



Awakening

Riya Gandhi

I want a sari.

I want it silky and barely bejeweled,

I want to affix the rose-pink drape across my right shoulder,

I want to wear it, Lover, as your fingers brush my calves,

kneeling and pleating the skirt around me

in this makeshift bridal suite.

I want it cropped and neckline cut deep,

this sari, skin bared for all to gawk,

none to speak. After you sneak away

post-peck of the forehead, I want to walk out the suite

and down the banquet hall, mother's hand in mine,

past the bar and veg buffet,

whiffs of paneer, mung, and ringan wafting up from half-lidded boxes,

past tables of uncles whose names I don't recall sipping scotch

from silver flasks, past the mothers and grandmothers

cradling kids on their laps, force-feeding reddish curry,

freshly painted nails tinted orange by turmeric and garam masala.

I want to cross the altar seven times with your eyes

set straight on mine, my drape wedded to your suit.

I want that sari bad.

I want it to shimmer in
your acceptance of me,
to show you how beautiful this life could be,
and will be,
now that I know. When I find it, I'll let you
adorn me in the rose-pink sheets,
and I'll bare this silk like bone, like tissue, like skin
like everything hidden inside
suddenly surfacing.

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