

May 2017

Dear Incoming 2017-2018 9th Graders,

This packet contains your summer reading assignment to be completed prior to the first day of ninth grade.

This assignment is different depending on the English 9 course (Learning Support, Academic, or Honors) you have registered for in the coming school year. *Please* be certain you complete the assignment for the correct course.

Arrive on the first day of school with this assignment fully completed.

You may elect to complete this assignment by neatly writing your answers in the provided packet OR recreating the charts and typing your responses.

Should you have questions regarding the task and completion of your summer reading assignment, please email 9th grade teacher of English, Ms. Quinby at jquin@spring-ford.net. Please be considerate in your email and also allow a few days turnaround for a response.

We all look forward to meeting you in August! Enjoy your summer!

Spring-Ford 9th Grade English Teachers

Summer 2017 Reading Assignment:
For incoming freshmen for 2017 – 2018 school year
For the graduating class of 2021

Please use the following Table of Contents to determine your summer reading assignment respective to the English 9 class you are enrolled in.

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Learning Support English 9 Assignment

DIRECTIONS:

- 1) Choose ***one (1)*** of the four books listed below. You will notice there is at least 1 book for each of the thematic units we will be covering in 9th grade. Again, you are to select *only 1* of the 4 book options!! [You do **NOT** need to read one book per thematic unit].
- 2) Please use your judgement and consider your own reading ability and interests when making picking your book. You are encouraged to read summaries or reviews of these books in your decision making process! I suggest looking them up on Amazon or other sale sites to get a quick overview of the book. There is no requirement to **purchase** a summer reading book; please consider contacting your local free public library.
- 3) Complete the accompanying brainstorming questions and graphic organizer assignments [pages 4 AND 5] after reading the book.
- 4) After completing the assignment on pages 4 and 5, please review your work against the rubric on page 6. This will be the exact rubric used to assess your paper once you return to school.

BOOK OPTION	AUTHOR	GENRE	THEMATIC CATEGORY
<i>Defending Jacob</i>	William Landay	Thriller	Choice & Consequence
<i>The Uglies</i>	Scott Westerfeld	Futuristic Fantasy	Power & Oppression
<i>We Should Hang Out Sometime</i>	John Sundquist	Autobiography	Growth & Change
<i>Speak</i>	Laurie Halse Andersen	Realistic Fiction	Growth & Change

Assignment Purpose

Students will be reading a book with the goal of identifying and analyzing character growth and the inter-relation with theme development.

PA Core Reading Standards

- 1.3.C Analyze how complex characters develop over the course of a text, interact with other characters, and advance the plot or develop the theme.
- 1.3.E Analyze how an author's choices concerning how to structure a text, order events within it, and manipulate time to create an effect.

Learning Support English 9 Graphic Organizer

FORM of CHARACTERIZATION	<p>How does your character behave/act, think, and/or speak in the <u>BEGINNING</u> of the book?</p> <p>You are not required to provide a quote for this column. Provide a paraphrase or description.</p>	<p>How does the character behave/act, think, and/or speak at the <u>END</u> of the book?</p> <p>Provide a paraphrase or description. THEN, provide ONE quote which demonstrates or supports HOW the character changes.</p>	<p>How does this character's changed behavior/action, thought, and/or words reflect the <u>THEME</u> (lesson) you stated in #2 on the previous page?</p>
BEHAVE / ACT		<p>Paraphrase/Description:</p> <p>Quote WITH page number:</p>	
THINK		<p>Paraphrase/Description:</p> <p>Quote WITH page number:</p>	
SPEAK		<p>Paraphrase/Description:</p> <p>Quote WITH page number:</p>	

Learning Support English 9 RUBRIC

We would like to see evidence that you have spent time and thought reading and responding. Your score will help you continue to improve as the year unfolds. Additionally, the work you complete over the summer will be a part of a future assignment; Please be diligent in your reading and analysis!

Component	Requirements	Value 3 points each	Multiplier (x 3)
<p>Component 1: Student's structured response</p> <p>(3 points per level, with weighting of 3 points)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Clearly answers the question or prompt provided on summer assignment ● Response is thoughtful and clearly reflects evidence that the assigned material was read. 	<p><u>Students can earn:</u> 3 for excellence in this area, 2.5 for good work in this area, 2 for approaching the criteria 0 not completed</p>	<p>_____</p> <p>x 3</p>
<p>Component 2: Evidence/ Example</p> <p>(3 points per level, with weighting of 3 points)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Evidence/examples/quotes are specific, accurate and relevant ● Evidence tracks the development of a character over a course of the text, with specific attention to how the development advances the theme. (1.3.C) 	<p><u>Students can earn:</u> 3 for excellence in this area, 2.5 for good work in this area, 2 for approaching the criteria 0 not completed</p>	<p>_____</p> <p>x 3</p>
<p>Component 3: Analysis/ extended response</p> <p>(3 points per level, with weighting of 3 points)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Clearly connects evidence to focus of the prompt/question ● Does not just summarize the evidence, but provides thoughtful explanation and connections. ● Analysis considers the author's choices regarding how to structure a text and order events in order to manipulate time to create an effect (i.e. character growth, theme development). (1.3.E) 	<p><u>Students can earn:</u> 3 for excellence in this area, 2.5 for good work in this area, 2 for approaching the criteria 0 not completed</p>	<p>_____</p> <p>x 3</p>

Scoring

Component 1: ____ + Component 2: ____ + Component 3 ____ = _____ / 27 points

Academic English 9 Assignment

DIRECTIONS:

- 1) Choose **one (1)** of the six books listed below. You will notice there are two books for each of the thematic units we will be covering in 9th grade. Again, you are to select *only 1* of the 6 book options!! [You do **NOT** need to read one book per thematic unit].
- 2) Please use your discretion and consider your own reading ability and reading interest when making your book selection. You are encouraged to read summaries or reviews of these books in your decision making process!
- 3) Complete the accompanying assignment [pages 8 AND 9] after reading the book. There is no requirement to **purchase** a summer reading book; please consider contacting your local free public library.
- 4) After completing the assignment on pages 8 and 9, please review your work against the rubric on page 10. This will be the exact rubric used to assess your paper once you return to school.

BOOK OPTION	AUTHOR	GENRE	THEMATIC CATEGORY
<i>Defending Jacob</i>	William Landay	Thriller	Choice & Consequence
<i>Something Wicked This Way Comes</i>	Ray Bradbury	Fantasy	Choice & Consequence
<i>The Uglies</i>	Scott Westerfeld	Futuristic Fantasy	Power & Oppression
<i>The Other Wes Moore</i>	Wes Moore	Autobiography	Power & Oppression
<i>Speak</i>	Laurie Halse Andersen	Realistic Fiction	Growth & Change
<i>We Should Hang Out Sometime</i>	John Sundquist	Autobiography	Growth & Change

Assignment Purpose

Students will be reading a book with the goal of identifying and analyzing character growth and the inter-relation with theme development.

PA Core Reading Standards

1.3.C Analyze how complex characters develop over the course of a text, interact with other characters, and advance the plot or develop the theme.

1.3.E Analyze how an author's choices concerning how to structure a text, order events within it, and manipulate time to create an effect.

Academic English 9 Assignment

FOCUS: How does the **growth of a character** in a piece of literature assist in **developing the theme** of the text? (*Definition of theme*: A central idea or statement that unifies and controls an entire literary work) To answer this question, use your summer reading book & complete the following questions & graphic organizer on next page.

1) What book are you analyzing?

2) What is the central **theme** of the text? A theme must be a complete sentence, not a thought, fragment, or single word.

