadn't appeared so determined in months. What was there left to say to her? He thought back to their first meeting, four years earlier at a lecture hall in Cambridge, where a group of Bengali poets were giving a recital. They'd ended up side by side, on folding wooden chairs. Shukumar was soon bored; he was unable to decipher the literary diction, and couldn't join the rest of the audience as they sighed and nodded solemnly after certain phrases. Peering at the newspaper folded in his lap, he studied the temperatures of cities around the world. Ninety-one degrees in Singapore yesterday, fifty-one in Stockholm. When he turned his head to the left, he saw a woman next to him making a grocery list on the back of a folder, and was startled to find that she was beautiful.



He couldn't think of anything. But Shoba was waiting for him to speak. She hadn't appeared so determined in months. So there's sudden determination coming in, there is sudden determination being generated over here. What was there left to say to her? He thought back to their first meeting, four years earlier at a lecture hall in Cambridge, where a group of Bengali poets was giving a recital.

So there is this Bengali Poets Association, Cambridge America, Massachusetts presumably where they were talking about recital of Bengalis. They ended up side by side on folding wooden chairs. Shukumar was soon bored. He was unable to decipher the literary diction and couldn't join the rest of the audience as they sighed and nodded solemnly after certain phrases.

So, this is again symbolically, locating Shukumar as outside these parameters of Bengali intellectuals who understand poetry, who sigh and nod solemnly after certain phrases as if, you know a collective response to it.

And obviously there is a slight ring of satire, is that the ring of sarcasm over here in terms of the pretentious quality of this kind of a response. Shukumar does not fit in at all in this kind of a response structure. People are sighing and nodding together after some phrases belted out by these poets who are reciting.

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So they connect as outsiders. This is something we get to know over here, and look at the beautiful way in which this is conveyed to us. This is conveyed to us in a game that they play with each other, in the darkness. So this is all very, very informative. This is about, this is telling us how these two people first met, but look at the indirectness of that communication. Look at the way in which it is so peripherally, and beautifully, and complexly communicated to us in this little game in the dark.

And she, he had felt himself as an outsider in that poetry recital, and he started noting the temperature studies across the world in newspaper that he is reading, and he looks around and he sees a woman next to him and listen away making grocery lists, you know on the back of his folder and he realizes immediately that she too feels like an outsider over here, and that connects them. Then he also thinks, of course, she is beautiful.

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"You're thinking of truth or dare. This is different. Okay, I'll start." She took a sip of wine. "The first time I was alone in your apartment, I looked in your address book to see if you'd written me in. I think we'd known each other two weeks."

"Where was I?"

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"Okay" he said, remembering. "The first time we went out to dinner, to the Portuguese place, I forgot to tip the waiter. I went back the next morning, found out his name, left money with the manager."



"Okay", he said, remembering. "The first time we went out to dinner to the Portuguese place, I forgot to tip the waiter. I went back the next morning, found out his name, left money with the manager." So you know, presumably this game is about doing and saying something

about the non-intelligent, clumsy, cumbersome, funny, amusing things that are done and that never spoken about, never owned up. So, this is something he said.

Now, interestingly, what we find here is, he remembers something, but he tells something else. He remembers the first meeting. He remembers how he first met Shobha in that poetry recital, but he does not choose to say that. He doesn't choose to speak about that, what he says instead, is how he went back to a Portuguese place having forgotten to tip the waiter. He goes back the next day and tips him, left money with a manager.

Okay, so that is something is said to her for the first time, and that's something which is told to her for the first time, and that is the part of the game that they are playing. Okay. And we find that this ludic activity, which is recited, which is given to us, becomes a part of the conversation strategy, you know, of these two people who are otherwise a strange for each other and the Shobha is little bit surprised.

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"Okay" he said, remembering. "The first time we went out to dinner, to the Portuguese place, I forgot to tip the waiter. I went back the next morning, found out his name, left money with the manager."

"You went all the way back to Somerville just to tip a waiter?"

"I took a cab."

"Why did you forget to tip the waiter?"



She tells him, "You went all the way up to Somerville, just to tip, the waiter?" "I took a cab." "Why did you forget to tip the waiter?" And then Shukumar, off course, is giving answer to this question. And his answer is...

