

# Stream of Unconsciousness

*by Sharanya Manivannan*

In his dream, he was choking on an ice cube. He didn't know what would happen first — if it would melt or he would die. He had been watching too much David Lynch lately. He called to tell her about the dream. She said, “You have a tendency of waiting for your problems to disappear. And sometimes they melt away. But there are times when unless you cough them out, no matter how painful for you or how much effort it takes, they'll kill you, your problems.”

He had moved countries and cut off his hair. He was going to get therapy. He talked psychobabble now. More importantly, he paid attention when she did the same. It didn't amuse her, as it could have, which meant she still cared. Sometimes she felt like she had his balls in her purse, and was desperate to return them, but that would involve acknowledging she had taken them in the first place. He was a watch collector, a failed auteur, a misogynist. She was the kind of woman who would crack a rib if someone looked at her too sweetly, and cry for six months if he didn't, a masochist. They fit together, but with some effort, like Tetris blocks.

He was very far away. She didn't smoke anymore. They were forever in freefall, forever maneuvering their positions in the hope they could land in some sort of coordination. Or avoid the other completely. They shared the hate of siblings. They were both alcoholics.

A million years before, a stranger had stopped them both in front of her college and told him, “This is a burden for the rest of your life. Your eyebrows and hers. For the rest of your lives.” Then he walked away. That made her very happy for a long time.

That was a million years ago. And now she saw the stranger was right. Burden. It was not a word lost in translation. Burden. He had seen it. He had known.