3) Which character from this text reflects growth? (Choose **ONE** character to focus on for this assignment and your graphic organizer on the next page)

Academic English 9 Assignment

FORM of CHARACTERIZATION	<p>How does the character behave/act, think, and/or speak in the BEGINNING of the book?</p> <p>You are not required to provide a quote for this column. Provide a paraphrase or description.</p>	<p>How does the character behave/act, think, and/or speak at the END of the book?</p> <p>Provide a paraphrase or description. THEN, provide ONE quote which demonstrates or supports HOW the character changes.</p>	<p>How does this character's changed behavior/action, thought, and/or words reflect the THEME you have stated on the previous page?</p>
BEHAVE / ACT			
THINK			
SPEAK			

Academic English 9 RUBRIC

We would like to see evidence that you have spent time and thought reading and responding. Your score will help you continue to improve as the year unfolds. Additionally, the work you complete over the summer will be a part of a future assignment; Please be diligent in your reading and analysis!

Component	Requirements	Value 3 points each	Multiplier (x 3)
Component 1: Student's structured response (3 points per level, with weighting of 3 points)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Clearly answers the question or prompt provided on summer assignment ● Response is thoughtful and clearly reflects evidence that the assigned material was read. 	<u>Students can earn:</u> 3 for excellence in this area, 2.5 for good work in this area, 2 for approaching the criteria 0 not completed	<hr style="width: 50px; margin: 0 auto;"/> x 3
Component 2: Evidence/ Example (3 points per level, with weighting of 3 points)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Evidence/examples are specific, accurate and relevant ● Evidence tracks the development of a character over a course of the text, with specific attention to how the development advances the theme. (1.3.C) 	<u>Students can earn:</u> 3 for excellence in this area, 2.5 for good work in this area, 2 for approaching the criteria 0 not completed	<hr style="width: 50px; margin: 0 auto;"/> x 3
Component 3: Analysis/ extended response (3 points per level, with weighting of 3 points)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Clearly connects evidence to focus of the prompt/question ● Does not just summarize the evidence, but provides thoughtful explanation and connections. ● Analysis considers the author's choices regarding how to structure a text and order events in order to manipulate time to create an effect (i.e. character growth, theme development). (1.3.E) 	<u>Students can earn:</u> 3 for excellence in this area, 2.5 for good work in this area, 2 for approaching the criteria 0 not completed	<hr style="width: 50px; margin: 0 auto;"/> x 3

Scoring

Component 1: ____ + Component 2: ____ + Component 3 ____ = _____ / 27 points

Honors English 9 Assignment

DIRECTIONS:

- 1) Choose **one (1)** of the six books listed below. You will notice there are two books for each of the thematic units we will be covering in 9th grade. Again, you are to select *only 1* of the 6 book options!! [You do **NOT** need to read one book per thematic unit].
- 2) Please use your discretion and consider your own reading ability and reading interest when making your book selection. You are encouraged to read summaries or reviews of these books in your decision making process!
- 3) Read the three (3) ancillary texts available either at the links provided at the bottom of this page or in the back of this packet.
- 4) Complete the accompanying assignment [directions on page 12, assignment on pages 13, 15-17] after reading the book and the three ancillary pieces. There is no requirement to **purchase** a summer reading book; please consider contacting your local free public library.
- 5) After completing the assignment on pages 13, 15-17, please review your work against the rubric on page 18. This will be the exact rubric used to assess your paper in mid to late September.

BOOK OPTION	AUTHOR	GENRE	THEMATIC CATEGORY
<i>Defending Jacob</i>	William Landay	Thriller	Choice & Consequence
<i>Something Wicked This Way Comes</i>	Ray Bradbury	Fantasy	Choice & Consequence
<i>The Uglies</i>	Scott Westerfeld	Futuristic Fantasy	Power & Oppression
<i>The Other Wes Moore</i>	Wes Moore	Autobiography	Power & Oppression
<i>Speak</i>	Laurie Halse Andersen	Realistic Fiction	Growth & Change
<i>We Should Hang Out Sometime</i>	John Sundquist	Autobiography	Growth & Change

HONORS STUDENTS also need to read the following 3 pieces of texts.
These ancillary texts are:

ANCILLARY TEXT	AUTHOR	AVAILABLE AT ** also found on pages 18-35 in this packet **
<i>The Art of Resilience</i>	Hara Estroff Marano	https://www.psychologytoday.com/articles/200305/the-art-resilience
<i>If</i>	Rudyard Kipling	https://www.poets.org/poetsorg/poem/if%E2%80%9494
<i>The Third and Final Continent</i>	Jhumpa Lahiri	https://iblit2013.files.wordpress.com/2013/08/lahiri-interpretor-of-maladies-full-text.pdf

Honors English 9 Summer Reading Assignment

Assignment Purpose

Students will be reading one book and three other texts with the goal of identifying and analyzing character growth and the inter-relation with theme development.

PA Core Reading Standards

1.3 B Cite strong & thorough textual evidence to support analysis of what the text say explicitly, as well as inferences and conclusions based on an author's implicit and explicit assumptions and beliefs about a subject.

1.3.C Analyze how complex characters develop over the course of a text, interact with other characters, and advance the plot or develop the theme.

1.3.E Analyze how an author's choices concerning how to structure a text, order events within it, and manipulate time to create an effect.

Directions:

1. **Using your summer reading book and 2 of the 3 assigned ancillary texts, identify a theme shared throughout the texts and analyze how it is developed through each author's use of literary elements or devices.** (*definition of theme: a central idea or statement that unifies and controls an entire literary work*)
2. **Complete the graphic organizer on the next page to organize your thoughts.** *Remember- The end result, once back in school, will be a synthesis essay (To clarify, you are NOT completing the actual writing of the essay over the summer).*
3. **In completing the graphic organizer, think about three (3) WAYS in which the theme is developed.** Source 1 and Source 2 in the chart should have the SAME literary element or device **FOR EACH EXAMPLE.** These three ways are similar to main ideas (of which we call claims).
4. **Pull from 2 (of your 3) texts which best prove how that claim (of how the theme is developed) is valid.** *You may NOT simply approach the organization of this essay by devoting one paragraph per text. Talking about each text in isolation and how the theme is developed is NOT what you are to do.*

Honors English 9 Summer Reading Assignment

Answer these questions BEFORE completing the graphic organizers:

1. What do these texts have in common?
2. What are common/central themes/messages woven throughout the texts? [Your response to this must consist of more than just one word answers].
3. How is theme established as shown through the author's use of literary elements or devices? (think what literary elements/devices help to illustrate and make apparent this theme)
4. What is your thesis? The thesis overall statement that reveals what you will show in your essay. The focus of your thesis statement should follow from the prompt (Direction #1 on page 12). [Reminder that the essay portion will be completed as a class assignment in September].

Honors English 9 Summer Reading Assignment

BRIEF MODEL:

Most of you should have read William Golding's *Lord of the Flies* during 8th grade; thus, the concepts presented in this sample should be familiar to you.

THEME: One common theme is man's inherent evil and the thin line between civilization and savagery.

ESTABLISHMENT OF THEME:

- 1) This theme is made apparent between the **conflict** between the human impulse towards savagery and the rules of civilization which are designed to contain and minimize it. While on the island, the conflict is dramatized by the clash between Ralph and Jack, who respectively represent civilization and savagery.
- 2) And now you, as the student, would continue this discussion of *HOW* Ralph represents civilization and *HOW* Jack represents savagery.) [This would serve as a first claim to show one way in which the theme is developed].
- 3) You then need to develop two additional ways this same theme is created. Each of these would serve as claim 2 and claim 3.

THESIS: In your thesis, you will combine your theme AND how it is created into a single sentence.

