

ONE

Arundhati surveyed the set-up for the evening—just one last time. The walnut brown teakwood furniture looked inviting. Lilies bloomed in a porcelain vase placed on a console table. The marble floors gleamed. She glanced over at her prized possessions, her little shrine to literature. Airtight containers sitting on the mantelpiece held a hairband of Sylvia Plath's, Vincent Van Gogh's pipe, and Balzac's coffee cups.

“Ah! My ppprrecious.” She whispered as she ran her fingers over the containers.

Arundhati lived in a stately villa in the heart of Malabar Hills in Mumbai with her parents. An only child, Arundhati was allowed to indulge her literary passion at the grandest scale possible by her father Pradeep Basu, thanks to his thriving fertilizer factories in Mumbai.

She took a deep breath and looked at the bookcases that lined the rust-colored walls. The work of an eighteenth century thinker caught her eye. She cradled the hardbound copy in her hand. In the main hall, the chalet style cuckoo clock chimed six. *I hope Vishwas has set out the footstools on the balcony. And I hope that he's asked Chef Rustom to revamp the menu. Huh! I won't have tacky bread pakoras served at my literati gathering*, she thought as she parted the delicate drapes that hung like scrolls of parchment and hurried to the balcony.

Vishwas, the housekeeper, was wheeling in the hostess trolley laden with appetizers. “Arundhati baby, all ready. I asked Chef Rustom to replace the *pakoras* with spicy salmon rolls.”

“Excellent! Thanks Vishwas. You are the best!” She tilted her head to the side and looked out at the stunning sea view. “Nobody throws parties like me. No lowbrow Bollywood talk or soggy snacks will be entertained at my literati soiree.”

* * *

“Welcome. Welcome to another celebration of art, poetry and life. Welcome to the first fortnightly literati Friday evening of 2011, folks.” Twenty-four eyes turned towards her.

Dressed in an olive-colored, silk *kurti*, Arundhati surveyed the guests that she had handpicked with care. Deepa and Nisha were regulars; the three of them a close-knit girl gang. In their world they referred to each other as the ‘artsy sisters’. Arundhati was the impetuous and gutsy one; Deepa was practical and enthusiastic and Nisha was quiet and compassionate. They had such distinctive personalities, yet they had been inseparable since high school.

“What a stunning turnout. The ‘Who’s Who’ of St Paul’s literary scene are here today. How did you get Divya? She never attends any literary events. Oooo...look there’s Geetanjali, the prize-winning poet. How did you manage, my dear?”

Arundhati beamed. Deepa was right; gathered that Friday were short-story winners, class toppers and prize-winning poets—all from St Paul’s College, the most elite college in town with the best English literature program.

“Persuasion is one of my many talents, *ma cherie*. Besides, only a St Paul genius can understand another.”

Arundhati turned to her guests, kicking off the evening with a dramatic recitation.

“I’m nobody! Who are you? Are you nobody, too? Then there’s a pair of us—don’t tell! They’d advertise—you know!”

Arundhati widened her kohl-lined eyes, threw back her shoulders and continued, “I shall never get out of this! There are two of me now; this new absolutely white person and the old yellow one.”

Her voice dropped a dramatic notch, “Any guesses, people? A glimmer of an idea? Any at all?”

The audience remained silent. Then Deepa squealed, “Plath, Plath of course! Are we discussing her works today?”

Arundhati flashed a smile at her friend. “Deeps, you are close—yes, the first lines are by Sylvia Plath and the second by Emily Dickinson. Today we’re going to explore the image of the divided self and also the complex issue of identity.

There were voices, whispers and sighs. Arundhati’s famous literary tea party had set sail.

At the end of the evening, glowingly happy, she raised her glass for a toast, "To many more engaging and exciting literary evenings. Cheers, everyone!"

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"We have a movie club, a drama club and even a nature club. What about literary enthusiasts like ourselves? Where do we go?" Arundhati had addressed a bunch of like-minded students at St Paul's two years ago. It was the start of literati fever, led by Arundhati and her artsy sisters.

"How about the rules for literati? What do you have in mind?" The girls asked Arundhati as they gathered on her balcony one balmy summer evening.

"Already thought of that. Listen to this," she said. "We will hold literati evenings every other Friday. Every month, a list of topics will be circulated among the interested and voted on. The topics that get a majority will be selected and announced on the day of the meeting by me. How does it sound? Shall we seal it then?" Deepa and Nisha had nodded.

