

SNAPSHOTS

Supplementary Reader in English
for Class XI
(Core Course)



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NCERT

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Foreword

THE National Curriculum Framework (NCF), 2005, recommends that children's life at school must be linked to their life outside the school. This principle marks a departure from the legacy of bookish learning which continues to shape our system and causes a gap between the school, home and community. The syllabi and textbooks developed on the basis of NCF signify an attempt to implement this basic idea. They also attempt to discourage rote learning and the maintenance of sharp boundaries between different subject areas. We hope these measures will take us significantly further in the direction of a child-centred system of education outlined in the National Policy of Education (1986).

The success of this effort depends on the steps that school principals and teachers will take to encourage children to reflect on their own learning and to pursue imaginative activities and questions. We must recognise that, given space, time and freedom, children generate new knowledge by engaging with the information passed on to them by adults. Treating the prescribed textbook as the sole basis of examination is one of the key reasons why other resources and sites of learning are ignored. Inculcating creativity and initiative is possible if we perceive and treat children as participants in learning, not as receivers of a fixed body of knowledge.

These aims imply considerable change in school routines and mode of functioning. Flexibility in the daily time-table is as necessary as rigour in implementing the annual calendar so that the required number of teaching days are actually devoted to teaching. The methods used for teaching and evaluation will also determine how effective this supplementary reader proves for making children's life at school a happy experience, rather than a source of stress or boredom. Syllabus designers have tried to address the problem of curricular burden by restructuring and reorienting knowledge at different stages with greater consideration for child psychology and the time available for teaching. The book attempts to enhance this endeavour by giving higher priority and space to opportunities for contemplation and wondering, discussion in small groups, and activities requiring hands-on experience.

The National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT) appreciates the hard work done by the textbook development committee responsible for this book. We wish to thank the Chairperson of the advisory group in languages, Professor Namwar Singh and the Chief Advisor for this book, Professor R. Amritavalli for guiding the work of this committee. Several teachers contributed to the development of this book; we are grateful to their principals for making this possible. We are indebted to the institutions and organisations which have generously permitted us to draw upon their resources, materials and personnel. We are especially grateful to the members of the National Monitoring Committee, appointed by the Department of Secondary and Higher Education, Ministry of Human Resource Development under the Chairpersonship of Professor Mrinal Miri and Professor G.P. Deshpande for their valuable time and contribution. As an organisation committed to systemic reform and continuous improvement in the quality of its products, NCERT welcomes comments and suggestions which will enable us to undertake further revision and refinements.

New Delhi
20 December 2005

Director
National Council of Educational
Research and Training

About the Book

THIS supplementary reader, based on the English syllabus for Class XI, is prepared on the lines suggested by the National Curriculum Framework for School Education, 2005.

For young adults, awareness of personal development and growing independence begins at the higher secondary stage. It is during this period that they seek to understand themselves and the society in which they live. Literature plays an important role in moulding young minds. The choice of stories and biographical sketches in *Snapshots* by contemporary writers exposes learners to the various narratives of life that the literatures of the world offer.

The stories deal with a range of human predicaments: moral choices in adolescents, as in William Saroyan's 'The Summer of the Beautiful White Horse'; the poignancy of personal loss and reconciliation that follows war in Marga Minco's 'The Address'; language and imperialism invading the rural setting in 'Ranga's Marriage' by Masti Venkatesha Iyengar; and professional commitment in A. J. Cronin's 'Birth', an excerpt from the novel *The Citadel*. We also have J.B. Priestley's play, 'Mother's Day', an early comment on the acceptance of (and rebellion against) the assumed roles of men and women at home. Amitav Ghosh's 'The Ghat of the Only World', is a touching tribute to Aga Shahid Ali, a Kashmiri poet who wrote in English, while Vikram Seth's 'The Tale of Melon City' is a humorous satire set in verse.

The language of these stories allows learners to read on their own with only occasional support from the teacher or reference to the dictionary. Learners should be encouraged to read the stories at home and the themes, narrative patterns and stylistic features including use of punctuation can be discussed in the classroom. It is hoped that this gateway to extensive reading will help learners imbibe language unconsciously.

THE CONSTITUTION OF INDIA

PREAMBLE

WE, THE PEOPLE OF INDIA, having solemnly resolved to constitute India into a ¹**[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 ²[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.**

1. Subs. by the Constitution (Forty-second Amendment) Act, 1976, Sec.2, for "Sovereign Democratic Republic" (w.e.f. 3.1.1977)
2. Subs. by the Constitution (Forty-second Amendment) Act, 1976, Sec.2, for "Unity of the Nation" (w.e.f. 3.1.1977)

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Constitution of India

Part IV A (Article 51 A)

Fundamental Duties

It shall be the duty of every citizen of India —

- (a) to abide by the Constitution and respect its ideals and institutions, the National Flag and the National Anthem;
- (b) to cherish and follow the noble ideals which inspired our national struggle for freedom;
- (c) to uphold and protect the sovereignty, unity and integrity of India;
- (d) to defend the country and render national service when called upon to do so;
- (e) to promote harmony and the spirit of common brotherhood amongst all the people of India transcending religious, linguistic and regional or sectional diversities; to renounce practices derogatory to the dignity of women;
- (f) to value and preserve the rich heritage of our composite culture;
- (g) to protect and improve the natural environment including forests, lakes, rivers, wildlife and to have compassion for living creatures;
- (h) to develop the scientific temper, humanism and the spirit of inquiry and reform;
- (i) to safeguard public property and to abjure violence;
- (j) to strive towards excellence in all spheres of individual and collective activity so that the nation constantly rises to higher levels of endeavour and achievement;
- * (k) who is a parent or guardian, to provide opportunities for education to his child or, as the case may be, ward between the age of six and fourteen years.

Note: The Article 51A containing Fundamental Duties was inserted by the Constitution (42nd Amendment) Act, 1976 (with effect from 3 January 1977).

* (k) was inserted by the Constitution (86th Amendment) Act, 2002 (with effect from 1 April 2010).

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CONSTITUTION OF INDIA

Part III (Articles 12 – 35)

(Subject to certain conditions, some exceptions and reasonable restrictions)

guarantees these

Fundamental Rights

Right to Equality

- before law and equal protection of laws;
- irrespective of religion, race, caste, sex or place of birth;
- of opportunity in public employment;
- by abolition of untouchability and titles.

Right to Freedom

- of expression, assembly, association, movement, residence and profession;
- of certain protections in respect of conviction for offences;
- of protection of life and personal liberty;
- of free and compulsory education for children between the age of six and fourteen years;
- of protection against arrest and detention in certain cases.

Right against Exploitation

- for prohibition of traffic in human beings and forced labour;
- for prohibition of employment of children in hazardous jobs.