Sample Thesis for *Lord of the Flies*: The theme that man is inherently evil with only a thin line between civilization and savagery is developed through the use of conflict, characterization, and symbolism in *Lord of the Flies* by William Golding.

Helpful Hint: When thinking about **HOW** the theme is displayed in your charts on the following pages, please consider these literary elements/devices to get you started. These literary terms will help to develop your 3 claims. This list is not all inclusive:

- 1) Diction
- 2) Characterization
- 3) Mood
- 4) Tone
- 5) Plot or Plot elements
- 6) Symbolism
- 7) Point of View
- 8) Figurative Language
- 9) Setting
- 10) Conflict

** Best practice would involve looking up any of the above literary terms if you are unsure of their meaning and usage. Please consult a reputable source in this search (this means a blog or Wikipedia are NOT acceptable)

DIRECTIONS: Synthesis Organizer: Use the following three (3) tables on pages 15-17 to identify useful quotes from your selected sources which will be helpful when generating an essay once back to school.

Thesis [which is the same for all three claims!]: _____

Claim #1: Theme as revealed through _____ **(literary device)**

<p>Source 1</p> <p><u>Summer Reading Book</u></p>	<p>Source 2</p> <p>1) Article: <i>The Art of Resilience</i> OR 2) Poem: <i>If</i> OR 3) Short story: <i>The Third and Final Continent</i></p>
<p>Quote from the text to serve as evidence to prove this point. [1) Introduce quote 2) Provide quote 3) Provide internal citation 4) Explain/Analyze the quote].</p>	<p>Quote from the text to serve as evidence to prove this point. [1) Introduce quote 2) Provide quote 3) Provide internal citation 4) Explain/Analyze the quote].</p>

Now work to synthesize your ideas from above to answer the following question. Synthesis is defined as a combination of ideas to form a theory (pulling together of ideas and evidence).

What are the texts saying about the theme?

(Example: For a theme of love, the texts might both be showing how love is the most powerful force in life.)

Claim #2: Theme as revealed through _____

How is the theme conveyed/revealed?

<p style="text-align: center;">Source 1</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><u>Summer Reading Book</u></p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Source 2</p> <p>1) Article: <i>The Art of Resilience</i> OR 2) Poem: <i>If</i> OR 3) Short story: <i>The Third and Final Continent</i></p>
<p>Quote from the text to serve as evidence to prove this point. [1) Introduce quote 2) Provide quote 3) Provide internal citation 4) Explain/Analyze the quote].</p>	<p>Quote from the text to serve as evidence to prove this point. [1) Introduce quote 2) Provide quote 3) Provide internal citation 4) Explain/Analyze the quote].</p>

Now work to synthesize your ideas from above to answer the following question. Synthesis is defined as a combination of ideas to form a theory (pulling together of ideas and evidence). **What are the texts saying about the theme?**

(Example: For a theme of love, the texts might both be showing how love is the most powerful force in life.)

Claim #3: Theme as revealed through _____

<p style="text-align: center;">Source 1</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><u>Summer Reading Book</u></p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Source 2</p> <p>1) Article: <i>The Art of Resilience</i> OR 2) Poem: <i>If</i> OR 3) Short story: <i>The Third and Final Continent</i></p>
<p>Quote from the text to serve as evidence to prove this point. [1) Introduce quote 2) Provide quote 3) Provide internal citation 4) Explain/Analyze the quote].</p>	<p>Quote from the text to serve as evidence to prove this point. [1) Introduce quote 2) Provide quote 3) Provide internal citation 4) Explain/Analyze the quote].</p>

Now work to synthesize your ideas from above to answer the following question. Synthesis is defined as a combination of ideas to form a theory (pulling together of ideas and evidence). **What are the texts saying about the theme?**
 (Example: For a theme of love, the texts might both be showing how love is the most powerful force in life.)

Honors English 9 Summer Reading Rubric

We would like to see evidence that you have spent time and thought reading and responding.
Your score will help you continue to improve as the year unfolds.

PER CLAIM		
Component	Requirements	Point Value
Component 1: Quote Introduction & Selection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Includes <u>2 quotes</u> per claim that are significant to the development of relevant in responding to the activity ● Cites both quotes correctly using MLA format (1.4.W) ● Evidence/examples are specific, accurate and relevant ● Evidence tracks how the literary devices work to advance the theme. (1.3.C) 	<u>Students can earn:</u> 4 = for meeting requirements 3 = improper citation 0-2 = not completed
Component 2: Quote Analysis & Synthesis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Clearly connects evidence to focus of the prompt/question ● Does not just summarize the evidence, but provides thoughtful explanation and connections. ● Analysis considers the author's choices regarding how to structure a text and order events in order to manipulate time to create an effect (i.e. character growth, theme development). (1.3.E) ● Expertly draws on evidence from the text to support analysis and reflection (1.3.B) ● Clearly demonstrates how each quote is effective and important, applying grade level standards for literature and literary non-fiction (1.4.S) 	<u>Students can earn:</u> 8 = excellence in this area 7 = good work in this area 6 = approaching the criteria 4-5 = does not meet criteria 0 = not completed

Claim 1 _____ + **Claim 2** _____ + **Claim 3** _____ = **36 points**

The work you complete over the summer will be a part of a future assignment; please be diligent in your reading and analysis!

HONORS ANCILLARY TEXTS (NOT for Academic or Learning Support)***The Art of Resilience* by Hara Estroff Marano**

Think you're a prisoner of a troubled childhood? Think again. You need not go through the rest of your life as an emotional cripple. It is possible to bounce back from adversity and go on to live a healthy, fulfilling life. In fact, more people do it than you may think.

Resilience may be an art, the ultimate art of living, but it has recently been subjected to the scrutiny of science. This much is known so far. At the heart of resilience is a belief in oneself—yet also a belief in something larger than oneself.

Resilient people do not let adversity define them. They find resilience by moving towards a goal beyond themselves, transcending pain and grief by perceiving bad times as a temporary state of affairs.

Experts argue among themselves about how much of resilience is genetic. People do seem to differ in their inborn ability to handle life's stresses. But resilience can also be cultivated. It's possible to strengthen your inner self and your belief in yourself, to define yourself as capable and competent. It's possible to fortify your psyche. It's possible to develop a sense of mastery.

And it's definitely necessary to go back and reinterpret past events to find the strengths you have probably had within all along. Some evidence shows that it's not really until adulthood that people begin to surmount the difficulties of childhood and to rebuild their lives.

One problem is, there are elements of our culture that glorify frailty, says Washington, D.C. psychiatrist Steven Wolin, M.D. There is a whole industry that would turn you into a victim by having you dwell on the traumas in your life. In reality you have considerable capacity for strength, although you might not be wholly aware of it.

Sometimes it is easier to be a victim; talking about how other people make you do what you do removes the obligation to change. And sympathy can feel sweet; talk of resilience can make some feel that no one is really appreciating exactly how much they have suffered.

Wolin defines resiliency as the capacity to rise above adversity—sometimes the terrible adversity of outright violence, molestation or war—and forge lasting strengths in the struggle. It is the means by which children of troubled families are not immobilized by hardship but rebound from it, learn to protect themselves and emerge as strong adults, able to lead gratifying lives.

Resilient people don't walk between the raindrops; they have scars to show for their experience. They struggle—but keep functioning anyway. Resilience is not the ability to escape unharmed. It is not about magic.

Most people mistakenly operate on what Wolin calls "the damage model," a false belief about the way

disease is transmitted. It basically says that if your family is having trouble, the chances are high that you will suffer lasting emotional disturbances. It's a prophecy of doom.