A red carpet welcome was laid out for literary snobbery, writing credentials and college prizewinners at literati. Phonies and wannabes were strictly off limits. All attendees had to possess an undying love for western literature, with a healthy dollop of admiration for American writers and poets such as Hemingway. Familiarity with Sylvia Plath, whom Arundhati considered the pinnacle of poetry, was mandatory. And no Bollywood related themes or Indian writers would be entertained.

* * *

The next two weeks flew by. Before Arundhati realized, it was literati Friday again. By coincidence it was also the day the Ithaca Poetry Contest winner and the Founder's Day presenters would be announced.

The Ithaca Poetry Contest was an annual contest organized by St Paul's College. Only poems par excellence made to the shortlist. Arundhati was the reigning contest winner, having won three years in a row.

At the sound of her alarm clock, Arundhati leapt out of her four-poster bed and rushed through her morning rituals. She wore her favorite rust-colored *kurti* and was ready to take center stage.

“Ma, guess what? Exciting times ahead! The Ithaca winner is to be announced today. And not just that—Professor Nadkarni is going to pick presenters for Founder’s Day,” Arundhati said as she grabbed a croissant from the breakfast hot plate and poured herself a cup of tea from the silver tea service.

“Oh, is it? Good luck, *beta*,” Jayshree Basu said, layering her crunchy rye toast with scrambled eggs. Jayshree Basu was an artist and sculptor, well known in the city’s cultural circuit.

“Ha! Wishes are for losers. You may want to congratulate the Ithaca contest winner in advance, Ma. As for Founder’s Day, I can smell a solo act for me. I’ve done it for the past three years—now it’s time to shine alone.

By the time Arundhati pulled into the college parking lot, a robust sun was hovering over St Paul’s College. In the bright light, the heritage building looked hung over. A stubble of moss layered its intricately designed clusters of columns and spires, giving it a rugged look. Amidst all this, the campus precincts looked greener. But Arundhati noticed none of it. Her eye was on the prize that lay beyond those yellow limestone walls.

She went straight to the noticeboard and found the Ithaca poetry announcement. *Aha!* The moment had arrived. She read: ‘The 2011 Ithaca Poetry Contest Winner is D. G. Beckett’.

“Huh? D. G. Who?” Her tongue stiffened around the last syllables. *What about Arundhati Basu—the three-time winner?* Arundhati thought on her way to the classroom for her first lecture.

It was Professor Vimla Nadkarni’s lecture. The classroom was packed. Professor Nadkarni’s popularity was no accident. She was known to encourage illuminating discussions and opinions among her students. As always, she opened the floor for discussions at the end of the lecture, but something was amiss. The class knew it. And so did Professor Nadkarni.

“Arundhati, are you okay? You don’t look too well. Why are you so quiet? I thought metaphysical poetry was your favorite?” The professor’s voice sounded less thunderous than usual.

“Oh, it’s nothing, Professor. It’s still my favorite,” Arundhati said, trying to look upbeat. She continued, “In fact, I think this line from John Donne's poem...”

“Don’t you know, Professor? Arundhati, the literary queen, has been dethroned. We have a new Ithaca Contest Winner. Some D. G. Beckett. A new loser...” Aaron Jacob interrupted her.

There were whispers and sighs in the room. Both Professor Nadkarni and Arundhati glared at him.

“Thank you, Aaron. If only you paid as much attention to your textbooks as you do to college gossip,” Professor Nadkarni said crushingly. She continued, “Arundhati, don’t be so hard on yourself. This is life—sometimes you win, sometimes you lose. It’s all part of the game? So be a sport and cheer up. After all, it is just a contest.” Professor Nadkarni tried to soothe her favorite student.

Cheer up!?! Just a contest? Doesn’t Professor Nadkarni know me at all? Doesn’t she know, after three years, that I always win? What is wrong with these people? Some new kid cannot just waltz in and take away my glory just like that. She wanted to scream.

Professor Nadkarni turned to the class and asked. “By the way, who is D. G. Beckett? He has to be a St Paul student, maybe a senior?” Professor Nadkarni watched as the class sat up in interest.

Aha! D. G. Beckett was certainly among them. He was no stranger. He could be a familiar classmate or even a friend.