Right to Freedom of Religion

- freedom of conscience and free profession, practice and propagation of religion;
- freedom to manage religious affairs;
- freedom as to payment of taxes for promotion of any particular religion;
- freedom as to attendance at religious instruction or religious worship in educational institutions wholly maintained by the State.

Cultural and Educational Rights

- for protection of interests of minorities to conserve their language, script and culture;
- for minorities to establish and administer educational institutions of their choice.

Right to Constitutional Remedies

- by issuance of directions or orders or writs by the Supreme Court and High Courts for enforcement of these Fundamental Rights.

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1

The Summer of the Beautiful White Horse

William Saroyan

This story is about two poor Armenian boys who belong to a tribe whose hallmarks are trust and honesty.

ONE day back there in the good old days when I was nine and the world was full of every imaginable kind of magnificence, and life was still a delightful and mysterious dream, my cousin Mourad, who was considered crazy by everybody who knew him except me, came to my house at four in the morning and woke me up tapping on the window of my room.

Aram, he said.

I jumped out of bed and looked out of the window.


I couldn't believe what I saw.

It wasn't morning yet, but it was summer and with daybreak not many minutes around the corner of the world it was light enough for me to know I wasn't dreaming.

My cousin Mourad was sitting on a beautiful white horse.

I stuck my head out of the window and rubbed my eyes.

Yes, he said in Armenian. It's a horse. You're not dreaming. Make it quick if you want to ride.



I knew my cousin Mourad enjoyed being alive more than anybody else who had ever fallen into the world by mistake, but this was more than even I could believe.

In the first place, my earliest memories had been memories of horses and my first longings had been longings to ride.

This was the wonderful part.

In the second place, we were poor.

This was the part that wouldn't permit me to believe what I saw.

We were poor. We had no money. Our whole tribe was poverty-stricken. Every branch of the Garoghlanian¹ family was living in the most amazing and comical poverty in the world. Nobody could understand where we ever got money enough to keep us with food in our bellies, not even the old men of the family. Most important of all, though, we were famous for our honesty. We had been famous for our honesty for something like eleven centuries, even when we had been the wealthiest family in what we liked to think was the world. We were proud first, honest next, and after that we believed in right and wrong. None of us would take advantage of anybody in the world, let alone steal.

Consequently, even though I could *see* the horse, so magnificent; even though I could *smell* it, so lovely; even though I could *hear* it breathing, so exciting; I couldn't *believe* the horse had anything to do with my cousin Mourad or with me or with any of the other members of our family, asleep or awake, because I *knew* my cousin Mourad couldn't have *bought* the horse, and if he couldn't have bought it he must have *stolen* it, and I refused to believe he had stolen it.

No member of the Garoghlanian family could be a thief.

I stared first at my cousin and then at the horse. There was a pious stillness and humour in each of them which on the one hand delighted me and on the other frightened me.

Mourad, I said, where did you steal this horse?

Leap out of the window, he said, if you want to ride.

It was true, then. He *had* stolen the horse. There was no question about it. He had come to invite me to ride or not, as I chose.

Well, it seemed to me stealing a horse for a ride was not the same thing as stealing something else, such as money. For all I knew, maybe it wasn't stealing at all. If you were crazy about

¹ an Armenian tribe



horses the way my cousin Mourad and I were, it wasn't stealing. It wouldn't become stealing until we offered to sell the horse, which of course, I knew we would never do.

Let me put on some clothes, I said.

All right, he said, but hurry.

I leaped into my clothes.

I jumped down to the yard from the window and leaped up onto the horse behind my cousin Mourad.

That year we lived at the edge of town, on Walnut Avenue. Behind our house was the country: vineyards, orchards, irrigation ditches, and country roads. In less than three minutes we were on Olive Avenue, and then the horse began to trot. The air was new and lovely to breathe. The feel of the horse running was wonderful. My cousin Mourad who was considered one of the craziest members of our family began to sing. I mean, he began to roar.

Every family has a crazy streak in it somewhere, and my cousin Mourad was considered the natural descendant of the crazy streak in our tribe. Before him was our uncle Khosrove, an enormous man with a powerful head of black hair and the largest moustache in the San Joaquin Valley², a man so furious in temper, so irritable, so impatient that he stopped anyone from talking by roaring, *It is no harm; pay no attention to it.*

That was all, no matter what anybody happened to be talking about. Once it was his own son Arak running eight blocks to the barber's shop where his father was having his moustache trimmed to tell him their house was on fire. This man Khosrove sat up in the chair and roared, *It is no harm; pay no attention to it.* The barber said, *But the boy says your house is on fire.* So Khosrove roared, *Enough, it is no harm, I say.*

My cousin Mourad was considered the natural descendant of this man, although Mourad's father was Zorab, who was practical and nothing else. That's how it was in our tribe. A man could be the father of his son's flesh, but that did not mean that he was also the father of his spirit. The distribution of the various kinds of spirit of our tribe had been from the beginning capricious and vagrant.

We rode and my cousin Mourad sang. For all anybody knew we were still in the old country where, at least according to

² one of the long interior valleys of California



some of our neighbours, we belonged. We let the horse run as long as it felt like running.

At last my cousin Mourad said, Get down. I want to ride alone.

Will you let me ride alone? I asked.

That is up to the horse, my cousin said. Get down.

The *horse* will let me ride, I said.

We shall see, he said. Don't forget that I have a way with a horse.

Well, I said, any way you have with a horse, I have also.

For the sake of your safety, he said, let us hope so. Get down.

All right, I said, but remember you've got to let me try to ride alone.

I got down and my cousin Mourad kicked his heels into the horse and shouted, *Vazire*, run. The horse stood on its hind legs, snorted, and burst into a fury of speed that was the loveliest





thing I had ever seen. My cousin Mourad raced the horse across a field of dry grass to an irrigation ditch, crossed the ditch on the horse, and five minutes later returned, dripping wet.

The sun was coming up.

Now it's my turn to ride, I said.

My cousin Mourad got off the horse.

Ride, he said.

I leaped to the back of the horse and for a moment knew the most awful fear imaginable. The horse did not move.

Kick into his muscles, my cousin Mourad said. What are you waiting for? We've got to take him back before everybody in the world is up and about.

I kicked into the muscles of the horse. Once again it reared and snorted. Then it began to run. I didn't know what to do. Instead of running across the field to the irrigation ditch the horse ran down the road to the vineyard of Dikran Halabian where it began to leap over vines. The horse leaped over seven vines before I fell. Then it continued running.

My cousin Mourad came running down the road.

I'm not worried about you, he shouted. We've got to get that horse. You go this way and I'll go this way. If you come upon him, be kindly. I'll be near.

I continued down the road and my cousin, Mourad went across the field toward the irrigation ditch.

It took him half an hour to find the horse and bring him back.

All right, he said, jump on. The whole world is awake now.

What will we do? I said.

Well, he said, we'll either take him back or hide him until tomorrow morning.

He didn't sound worried and I knew he'd hide him and not take him back. Not for a while, at any rate.

