

Love Poem (2006)

By Tishani Doshi (India)

Ultimately, we will lose each other
to something. I would hope for grand
circumstance-- death or disaster.
But it might not be that way at all.
It might be that you walk out
one morning after making love
to buy cigarettes, and never return,
or I fall in love with another man.
It might be a slow drift into indifference.
Either way, we'll have to learn
to bear the weight of the eventuality
that we will lose each other to something.
So why not begin now, while your head
rests like a perfect moon in my lap,
and the dogs on the beach are howling?
Why not reach for the seam in this South Indian
night and tear it, just a little, so the falling
can begin? Because later, when we cross
each other on the streets, and are forced
to look away, when we've thrown
the disregarded pieces of our togetherness
into bedroom drawers and the smell
of our bodies is disappearing like the sweet
decay of lilies-- what will we call it,
when it's no longer love?



Tishani Doshi
born 1975

DIRECTIONS: Choose any THREE of the following to answer.

1. In lines 12-14, the speaker compares a head resting on a lap to a perfect moon? How are the two ideas alike? Explain.
2. In lines 16-17 the speaker compares a South Indian night to a cloth with a seam (the line where two or more layers of fabric are held together by stitches) that can be ripped apart. How are the two ideas alike? Explain.
3. In lines 21-22 the speaker compares a relationship to something that can be packed away into bedroom drawers. How are the two ideas alike? Explain.

4. In lines 22-23 the speaker describes bodies by describing only a part of the body (a smell)-- where the smell stands in for the entirety of the body. Why would the speaker think that this part (a smell) should best stand in for the whole (a body, of which the smell forms merely a part)? Explain.
5. In lines 23-24 the speaker compares the decay of a relationship to the decay of lilies (a type of flower). How are the two ideas alike? Explain.

DIRECTIONS: Answer the following question.

6. The speaker says she wishes to be parted from her lover only by “death or disaster” (3), suggesting that she loves him and does not want to be parted in an untimely manner. However, in line 13, the speaker says, “Why not begin [the process of breaking apart] now.” What could explain these contradictory feelings? Use evidence from the text (quotation) in support of your answer.



Tishani Doshi