Arundhati scrutinized each classmate, *Nah! None of her classmates seemed the D. G. Beckett type. It has to be a senior—a third year student, for sure,* she was confident. Blueprints of ‘How to catch D. G. Beckett’ appeared in her brain.

The class wound up a few minutes before the final lecture bell that day. It was a sign—everyone knew that the Founder’s Day announcement was underway. Founder’s Day was St Paul’s annual social extravaganza, a platform that showcased the talents and interests of the students. It was an honor to be considered. Each year every St Paulian secretly hoped that they would be among the chosen ones.

Professor Nadkarni put away her lecture notes, adjusted her spectacles, cleared her throat and peered down at her students. In anticipation of the announcement, Arundhati unclenched her hands. *Ah! Here it comes. Please, God, now is the moment to wave your wand for some poetic justice.*

Professor Nadkarni began, “Students, please pay attention. I have an important announcement. Shalini, please stop doodling. And Vijay, can you please stop thinking about your poems for a moment and focus?”

She paused and then continued, “Founder’s Day is coming up. It is exactly a month from now, which means there is sufficient time to prepare. Unlike previous years, this year, we are planning a theme-based program.”

She scanned her audience. There were vacant stares, intrigued eyes and fumbling hands. “Each batch will be given a theme. For second year students we have chosen the theme ‘Literary Love Stories of all Time’.

“After a meeting with the head of the department and other professors, we have selected Arundhati Basu and Nikhil Menon to give the introductory speech.” And she added, “I am very pleased to give Nikhil Menon this opportunity. His recent assignments have been thought-provoking and impressive. And I am sure he and Arundhati, our star pupil, can pool together their original ideas and come up with some interesting material.”

Arundhati’s ego went up in a puff of smoke. The lecture bell clanged. Nikhil Menon and impressive? The class blinked. Under Professor Nadkarni’s stern gaze, they gave the duo a weak round of applause before bursting into whispers.

From one corner of the classroom, Aaron Jacob hissed, “Well, this sounds like fun. Founder’s Day event, starring Sylvia Psycho and *Phattu* Turkey. Tan tara, tan tara!” Mimicking trumpet horns, he added, “Now this is one Founder’s Day I don’t want to miss. What say, guys?” He and his cronies broke into snide laughter.

“Stop making such stupid, clichéd statements, Dorian Gray. It makes me want to throw up. And all you laughing hyenas out there...pathetic behavior,” Arundhati said disdainfully.

Her barb found its mark. Aaron’s pretty face crumpled.

In the background, the blondies, Sheetal, Pamela and Rinky, blundered on, “*Kaun hai* Dorian Gray? Aaron’s pet name *hai kya*? Why does he have so much *khunas* in his eyes?” Sheetal, Pamela and Pinky were flaky college beauties who had bought the literature course with their respective businessmen dads’ bank balances. It was enough to bar them from most cliques, including Arundhati’s.

“Professor Nadkarni, please tell me this is a joke.” Arundhati caught up with her in the corridor.

“Joke? What do you mean?”

“I mean Nikhil. Don’t you remember how he messed up that presentation?”

“Ah! That. Come on, Arundhati—that was three years ago. It’s ancient history. He is a really good student with immense potential. I would suggest that you read one of his papers, especially on Indian writers. It is eye opening. I can mail it to you.”

Arundhati looked at Professor Nadkarni with disinterest.

“Trust me, it will work out—it might even be life-changing,” said Professor Nadkarni.

Read his papers...what nonsense—life-changing indeed!

Arundhati walked away from Professor Nadkarni towards the classroom.

I miss my girls—Deepa and Nisha. Arundhati thought as she gathered her bag. As she exited the classroom she stopped. *Well, let me at least catch a glimpse of my co-host. Where is he? Mr. Nikhil Menon.*

A mere ten feet away, a plain-looking boy with gangly limbs and unkempt hair was putting away his books. He looked up and Arundhati blinked. Nikhil Menon had the most expressive amber eyes that she had ever seen. They observed each other for a short moment.

And now there are two to tackle—an ordinary Nikhil and an extraordinary D. G. Beckett. Hmm...let’s see if either of them can keep up with me.