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The birthday candles had burned out, but he pictured her face clearly in the dark, the wide tilting eyes, the full grape-toned lips, the fall at age two from her high chair still visible as a comma on her chin. Each day, Shukumar noticed, her beauty, which had once overwhelmed him, seemed to fade. The cosmetics that had seemed superfluous were necessary now, not to improve her but to define her somehow.

"By the end of the meal I had a funny feeling that I might marry you," he said, admitting it to himself as well as to her for the first time. "It must have distracted me."

The next night Shoba came home earlier than usual. There was lamb left over from the evening before, and Shukumar heated it up so that they were able to eat by seven. He'd gone out that day, through the melting snow, and bought a packet of taper candles from the corner store, and batteries to fit the flashlight. He had the candles ready on the countertop, standing in brass holders shaped like lotuses, but they ate under the glow of the copper-shaded ceiling lamp that hung over the table.

When they had finished eating, Shukumar was surprised to see that Shoba was stacking her plate on top of his, and then carrying them over to the sink. He had assumed she would retreat to the living room, behind her barricade of files.

"Don't worry about the dishes," he said, taking them from her hands.

"It seems silly not to," she replied, scattering a dozen of datagrams onto a cushion. "It's nearly eight o'clock."



The birthday candles had burned out. So, before the answer comes, birthday candle burned out, and that becomes a very symbolic kind of response over here. It's darkness again. And then he pictured her phase clearly in the dark. The white tilting eyes, the full grape-toned lips, the fall at age two from high chair still visible as a comma on her chin. So, the comma on her chin is as a fall at age of two, that's really visible on her chin, the injury that she experienced of her child.

Each day Shukumar noticed her beauty, which had once overwhelmed him, seemed to fade. The cosmetics that had seemed superfluous were necessary now, not to improve her but to define her somehow. So, she is getting defined by the cosmetics. She is going defined without facial apparatus that is around her. And that becomes part of the depletion narrative, the depletion experience that she is experiencing as a mother of a dead child, the human tragedies began to consume her.

"By the end of the meal I had a funny feeling that I might marry you," he said, admitting it to himself as well as to her for the first time. "It must have distracted me". So, the response comes much later and you find again the pause very-very important, before he could respond the lights go out and then Shukumar visualizes and sees Shobha in the dark for the first time and then the clear facial details appear and very meticulous descriptions.

And then he tells her that by the end of meal I had a funny feeling that I might marry you. That feeling, that happiness maybe, of the knowledge that I might marry you distracted me, and so I forgot to tip the waiter. So, I went back to the restaurant in a cab, the next day and left the tip with the manager.

The next night show about came home earlier than usual. There was lamb left over from the evening before, and Shukumar heated it up so that they were able to eat by seven. So, we find that how these two people are now beginning to connect again, and this whole idea of connecting again is described to us in such little details that Shobha comes home earlier than usual.

Shukumar doesn't bother to cook, but he heats up the lamb which left over from the previous day. And they sit down and eat at seven just so they have some time before the lights go out. He'd gone out of the day before to the melting snow and bought a packet of taper candles from the corner store, and batteries to fit in the flashlights.

So, we find again that some sense of ordinariness, some sense of normalcy, sense of returning over here because we have been told earlier that he barely leaves house now. He never gets out of the home anymore. But he had gone out that particular day through the melting snow and actually bought some taper candles from the corner store and batteries to fit the flashlight.

He had the candles ready on the countertop, standing in the brass holders shaped like lotuses, but they ate under the glow of the copper-shaded ceiling lamp that hung over the table. So, you know, the candles were there but obviously the power cut had not happened yet, it is still evening by seven and started eating at light, during the normal light conditions.

When they had finished eating Shukumar was surprised to see that Shobha was stacking a plate on top of his, and then carrying them over the sink. He had assumed she would retreat to the living room behind the barricade of files. And this is again very ordinary activity, which symbolically means a lot. There's a lot of symbolic significance in that, and that is at the end of the meal.

