

A ribbon of light spins through the sky, as turmeric falls with evening, settling into the orange setting sun. Seema did not like watching sunsets from the balcony, but she did it every day. The sea looked murky from where she sat. Almost the same colour as her strong cup of chai. The sun dropped, like her round biscuit being dunked, slowly into the sea. As evening fell over her shoulders, a gauzy chiffon dupatta encrusted with the embers of broken stars, she remembered how she got here.

Darkness she understands, so she does not reach for the light switch on the table lamp. It is not her table, not her lamp. It is all his.

An arranged marriage.

Bombay is not her city. Oh yes, must remember Mumbai. Everyone insisted on Mumbai these days, even more than they did twenty years ago when they had changed the name officially. It was this President with his orange-coloured, noble blood. Politicians were all the same. Pretenders. Her passport stated Bombay as her place of birth still. She had not bothered to change it. Her dreams were melting like this Marie biscuit, falling into her teacup. Her passport had lapsed. Once she had dreamed of other places. She had taken the bus to the British Council and  
pond, hopeful one  
She was a doer. Even as a little girl growing up in the Pune Cantonment she was always building bridges of leaves over muddy rainwater streams, guiding ants with her stick to climb across to the dry side. She never sat musing. She used her time well. Until Baba died.

It was her mother. It had to be her mother.

Why had they named her Seema? It meant boundary. Some aunt had said at the wedding that your name defined your destiny. She did not even have to look up the meaning of her name. It was one of the most common Hindu names. In Hindi class, which she hated, the teacher compared the words Seema and Rekha as synonyms. There was nothing similar about them! Rekha might mean a line drawn in the sand, or around some unfortunate mythological Queen banished to a forest, and not even allowed to walk free to stroke the wide-eyed fawns or gather fallen frangipani. No, the Lakshman Rekha hemmed Sita in. But Rekha made a much better name than Seema. Rekha was the name of one of the greatest, most glamorous filmstars India ever produced. Who the hell was Seema?