TWO

That evening, a shaken Arundhati enacted her version of a tragic play. She shuffled around the room hiding her trophies and previous writing laurels. *They're mocking me*, she thought. She ignored the endless pings from her Facebook page and BlackBerry (her long list of fans expressing their shock). She had officially hit rock bottom and sat surrounded by the neon blue light of depression.

Arundhati in mourning looked like a cross cockatoo that had lost some of its finest fluff in a wayward duel. After being treated like a diva and mollycoddled by friends and peers, she had lost perspective and couldn't believe she had lost out to an unknown newbie poet.

It is time to mop up the bitter tears of failure and disillusionment and move on, she told herself after a few hours of playing tragedy queen. A meditative peace filled her and she felt ready to face the poem that had outwitted her.

She opened up the prize-winning poem, reading it in one go at first, then again and again until she gasped, "Brilliant."

With every reading, Arundhati acquired a new layer of clarity. With every chiseled word in each perfectly carved line, D.G. Beckett had brought Van Gogh's painting, 'The Potato Eaters' alive.

THE POTATO EATERS

Gazing at the fields, clasping a barren easel to my heart,
I behold the common folks etching out patterns in the path.
Sweat shivers on their bodies, while tool-clasped hands rock the earth.
Dusk has set in, her shadowy fingers creeping across the fields.
The folks leave their hoes and trickle into their homes.
Amidst laughter, chatter and darkness, the table is set.
A dim gas lamp flickers, casts gigantic shadows on the soot-stained walls.
All are ready to sup.
In the glow of light, I see their ruddy eager faces and gnarled fingers,
feasting;

A platter of delectable potatoes: all ruddy and wrinkled, like the eaters themselves.

Silence slowly settles, while satiety oozes from their glinting eyes.

Dusk timidly exits, as night unveils her moonlit visage

Casting one last sweeping glance...

I realize that my cold canvas would be fertile again...

The Potato Eaters is one of the earliest paintings painted by Vincent Van Gogh, the great Dutch painter.

Arundhati recognized artistic flair. And far from being petty minded, she was an admirer of literary talent. She knew too well not to ignore it, or dismiss it with an envious shrug. On the contrary, she could not wait to find out the identity of this mystery winner. And she remembered what Professor Nadkarni had pointed out during her lecture. D. G. Beckett was from St Paul's.

She sat up with interest. *Who would know if D. G. Beckett was a guy or a girl? Who can I ask?* She scrolled up and down her Facebook page for an answer. *Aha!* Her cursor landed on Rudra Sinha, a senior student. The editor of Ithaca Magazine, Rudra was the perfect candidate to help her solve the mystery. But Rudra's mercurial nature did not really make her an ideal candidate for the Miss Congeniality title—she would have to be handled with caution.

Arundhati mustered the courage to ping Rudra.

'Hey Rudra, how are you? Just checked out the latest edition of Ithaca—it looks superb.'

Ten intense minutes later, Rudra replied.

'Thanks, Arundhati. Glad you liked it.'

A civil reply, thought Arundhati and decided to shoot her query.

'Rudra, I wanted to invite D. G. Beckett for my next literati meet. Is it possible for you to give me the person's details so that I can invite him/her personally.'

'He's a guy and from St Paul's. I don't have his real name or address. Gotta go. Work beckons.' And she was gone.

Arundhati stared at the computer screen. Her BlackBerry rang—it was Deepa.

'Oh, Arundhati. How are you holding up? Heard everything—the Ithaca contest fiasco, the Founder's Day program debacle—it must be so tough. We've been calling. Why weren't you answering your phone? We

feel terrible that we couldn't be there for you today. Here, Nisha wants to speak to you.”

Before Arundhati could reply, Nisha's tiny voice said, “I'm sorry about what happened—it came as a shock to all of us.”

Propped up in her chair, Arundhati sighed dramatically. “Thanks, for calling guys. It's been a tough day. It was a shocker, a real biggie.”

The girls' sympathy had a soothing effect on Arundhati and she felt much better after chatting to them. As she talked to them, she decided what she was going to do next.

Her focus and confidence returned as she laid out her two missions before them: Mission D. G. Beckett and Mission Nikhil. The first was to track down the anonymous genius interloper, and present him at literati as *her* discovery. Maybe they could even be friends. Arundhati chuckled at the thought. As for Nikhil, she would ensure that the weirdo ran squealing to the classroom with his ‘insightful’ assignments and begged Professor Nadkarni to take him off the event. The Founder's Day stage was going to be hers and she was not going to share with any Nikhil-Vikhil.