Where will we hide him? I said.

I know a place, he said.

How long ago did you steal this horse? I said.

It suddenly dawned on me that he had been taking these early morning rides for some time and had come for me this morning only because he knew how much I longed to ride.

Who said anything about stealing a horse? he said.

Anyhow, I said, how long ago did you begin riding every morning?



Not until this morning, he said.

Are you telling the truth? I said.

Of course not, he said, but if we are found out, that's what you're to say. I don't want both of us to be liars. All you know is that we started riding this morning.

All right, I said.

He walked the horse quietly to the barn of a deserted vineyard which at one time had been the pride of a farmer named Fetvajian. There were some oats and dry alfalfa in the barn.

We began walking home.

It wasn't easy, he said, to get the horse to behave so nicely. At first it wanted to run wild, but, as I've told you, I have a way with a horse. I can get it to want to do anything I want it to do. Horses understand me.

How do you do it? I said.

I have an understanding with a horse, he said.

Yes, but what sort of an understanding? I said.

A simple and honest one, he said.

Well, I said, I wish I knew how to reach an understanding like that with a horse.

You're still a small boy, he said. When you get to be thirteen you'll know how to do it.

I went home and ate a hearty breakfast.

That afternoon my uncle Khosrove came to our house for coffee and cigarettes. He sat in the parlour, sipping and smoking and remembering the old country. Then another visitor arrived, a farmer named John Byro, an Assyrian who, out of loneliness, had learned to speak Armenian. My mother brought the lonely visitor coffee and tobacco and he rolled a cigarette and sipped and smoked, and then at last, sighing sadly, he said, My white horse which was stolen last month is still gone — I cannot understand it.

My uncle Khosrove became very irritated and shouted, It's no harm. What is the loss of a horse? Haven't we all lost the homeland? What is this crying over a horse?

That may be all right for you, a city dweller, to say, John Byro said, but what of my sully? What good is a sully without a horse?

Pay no attention to it, my uncle Khosrove roared.

I walked ten miles to get here, John Byro said.

You have legs, my uncle Khosrove shouted.



My left leg pains me, the farmer said.

Pay no attention to it, my uncle Khosrove roared.

That horse cost me sixty dollars, the farmer said.

I spit on money, my uncle Khosrove said.

He got up and stalked out of the house, slamming the screen door.

My mother explained.

He has a gentle heart, she said. It is simply that he is homesick and such a large man.

The farmer went away and I ran over to my cousin Mourad's house.

He was sitting under a peach tree, trying to repair the hurt wing of a young robin which could not fly. He was talking to the bird.

What is it? he said.

The farmer, John Byro, I said. He visited our house. He wants his horse. You've had it a month. I want you to promise not to take it back until I learn to ride.

It will take you *a year* to learn to ride, my cousin Mourad said.

We could keep the horse a year, I said.

My cousin Mourad leaped to his feet.

What? he roared. Are you inviting a member of the Garoghlanian family to steal? The horse must go back to its true owner.

When? I said.

In six months at the latest, he said.

He threw the bird into the air. The bird tried hard, almost fell twice, but at last flew away, high and straight.

Early every morning for two weeks my cousin Mourad and I took the horse out of the barn of the deserted vineyard where we were hiding it and rode it, and every morning the horse, when it was my turn to ride alone, leaped over grape vines and small trees and threw me and ran away. Nevertheless, I hoped in time to learn to ride the way my cousin Mourad rode.

One morning on the way to Fetvajian's deserted vineyard we ran into the farmer John Byro who was on his way to town.

Let me do the talking, my cousin Mourad said. I have a way with farmers.

Good morning, John Byro, my cousin Mourad said to the farmer.

The farmer studied the horse eagerly.



Good morning, son of my friends, he said. What is the name of your horse?

My Heart, my cousin Mourad said in Armenian.

A lovely name, John Byro said, for a lovely horse. I could swear it is the horse that was stolen from me many weeks ago. May I look into his mouth?

Of course, Mourad said.

The farmer looked into the mouth of the horse.

Tooth for tooth, he said. I would swear it is my horse if I didn't know your parents. The fame of your family for honesty is well known to me. Yet the horse is the twin of my horse. A suspicious man would believe his eyes instead of his heart. Good day, my young friends.

Good day, John Byro, my cousin Mourad said.

Early the following morning we took the horse to John Byro's vineyard and put it in the barn. The dogs followed us around without making a sound.

The dogs, I whispered to my cousin Mourad. I thought they would bark.

They would at somebody else, he said. I have a way with dogs.

My cousin Mourad put his arms around the horse, pressed his nose into the horse's nose, patted it, and then we went away.

That afternoon John Byro came to our house in his surrey and showed my mother the horse that had been stolen and returned.

I do not know what to think, he said. The horse is stronger than ever. Better-tempered, too. I thank God. My uncle Khosrove, who was in the parlour, became irritated and shouted, Quiet, man, quiet. Your horse has been returned. Pay no attention to it.

1. You will probably agree that this story does not have breathless adventure and exciting action. Then what in your opinion makes it interesting?
2. Did the boys return the horse because they were conscience-stricken or because they were afraid?
3. "One day back there in the good old days when I was nine and the world was full of every imaginable kind of magnificence, and life was still a delightful and mysterious dream..." The story begins in a mood of



nostalgia. Can you narrate some incident from your childhood that might make an interesting story?

4. The story revolves around characters who belong to a tribe in Armenia. Mourad and Aram are members of the Garoghlanian family. Now locate Armenia and Assyria on the atlas and prepare a write-up on the Garoghlanian tribes. You may write about people, their names, traits, geographical and economic features as suggested in the story.

TRY THIS OUT

“The horse stood on its hind legs, snorted, and burst into a fury of speed that was the loveliest thing I had ever seen.” These lines could be an artist’s delight. Try to draw a picture as depicted in the above lines.

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2

The Address

Marga Minco

This short story is a poignant account of a daughter who goes in search of her mother's belongings after the War, in Holland. When she finds them, the objects evoke memories of her earlier life. However, she decides to leave them all behind and resolves to move on.

'Do you still know me?' I asked.

The woman looked at me searchingly. She had opened the door a chink. I came closer and stood on the step.

'No, I don't know you.'

'I'm Mrs S's daughter.'

She held her hand on the door as though she wanted to prevent it opening any further. Her face gave absolutely no sign of recognition. She kept staring at me in silence.

Perhaps I was mistaken, I thought, perhaps it isn't her. I had seen her only once, fleetingly, and that was years ago. It was most probable that I had rung the wrong bell. The woman let go of the door and stepped to the side. She was wearing my mother's green knitted cardigan. The wooden buttons were rather pale from washing. She saw that I was looking at the cardigan and half hid herself again behind the door. But I knew now that I was right.

'Well, you knew my mother?' I asked.

'Have you come back?' said the woman. 'I thought that no one had come back.'