Wolin offers survivors of troubled families a more balanced perspective about their past, based on 20 years of his own research on adult children of alcoholics. Most of them, he has found, do not repeat their parents' drinking patterns. The same is true of adults who have survived families troubled by mental illness, chronic marital disputes, racial discrimination and poverty.

The ground-breaking resilience research of sociologist Emmy Werner, Ph.D., of the University of California, showed that even at the time about a third of kids never seemed to be affected by the grinding poverty, alcoholism and abuse in the homes they grew up in. Of the remaining two-thirds, many were troubled as teens, typically turning to petty crime. But by the time they reached their 30s and 40s, they had pulled themselves together, determined to not repeat their parents' lives.

A troubled family can indeed inflict considerable harm on its children, but resilient people are challenged by such troubles to experiment and respond actively and creatively. Their pre-emptive responses to adversity, repeated over time, become incorporated into their inner selves as lasting strengths.

To the degree that it is learned, resilience seems to develop out of the challenge to maintain self-esteem. Troubled families make their children feel powerless and bad about themselves. Resilience is the capacity for a person to maintain self-esteem despite the powerful influence of the parents.

It is also possible to be hurt and to rebound at the same time. We human beings are complex enough psychologically to accommodate the two. What the resilient do is refrain from blaming themselves for what has gone wrong. In the language of psychology, they externalize blame. And they internalize success; they take responsibility for what goes right in their lives.

One way they do this, Wolin has found, is to maintain independence. Survivors draw boundaries between themselves and troubled parents; they keep their emotional distance while satisfying the demands of conscience. Resilient children often hang out with families of untroubled peers. As adults, the resilient children of alcoholics marry into stable, loving families with whom they spend a great deal of time.

Survivors cultivate insight, the mental habit of asking themselves penetrating questions and giving honest answers. They also take the initiative. They take charge of problems, stretching and testing themselves.

But they don't do all the work alone. One of the cardinal findings of resilience research is that those who lacked strong family support systems growing up sought and received help from others—a teacher, a neighbor, the parents of peers or, eventually, a spouse. They were not afraid to talk about the hard times they were having to someone who cared for their well-being.

Relationships foster resilience, Wolin contends. Resilient people do the active give-and-take work necessary to derive emotional gratification from others.

Reframing is at the heart of resilience. It is a way of shifting focus from the cup half empty to the cup half full. Wolin accords it a central role in "survivor's pride." He tells the story of a patient, a woman who felt helpless. She had been whipped by her father throughout childhood any time he felt challenged. Wolin instead encouraged her to see herself as smart, an accomplished strategist. She had eventually learned to recognize her father's moods and respond to them.

There are lessons in her tale for everyone, Wolin insists. You re-examine your life story to see how heroic your acts were as a child. You go back to an incident, find the strengths, and build self-esteem from the achievement.

Psychologist Edith Grotberg, Ph.D., believes that everyone needs reminders of the strengths they have. She urges people to cultivate resilience by thinking along three lines:

- **I Have:** strong relationships, structure, rules at home, role models; these are external supports that are provided;
- **I Am:** a person who has hope and faith, cares about others, is proud of myself; these are inner strengths that can be developed;
- **I Can:** communicate, solve problems, gauge the temperament of others, seek good relationships—all interpersonal and problem-solving skills that are acquired.

If —

Rudyard Kipling, 1865 - 1936

If you can keep your head when all about you

Are losing theirs and blaming it on you;

If you can trust yourself when all men doubt you,

But make allowance for their doubting too;

If you can wait and not be tired by waiting,

Or, being lied about, don't deal in lies,

Or, being hated, don't give way to hating,

And yet don't look too good, nor talk too wise;

If you can dream—and not make dreams your master;

If you can think—and not make thoughts your aim;

If you can meet with triumph and disaster

And treat those two impostors just the same;

If you can bear to hear the truth you've spoken

Twisted by knaves to make a trap for fools,

Or watch the things you gave your life to broken,

And stoop and build 'em up with wornout tools;

If you can make one heap of all your winnings

And risk it on one turn of pitch-and-toss,

And lose, and start again at your beginnings

And never breathe a word about your loss;

If you can force your heart and nerve and sinew

To serve your turn long after they are gone,

And so hold on when there is nothing in you

Except the Will which says to them: "Hold on";

If you can talk with crowds and keep your virtue,
Or walk with kings—nor lose the common touch;
If neither foes nor loving friends can hurt you;
If all men count with you, but none too much;
If you can fill the unforgiving minute
With sixty seconds' worth of distance run—
Yours is the Earth and everything that's in it,
And—which is more—you'll be a Man, my son!

The Third and Final Continent by Jhumpa Lahiri

I left India in 1964 with a certificate in commerce and the equivalent, in those days, of ten dollars to my name. For three weeks I sailed on the S.S. Roma, an Italian cargo vessel, in a cabin next to the ship's engine, across the Arabian Sea, the Red Sea, the Mediterranean, and finally to England. I lived in London, in Finsbury Park, in a house occupied entirely by penniless Bengali bachelors like myself, at least a dozen and sometimes more, all struggling to educate and establish ourselves abroad.

I attended lectures at L.S.E. and worked at the university library to get by. We lived three or four to a room, shared a single, icy toilet, and took turns cooking pots of egg curry, which we ate with our hands on a table covered with newspapers. Apart from our jobs we had few responsibilities. On weekends we lounged barefoot in drawstring pajamas, drinking tea and smoking Rothmans, or set out to watch cricket at Lord's. Some weekends the house was crammed with still more Bengalis, to whom we had introduced ourselves at the greengrocer, or on the Tube, and we made yet more egg curry, and played Mukesh on a Grundig reel-to-reel, and soaked our dirty dishes in the bathtub. Every now and then someone in the house moved out, to live with a woman whom his family back in Calcutta had determined he was to wed. In 1969, when I was thirty-six years old, my own marriage was arranged. Around the same time, I was offered a full-time job in America, in the processing department of a library at M.I.T. The salary was generous enough to support a wife, and I was honored to be hired by a world-famous university, and so I obtained a green card, and prepared to travel farther still.

By then I had enough money to go by plane. I flew first to Calcutta, to attend my wedding, and a week later to Boston, to begin my new job. During the flight I read "The Student Guide to North America," for although I was no longer a student, I was on a budget all the same. I learned that Americans drove on the right side of the road, not the left, and that they called a lift an elevator and an engaged phone busy. "The pace of life in North America is different from Britain, as you will soon discover," the guidebook informed me. "Everybody feels he must get to the top. Don't expect an English cup of tea." As the plane began its descent over Boston Harbor, the pilot announced the weather and the time, and that President Nixon had declared a national holiday: two American men had landed on the moon. Several passengers cheered. "God bless America!" one of them hollered. Across the aisle, I saw a woman praying.

I spent my first night at the Y.M.C.A. in Central Square, Cambridge, an inexpensive accommodation recommended by my guidebook which was within walking distance of M.I.T. The room contained a cot, a desk, and a small wooden cross on one wall. A sign on the door said that cooking was strictly forbidden. A bare window overlooked Massachusetts Avenue. Car horns, shrill and prolonged, blared one after another. Sirens and flashing lights heralded endless emergencies, and a succession of buses rumbled past, their doors opening and closing with a powerful hiss, throughout the night. The noise was constantly distracting, at times suffocating. I felt it deep in my ribs, just as I had felt the furious drone of the engine on the S.S. Roma. But there was no ship's deck to escape to, no glittering ocean to thrill my soul, no breeze to cool my face, no one to talk to. I was too tired to pace the gloomy corridors of the Y.M.C.A. in my pajamas. Instead I sat at the desk and stared out the window. In the morning I reported to my job at the Dewey Library, a beige fortlike building by Memorial Drive. I also opened a bank account, rented a post-office box, and bought a plastic bowl and a spoon. I went to a supermarket called Purity Supreme, wandering up and down the aisles, comparing prices with those in England. In the end I bought a carton of milk and a box of cornflakes. This was my first meal in America. Even the simple chore of buying milk was new to me; in London we'd had bottles delivered each morning to our door.