Shukumar is really surprised to see the Shoba is stacking the two plates together and carrying those to the kitchen sink and a complete contrast to what she does now, so what she does



now, the moment she finishes her meal and she goes back and retreats in living room to a pack of files. So completely disconnecting her from the household chores, from the household duties, and Shukumar is obviously expected to carry all these Duties.

But now Shobha, decides, she feels involved in a certain way. She feels invested in a certain way and there is some degree of ordinariness which is seemingly returning into this narrative, in the sense that she finds herself carrying the plates back to the kitchen sink. Shukumar is observing that, and that becomes a bit of a departure from the distance in narrative that they have been experiencing for a while.

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"Don't worry about the dishes," he said, taking them from her hands.

"It seems silly not to," she replied, pouring a drop of detergent onto a sponge. "It's nearly eight o'clock."

His heart quickened. All day Shukumar had looked forward to the lights going out. He thought about what Shoba had said the night before, about looking in his address book. It felt good to remember her as she was then, how bold yet nervous she'd been when they first met, how hopeful. They stood side by side at the sink, their reflections fitting together in the frame of the window. It made him shy, the way he felt the first time they stood together in a mirror. He couldn't recall the last time they'd been photographed. They had stopped attending parties, went nowhere together. The film in his camera still contained pictures of Shoba, in the year when she was pregnant.



"Don't worry about the dishes," he said, taking them from her hands. "It seems silly not to," she replied, pouring a drop of detergent onto a sponge. "It's nearly eight o'clock." So this is beginning to be a normal conversation again. His heart quickened. All day Shukumar had looked forward to the lights going out. He thought about what Shobha had said the night before, about looking in his address book.

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He couldn't recall the last time they'd been photographed. They had stopped attending parties, went nowhere together. The film in his camera still contained pictures of Shobha, in the yard when she was pregnant. So there's no new photograph after that. So there's no newness which has emerged after that, it is the last photo in his camera.

And this of course, pre-digital camera we are talking about was a photo of Shobha in her backyard, which was pregnant and there was no photograph of them together after that. They stopped appearing together at parties, they stopped going out together in social occasions.

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After finishing the dishes, they leaned against the counter, drying their hands on either end of a towel. At eight o'clock the house went black. Shukumar lit the wicks of the candles, impressed by their long, steady flames.



After finishing the dishes, they leaned against the counter, drying their hands on either end of the towel. So, again very-very symbolic. So the two of them do the dishes together and after finishing the dishes together, they stand together and dry the hands on either end of the same towel. So, that seems to be some kind of a connect happening over here.

At eight o'clock, the house went black. Shukumar lit the wicks of the candles, impressed by their long, steady flames. "Let's sit outside," Shoba said. "I think it is warm still." They each other took a candle and sat down on the steps. It seemed strange to be sitting outside with patches of snow, snow still on the ground.

But everyone was out of their houses tonight. The air fresh enough to make people restless. Screen doors opened and closed. A small parade of neighbors passed by the flashlights. So it

was a very interesting image that is given away. There's still patches of snow on the ground, but the weather is now warming up.

So people are actually preferring to come out of the houses and certainly balconies and yards, whichever they have. And they see neighbors, passing by with flashlights.

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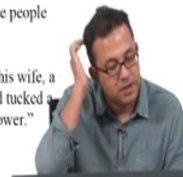
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They each took a candle and sat down on the steps. It seemed strange to be sitting outside with patches of snow still on the ground. But everyone was out of their houses tonight, the air fresh enough to make people restless. Screen doors opened and closed. A small parade of neighbors passed by with flashlights.

"We're going to the bookstore to browse," a silver-haired man called out. He was walking with his wife, a thin woman in a windbreaker, and holding a dog on a leash. They were the Bradfords, and they had tucked a sympathy card into Shoba and Shukumar's mailbox back in September. "I hear they've got their power."



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So there was a sympathy card, which was put in a mailbox in September when the news of their loss of a child was made public. And now to see them, the Bradfords, they go into a local bookstore and they just called out and said "I hear they've got the power." So it makes sense for them, for us to go and browse books where there is a power cut.

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"They'd better," Shukumar said. "Or you'll be browsing in the dark."

The woman laughed, slipping her arm through the crook of her husband's elbow. "Want to join us?"