'Only me.'



A door opened and closed in the passage behind her. A musty smell emerged.

'I regret I cannot do anything for you.'

'I've come here specially on the train. I wanted to talk to you for a moment.'

'It is not convenient for me now,' said the woman. 'I can't see you. Another time.'

She nodded and cautiously closed the door as though no one inside the house should be disturbed.

I stood where I was on the step. The curtain in front of the bay window moved. Someone stared at me and would then have asked what I wanted. 'Oh, nothing,' the woman would have said. 'It was nothing.'

I looked at the name-plate again. *Dorling* it said, in black letters on white enamel. And on the jamb, a bit higher, the number. *Number 46*.

As I walked slowly back to the station I thought about my mother, who had given me the address years ago. It had been in the first half of the War. I was home for a few days and it struck me immediately that something or other about the rooms had changed. I missed various things. My mother was surprised I should have noticed so quickly. Then she told me about Mrs Dorling. I had never heard of her but apparently she was an old acquaintance of my mother, whom she hadn't seen for years. She had suddenly turned up and renewed their contact. Since then she had come regularly.

'Every time she leaves here she takes something home with her,' said my mother. 'She took all the table silver in one go. And then the antique plates that hung there. She had trouble lugging those large vases, and I'm worried she got a crick in her back from the crockery.' My mother shook her head pityingly. 'I would never have dared ask her. She suggested it to me herself. She even insisted. She wanted to save all my nice things. If we have to leave here we shall lose everything, she says.'

'Have you agreed with her that she should keep everything?' I asked.

'As if that's necessary,' my mother cried. 'It would simply be an insult to talk like that. And think about the risk she's running, each time she goes out of our door with a full suitcase or bag.'



My mother seemed to notice that I was not entirely convinced. She looked at me reprovingly and after that we spoke no more about it.

Meanwhile I had arrived at the station without having paid much attention to things on the way. I was walking in familiar places again for the first time since the War, but I did not want to go further than was necessary. I didn't want to upset myself with the sight of streets and houses full of memories from a precious time.

In the train back I saw Mrs Dorling in front of me again as I had the first time I met her. It was the morning after the day my mother had told me about her. I had got up late and, coming downstairs, I saw my mother about to see someone out. A woman with a broad back.

'There is my daughter,' said my mother. She beckoned to me.

The woman nodded and picked up the suitcase under the coat-rack. She wore a brown coat and a shapeless hat.

'Does she live far away?' I asked, seeing the difficulty she had going out of the house with the heavy case.

'In Marconi Street,' said my mother. 'Number 46. Remember that.'

I had remembered it. But I had waited a long time to go there. Initially after the Liberation I was absolutely not interested in all that stored stuff, and naturally I was also rather afraid of it. Afraid of being confronted with things that had belonged to a connection that no longer existed; which were hidden away in cupboards and boxes and waiting in vain until they were put back in their place again; which had endured all those years because they were 'things.'

But gradually everything became more normal again. Bread was getting to be a lighter colour, there was a bed you could sleep in unthreatened, a room with a view you were more used to glancing at each day. And one day I noticed I was curious about all the possessions that must still be at that address. I wanted to see them, touch, remember.

After my first visit in vain to Mrs Dorling's house I decided to try a second time. Now a girl of about fifteen opened the door to me. I asked her if her mother was at home.

'No' she said, 'my mother's doing an errand.'

'No matter,' I said, 'I'll wait for her.'



I followed the girl along the passage. An old-fashioned iron Hanukkah¹ candle-holder hung next to a mirror. We never used it because it was much more cumbersome than a single candlestick.

'Won't you sit down?' asked the girl. She held open the door of the living-room and I went inside past her. I stopped, horrified. I was in a room I knew and did not know. I found myself in the midst of things I did want to see again but which oppressed me in the strange atmosphere. Or because of the tasteless way everything was arranged, because of the ugly furniture or the muggy smell that hung there, I don't know; but I scarcely dared to look around me. The girl moved a chair. I sat down and stared at the woollen table-cloth. I rubbed it. My fingers grew warm from rubbing. I followed the lines of the pattern. Somewhere on the edge there should be a burn mark that had never been repaired.

'My mother'll be back soon,' said the girl. 'I've already made tea for her. Will you have a cup?'

'Thank you.'

I looked up. The girl put cups ready on the tea-table. She had a broad back. Just like her mother. She poured tea from a white pot. All it had was a gold border on the lid, I remembered. She opened a box and took some spoons out.

'That's a nice box.' I heard my own voice. It was a strange voice. As though each sound was different in this room.

'Oh, you know about them?' She had turned round and brought me my tea. She laughed. 'My mother says it is antique. We've got lots more.' She pointed round the room. 'See for yourself.'

I had no need to follow her hand. I knew which things she meant. I just looked at the still life over the tea-table. As a child I had always fancied the apple on the pewter plate.

'We use it for everything,' she said. 'Once we even ate off the plates hanging there on the wall. I wanted to so much. But it wasn't anything special.'

I had found the burn mark on the table-cloth. The girl looked questioningly at me.

'Yes,' I said, 'you get so used to touching all these lovely things in the house, you hardly look at them any more. You only

¹ the Feast of Lights, a Hebrew festival in December



notice when something is missing, because it has to be repaired or because you have lent it, for example.'

Again I heard the unnatural sound of my voice and I went on: 'I remember my mother once asked me if I would help her polish the silver. It was a very long time ago and I was probably bored that day or perhaps I had to stay at home because I was ill, as she had never asked me before. I asked her which silver she meant and she replied, surprised, that it was the spoons, forks and knives, of course. And that was the strange thing, I didn't know the cutlery we ate off every day was silver.'

The girl laughed again.

'I bet you don't know it is either.' I looked intently at her.

'What we eat with?' she asked.

'Well, do you know?'

She hesitated. She walked to the sideboard and wanted to open a drawer. 'I'll look. It's in here.'

I jumped up. 'I was forgetting the time, I must catch my train.'

She had her hand on the drawer. 'Don't you want to wait for my mother?'

'No, I must go.' I walked to the door. The girl pulled the drawer open. 'I can find my own way.'

As I walked down the passage I heard the jingling of spoons and forks.

At the corner of the road I looked up at the name-plate. *Marconi Street*, it said. I had been at Number 46. The address was correct. But now I didn't want to remember it any more. I wouldn't go back there because the objects that are linked in your memory with the familiar life of former times instantly lose their value when, severed from them, you see them again in strange surroundings. And what should I have done with them in a small rented room where the shreds of black-out paper still hung along the windows and no more than a handful of cutlery fitted in the narrow table drawer?

I resolved to forget the address. Of all the things I had to forget, that would be the easiest.



1. 'Have you come back?' said the woman. 'I thought that no one had come back.' Does this statement give some clue about the story? If yes, what is it?
2. The story is divided into pre-War and post-War times. What hardships do you think the girl underwent during these times?
3. Why did the narrator of the story want to forget the address?
4. 'The Address' is a story of human predicament that follows war. Comment.