In a week I had adjusted, more or less. I ate cornflakes and milk morning and night, and bought some

bananas for variety, slicing them into the bowl with the edge of my spoon. I left my carton of milk on the shaded part of the windowsill, as I had seen other residents at the Y.M.C.A. do. To pass the time in the evenings I read the Boston Globe downstairs, in a spacious room with stained-glass windows. I read every article and advertisement, so that I would grow familiar with things, and when my eyes grew tired I slept. Only I did not sleep well. Each night I had to keep the window wide open; it was the only source of air in the stifling room, and the noise was intolerable. I would lie on the cot with my fingers pressed into my ears, but when I drifted off to sleep my hands fell away, and the noise of the traffic would wake me up again. Pigeon feathers drifted onto the windowsill, and one evening, when I poured milk over my cornflakes, I saw that it had soured. Nevertheless I resolved to stay at the Y.M.C.A. for six weeks, until my wife's passport and green card were ready. Once she arrived I would have to rent a proper apartment, and from time to time I studied the classified section of the newspaper, or stopped in at the housing office at M.I.T. during my lunch break to see what was available. It was in this manner that I discovered a room for immediate occupancy, in a house on a quiet street, the listing said, for eight dollars per week. I dialed the number from a pay telephone, sorting through the coins, with which I was still unfamiliar, smaller and lighter than shillings, heavier and brighter than paisas.

"Who is speaking?" a woman demanded. Her voice was bold and clamorous.

"Yes, good afternoon, Madam. I am calling about the room for rent."

"Harvard or Tech?"

"I beg your pardon?"

"Are you from Harvard or Tech?"

Gathering that Tech referred to the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, I replied, "I work at Dewey Library," adding tentatively, "at Tech."

"I only rent rooms to boys from Harvard or Tech!"

"Yes, Madam."

I was given an address and an appointment for seven o'clock that evening. Thirty minutes before the hour I set out, my guidebook in my pocket, my breath fresh with Listerine. I turned down a street shaded with trees, perpendicular to Massachusetts Avenue. In spite of the heat I wore a coat and tie, regarding the event as I would any other interview; I had never lived in the home of a person who was not Indian. The house, surrounded by a chain-link fence, was off-white with dark-brown trim, with a tangle of forsythia bushes plastered against its front and sides. When I pressed the bell, the woman with whom I had spoken on the phone hollered from what seemed to be just the other side of the door, "One minute, please!"

Several minutes later the door was opened by a tiny, extremely old woman. A mass of snowy hair was arranged like a small sack on top of her head. As I stepped into the house she sat down on a wooden bench positioned at the bottom of a narrow carpeted staircase. Once she was settled on the bench, in a small pool of light, she peered up at me, giving me her undivided attention. She wore a long black skirt that spread like a stiff tent to the floor, and a starched white shirt edged with ruffles at the throat and cuffs. Her hands, folded together in her lap, had long pallid fingers, with swollen knuckles and tough yellow nails. Age had battered her features so that she almost resembled a man, with sharp, shrunken eyes and prominent creases on either side of her nose. Her lips, chapped and faded, had nearly

disappeared, and her eyebrows were missing altogether. Nevertheless she looked fierce.

"Lock up!" she commanded. She shouted even though I stood only a few feet away. "Fasten the chain and firmly press that button on the knob! This is the first thing you shall do when you enter, is that clear?"

I locked the door as directed and examined the house. Next to the bench was a small round table, its legs fully concealed, much like the woman's, by a skirt of lace. The table held a lamp, a transistor radio, a leather change purse with a silver clasp, and a telephone. A thick wooden cane was propped against one side. There was a parlor to my right, lined with bookcases and filled with shabby claw-footed furniture. In the corner of the parlor I saw a grand piano with its top down, piled with papers. The piano's bench was missing; it seemed to be the one on which the woman was sitting. Somewhere in the house a clock chimed seven times.

"You're punctual!" the woman proclaimed. "I expect you shall be so with the rent!"

"I have a letter, Madam." In my jacket pocket was a letter from M.I.T. confirming my employment, which I had brought along to prove that I was indeed from Tech.

She stared at the letter, then handed it back to me carefully, gripping it with her fingers as if it were a plate heaped with food. She did not wear glasses, and I wondered if she'd read a word of it. "The last boy was always late! Still owes me eight dollars! Harvard boys aren't what they used to be! Only Harvard and Tech in this house! How's Tech, boy?"

"It is very well."

"You checked the lock?"

"Yes, Madam."

She unclasped her fingers, slapped the space beside her on the bench with one hand, and told me to sit down. For a moment she was silent. Then she intoned, as if she alone possessed this knowledge:

"There is an American flag on the moon!"

"Yes, Madam." Until then I had not thought very much about the moon shot. It was in the newspaper, of course, article upon article. The astronauts had landed on the shores of the Sea of Tranquility, I had read, travelling farther than anyone in the history of civilization. For a few hours they explored the moon's surface. They gathered rocks in their pockets, described their surroundings (a magnificent desolation, according to one astronaut), spoke by phone to the President, and planted a flag in lunar soil. The voyage was hailed as man's most awesome achievement.

The woman bellowed, "A flag on the moon, boy! I heard it on the radio! Isn't that splendid?"

"Yes, Madam."

But she was not satisfied with my reply. Instead she commanded, "Say 'Splendid!'"

I was both baffled and somewhat insulted by the request. It reminded me of the way I was taught multiplication tables as a child, repeating after the master, sitting cross-legged on the floor of my one-

room Tollygunge school. It also reminded me of my wedding, when I had repeated endless Sanskrit verses after the priest, verses I barely understood, which joined me to my wife. I said nothing.

"Say 'Splendid!'" the woman bellowed once again.

"Splendid," I murmured. I had to repeat the word a second time at the top of my lungs, so she could hear. I was reluctant to raise my voice to an elderly woman, but she did not appear to be offended. If anything the reply pleased her, because her next command was:

"Go see the room!"

I rose from the bench and mounted the narrow staircase. There were five doors, two on either side of an equally narrow hallway, and one at the opposite end. Only one door was open. The room contained a twin bed under a sloping ceiling, a brown oval rug, a basin with an exposed pipe, and a chest of drawers. One door led to a closet, another to a toilet and a tub. The window was open; net curtains stirred in the breeze. I lifted them away and inspected the view: a small back yard, with a few fruit trees and an empty clothesline. I was satisfied.

When I returned to the foyer the woman picked up the leather change purse on the table, opened the clasp, fished about with her fingers, and produced a key on a thin wire hoop. She informed me that there was a kitchen at the back of the house, accessible through the parlor. I was welcome to use the stove as long as I left it as I found it. Sheets and towels were provided, but keeping them clean was my own responsibility. The rent was due Friday mornings on the ledge above the piano keys. "And no lady visitors!"

"I am a married man, Madam." It was the first time I had announced this fact to anyone.

But she had not heard. "No lady visitors!" she insisted. She introduced herself as Mrs. Croft.

My wife's name was Mala. The marriage had been arranged by my older brother and his wife. I regarded the proposition with neither objection nor enthusiasm. It was a duty expected of me, as it was expected of every man. She was the daughter of a schoolteacher in Belehata. I was told that she could cook, knit, embroider, sketch landscapes, and recite poems by Tagore, but these talents could not make up for the fact that she did not possess a fair complexion, and so a string of men had rejected her to her face. She was twenty-seven, an age when her parents had begun to fear that she would never marry, and so they were willing to ship their only child halfway across the world in order to save her from spinsterhood.