"No thanks," Shoba and Shukumar called out together. It surprised Shukumar that his words matched her



"They'd would better," Shukumar said. "Or you will be browsing in the dark". The woman laughed slipping her arm through the crook of her husband's elbow.. "Want to join us?" "No thanks." Shobha and Shukumar called out together. It surprised Shukumar that his words matched hers.

So for the first time in many months, they said something together. "No thanks". Ironically, it was a negative statement. But at the same time, you know, either way it was a statement they made together and it was something which happened for the first time in many months and his words matched her.

So there's some kind of commonality, beginning to brew between them, thanks to the darkness. So in a way, the darkness is perhaps making them or force to look into each other, look at each other, and tend to have a proper conversation. They can't be escaping away in the rooms, and the light.

They can't do that, they can't escape, they cannot evade each other now because the darkness is bringing them together. It forces them to be together with the candlelight in a backyard or a courtyard or in the front yard. And that is beginning to brew into some kind of commonality, some kind of a common conversation that is happening over here. Okay?

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It surprised Shukumar that his words matched hers. He wondered what Shoba would tell him in the dark. The worst possibilities had already run through his head. That she had an affair. That she did not respect him for being 35 and still a student that he blamed him for being in Baltimore, the way her mother did.

But he knew that those things were not true. She had been faithful, as had he. She believed in him. It was she who had insisted he go to Baltimore. Why didn't they know about each other? What did not they know about each of them? They certainly know everything about each other.

He knew, she curled her fingers tightly when she slept, that body twitched during bad dreams. He knew it was honeydew she favored over cantaloupe. He knew when they returned from the hospital the first thing she did when she walked into the house was packed out objects of theirs and toss them into a pile in the hallway; books from the shelves, plants from the windowsills, paintings from the wall, photos from tables, pots, and pans that hung from the hooks over the stove.

Shukumar has stepped out of her way, watching as she moved methodically from room to room. When she was satisfied, she stood there staring at the pile and she had made, her lips drawn back in such distaste that Shukumar had thought she would spit. Then she started to cry.

So, you know, these are some familiar details that, you know, told to us about the preference of this people that he seems to know everyone. It seems to, sort of, know her inside out. And then we also told that very tragic episode when the first came back from the hospital. She wanted to essentially evacuate everything, she took out the books from the shelves, plants from the windowsills, photos from the books, pots and pans from the hooks.

And then Shukumar had stepped away watching what she did methodically from room to room. And then she stood there staring at the pile that she had made it. So, she, sort of, put everything together, books, pictures, paintings, plants, everything together in one massive pile in the middle of the house. And then her lips were drawn back in such distaste that Shukumar had thought she would spit.

So it was a visceral feeling of repulsion. Then of course, she wanted to cry. So again, look at the, I mean this is a very, very human, you know, this deep human tragedy of losing the child and the way that is manifested, the way that is, you know, represented, the way that is articulated is so beautifully conveyed to us in this fiction and through a very domestic, ordinary objects, connecting or symbolically manifesting, or articulating something extraordinary.

The extraordinary sense of loss, the extraordinary sense of absence, the extraordinary sense of frustration or the losing of a possibility that is given to us through very domestic signifiers, ordinary signifiers, and that becomes very, very interesting over here. And then she began to cry.

He began to feel cold as she sat there on the steps. He felt that he needed her to talk first in order to reciprocate. “That time when your mother came to visit us,” she said, finally. “When I said one night I had to stay late at work. I went out with Gillian and had a Martini.”

So you know, she told him about a lie that she, had to tell him one by the time when his mother, Shobha’s mother-in-law, Shukumar’s mother had come to visit us, she wanted to just get away. She had told them at that point of a time that she had to go out and stay late to work, but actually went out with Gillian and had a Martini.

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dreams. He knew it was honeydew she favored over cantaloupe. He knew that when they returned from the hospital the first thing she did when she walked into the house was pick out objects of theirs and toss them into a pile in the hallway: books from the shelves, plants from the windowsills, paintings from walls, photos from tables, pots and pans that hung from the hooks over the stove. Shukumar had stepped out of her way, watching as she moved methodically from room to room. When she was satisfied, she stood there staring at the pile she'd made, her lips drawn back in such distaste that Shukumar had thought she would spit. Then she'd started to cry.