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11073CH03



3

Ranga's Marriage

Masti Venkatesha Iyengar

Ranga, the accountant's son, is one of the rare breed among the village folk who has been to the city to pursue his studies. When he returns to his village from the city of Bangalore, the crowds mill around his house to see whether he has changed or not. His ideas about marriage are now quite different—or are they?

WHEN you see this title, some of you may ask, "Ranga's Marriage?" Why not "Ranganatha Vivaha" or "Ranganatha Vijaya?" Well, yes. I know I could have used some other mouth-filling one like "Jagannatha Vijaya" or "Girija Kalyana." But then, this is not about Jagannatha's victory or Girija's wedding. It's about our own Ranga's marriage and hence no fancy title. Hosahalli is our village. You must have heard of it. No? What a pity! But it is not your fault. There is no mention of it in any geography book. Those sahibs in England, writing in English, probably do not know that such a place exists, and so make no mention of it. Our own people too forget about it. You know how it is—they are like a flock of sheep. One sheep walks into a pit, the rest blindly follow it. When both, the sahibs in England and our own geographers, have not referred to it, you can not expect the poor cartographer to remember to put it on the map, can you? And so there is not even the shadow of our village on any map.

Sorry, I started somewhere and then went off in another direction. If the state of Mysore is to Bharatarvarsha what the



sweet *karigadabu*¹ is to a festive meal, then Hosahalli is to Mysore State what the filling is to the *karigadabu*. What I have said is absolutely true, believe me. I will not object to your questioning it but I will stick to my opinion. I am not the only one who speaks glowingly of Hosahalli. We have a doctor in our place. His name is Gundabhata. He agrees with me. He has been to quite a few places. No, not England. If anyone asks him whether he has been there, he says, "No, *annayya*², I have left that to you. Running around like a flea-pestered dog, is not for me. I have seen a few places in my time, though." As a matter of fact, he has seen many.

We have some mango trees in our village. Come visit us, and I will give you a raw mango from one of them. Do not eat it. Just take a bite. The sourness is sure to go straight to your *brahmarandhra*³. I once took one such fruit home and a chutney was made out of it. All of us ate it. The cough we suffered from, after that! It was when I went for the cough medicine, that the doctor told me about the special quality of the fruit.

Just as the mango is special, so is everything else around our village. We have a creeper growing in the ever-so-fine water of the village pond. Its flowers are a feast to behold. Get two leaves from the creeper when you go to the pond for your bath, and you will not have to worry about not having leaves on which to serve the afternoon meal. You will say I am rambling. It is always like that when the subject of our village comes up. But enough. If any one of you would like to visit us, drop me a line. I will let you know where Hosahalli is and what things are like here. The best way of getting to know a place is to visit it, don't you agree?

What I am going to tell you is something that happened ten years ago. We did not have many people who knew English, then. Our village accountant was the first one who had enough courage to send his son to Bangalore to study. It is different now. There are many who know English. During the holidays, you come across them on every street, talking in English. Those days, we did not speak in English, nor did we bring in English words while talking

¹ a South Indian fried sweet filled with coconut and sugar

² (in Kannada) a respectful term for an elder

³ (in Kannada) the soft part in a child's head where skull bones join later. Here, used as an idiomatic expression to convey the extreme potency of sourness.



in Kannada. What has happened is disgraceful, believe me. The other day, I was in Rama Rao's house when they bought a bundle of firewood. Rama Rao's son came out to pay for it. He asked the woman, "How much should I give you?" "Four pice," she said. The boy told her he did not have any "change", and asked her to come the next morning. The poor woman did not understand the English word "change" and went away muttering to herself. I too did not know. Later, when I went to Ranga's house and asked him, I understood what it meant.

This priceless commodity, the English language, was not so widespread in our village a decade ago. That was why Ranga's homecoming was a great event. People rushed to his doorstep announcing, "The accountant's son has come," "The boy who had gone to Bangalore for his studies is here, it seems," and "Come, Ranga is here. Let's go and have a look."

Attracted by the crowd, I too went and stood in the courtyard and asked, "Why have all these people come? There's no performing monkey here."

A boy, a fellow without any brains, said, loud enough for everyone to hear, "What are you doing here, then?" A youngster, immature and without any manners. Thinking that all these things were now of the past, I kept quiet.

Seeing so many people there, Ranga came out with a smile on his face. Had we all gone inside, the place would have turned into what people call the Black Hole of Calcutta. Thank God it did not. Everyone was surprised to see that Ranga was the same as he had been six months ago, when he had first left our village. An old lady who was near him, ran her hand over his chest, looked into his eyes and said, "The *janewara*⁴ is still there. He hasn't lost his caste." She went away soon after that. Ranga laughed.

Once they realised that Ranga still had the same hands, legs, eyes and nose, the crowd melted away, like a lump of sugar in a child's mouth. I continued to stand there. After everyone had gone, I asked, "How are you, Rangappa? Is everything well with you?" It was only then that Ranga noticed me. He came near me and did a *namaskara* respectfully, saying, "I am all right, with your blessings."

I must draw your attention to this aspect of Ranga's character. He knew when it would be to his advantage to talk to someone

⁴ (in Kannada) the sacred thread worn by Brahmins



and rightly assessed people's worth. As for his *namaskara* to me, he did not do it like any present-day boy—with his head up towards the sun, standing stiff like a pole without joints, jerking his body as if it was either a wand or a walking stick. Nor did he merely fold his hands. He bent low to touch my feet. "May you get married soon," I said, blessing him. After exchanging a few pleasantries, I left.

That afternoon, when I was resting, Ranga came to my house with a couple of oranges in his hand. A generous, considerate fellow. It would be a fine thing to have him marry, settle down and be of service to society, I thought.

For a while we talked about this and that. Then I came to the point. "Rangappa, when do you plan to get married?"

"I am not going to get married now," he said.

"Why not?"

"I need to find the right girl. I know an officer who got married only six months ago. He is about thirty and his wife is twenty-five, I am told. They will be able to talk lovingly to each other. Let's say I married a very young girl. She may take my words spoken in love as words spoken in anger. Recently, a troupe in Bangalore staged the play *Shakuntala*. There is no question of Dushyantha falling in love with Shakuntala if she were young, like the present-day brides, is there? What would have happened to Kalidasa's play? If one gets married, it should be to a girl who is mature. Otherwise, one should remain a bachelor. That's why I am not marrying now."

"Is there any other reason?"

"A man should marry a girl he admires. What we have now are arranged marriages. How can one admire a girl with milk stains on one side of her face and wetness on the other, or so young that she doesn't even know how to bite her fingers?"

"One a neem fruit, the other, a bittergourd."

"Exactly!" Ranga said, laughing.

