

## Wilderness House Literary Review 12/2

*Rudy Ravindra*

### **Most Memorable Man**

AT A GATHERING OF THE INDIAN CULTURAL ASSOCIATION, a bunch of us were chitchatting, waiting for the program to begin.

A friend pointed to an attractive lady. "Oh, there's Rekha, let's go say hi."

After the introductions, Rekha focused her piercing brown eyes on me. "So, young lady, where are you from?"

"India." I was intimidated by her booming voice, commanding gaze, dazzling designer pants suit, and stilettos. I felt at a disadvantage in my *salwar kameez*.

She laughed. "Of course, I know, I know, most everybody here's from India. I mean which city?"

"Bangalore."

"Great! Great! Bangalore's my favorite city. We'd go to Bangalore to escape the humid Kerala summers. Ah, there's Vivek. Come, come, meet Kaveri."

"Hi, I'm Vivek Desai. I teach at the university. I take it you are a new student, huh?" A broad smile and a firm handshake.

I was tongue-tied at the sight of this tall, handsome man, his kind eyes, and his salt and pepper hair. I mumbled that I joined the MBA program and then more people arrived, more introductions and then it was time to troop into the auditorium. We endured the secretary's soporific speech, the treasurer's tedious report, the amateur singing and dancing, and the greasy food from a mediocre Indian restaurant.

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Love at first sight was just a cliché until I met Vivek. I just couldn't stop thinking of him. The university website said that he taught Asian history, and published several manuscripts and a few books. In the picture he looked younger with abundant dark hair.

In my spare time, I walked around the hilly, wooded campus in the hope of running into Vivek. When I bumped into him near the library, I was ecstatic that he recognized me, and even remembered my name. That was the very first time I felt such a deep desire for any man. He triggered an intense feeling, and I wasn't sure if it was love or lust or both. I didn't care that he was married, I didn't care whether he was the type to carry on a torrid extra marital affair, I didn't care whether he'd wreck his wedded bliss for a fervent fling with a willing woman, and least of all, I didn't care whether he was even remotely attracted to me. Nothing mattered. Only my burning desire.

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A friend called. "Hey, Kaveri, would you like to go to Rekha's house? She asked me bring you."

"But I met her only once."

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"She remembers you. For all her busy schedule she finds time for these parties. You know, she's a big shot at the hospital, Chief of Cardiology."

It was spring, what with the time change, there was still plenty of day light in the evening, and the heavy snow fall during the long winter was but a distant dream. From the outside, the house looked unpretentious. But, the understated elegance of the interior was impressive with colorful original paintings, recessed lighting, and exquisite furniture. The large living room was ablaze with a roaring fire place, and people were talking and drinking. In a corner, an old, bald, bard was dispensing words of wisdom from Hindu scriptures to a group of devotees, and in another, Rekha was in an animated conversation with a blonde in a provocative, plunging neckline. I waved a hello and she waved back. I looked around for Vivek, but he was nowhere in sight. I came to this party hoping to forge a closer relationship with the man of my dreams. Hope, as my faculty advisor often reiterated, was not a plan.

I walked out to the backyard to admire the garden. Among a patch of bright yellow daffodils a few were bleached to pale white, and their petals all but withered. As if waiting for their cue, the tulips, interspersed among the vibrant, wine-red pansies, hesitantly raised their heads, and a few early blooms of red and white dotted the landscape with the alluring promise of more to come. And at the farther end a hedge of pink peonies brightened the yard. I sat on a bench looking at the vast expanse, hemmed in by huge mature hemlocks. The yard was peaceful and appeared secluded, despite houses beyond the backyard boundary. The bird songs, the chirping cicadas, and the pleasant piney smell of wood burning was soothing. I closed my eyes and lost myself for a few moments in that serene setting. A whiff of an amazing aroma, a combination of chocolate and vanilla, wafted in my direction. I saw Vivek smoking his pipe at the far end.