He began to feel cold as he sat there on the steps. He felt that he needed her to talk first, in order to reciprocate.

"That time when your mother came to visit us," she said finally. "When I said one night that I had to stay late at work, I went out with Gillian and had a martini."

He looked at her profile, the slender nose, the slightly masculine set of her jaw. He remembered that night well; eating with his mother, tired from teaching two classes back to back, wishing Shoba were there to say more of the right things because he came up with only the wrong ones. It had been twelve years since his father had died, and his mother had come to spend two weeks with him and Shoba, so they could honor his father's memory together. Each night his mother cooked something his father had liked, but she was too upset to eat the dishes herself, and her eyes would well up as Shoba stroked her hand. "It's so touching," Shoba had said to him at the time. Now he pictured Shoba with Gillian, in a bar with striped velvet sofas, the one they used to go to after the movies, making sure she got her extra olive, asking Gillian for a cigarette. He imagined her complaining, and Gillian sympathizing about visits from in-laws. It was Gillian who had driven Shoba to the hospital.

"Your turn," she said, stopping his thoughts.



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So, it was a bit of a disappointment, a bit of betrayal to a certain extent because we are told that this was a time when Shukumar's mother had come and they had decided to honor the memory of the Shukumar's father by cooking the dishes that he liked. It was all very human and touching but Shobha decided to get away one evening to run away from it.

Escape that, what she thought was a claustrophobic condition and went out with Gillian, a friend of hers in a bar, and just had a (( ))(19:11) me- time away from this domestic chores that she was experiencing.

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"Your turn," she said, stopping his thoughts.

At the end of their street Shukumar heard sounds of a drill and the electricians shouting over it. He looked at the darkened facades of the houses lining the street. Candles glowed in the windows of one. In spite of the warmth, smoke rose from the chimney.

"I cheated on my Oriental Civilization exam in college," he said. "It was my last semester, my last set of exams. My father had died a few months before. I could see the blue book of the guy next to me. He was an American guy, a maniac. He knew Urdu and Sanskrit. I couldn't remember if the verse we had to identify was an example of a *ghazal* or not. I looked at his answer and copied it down."

It had happened over fifteen years ago. He felt relief now, having told her.

She turned to him, looking not at his face, but at his shoes — old moccasins he wore as if they were slipper the leather at the back permanently flattened. He wondered if it bothered her, what he'd said. She took his



"Your turn, "She said, stopping his thoughts". At the end of their street Shukumar heard sounds of a drill and the electricians shouting over it. He looked at the darkened facades of the houses lining the streets. Candles glowed in the windows of one. In spite of the warmth, smoke rose from the chimney. You know, so it was already nice and domestic. So, candles in the windows, you know, smoke arising from the chimney. So, it was already warm at the same time it is cold.

"I cheated on my oriental civilization, exam in the Collage," he said. "It was my last semester, my last set of exams. My father had died a few months before. I could see the blue book or the guy next to me. He was an American guy, a maniac. He knew Urdu and Sanskrit. I couldn't remember if the verse we had to identify was an example of a *ghazal* or not. I looked at his answer and copied it down".

So he talks about experience of cheating in a particular exam that happened over 15 years ago. He felt relieved now having told her.



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"I cheated on my Oriental Civilization exam in college," he said. "It was my last semester, my last set of exams. My father had died a few months before. I could see the blue book of the guy next to me. He was an American guy, a maniac. He knew Urdu and Sanskrit. I couldn't remember if the verse we had to identify was an example of a *ghazal* or not. I looked at his answer and copied it down."

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She turned to him, looking not at his face, but at his shoes — old moccasins he wore as if they were slippers, the leather at the back permanently flattened. He wondered if it bothered her, what he'd said. She took his hand and pressed it. "You didn't have to tell me why you did it," she said, moving closer to him.

They sat together until nine o'clock, when the lights came on. They heard some people across the street clapping from their porch, and televisions being turned on. The Bradfords walked back down the street, eating ice-cream cones and waving. Shoba and Shukumar waved back. Then they stood up, his hand still in hers, and went inside.