I was distressed that the boy who I thought would make a good husband, had decided to remain a bachelor. After chatting for a little longer, Ranga left. I made up my mind right then, that I would get him married.

Rama Rao's niece, a pretty girl of eleven, had come to stay with him. She was from a big town, so she knew how to play the veena and the harmonium. She also had a sweet voice. Both



her parents had died, and her uncle had brought her home. Ranga was just the boy for her, and she, the most suitable bride for him.

Since I was a frequent visitor to Rama Rao's place, the girl was quite free with me. I completely forgot to mention her name! Ratna, it was. The very next morning I went to their house and told Rama Rao's wife, "I'll send some buttermilk for you. Ask Ratna to fetch it."

Ratna came. It was a Friday, so she was wearing a grand saree. I told her to sit in my room and requested her to sing a song. I sent for Ranga. While she was singing the song—*Krishnamurthy, in front of my eyes*—Ranga reached the door. He stopped at the threshold. He did not want the singing to stop, but was curious to see the singer. Carefully, he peeped in. The light coming into the room was blocked. Ratna looked up and seeing a stranger there, abruptly stopped.

Suppose you buy the best quality mango. You eat it slowly, savouring its peel, before biting into the juicy flesh. You do not want to waste any part of it. Before you take another bite, the fruit slips out of your hand and falls to the ground. How do you feel? Ranga's face showed the same disappointment when the singing stopped.

"You sent for me?" he asked as he came in and sat on a chair.

Ratna stood at a distance, her head lowered. Ranga repeatedly glanced at her. Once, our eyes met, and he looked very embarrassed. No one spoke for a long while.

"It was my coming in that stopped the singing. Let me leave."

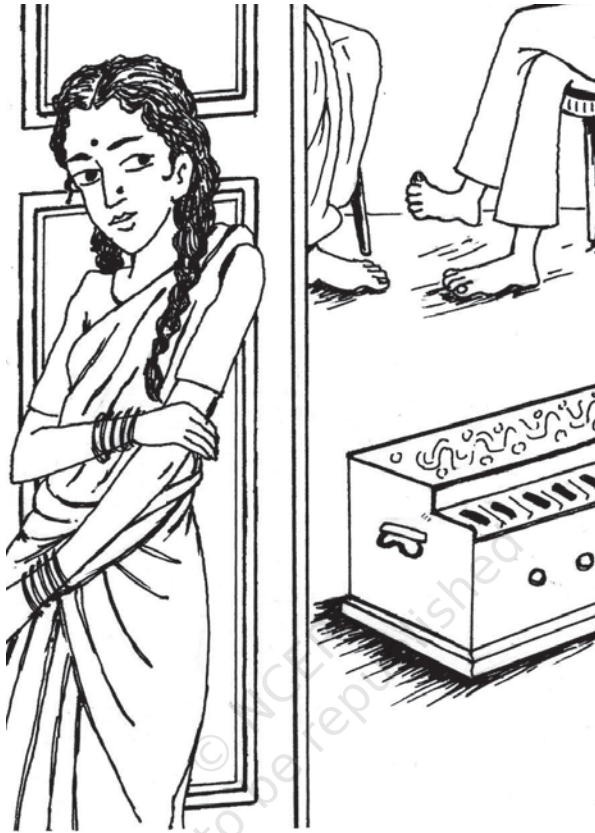
Words, mere words! The fellow said he would leave but did not make a move. How can one expect words to match actions in these days of Kaliyuga?

Ratna ran inside, overcome by shyness.

After a while, Ranga asked, "Who is that girl, swami?"

"Who's that inside?" the lion wanted to know. The he-goat who had taken shelter in the temple replied, "Does it matter who I am? I am a poor animal who has already eaten nine lions. I have vowed to eat one more. Tell me, are you male or female?" The lion fled the place in fear, it seems.

Like the he-goat, I said, "What does it matter to either of us who she is? I'm already married and you aren't the marrying kind."



Very hopefully, he asked, “She isn’t married, then?” His voice did not betray his excitement but I knew it was there.

“She was married a year ago.”

His face shrivelled like a roasted brinjal. After a while, Ranga left, saying, “I must go, I have work at home.”

I went to our Shastri the next morning and told him, “Keep everything ready to read the stars. I’ll come later.” I tutored him in all that I wanted him to say.

I found no change in Ranga when I met him that afternoon. “What’s the matter? You seem to be lost in thought,” I said.

“Nothing, nothing’s wrong, believe me.”

“Headache? Come, let’s go and see a doctor.”



"I have no headache. I'm my usual self."

"I went through the same thing when the process of choosing a girl for me was going on. But I don't think that that could be a reason for your present condition."

Ranga stared at me.

"Come, let's go and see Shastri," I suggested. "We will find out whether Guru and Shani are favourable for you or not."

Ranga accompanied me without any protest. As soon as Shastri saw me, he exclaimed, "What a surprise, Shyama! Haven't seen you for a long time."

Shyama is none other than your servant, the narrator of this tale.

I got angry and shouted, "What? Only this morning..." Shastri completed my sentence, "You finished all your work and are now free to visit me." Had he not done so, I would have ruined our plan by bursting like grains that are kept in the sun to dry. I was extremely careful of what I said afterwards.

Shastri turned to Ranga. "When did the young son of our accountant clerk come home? What can I do for him? It's very rarely that he visits us."

"Take out your paraphernalia. Our Rangappa seems to have something on his mind. Can you tell us what's worrying him? Shall we put your science of astrology to the test?"

There was authority in my voice as I spoke to Shastri. He took out two sheets of paper, some *cowries* and a book of palmyra leaves, saying, "Ours is an ancient science, *ayya*. There's a story to it... But I won't tell you that story now. This is not a *harikatha* which allows you to tell a story within a story... You may get bored. I'll tell it to you some other time."

Shastri moved his lips fast as he counted on his fingers and then asked, "What's your star?" Ranga didn't know. "Never mind," Shastri indicated with a shake of his head. He did some more calculations before saying in a serious tone, "It's about a girl."

I had been controlling my laughter all this while. But now I burst out laughing. I turned to Ranga. "Exactly what I had said."

"Who is the girl?" It was your humble servant who asked the question.

Shastri thought for a while before replying, "She probably has the name of something found in the ocean."

"Kamala?"

"Maybe."



“Could it be Pachchi, moss?”

“Must it be moss if it's not Kamala? Why not pearl or ratna, the precious stone?”

“Ratna? The girl in Rama Rao's house is Ratna. Tell me, is there any chance of our negotiations bearing fruit?”

“Definitely,” he said, after thinking for some time.

There was surprise on Ranga's face. And some happiness. I noticed it.

“But that girl is married...” I said. Then I turned to him. His face had fallen.

“I don't know all that. There may be some other girl who is suitable. I only told you what our *shastra* indicated,” Shastri said.