“Okay girls, put the phone on speaker and listen up—mission time. First, we tackle D.G. Beckett. The clues are lame—he is from St Paul's and is a guy. What do you think should be my plan of action?” Arundhati sounded like a military commander addressing her lieutenants.

“You know, Aru, why don't you check the internet? Who knows! You might get more of his stuff, maybe some personal information like an email or blog,” said Deepa.

Arundhati beamed. “Gorgeous, Deeps. Thanks you guys. I'll get on it right away.”

“Wait...a sec...what about Mission Nikhil? How are you going to handle that?” Nisha asked.

“Oh, that's simple—I will simply intimidate him with my literary know-how so much that—what do those pedestrian kids call it?—*uski waat lag jayegi*. And he will beg Professor Nadkarni to remove him from the Founder's Day program...hehe...what do you all think?”

“Will it be easy to knock him out? I don't remember him at all.” Deepa said.

“It'll be a piece of cake. Anyway, he has a history of mess-ups behind him. Remember that presentation of his where he made a fool of himself,

don't even know what it was he was going on about. Not to worry, will sort that out tomorrow. I have a meeting with him. Everything will be fine as long as I don't gaze into his enormous eyes."

The girls giggled. A tongue of heat built around the nape of Arundhati's neck as she remembered Nikhil's eyes, but she shrugged it off.

"Okay, so that's that. So when are you shifting, Deepa? It was supposed to be in June... Oh no, was it today?" Arundhati asked.

"Oh no! I usually never forget these things. What's wrong with me? So sorry guys!"

Deepa and Nisha laughed and said in unison, "Oh come on, Aru— with all the drama happening in your life, we hardly expected you to remember."

"So, does that mean I get to keep the house-warming gift that is stashed away in my cupboard?" Arundhati joked.

Inside a cupboard rested a poster of a painting by Vincent Van Gogh, purchased online from an Amsterdam gallery. For all her obsession, Arundhati was a generous friend and kept a tab on events and occasions associated with friends and family.

Finishing up the call with her friends, Arundhati turned to her computer and the first step in Mission D. G. Beckett.

Two hours later, Arundhati stretched in her chair. Apart from poems and stories she couldn't find any personal information. One last website remained on the search list. Arundhati let out a yawn as she followed her blinking cursor.

It stopped on D. G. Beckett's email id.

* * *

Torrential rains followed showers, sending traffic into a tailspin. Cars and buses coiled into queues. A few excited school children floated paper boats on rivulets of water that flowed down the sides of the roads. Nikhil Menon, however, was unaffected by it all. A lopsided smile lit up his face as he sidestepped the puddles outside the Mahalaxmi railway station and hopped into a taxi.

Outside his building in Worli, Mrs. Batliwala, his sweet old neighbor, was dragging her grocery bag into the lift. As always, Nikhil swooped in to her rescue.

“Hello, Mrs. Batliwala. Let me help you,” he said, taking it from her. Nikhil Menon was your friendly neighborhood boy who willingly helped his neighbors and building mates. Be it lugging grocery bags for Mrs. Batliwala, running errands for Mrs. Mehra’s catering business or even transporting Mr. Mehra’s latest paintings to the art gallery, Nikhil did it all with a smile.

“Thanks, Nikhil. You are such a savior, such a darling,” said Mrs. Batliwala. Her round eyes danced as she continued her prattle. “The weather has turned nasty. So much traffic on the road. Anyway, leave all that. How is college, son? Do you have loads of friends? How about girlfriends?” Mrs. Batliwala lowered her tone and winked at him.

Nikhil blushed. By the time he deposited her grocery bag in her apartment, she was chatting away with her other neighbors. She called after him and invited him in for some caramel custard, which Nikhil declined.

He was too excited for caramel custard. His mother, Nirmala, was not at home. She had left a note for him on the mantelpiece. A snack of *dosas* and *chutney* were waiting for him in the microwave. Nikhil was relieved. He did not want to face his mother’s intrusive questions. He was certain that her sharp eyes would have caught the spring in his steps and the lilt in his voice. However, he searched the flat for Ammuma, his grandmother Padma Kalyani. He wanted to tell her everything that happened that day. Besides being the world’s coolest grandma, she was also his confidant.