I walked up to him. "Hi, Dr. Desai, how are you?"

"Now, now, now, none of that doctor stuff, please call me Vivek, okay?" He touched my shoulder, triggering shock waves throughout my body. His touch was innocent, I knew. But for me it felt different, maybe because I was so enamored.

"Yes, doc...I mean Vivek." I managed to look unperturbed in spite of my rapidly fluttering heart. I wished I was bold enough to kiss him, a prelude to passionate pastimes.

That night I was restless, tossed and turned, until in desperation, I fantasized about him. I was sweating and moaning, and the relief was enormous. Although it was not the same as the real thing, it was nonetheless a release. I pulled up the History department website to see his sensual lips, and his sardonic smile, and felt as if he mocked my naughtiness.

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I saw Vivek many times after that party. My heart raced, and sweat poured out of my axilla. Thank god for deodorants, or else I would have stunk like a skunk. And another embarrassing thing, I became wet whenever I ran into Vivek. Pity, he didn't know my intense ardor and my irrepressible and unquenchable lust. At times, I used to be jealous of Rekha,

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who, I am sure, enjoyed his strong hands caressing her, fondling her, here, there, everywhere, and exploring her hills and valleys.

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I usually jogged around the outer perimeter of the campus, entered Rekha's neighborhood, past her house, and then crossed a small creek, and up a hill, leading back into the campus. The path was mapped out with an ulterior motive of 'accidentally' bumping into Rekha or Vivek, who pulled in or out of their driveway. With time, the driveway dialogs led to occasional tea in their gorgeous sun room with its floor to ceiling glass windows. In due course, the staff—the glum gardener, the chirpy cleaning crew, and the consummate cook knew the young student who popped in now and then, helped herself to a glass of water, and browsed the latest frivolous fashion magazines in the sunroom.

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I felt guilty, here I was lusting after her husband, and she seemingly unaware of my fervent feelings, treated me like family. Whenever they went shopping to Albany or Syracuse or New York City, bigger cities compared to our bitty town in Upstate, I was invited. And Rekha frequently whisked me off to drug dinners. In an attempt to coax the physicians to prescribe their brands, the drug reps arranged lectures by well-known physicians to talk about new drugs to treat depression or incontinence or other maladies. In addition to a power point presentation, a three course meal, expensive wine, and other potent potables were on offer. Since I had a degree in Biochemistry, I could comprehend the lectures.

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Rekha said. "You look good!"

I pirouetted, showing off my sleeveless ankle-length dress.

Rekha clapped. "You look like a supermodel! I love those open-toe sandals, they suit you."

I blushed. "I splurged a bit. I got a research assistantship, make a little bit more now."

"Wow! Congratulations! So, you are now gonna be more busy?"

"Well, not really, same work, but I need to help my advisor with manuscripts, no big deal."

"So, ready to rock and roll, eh?"

We hopped into her car. I looked at her designer clothes, her sleek sandals, her unobtrusive platinum jewelry, her professional hairdo, and her manicured hands on the wheel. I felt woefully inadequate beside this accomplished and supremely confident woman. In my heart of hearts I knew that Vivek, with such a sophisticated woman by his side, would never stoop down to be with me.

At the restaurant, she tossed the key to the valet, and we climbed up the steep stairs to the private dining room. Pam, the voluptuous drug rep, looked like she was poured into her pants suit. Rekha hugged her and introduced me.

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The lecture on a new drug to control blood glucose levels in diabetics was informative. Listening to the lecture, slowly munching the appetizers—pan-seared scallops, bacon-wrapped shrimp, and crab-stuffed mushrooms, and sipping the mellow Merlot, I didn't notice Rekha's absence. Only when the lights were back on, I saw her empty chair. Now that it was Q & A time, I quietly walked out to powder my nose. There were only two stalls, and luckily one was unoccupied. I took care of business and when I was pulling up my panties, heard moaning and groaning, and guttural noises from the adjoining stall. "Do it faster, faster, baby." I was astounded, that was Rekha! What the hell was she doing? Then I heard Pam's husky voice, "I love it, so smooth, you bitch, when do you find the time to get it waxed, ha?" I was embarrassed, my cheeks felt hot, literally shivering, slipped out silently. I was shocked that Rekha was a lesbian. On second thoughts, I felt that she had to be bisexual. After all, she must couple with Vivek. It was inconceivable that he wouldn't want to bed his sexy siren.