She turned to him looking not at his face but at shoes, old moccasins he wore as if they were slippers, the leather at the back permanently flattened. He wondered if it bothered her, what he had said. She took his hand and pressed it. "You didn't have to tell me why you did it," she said moving closer to him.

So again, look at the proximity began to brew. She taking his hand and coming closer to him and that, this conversation about the non-conversations, this conversation about things which haven't been spoken about earlier, seeming to bring them together as a couple, generates some warmth in them as a couple. They sat together until nine o'clock when the lights came on.

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So, they waved back together, they talk together, they take the hands, the hands to each other and then walk back inside. So, a degree of normalcy seems to be returning, a degree of ordinariness, ordinary intimacy seems to be returning all thanks to the darkness. The darkness becomes a symbolic light over here because it eradicates all the lies which they happen using carefully to escape each other.

Now, the escape routes through the lights have been done away with, so darkness actually forces them to come closer. Now they're holding each other, they are saying the same things, they are waving together, they are speaking together as a chorus sometimes addressing other people and they began to open up to each other.

And this opening up becomes an act of unfreezing over here, because, you know, in a sense they were existentially frozen for a period of time and they were freezing away from each other in a way. But this seems to be warming them up. This seems to be unfreezing them, and they're coming closer in a more organic way, as they had experiencing in the last few months.

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Somehow, without saying anything, it had turned into this. Into an exchange of confessions — the little ways they'd hurt or disappointed each other, and themselves. The following day Shukumar thought for hours about what to say to her. He was torn between admitting that he once ripped out a photo of a woman in one of the fashion magazines she used to subscribe to and carried it in his books for a week, or saying that he really hadn't lost the sweater-vest she bought him for their third wedding anniversary but had exchanged it for cash at Filene's, and that he had gotten drunk alone in the middle of the day at a hotel bar. For their first anniversary, Shoba had cooked a ten-course dinner just for him. The vest depressed him. "My wife gave me a sweater-vest for our anniversary," he complained to the bartender, his head heavy with cognac. "What do you expect?" the bartender had replied. "You're married."

As for the picture of the woman, he didn't know why he'd ripped it out. She wasn't as pretty as Shoba. She wore a white sequined dress, and had a sullen face and lean, mannish legs. Her bare arms were raised, her fists around her head, as if she were about to punch herself in the ears. It was an advertisement for stockings. Shoba had been pregnant at the time, her stomach suddenly immense, to the point where Shukumar no longer wanted to touch her. The first time he saw the picture he was lying in bed next to her, watching her as she read. When he noticed the magazine in the recycling pile he found the woman and tore out the page as carefully as he could. For about a week he allowed himself a glimpse each day. He felt an intense desire for the woman, but it was a desire that turned to disgust after a minute or two. It was the closest he'd come to infidelity.

He told Shoba about the sweater on the third night, the picture on the fourth. She said nothing as he spoke, expressed no protest or reproach. She simply listened, and then she took his hand, pressing it as she had before. On the third night, she told him that once after a lecture they'd attended, she let him speak to the chairman of his department without telling him that he had a dab of milt on his chin. She'd been irritated with him for



Somehow without saying anything, it had turned into this, into an exchange of confessions, the little ways they'd hurt or disappointed each other, and themselves. So, it becomes a confession game. It becomes confession ritual and that, but that seems to bring them together as a couple.

The following day Shukumar thought for hours about what to say to her. So, you know, they begin to anticipate, they begin to look forward to these evenings, where the power would go away and then they would begin this game of telling each other things which they haven't spoken about before. And that seems to be something they look forward to as a couple together in a way.

So, Shobha seems to come back early, Shukumar seems to finish everything before, and they still look forward to this activity of holding themselves together and talking to each other. The following day Shukumar thought for hours about what to say to help. He was torn between admitting that he once ripped out a photo of a woman in one of the fashion magazines, she used to subscribe to and carried it in his books for a week, or saying that he really hadn't lost a sweater-vest she bought him for their third wedding anniversary but had exchanged it for cash at Filene's, and that he had gotten drunk alone in the middle of the day at the hotel bar.