Nirmala and Padma were very different women. Nirmala, a devoted mother and wife, was a plain-speaking woman with the sharpness of a hawk. She came from a family where the elder members of her family retired to an austere life with a big emphasis on spirituality. Enter Padma, her mother-in-law. With her bobbed hair, crisp saris and sleeveless blouses, Padma was a generation-next grandmother. Her knowledge of fashion, mythological serials and Bollywood was startling. At seventy, she was active, involved and energetic and was loved by all her grandchildren. Nirmala and Padma shared a cordial and loving relationship, tempered with bouts of intense irritation with each other.

Differences aside, they supported each other when it mattered. And that included ganging up on Krishna Menon, who was obsessed with his son's career path or lack of it.

Nikhil recalled his conversation with his father right after his admission to St Paul's College.

"So, you want to take up literature?" His father had looked over the newspaper he was reading and surveyed him. "And where do you go from there? Don't tell me you want to eke out a living as a writer or poet? Or do you want to take up journalism? For heaven's sake, Nikhil, wake up and take a look at the real world."

How would he ever tell his father that he wanted to become a screenwriter? Nikhil saw how it would end—with the nuts and bolts of his body lying in a heap to be towed away and stitched together by MBA schools.

"Right now you are under the spell of literature, writing and all that tosh. I will give you the next three years to indulge yourself. But once you are out of St Paul's, I want you to do an MBA and chart out a career in sales and marketing, and that is final."

The memory of that conversation had a sobering effect on Nikhil. He dreaded another round of the career battle during dinner. Nikhil heard footsteps behind him and he turned around to find his grandma smiling at him.

"So, young man. You look like you've just been discovered by Karan Johar or something," she said.

"Eh?" Nikhil asked.

"There is a lightness in your steps, a swagger in your posture and a glow in your eyes. So, *majra kya hai, bachche?* Come on, fill me in."

"But, but...how do you know?"

"Oh, come on boy. Is your brain in slow-motion mode? I asked you a question."

"Ammuma, this has been the best day ever. The impossible has happened—I have been paired with Arundhati for Founder's Day. You remember her, right? I've told you about her. You know what that means—time alone—just the two of us. It's...it's like my wildest fantasy coming true. I am meeting her tomorrow."

"Oh wow...that's what I call hitting the jackpot. Tonight we party! Let's go the whole hog then, shall we? First, we crack open half a pint of

BR Cookies ‘n’ Cream, then maybe some nachos with the works and, of course, round it off with some Bollywood-style *naach gaana*...What say?”

Nikhil was in his own world. “And Ammuma, you should have seen her today in her rust-colored *kurti* all wrapped around her long, lean limbs—she glowed like a Greek goddess. You know, she even noticed me today. It was like being wafted on an endless stream of poetry.”

Padma was a bit miffed at the lack of enthusiasm for her party plans.

“Ahem...okay. Well, it’s time to snap out of your *shayarana-andaaz*—it’s almost time for dinner. Your career warden is gracing us with his presence, I hear. Hrrmph! Hope he doesn’t ramble on—there is so much to do and so little time. We have to think of what you are going to wear for your meeting with Arundhati and...” His grandmother’s voice trailed off as she headed to the dining table.

The dreaded dinner ended badly. That night Krishna Menon gave Nikhil an ultimatum, he had to send his business school applications off within a month. Crushed, Nikhil declined his grandma’s midnight party plans. He wanted to be alone with his thoughts of Arundhati and their meeting tomorrow.

Nikhil stepped into his room, his sanctuary. Next to his king-sized bed was an in-built walk-in closet—the gateway to his very own piece of heaven—stacks and stacks of books, all arranged alphabetically. In a corner of the closet, a couple of shelves were devoted to his clothes—baggy t-shirts and jeans. Snow-white drapes flowed along the sliding windows.

Nikhil’s room did not reek of affluence or burning passion but there was a steady and calm energy that flowed in the room. It was both grounding and uplifting. He switched on his computer, and logged into his account. His inbox was filled with notes of congratulations. He smiled at the screen and remembered that he had forgotten to tell his grandma the other wonderful news. That he had won the coveted Ithaca poetry contest.

D. G. Beckett smiled. He thought of his diary of unsent letters and reams of poetry dedicated to Arundhati. All that had finally paid off. His mind returned to a time when he had been incapable of even facing his own shadow.

