



Source: Steven Erlanger, 'Isolation of Gaza chokes off trade', *New York Times online*, 19/09/07.

Tags: [dreams](#), [refugees](#)
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It was humid and sticky and hot and Rajesh had had enough. But still he heard himself saying to Priti:

"...And, sometimes when I'm not thinking I remember another life, another time. I dream it, I mean, I literally dream it. It's like I've been bewitched. The other night I was sipping my tea and then all of a sudden a vision took hold of me and I could see that once, sometime, a while back, I had my own plot of land. Can you imagine it? My own plot of land? It was so exciting, I could hardly breathe! Of course, immediately I began to gather materials together to build a home. But, no sooner had I begun than a large thick wild plant burst up through the centre of the plot and grew to tall and menacing proportions right in front of me. I couldn't control it and the foundations of the house were damaged. And it seemed like the land was cursed and that all was lost, and I felt terribly sad. But just as I was about to give up, sink to my knees and weep I heard someone calling out, and I looked over my shoulder to the left and I saw other people in the same predicament, and looking over to the right I saw even more. And then I knew that this was how we were supposed to live; in and amongst such obstacles and that this would make us wise—that I was wise. And so I lived under the foliage of the plant. Making it mine, cleaning its leaves, talking to it, singing to it. And it grew to love me and I it.

"...And just now, when you were talking Priti. I remembered that once I could fly. I mean not literally, but I could, if I danced hard enough, I could spin and jump and skip in the sky. It was easy. And everyone would look at me and laugh and clap, and I was amazing. I mean it sounds pompous, but I was, I really was. I could stay air-bound for at least an hour. And when I would land it wouldn't be onto my feet, instead I would add one last flourish and land in a forward roll. I mean! The audacity! The daring! Landing in a forward roll!

"...And it makes me think Priti, if that were me in another life, and I could do all that (and I could) then this life, this reality, this should be easy. I mean, this, sitting here in this room, talking to those men, having them look over our stuff, ask us those questions, this is easy. We've travelled a long way to get here, a lot further than they have. It's in our blood. The things they've seen are nothing to us. We have a memory of another life, of a life they don't know about—can't even imagine—and we should remember that. It makes us strong. And when we get out of this room (and we will) we'll be so much happier than they can ever be. We will, we honestly will..."

Rajesh looked down at Priti. He wondered if she was buying this crap.

A trickle of sweat carelessly beaded its way down his forehead. Before he could wipe it away it found its way into the corner of his eye stinging slightly.

'Priti?'

No answer.

'Priti?'

Was she sleeping or just ignoring him?

If she were sleeping he could at least stop droning on, have some time to himself. Time to rake over what had gone wrong. Where they had failed...Anger welled up in him. What had happened? What the hell had they been thinking? That they might be allowed in? That they wouldn't end up here in this room, with these hungry men sniffing through their wares?

He felt nauseous and tired. Their belongings had been taken hours ago, maybe days...Would they ever get them back? An image flashed into his mind of lots of people staring blankly at Priti and he being marched off away from the barrier, away from their future. But now he was being ridiculous, melodramatic even. They still had a future didn't they? Just not the one they needed.

Don't think about that...

Don't think about that...

Easier to talk, to babble on, to recount his hallucinatory dreams to a listening (or sleeping) Priti.

"...And once we get out of this room, remember what we're going to do? Where we're going to end up? What our lives will be like? We are going to be treated like royalty. Because I know where to get hold of some money and get hold of some jobs. Uncle promised us some didn't he? And then it's only a matter of time before it all comes right for us, it's only a matter of time...Then really we will be flying won't we? Like I used to. We'll be able to dance, to gambol around, to land in front of everyone in forward rolls, with a flourish to rapturous applause and my oh my, won't that be fun? And our own plot of land. I've had it once, so it'll happen again. We'll own our own plot of land. It's our destiny, it's a matter of time, it's a step away, just outside of this room..."

Priti stirred, looked up at him and asked, 'and when will that be exactly?'

It was a blunt question. He swept over it.

'Soon, Priti, soon. They can't keep us in here forever can they? There are laws, there are people, they will come and find us. They will see our papers. They will come and find us. And then we will do what we set out to do. We will have the life we dreamed of, we will be happier than we could ever imagine.'

She looked away.

He looked up.

That was the plan, anyway.

Adapted for performance by Barbara Campbell from a story by Sheila Ghelani.