

*Sri Lanka*

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“That was so nice. You are such a good cook!” Ashley was sitting on the bean bag in his room, finishing the red wine they had started with the food. She was wearing a shortish skirt that stayed close to her thighs, which were smooth in light tights.

“Not too hot? I was worried about that...” He asked.

“Hot? As in hot spicy? No, it was just right. Wow. So this is like home cooked Sri Lankan food?”

“What? As opposed to take out? I suppose it is by definition; since I cooked it.”

“No, silly boy. I mean is this what you have at home, for dinner?” The chicken curry had faded her bright red lip-gloss, but he could still see the hint of blush high on her cheek bones.

“Oh, well yes, sort of. But we have more stuff. More dishes.” He didn’t even start to explain that this would be lunch, not dinner, at home.

“Sounds fabulous. You know what? I’m trying to decide if I should do my junior year abroad in Sri Lanka.”

“Oh does Wellesley have a program?”

*At the Water's Edge*

“No, it is through another college; but you can get a year’s worth of credits for it. I’d learn a lot, and I know I’d just love the food.”

He leant back, propped up on his pillows, glancing at the window pane for a moment. It was a little warmer today; there was a light drizzle instead of snow. Drops of water were falling, slowly, deliberately, it seemed, off the edge of the quarter open pane, onto the sill.

“And that is a good reason?” He sipped his wine, turning back to her.

“Well, I am interested in Sri Lanka. You know that.” She sounded defensive. Reaching for her bag, she took out her lip stick, and re-did her lips with practiced ease, slowly pouting.

He nodded quickly. “Yes, of course.”

“Krishna?”

He smiled almost unthinkingly.

“I was wondering... You are a sophomore right?”

He nodded again.

“So...” She stopped, small fingers pressed to bean bag. “You were there during these riots? I mean you were in Sri Lanka in 1983, right?”

“Yes I left right after the riots, at the end of August, to come here.”

“You are... Tamil right?”

He seemed to stiffen. “How do you figure?”

*Sri Lanka*

She bit her lip. "I'm sorry, if that is rude to say. I'm sorry. I just figured from the question you asked at the talk. I mean I thought you implied it."

He nodded and smiled slightly, not wanting her to be sorry, not wanting to be tense. "Yes, I'm Tamil."

"The riots... must have been hard for you? Was everything okay with your family?" She got off the bean bag and sat by the edge of the bed, by his hip, her thighs pressed together, body half turned to him, watching his face.

The water was pooling on the sill now; tiny drops gathering, islands on the grimy white surface. Slowly he took his eyes off the little puddles, hardly realizing Ashley was sitting so close, wisps of her scented hair brushing his hip. His mind calmed as he ran his eye on the edge of her ear, and the cutting ache in the back of his head lessened.

"Yes, they were fine." He looked out of the window again, feeling his cheek vibrate, unable to stop the tiny persistent motion. Most people here who asked about '83 stopped there, and he was used to that. Usually the subject changed to some thing more pleasant, after a quick "Oh that's good!"

But she said nothing, listening, her body turning further, one knee on the bed now, bent, tiny slipper kicked off.

He turned to her again, trying to smile, hoping to compose his face.