For five nights we shared a bed. Each of those nights, after applying cold cream and braiding her hair, she turned from me and wept; she missed her parents. Although I would be leaving the country in a few days, custom dictated that she was now a part of my household, and for the next six weeks she was to live with my brother and his wife, cooking, cleaning, serving tea and sweets to guests. I did nothing to console her. I lay on my own side of the bed, reading my guidebook by flashlight. At times I thought of the tiny room on the other side of the wall which had belonged to my mother. Now the room was practically empty; the wooden pallet on which she'd once slept was piled with trunks and old bedding. Nearly six years ago, before leaving for London, I had watched her die on that bed, had found her playing with her excrement in her final days. Before we cremated her I had cleaned each of her fingernails with a hairpin, and then, because my brother could not bear it, I had assumed the role of eldest son, and had touched the flame to her temple, to release her tormented soul to heaven.

The next morning I moved into Mrs. Croft's house. When I unlocked the door I saw that she was sitting

on the piano bench, on the same side as the previous evening. She wore the same black skirt, the same starched white blouse, and had her hands folded together the same way in her lap. She looked so much the same that I wondered if she'd spent the whole night on the bench. I put my suitcase upstairs and then headed off to work. That evening when I came home from the university, she was still there.

"Sit down, boy!" She slapped the space beside her.

I perched on the bench. I had a bag of groceries with me—more milk, more cornflakes, and more bananas, for my inspection of the kitchen earlier in the day had revealed no spare pots or pans. There were only two saucepans in the refrigerator, both containing some orange broth, and a copper kettle on the stove.

"Good evening, Madam."

She asked me if I had checked the lock. I told her I had.

For a moment she was silent. Then suddenly she declared, with the equal measures of disbelief and delight as the night before, "There's an American flag on the moon, boy!"

"Yes, Madam."

"A flag on the moon! Isn't that splendid?"

I nodded, dreading what I knew was coming. "Yes, Madam."

"Say 'Splendid!'"

This time I paused, looking to either side in case anyone was there to overhear me, though I knew perfectly well that the house was empty. I felt like an idiot. But it was a small enough thing to ask. "Splendid!" I cried out.

Within days it became our routine. In the mornings when I left for the library Mrs. Croft was either hidden away in her bedroom, on the other side of the staircase, or sitting on the bench, oblivious of my presence, listening to the news or classical music on the radio. But each evening when I returned the same thing happened: she slapped the bench, ordered me to sit down, declared that there was a flag on the moon, and declared that it was splendid. I said it was splendid, too, and then we sat in silence. As awkward as it was, and as endless as it felt to me then, the nightly encounter lasted only about ten minutes; inevitably she would drift off to sleep, her head falling abruptly toward her chest, leaving me free to retire to my room. By then, of course, there was no flag standing on the moon. The astronauts, I read in the paper, had seen it fall before they flew back to Earth. But I did not have the heart to tell her.

Friday morning, when my first week's rent was due, I went to the piano in the parlor to place my money on the ledge. The piano keys were dull and discolored. When I pressed one, it made no sound at all. I had put eight dollar bills in an envelope and written Mrs. Croft's name on the front of it. I was not in the habit of leaving money unmarked and unattended. From where I stood I could see the profile of her tent-shaped skirt in the hall. It seemed unnecessary to make her get up and walk all the way to the piano. I never saw her walking about, and assumed, from the cane propped against the round table, that she did so with difficulty. When I approached the bench she peered up at me and demanded:

"What is your business?"

"The rent, Madam."

"On the ledge above the piano keys!"

"I have it here." I extended the envelope toward her, but her fingers, folded together in her lap, did not budge. I bowed slightly and lowered the envelope, so that it hovered just above her hands. After a moment she accepted it, and nodded her head. That night when I came home, she did not slap the bench, but out of habit I sat beside her as usual. She asked me if I had checked the lock, but she mentioned nothing about the flag on the moon. Instead she said:

"It was very kind of you!"

"I beg your pardon, Madam?"

"Very kind of you!"

She was still holding the envelope in her hands.

On Sunday there was a knock on my door. An elderly woman introduced herself: she was Mrs. Croft's daughter, Helen. She walked into the room and looked at each of the walls as if for signs of change, glancing at the shirts that hung in the closet, the neckties draped over the doorknob, the box of cornflakes on the chest of drawers, the dirty bowl and spoon in the basin. She was short and thickwaisted, with cropped silver hair and bright pink lipstick. She wore a sleeveless summer dress, a necklace of white plastic beads, and spectacles on a chain that hung like a swing against her chest. The backs of her legs were mapped with dark-blue veins, and her upper arms sagged like the flesh of a roasted eggplant. She told me she lived in Arlington, a town farther up Massachusetts Avenue. "I come once a week to bring Mother groceries. Has she sent you packing yet?"

"It is very well, Madam."

"Some of the boys run screaming. But I think she likes you. You're the first boarder she's ever referred to as a gentleman.

"She looked at me, noticing my bare feet. (I still felt strange wearing shoes indoors, and always removed them before entering my room.) "Are you new to Boston?"

"New to America, Madam."

"From?" She raised her eyebrows.

"I am from Calcutta, India."

"Is that right? We had a Brazilian fellow, about a year ago. You'll find Cambridge a very international city."

I nodded, and began to wonder how long our conversation would last. But at that moment we heard Mrs. Croft's electrifying voice rising up the stairs.

"You are to come downstairs immediately!"

"What is it?" Helen cried back.

"Immediately!"

I put on my shoes. Helen sighed.

I followed Helen down the staircase. She seemed to be in no hurry, and complained at one point that she had a bad knee. "Have you been walking without your cane?" Helen called out. "You know you're not supposed to walk without that cane." She paused, resting her hand on the bannister, and looked back at me. "She slips sometimes."

For the first time Mrs. Croft seemed vulnerable. I pictured her on the floor in front of the bench, flat on her back, staring at the ceiling, her feet pointing in opposite directions. But when we reached the bottom of the staircase she was sitting there as usual, her hands folded together in her lap. Two grocery bags were at her feet. She did not slap the bench, or ask us to sit down. She glared.

"What is it, Mother?"

"It's improper!"

"What's improper?"

"It is improper for a lady and gentleman who are not married to one another to hold a private conversation without a chaperone!"

Helen said she was sixty-eight years old, old enough to be my mother, but Mrs. Croft insisted that Helen and I speak to each other downstairs, in the parlor. She added that it was also improper for a lady of Helen's station to reveal her age, and to wear a dress so high above the ankle.

"For your information, Mother, it's 1969. What would you do if you actually left the house one day and saw a girl in a miniskirt?"

Mrs. Croft sniffed. "I'd have her arrested."

Helen shook her head and picked up one of the grocery bags. I picked up the other one, and followed her through the parlor and into the kitchen. The bags were filled with cans of soup, which Helen opened up one by one with a few cranks of a can opener. She tossed the old soup into the sink, rinsed the saucepans under the tap, filled them with soup from the newly opened cans, and put them back in the refrigerator. "A few years ago she could still open the cans herself," Helen said. "She hates that I do it for her now. But the piano killed her hands." She put on her spectacles, glanced at the cupboards, and spotted my tea bags. "Shall we have a cup?"

I filled the kettle on the stove. "I beg your pardon, Madam. The piano?"