For their first anniversary Shobha had cooked a 10 course dinner just for him. The vest depressed him. "My wife gave me a sweater-vest for anniversary," he complained to the bartender, his head heavy with Cognac. "What do you expect?" the bartender had replied. "You are married".

So I know that this is a dark funny thing that we have been told that. Shukumar is thinking other ways. He is filtering all the different possibilities that he could tell Shobha. So, he is thinking about, maybe I can tell him that I took a photo of a woman in a fashion magazine and carried with me to excite me maybe sexually or I can just also tell her that I hated the vest that she gave me and actually went back and exchange that for cash.

Or actually telling to Shobha, lying to Shobha that he had actually lost it. I remember he was going to a bar and getting drunk with that cast that he had gotten from vest and then complain to the bartender his head heavy with cognac. "What do you expect", the bartender had replied that you are just married, and you'd get this kind of thing.

So, you know, that becomes, these old little details come back and this becomes a bit of an architecture of anticipation. And this is something that he wanted to think about, what to say, and what not to say that excites him in a way, that makes him more warm, more human in a way which he hadn't felt for a long time.

As for the picture of the woman, he didn't know why he had ripped it out. She wasn't as pretty as Shobha. She wore a white sequined dress and had sullen face and lean, mannish legs. Her bare arms were raised, her fists around her head, as if she were about to punch herself in the ears. So, we are told that she wasn't as pretty as Shobha, she wore a white sequined dress. He wasn't quite sure why he tore the photo away in the first place.

The first time he saw the picture, he was lying in bed next to her, watching her as she read. When I noticed the magazine in the recycling pile, he found the woman and tore out the page as carefully as he could. For about a week he allowed himself a glimpse each day. He felt an intense desire for the woman, but it was a desire that turned to disgust after a minute or two. It was the closest he had come to infidelity.

So, you know, he talks about his own quasi, infidelity experience and he thinks whether or not he should tell this to Shobha, etc. So, all this information from the past comes back to us as readers as well because we, these are things he hadn't told Shobha, and you know, Shobha... he is running these in his head in a way which is so very anticipatory and also exciting, and he is thinking whether or not he should go for this. What he should filter out, what he should say, and what he should not say to Shobha, and that's something which is, he is looking forward to as a person and as, you know, the dinner is coming closer, as the power cut is coming closer.

So, we are told that he told Shobha about the sweater on the third night, the picture on the fourth. She said nothing as he spoke, expressed no protests or reproach. She simply listened, and then took she took his hand, pressing it as she had before. On the third night, she told him that once after a lecture they had attended, she let him speak to the chairman of his department without telling him that he had a dab of pate on his chin. So you had a dab of pate on his chin she just let him speak to the chairman.

She had been irritated with him for some reason and so she let him go on and on about securing his fellowship for the following semester without putting a finger to his own chin as a signal. The fourth night, she said that she never liked the one person he'd ever published in his life, in a literary magazine in Utah. He had written the poem after meetings Shobha. She added that she found the poem sentimental.

So we are given these details. He had told her about the sweater. He had told her about the picture and then she tells him in returns certain things. She tells him in returned, that in one particular occasion he was having a very bond conversation with the chairman, about his fellowship of next semester and then she let him go on speaking despite noticing dab of pate on his chin and instead of signaling him by touching her own chin, she let him go on, as some kind of a punishment for irritating her.

And then she also tells him in the fourth night that she never liked the one poem that he has published, which is about meeting Shobha, and that, she had found the poem very very sentimental.

So, I stopped at this point today, but what we see brewing, between these two people who are otherwise a strange from each other is a series of conversations coming and conversations they never had, and these never had conversations which is now coming in, is beginning to unfreeze them, is begin to generate a degree of human warmth, which had been missing in their lives for a period of time, for months, all together since the loss of the child.

And that begins to sort of turn the story, turn the narrative to a certain extent, which is very interesting. And we find how the story ends in the following lectures where we conclude with this particular texts. So, I stop at this point today and I'll see you in the next lecture where we conclude with the story, a temporary matter. Thank you for your attention.