

## A Little Kind of Knowing

She had never been to India.

No, she had never been but had always known that she would. This knowledge had been tucked away in The Pocket of Gut Feelings and Maybe Onedays - her private collection of mindtruths that Deserved Capital Letters - and only wriggled it's way back into the open air of her awareness half way through her first year at Law School.

*Aamani stands still and silent as the Lakshmi statue at the back of the shop while the bent faceless figure hums on the sewing machine below her elbow*

It was decided over a flat white in the borrowed minutes before Legal Method on a Wednesday afternoon - a friend was telling her about an aid organisation that was currently recruiting students to head to India to do volunteer work over the summer break. As she sipped her coffee she felt a stir in her Pocket, a kind of murmur, as the Gut Feeling wriggled itself over the Maybe Onedays and peered out over the Pocket edge to spy at the two girls chatting. And just like that, she knew. In November she would fly to Mumbai and spend three months working in the streets of a city she knew nothing about with children whose faces she both longed to meet and felt she already knew - as familiar as her own brothers' and sisters'.

*Two silent goddesses; one chipped and dusty with flakes in the gold paint of her arms, the other standing trapped in the illuminated chasm of this closet, nestled between the tight-shut faces of the bicycle store and the tobacconist. In an indistinguishable alley in an indistinguishable street of Mumbai, Aamani stands and stares out into the thick night*

Mumbai. She liked how it rolled off her tongue into her verses of dialogue. Unspoken, it lolled around her mouth like a piece of candy too big to suck on indiscreetly, one her tongue liked to play with.

*Aamani is being tailored into the ethnic entity, put on display and cast in hues, not dissimilar to the shelf of Lamingtons in the window of the Kiwi bakery - on display; not quite Indian, not quite woman, a commodity image for the Western world to peer in at and Oooh at the exotic Eastern Princess; transfixing as the lights of Diwali, transfixing as the gaze of the stalking Bengal, transfixing ... worshipable even*

'You'll Love And Hate It In Equal Parts', they all said with capital letters. 'It'll Be Too In Your Face, Too Noisy, Too Smelly, Too Dangerous', they told her. 'Who Are You Doing This For? What Have You Got To Prove?' was her favourite. But she

just sat with her wee Pocket of knowing, went to class, did her study, wrote and rewrote her exam prep notes. How could she tell them it was just a Gut Feeling?

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*Who is she looking at? Where is she looking to? Where is her tomorrow if the street is so dark and the world likes to see where she stands so bright?*

As exams began looming and IN DEE AH began quivering in the wings of her timestage, she began to respond viscerally to the Mumbai in her mind. She could taste the dense spicerubbishlotusheat smell that she hadn't come to know yet; the ringing in her ears from too much reading became the blaring of carsanddogsandchildrenandcitynoise. She had both not quite left and not quite landed but straddled two worlds, scheduled to one, longing for the other.

*As the sewing machine hums into the heavy night Aamani ever so slightly shifts her weight, lowers her gaze and smiles. An unfurling lotus smile, honest but secret –*

The Day arrived. As she kissed goodbyes under the Cathay Pacific terminal sign, her Pocket stirred in a satisfied tremor and she knew this was the beginning of the journey her Maybe Onedays had smugly kept secret until now. This was her homecoming.

*her own private knowing.*