"She used to give lessons. For forty years. It was how she raised us after my father died." Helen put her hands on her hips, staring at the open refrigerator. She reached into the back, pulled out a wrapped stick of butter, frowned, and tossed it into the garbage. "That ought to do it," she said, and put the unopened cans of soup in the cupboard. I sat at the table and watched as Helen washed the dirty dishes, tied up the garbage bag, and poured boiling water into two cups. She handed one to me without milk, and sat down

at the table.

"Excuse me, Madam, but is it enough?"

Helen took a sip of her tea. Her lipstick left a smiling pink stain on the rim of the cup. "Is what enough?"

"The soup in the pans. Is it enough food for Mrs. Croft?"

"She won't eat anything else. She stopped eating solids after she turned one hundred. That was, let's see, three years ago."

I was mortified. I had assumed Mrs. Croft was in her eighties, perhaps as old as ninety. I had never known a person who had lived for over a century. That this person was a widow who lived alone mortified me further still. Widowhood had driven my own mother insane. My father, who worked as a clerk at the General Post Office of Calcutta, died of encephalitis when I was sixteen. My mother refused to adjust to life without him; instead she sank deeper into a world of darkness from which neither I, nor my brother, nor concerned relatives, nor psychiatric clinics on Rash Behari Avenue could save her. What pained me most was to see her so unguarded, to hear her burp after meals or expel gas in front of company without the slightest embarrassment. After my father's death my brother abandoned his schooling and began to work in the jute mill he would eventually manage, in order to keep the household running. And so it was my job to sit by my mother's feet and study for my exams as she counted and recounted the bracelets on her arm as if they were the beads of an abacus. We tried to keep an eye on her. Once she had wandered half naked to the tram depot before we were able to bring her inside again.

"I am happy to warm Mrs. Croft's soup in the evenings," I suggested. "It is no trouble."

Helen looked at her watch, stood up, and poured the rest of her tea into the sink. "I wouldn't if I were you. That's the sort of thing that would kill her altogether."

That evening, when Helen had gone and Mrs. Croft and I were alone again, I began to worry. Now that I knew how very old she was, I worried that something would happen to her in the middle of the night, or when I was out during the day. As vigorous as her voice was, and imperious as she seemed, I knew that even a scratch or a cough could kill a person that old; each day she lived, I knew, was something of a miracle. Helen didn't seem concerned. She came and went, bringing soup for Mrs. Croft, one Sunday after the next.

In this manner the six weeks of that summer passed. I came home each evening, after my hours at the library, and spent a few minutes on the piano bench with Mrs. Croft. Some evenings I sat beside her long after she had drifted off to sleep, still in awe of how many years she had spent on this earth. At times I tried to picture the world she had been born into, in 1866—a world, I imagined, filled with women in long black skirts, and chaste conversations in the parlor. Now, when I looked at her hands with their swollen knuckles folded together in her lap, I imagined them smooth and slim, striking the piano keys. At times I came downstairs before going to sleep, to make sure she was sitting upright on the bench, or was safe in her bedroom. On Fridays I put the rent in her hands. There was nothing I could do for her beyond these simple gestures. I was not her son, and, apart from those eight dollars, I owed her nothing.

At the end of August, Mala's passport and green card were ready. I received a telegram with her flight information; my brother's house in Calcutta had no telephone. Around that time I also received a letter

from her, written only a few days after we had parted. There was no salutation; addressing me by name would have assumed an intimacy we had not yet discovered. It contained only a few lines. "I write in English in preparation for the journey. Here I am very much lonely. I sit very cold there. Is there snow. Yours, Mala."

I was not touched by her words. We had spent only a handful of days in each other's company. And yet we were bound together; for six weeks she had worn an iron bangle on her wrist, and applied vermilion powder to the part in her hair, to signify to the world that she was a bride. In those six weeks I regarded her arrival as I would the arrival of a coming month, or season—something inevitable, but meaningless at the time. So little did I know her that, while details of her face sometimes rose to my memory, I could not conjure up the whole of it.

A few days after receiving the letter, as I was walking to work in the morning, I saw an Indian woman on Massachusetts Avenue, wearing a sari with its free end nearly dragging on the footpath, and pushing a child in a stroller. An American woman with a small black dog on a leash was walking to one side of her. Suddenly the dog began barking. I watched as the Indian woman, startled, stopped in her path, at which point the dog leaped up and seized the end of the sari between its teeth. The American woman scolded the dog, appeared to apologize, and walked quickly away, leaving the Indian woman to fix her sari, and quiet her crying child. She did not see me standing there, and eventually she continued on her way. Such a mishap, I realized that morning, would soon be my concern. It was my duty to take care of Mala, to welcome her and protect her. I would have to buy her her first pair of snow boots, her first winter coat. I would have to tell her which streets to avoid, which way the traffic came, tell her to wear her sari so that the free end did not drag on the footpath. A five-mile separation from her parents, I recalled with some irritation, had caused her to weep.

Unlike Mala, I was used to it all by then: used to cornflakes and milk, used to Helen's visits, used to sitting on the bench with Mrs. Croft. The only thing I was not used to was Mala. Nevertheless I did what I had to do. I went to the housing office at M.I.T. and found a furnished apartment a few blocks away, with a double bed and a private kitchen and bath, for forty dollars a week. One last Friday I handed Mrs. Croft eight dollar bills in an envelope, brought my suitcase downstairs, and informed her that I was moving. She put my key into her change purse. The last thing she asked me to do was hand her the cane propped against the table, so that she could walk to the door and lock it behind me. "Goodbye, then," she said, and retreated back into the house. I did not expect any display of emotion, but I was disappointed all the same. I was only a boarder, a man who paid her a bit of money and passed in and out of her home for six weeks. Compared with a century, it was no time at all.

At the airport I recognized Mala immediately. The free end of her sari did not drag on the floor, but was draped in a sign of bridal modesty over her head, just as it had draped my mother until the day my father died. Her thin brown arms were stacked with gold bracelets, a small red circle was painted on her forehead, and the edges of her feet were tinted with a decorative red dye. I did not embrace her, or kiss her, or take her hand. Instead I asked her, speaking Bengali for the first time in America, if she was hungry.

She hesitated, then nodded yes.

I told her I had prepared some egg curry at home. "What did they give you to eat on the plane?"

"I didn't eat."

"All the way from Calcutta?"

"The menu said oxtail soup."

"But surely there were other items."

"The thought of eating an ox's tail made me lose my appetite."

When we arrived home, Mala opened up one of her suitcases, and presented me with two pullover sweaters, both made with bright-blue wool, which she had knitted in the course of our separation, one with a V neck, the other covered with cables. I tried them on; both were tight under the arms. She had also brought me two new pairs of drawstring pajamas, a letter from my brother, and a packet of loose Darjeeling tea. I had no present for her apart from the egg curry. We sat at a bare table, staring at our plates. We ate with our hands, another thing I had not yet done in America.

"The house is nice," she said. "Also the egg curry." With her left hand she held the end of her sari to her chest, so it would not slip off her head.

"I don't know many recipes."

She nodded, peeling the skin off each of her potatoes before eating them. At one point the sari slipped to her shoulders. She readjusted it at once."

There is no need to cover your head," I said. "I don't mind. It doesn't matter here."

She kept it covered anyway.