We left the place. On the way, we passed by Rama Rao's house. Ratna was standing at the door. I went in alone and came out a minute later.

“Surprising. This girl isn't married, it seems. Someone told me the other day that she was. What Shastri told us has turned out to be true after all! But Rangappa, I can't believe that you have been thinking of her. Swear on the name of Madhavacharya⁵ and tell me, is it true what Shastri said?”

I do not know whether anyone else would have been direct. Ranga admitted, “There's greater truth in that *shastra* than we imagine. What he said is absolutely true.”

Shastri was at the well when I went there that evening. I said, “So Shastrigale, you repeated everything I had taught you without giving rise to any suspicion. What a marvellous *shastra* yours is!” He didn't like it at all.

“What are you saying? What you said to me was what I could have found out myself from the *shastras*. Don't forget, I developed on the hints you had given me.”

Tell me, is this what a decent man says?

Rangappa had come the other day to invite me for dinner. “What's the occasion?” I asked.

“It's Shyama's birthday. He is three.”

“It's not a nice name — Shyama,” I said. “I'm like a dark piece of oil-cake. Why did you have to give that golden child of yours such a name? What a childish couple you are, Ratna and you! I

⁵ an exponent of Vedantic philosophy from South India



know, I know, it is the English custom of naming the child after someone you like... Your wife is eight months pregnant now. Who's there to help your mother to cook?"

"My sister has come with her."

I went there for dinner. Shyama rushed to me when I walked in and put his arms round my legs. I kissed him on his cheek and placed a ring on his tiny little finger.

Allow me to take leave of you, reader. I am always here, ready to serve you.

You were not bored, I hope?

READING WITH INSIGHT

1. Comment on the influence of English—the language and the way of life—on Indian life as reflected in the story. What is the narrator's attitude to English?
2. Astrologers' perceptions are based more on hearsay and conjecture than what they learn from the study of the stars. Comment with reference to the story.
3. Indian society has moved a long way from the way the marriage is arranged in the story. Discuss.
4. What kind of a person do you think the narrator is?



11073CH04



4

Albert Einstein at School

Patrick Pringle

Albert Einstein (1879–1955) is regarded as the greatest physicist since Newton. In the following extract from *The Young Einstein*, the well-known biographer, Patrick Pringle, describes the circumstances which led to Albert Einstein's expulsion from a German school.

"In what year, Einstein," asked the history teacher, "did the Prussians defeat the French at Waterloo?"

"I don't know, sir,"

"Why don't you know? You've been told it often enough."

"I must have forgotten."

"Did you ever try to learn?" asked Mr Braun.

"No, sir," Albert replied with his usual unthinking honesty.

"Why not?"

"I can't see any point in learning dates. One can always look them up in a book."

Mr Braun was speechless for a few moments.

"You amaze me, Einstein," he said at last. "Don't you realise that one can always look most things up in books? That applies to all the facts you learn at school."

"Yes, sir."

"Then I suppose you don't see any point in learning facts."

"Frankly, sir, I don't," said Albert.

"Then you don't believe in education at all?"

"Oh, yes, sir, I do. I don't think learning facts is education."



“In that case,” said the history teacher with heavy sarcasm, “perhaps you will be so kind as to tell the class the Einstein theory of education.”

Albert flushed.

“I think it’s not facts that matter, but ideas,” he said. “I don’t see the point in learning the dates of battles, or even which of the armies killed more men. I’d be more interested in learning why those soldiers were trying to kill each other.”

“That’s enough,” Mr Braun’s eyes were cold and cruel. “We don’t want a lecture from you, Einstein. You will stay in for an extra period today, although I don’t imagine it will do you much good. It won’t do the school any good, either. You are a disgrace. I don’t know why you continue to come.”

“It’s not my wish, sir,” Albert pointed out.

“Then you are an ungrateful boy and ought to be ashamed of yourself. I suggest you ask your father to take you away.”

Albert felt miserable when he left school that afternoon; not that it had been a bad day — most days were bad now, anyway — but because he had to go back to the hateful place the next morning. He only wished his father would take him away, but there was no point in even asking. He knew what the answer would be: he would have to stay until he had taken his diploma.

Going back to his lodgings did not cheer him up. His father had so little money to spare that Albert had been found a room in one of the poorest quarters of Munich. He did not mind the bad food and lack of comfort, or even the dirt and squalor, but he hated the atmosphere of slum violence. His landlady beat her children regularly, and every Saturday her husband came drunk and beat her.

“But at least you have a room of your own, which is more than I can say,” said Yuri when he called round in the evening.

“At least you live among civilised human beings, even if they are all poor students,” said Albert.

“They are not all civilised,” Yuri replied. “Did you not hear that one of them was killed last week in a duel?”

“And what happens to the one who killed him?”

“Nothing, of course. He is even proud of it. His only worry is that the authorities have told him not to fight any more duels. He’s upset about this because he hasn’t a single scar on his face to wear for the rest of his life as a badge of honour.”

“Ugh!” exclaimed Albert. “And these are the students.”

“Well, you’ll be a student one day,” said Yuri.



"I doubt it," said Albert glumly. "I don't think I'll ever pass the exams for the school diploma."

He told his cousin Elsa the same next time she came to Munich. Normally she lived in Berlin, where her father had a business.

"I'm sure you could learn enough to pass the exams, Albert, if you tried," she said, "I know lots of boys who are much more stupid than you are, who get through. They say you don't have to know anything—you don't have to understand what you're taught, just be able to repeat it in the exams."

"That's the whole trouble," said Albert. "I'm no good at learning things by heart."

"You don't need to be good at it. Anyone can learn like a parrot. You just don't try. And yet I always see you with a book under your arm," added Elsa. "What is the one you're reading?"

"A book on geology."

"Geology? Rocks and things? Do you learn that?"

"No. We have hardly any science at school."

"Then why are you studying it?"

"Because I like it. Isn't that a good enough reason?"

Elsa sighed.

"You're right, of course, Albert," she said. "But it won't help with your diploma."

Apart from books on science his only comfort was music, and he played his violin regularly until his landlady asked him to stop.

"That wailing gets on my nerves," she said. "There's enough noise in this house, with all the kids howling."

Albert was tempted to point out that most of the time it was she who made them howl, but he decided it was better to say nothing.

"I must get away from here," he told Yuri, after six months alone in Munich. "It is absurd that I should go on like this. In the end it will turn out I have been wasting my father's money and everyone's time. It will be better for all if I stop now."

"And then what will you do?" Yuri asked.

"I don't know. If I go to Milan I'm afraid my father will send me back. Unless..." His eyes gleamed with a sudden idea. "Yuri, do you know any friendly doctors?"

"I know a lot of medical students, and some of them are friendly," said Yuri. "Doctor, no. I've never had enough money to go to one. Why?"

"Suppose," said Albert, "that I had a nervous breakdown. Suppose a doctor would say it's bad for me to go to school, and I need to get right away from it?"