On the way home, Rekha said, "I know you heard us, you were in the next stall, I saw your feet."

The road was dark, a long stretch from downtown to the university campus, and the bright beams of the BMW were a boon. I thought she'd drop me at my apartment at the other end of the campus, but she drove to her house. "You better come in. Vivek is away, some conference."

She poured a couple of shots of whiskey. "You are all shook up. Drink it straight up." She tossed her jacket on a chair, got rid of her sandals, and curled up on the sofa. "Now, you know my little secret. And I know yours." She flashed a knowing smile. "Now, now, now, don't be shocked. Whenever you are near Vivek, the way you look at him, I know *that* look, ha, ha, ha." She laughed like a vamp in the Bollywood movies.

"B..b..b..b..but...how, how, how..."

"You look so pale, girl, come on drink up." She poured another generous shot. "I knew it from the very beginning. But, lemme tell you something. He is too engrossed. Most of the time he pores over ancient documents, no time for affairs, ha, ha, ha."

"S...s...so, you don't, you don't..."

"Oh, yes, we do, we do, most definitely. When he's in one of his rare moods, he's a real cave man."

Although my brain was a bit fuzzy, whiskey on top of wine, I couldn't help but feel jealous of their coupling, a wild Vivek with the ravishing Rekha.

Rekha hugged me. "Come to mama, she loves your silky skin, so fair and flawless, ripe and ready." She smacked her lips, and kissed me.

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I pondered if I'd have been receptive to her advances had I been sober. But, truth be told, I was not all that drunk and was aroused by her amorous kisses and caresses. Being with my very first woman was entirely different from the experience with my boyfriend in Bangalore. With Rekha, it was endless, exhilarating and exuberant. Waves upon waves of pleasure

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washed over me. And there was no need for enormous erections, there was no need to reassure and revive a prematurely spurted member, and most of all, there was no need to feign pleasure to assuage the male ego.

From that initial, perhaps impromptu encounter, our liaison became somewhat steady, and I looked forward to our trysts with anxious anticipation. In skimpy bras and thongs, I paraded up and down in high-heeled sandals, and danced to the bawdy Bollywood ballads. She enjoyed those shows very much, and rewarded me in her own special way.

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I couldn't help but imagine their intercourse. Was Vivek rough and rowdy? Did he bruise Rekha's succulent lips? Did he fondle her perky breasts and shapely buttocks, and leave those ugly black and blue marks? Or were those the handiwork of that brazen hussy, Pam? Ignorance was bliss, and I didn't like to face the truth. To all intents and purposes, it was immaterial. It was enough that Rekha was with me from time to time.

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The next three years flew by fast what with my courses, and internships at a few companies. I completed my MBA, and got a great job at a multinational company in California. I hated to move away from Rekha and hated the thought of starting a new life in an unfamiliar place without a steady companion, without someone to share stories and secrets. But I knew that the romance had to end one day. Being the only child, I had to return to India, get hitched and present grandbabies to my dotting parents. Hopefully, the California job would be a spring board to a senior position in Bangalore.

So, with a heavy heart, I jogged towards Rekha's house. Sweating profusely, I entered the sunroom to see Rekha, her face flushed with pleasure, on all fours, while Vivek, with his eyes closed, rammed her robustly.

Rekha smiled. "Hi, Kaveri, oh, ah, come, oh, sweetie, not so hard, wow, baby, join us Kaveri!"

Vivek smiled and waved me in.

I thought, this is my lucky day, and quickly got rid of my jogging outfit.