I waited to get used to her, to her presence at my side, at my table and in my bed, but a week later we were still strangers. I still was not used to coming home to an apartment that smelled of steamed rice, and finding that the basin in the bathroom was always wiped clean, our two toothbrushes lying side by side, a cake of Pears soap residing in the soap dish. I was not used to the fragrance of the coconut oil she rubbed every other night into her scalp, or the delicate sound her bracelets made as she moved about the apartment. In the mornings she was always awake before I was. The first morning when I came into the kitchen she had heated up the leftover sand set a plate with a spoonful of salt on its edge, assuming I would eat rice for breakfast, as most Bengali husbands did. I told her cereal would do, and the next morning when I came into the kitchen she had already poured the cornflakes into my bowl. One morning she walked with me to M.I.T., where I gave her a short tour of the campus. The next morning before I left for work she asked me for a few dollars. I parted with them reluctantly, but I knew that this, too, was now normal. When I came home from work there was a potato peeler in the kitchen drawer, and a tablecloth on the table, and chicken curry made with fresh garlic and ginger on the stove. After dinner I read the newspaper, while Mala sat at the kitchen table, working on a cardigan for herself with more of the blue wool, or writing letters home.

On Friday, I suggested going out. Mala set down her knitting and disappeared into the bathroom. When she emerged I regretted the suggestion; she had put on a silk sari and extra bracelets, and coiled her hair with a flattering side part on top of her head. She was prepared as if for a party, or at the very least for the cinema, but I had no such destination in mind. The evening was balmy. We walked several blocks down Massachusetts Avenue, looking into the windows of restaurants and shops. Then, without thinking, I led her down the quiet street where for so many nights I had walked alone.

"This is where I lived before you came," I said, stopping at Mrs. Croft's chain-link fence.

"In such a big house?"

"I had a small room upstairs. At the back."

"Who else lives there?"

"A very old woman."

"With her family?"

"Alone."

"But who takes care of her?"

I opened the gate. "For the most part she takes care of herself."

I wondered if Mrs. Croft would remember me; I wondered if she had a new boarder to sit with her each evening. When I pressed the bell I expected the same long wait as that day of our first meeting, when I did not have a key. But this time the door was opened almost immediately, by Helen. Mrs. Croft was not sitting on the bench. The bench was gone.

"Hello there," Helen said, smiling with her bright pink lips at Mala. "Mother's in the parlor. Will you be visiting awhile?"

"As you wish, Madam."

"Then I think I'll run to the store, if you don't mind. She had a little accident. We can't leave her alone these days, not even for a minute."

I locked the door after Helen and walked into the parlor. Mrs. Croft was lying flat on her back, her head on a peach-colored cushion, a thin white quilt spread over her body. Her hands were folded together on her chest. When she saw me she pointed at the sofa, and told me to sit down. I took my place as directed, but Mala wandered over to the piano and sat on the bench, which was now positioned where it belonged.

"I broke my hip!" Mrs. Croft announced, as if no time had passed.

"Oh dear, Madam."

"I fell off the bench!"

"I am so sorry, Madam."

"It was the middle of the night! Do you know what I did, boy?"

I shook my head.

"I called the police!"

She stared up at the ceiling and grinned sedately, exposing a crowded row of long gray teeth. "What do

you say to that, boy?"

As stunned as I was, I knew what I had to say. With no hesitation at all, I cried out, "Splendid!"

Mala laughed then. Her voice was full of kindness, her eyes bright with amusement. I had never heard her laugh before, and it was loud enough so that Mrs. Croft heard, too. She turned to Mala and glared.

"Who is she, boy?"

"She is my wife, Madam."

Mrs. Croft pressed her head at an angle against the cushion to get a better look. "Can you play the piano?"

"No, Madam," Mala replied.

"Then stand up!"

Mala rose to her feet, adjusting the end of her sari over her head and holding it to her chest, and, for the first time since her arrival, I felt sympathy. I remembered my first days in London, learning how to take the Tube to Russell Square, riding an escalator for the first time, unable to understand that when the man cried "piper" it meant "paper," unable to decipher, for a whole year, that the conductor said "Mind the gap" as the train pulled away from each station. Like me, Mala had travelled far from home, not knowing where she was going, or what she would find, for no reason other than to be my wife. As strange as it seemed, I knew in my heart that one day her death would affect me, and stranger still, that mine would affect her. I wanted somehow to explain this to Mrs. Croft, who was still scrutinizing Mala from top to toe with what seemed to be placid disdain. I wondered if Mrs. Croft had ever seen a woman in a sari, with a dot painted on her forehead and bracelets stacked on her wrists. I wondered what she would object to. I wondered if she could see the red dye still vivid on Mala's feet, all but obscured by the bottom edge of her sari. At last Mrs. Croft declared, with the equal measures of disbelief and delight I knew well:

"She is a perfect lady!"

Now it was I who laughed. I did so quietly, and Mrs. Croft did not hear me. But Mala had heard, and, for the first time, we looked at each other and smiled.

I like to think of that moment in Mrs. Croft's parlor as the moment when the distance between Mala and me began to lessen. Although we were not yet fully in love, I like to think of the months that followed as a honeymoon of sorts. Together we explored the city and met other Bengalis, some of whom are still friends today. We discovered that a man named Bill sold fresh fish on Prospect Street, and that a shop in Harvard Square called Cardullo's sold bay leaves and cloves. In the evenings we walked to the Charles River to watch sailboats drift across the water, or had ice-cream cones in Harvard Yard. We bought a camera with which to document our life together, and I took pictures of her posing in front of the Prudential Building, so that she could send them to her parents. At night we kissed, shy at first but quickly bold, and discovered pleasure and solace in each other's arms. I told her about my voyage on the S.S. Roma, and about Finsbury Park and the Y.M.C.A., and my evenings on the bench with Mrs. Croft. When I told her stories about my mother, she wept. It was Mala who consoled me when, reading the Globe one evening, I came across Mrs. Croft's obituary. I had not thought of her in several months—by then those six weeks of the summer were already a remote interlude in my past—but when I learned of

her death I was stricken, so much so that when Mala looked up from her knitting she found me staring at the wall, unable to speak. Mrs. Croft's was the first death I mourned in America, for hers was the first life I had admired; she had left this world at last, ancient and alone, never to return.

As for me, I have not strayed much farther. Mala and I live in a town about twenty miles from Boston, on a tree-lined street much like Mrs. Croft's, in a house we own, with room for guests, and a garden that saves us from buying tomatoes in summer. We are American citizens now, so that we can collect Social Security when it is time. Though we visit Calcutta every few years, we have decided to grow old here. I work in a small college library. We have a son who attends Harvard University. Mala no longer drapes the end of her sari over her head, or weeps at night for her parents, but occasionally she weeps for our son. So we drive to Cambridge to visit him, or bring him home for a weekend, so that he can eat rice with us with his hands, and speak in Bengali, things we sometimes worry he will no longer do after we die.

Whenever we make that drive, I always take Massachusetts Avenue, in spite of the traffic. I barely recognize the buildings now, but each time I am there I return instantly to those six weeks as if they were only the other day, and I slow down and point to Mrs. Croft's street, saying to my son, Here was my first home in America, where I lived with a woman who was a hundred and three. "Remember?" Mala says, and smiles, amazed, as I am, that there was ever a time that we were strangers. My son always expresses his astonishment, not at Mrs. Croft's age but at how little I paid in rent, a fact nearly as inconceivable to him as a flag on the moon was to a woman born in 1866. In my son's eyes I see the ambition that had first hurled me across the world. In a few years he will graduate and pave his own way, alone and unprotected. But I remind myself that he has a father who is still living, a mother who is happy and strong. Whenever he is discouraged, I tell him that if I can survive on three continents, then there is no obstacle he cannot conquer. While the astronauts, heroes forever, spent mere hours on the moon, I have remained in this new world for nearly thirty years. I know that my achievement is quite ordinary. I am not the only man to seek his fortune far from home, and certainly I am not the first. Still, there are times I am bewildered by each mile I have travelled, each meal I have eaten, each person I have known, each room in which I have slept. As ordinary as it all appears, there are times when it is beyond my imagination.