"I can't imagine a doctor saying that," said Yuri.

"I must try," said Albert, "to find a doctor who specialises in nerves."

"There are plenty of them," Yuri told him. He hesitated for a moment, and then added, rather reluctantly, "I'll ask some of the students if they know one, if you like."

"Will you? Oh, thank you, Yuri," Albert's eyes were shining.

"Wait a moment, I haven't found one yet..."

"Oh, but you will!"

"And if I do I don't know if he'll be willing to help you..."

"He will, he will," declared Albert. "I'm going to have a real nervous breakdown, to make it easier for him." He laughed merrily.

"I've never seen you looking less nervous," remarked Yuri.

"A day or two at school will soon put that right." Albert assured him.

Certainly he had lost his high spirits when Yuri saw him next.

"I can't stand it any longer," he said, "I really shall have a nervous breakdown that will satisfy any doctor."

"Keep it up, then," said Yuri. "I've found a doctor for you."

"You have?" Albert's face lit up. "Oh, good. When can I see him?"

"I have an appointment for you for tomorrow evening," Yuri said. "Here's the address."

He handed Albert a piece of paper.

"Doctor Ernst Weil—is he a specialist in nervous troubles?" asked Albert.

"Not exactly," Yuri admitted. "As a matter of fact he only qualified as a doctor last week. You may even be his first patient!"

"You knew him as a student, then?"

"I've known Ernst for years." Yuri hesitated for a few moments. "He's not a fool," he warned Albert.

"What do you mean?"

"Don't try to pull the wool over his eyes¹, that's all. Be frank with him, but don't pretend you've got what you haven't. Not that you'd deceive anyone." Yuri added. "You're the world's worst liar."

Albert spent the next day wondering what to tell the doctor. When the time arrived for his appointment he had worried over it so much that he really was quite nervous.

¹ cheat or deceive him



"I don't really know how to describe my trouble, Dr Weil," he began.

"Don't try," said the young doctor with a friendly smile. "Yuri has already given me a history of the case."

"Oh! What did he say?"

"Only that you want me to think you have had a nervous breakdown, and say that you mustn't go back to that school."

"Oh dear." Albert's face fell. "He shouldn't have told you that."

"Why not? Isn't it true, then?"

"Yes, that's the trouble. Now you'll say there's nothing wrong with me, and you'll tell me to go back to school."

"Don't be too sure of that," said the doctor. "As a matter of fact I am pretty sure you are in a nervous state about that school."

"But I haven't told you anything about it," said Albert, wide-eyed. "How can you know that?"

"Because you wouldn't have come to see me about this if you hadn't been pretty close to a nervous breakdown, that's why. Now," said the doctor briskly, "if I certify that you have had a nervous breakdown, and must stay away from school for a while, what will you do?"

"I'll go to Italy," said Albert. "To Milan, where my parents are."

"And what will you do there?"

"I'll try to get into an Italian college or institute."

"How can you, without a diploma?"

"I'll ask my mathematics teacher to give me something about my work, and perhaps that will be enough. I've learnt all the maths they teach at school, and a bit more," he added when Dr Weil looked doubtful.

"Well, it's up to you," he said. "I doubt if it will come off, but I can see you're not doing yourself or anyone else much good by staying here. How long would you like me to say you should stay away from school? Would six months be all right?"

"This is very kind of you."

"It's nothing. I've only just stopped being a student myself, so I know how you feel. Here you are." Dr Weil handed him the certificate, "And the best of luck."

"How much..."

"Nothing, if you have anything to spare, invite Yuri to a meal. He's a good friend of mine, and yours too, I think,"

Albert had no money to spare, but he pretended he had and took Yuri out to supper.



"Isn't it wonderful?" he said after showing Yuri the certificate.

"Yes, it's fine," Yuri agreed. "Six months is a good period. This way you won't actually be leaving the school so if the worst comes to the worst you'll be able to come back and carry on for your diploma."

"I'll never go back to that place," Albert assured him. "I'm going to take this certificate to the head teacher tomorrow, and that will be the end of it."

"Don't forget to get a reference in writing from your mathematics teacher first," Yuri reminded him.

Mr Koch willingly gave Albert the reference he wanted.

"If I say I can't teach you any more, and probably you'll soon be able to teach me, will that be all right?" he asked.

"That's saying too much, sir," said Albert.

"It's only the truth. But alright. I'll put it more seriously."

It was still a glowing reference, and Mr Koch made the point that Albert was ready immediately to enter a college or institute for the study of higher mathematics.

"I'm sorry you're leaving us, although you're wasting your time in my class," he said.

"It's almost the only class where I'm not wasting my time," said Albert. "But how did you know I'm leaving, sir?"

"You wouldn't have asked me for this reference otherwise."

"I thought you'd wonder..."

"There's nothing to wonder about, Einstein. I knew you were going to leave before you knew yourself."

Albert was puzzled. What did the teacher mean?

He soon found out. Before he had a chance to ask for an interview with the head teacher, he was summoned to the head's room.

"Well, it saves me the trouble of having to wait an hour or two outside," he thought.

He hardly bothered to wonder why he had been sent for, but vaguely supposed he was to be punished again for bad work and laziness. Well, he had finished with punishments.

"I'm not going to punish you," the head teacher said, to Albert's surprise. "Your work is terrible, and I'm not prepared to have you here any longer, Einstein. I want you to leave the school now."

"Leave school now?" repeated Albert, dazed.

"That is what I said."

"You mean," said Albert, "that I am to be expelled?"



“You can take it that way if you wish, Einstein.” The head teacher was not mincing words. “The simplest thing will be for you to go of your own accord, and then the question won’t arise.”

“But,” said Albert, “what crime have I committed?”

“Your presence in the classroom makes it impossible for the teacher to teach and for the other pupils to learn. You refuse to learn, you are in constant rebellion, and no serious work can be done while you are there.”

Albert felt the medical certificate almost burning a hole in his pocket.

“I was going to leave, anyway,” he said.

“Then we are in agreement at least, Einstein,” the head said.

For a moment Albert was tempted to tell the man what he thought of him and of his school. Then he stopped himself. Without another word, holding his head high, he stalked out.

“Shut the door after you!” shouted the head.

Albert ignored him.

He walked straight on, out of the school where he had spent five miserable years, without turning his head to give it a last look. He could not think of anyone he wanted to say goodbye to.

Indeed, Yuri was almost the only person in Munich he felt like seeing before he left the town he had come to hate almost as much as the school. Elsa was back in Berlin, and he had no other real friends.

“Goodbye—and good luck,” said Yuri when he left. “You are going to a wonderful country, I think. I hope you will be happier there.”

1. What do you understand of Einstein’s nature from his conversations with his history teacher, his mathematics teacher and the head teacher?
2. The school system often curbs individual talents. Discuss.
3. How do you distinguish between information gathering and insight formation?