

On Assignment

I've been asked to write a page of bad writing. A page of writing where I do not worry about how it looks. Where I can be myself. Unshackled from the pretense of goodness.

So I thought I'd write about a tennis lesson. About a middle aged immigrant who watched Wimbledon in India as a young boy on leisurely and stressful Sundays but never got farther than the neighborhood park littered by confetti from the local Dusherra demolition of the Brahman-demon king of Lanka. This man, I was intending to write about, he did manage to get to MIT though. To the store that sold cheap sun glasses. Inside the bedroom of the woman who made him hate his stutter. Inside the autorickshaw that would take him to the job that would cure his alcoholism in Pune. On the stretcher that ...wait. But I've already written about a middle aged immigrant man experimenting with sports. One should only steal in a pinch. Especially from oneself. Idea abandoned.

So I veered toward another idea. About a man struggling with a cough. I thought of pumps, inhalers, of codeine, of dirty glances, Kleenex, delayed projects, blood in sputum, a full grown body crawling on fours. No, this is too close. I cannot write about it. Not just yet.

Then I thought I should write a story about a woman who is a sex kitty. You know, about the perils of being sex kitty. Are there any? This called for research. Therefore I stalled the story. But like any stalled project, it cast its shadow. Everywhere I go I see

belts, polka dot stockings, red Minnie mouse headbands. No whips. Thank you very much.

So oppressive, these unwritten stories. Like trying to break open a keyless room secured on the inside with a deadbolt. You push, push, get help. The door is strong, hardy unvarnished wood. You must enter, the world of this story, otherwise life is incomplete. These stories are not possibilities. They are promises. They live, breathe, yawn. I am perpetually pregnant. I am that kind of mother who worries about her children. Always, that is my job. And goodness does not need unshackling.

Any questions, I'll take them now.
