



Learn English Through Stories

I Series

17

**Adapted and modified by
Kulwant Singh Sandhu**

<https://learn-by-reading.co.uk>

Contents

Slumdog Millionaire:

1. Chapter Eleven: A Love Story.

Chapter Eleven: A Love Story

16 years of age, Agra.

When I arrived in Agra, I wandered through the busy streets until I came to a river. Suddenly, I saw something huge and white - a kind of building I had never seen before. So, I asked a man who was near me what it was.

“Don’t you know?” he said, shocked. “It’s the Taj Mahal!”

Thirty minutes later, I arrived at its gates. There was a sign that said, “Entry: Indians 20 rupees, Foreigners 20 dollars, Mon- days closed, Fridays free.” I was lucky; it was Friday. I went inside and was amazed by the beautiful building and its wonderful gardens.

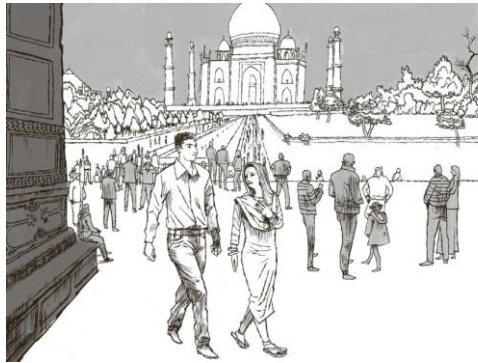
The place was full of tourists of all kinds. I quietly joined a group who were being taken around by a guide. I listened carefully to everything he told them. I learned a lot about the building and the history of the Taj Mahal. At the end, I had a brilliant idea. My English would be useful there - I could become a guide. An illegal one.

It was easy to do. I just quietly waited outside the front gate and chatted to tourists, and then they paid me to take them around and tell them interesting things. Most of the things I told them I had remembered from the real guide. Other parts I just made up.

A few days later, I heard about a place that rented out rooms. I knocked on the front door and waited. An older woman in expensive clothes and lots of jewellery opened the door.

“I am Swapna Devi. What do you want?” she said, coldly. I spoke politely in English and asked if she had a room I could rent. That night, I moved into a low building at the back of the house where about thirty other people already lived.

During the next year, I made a lot of money as an illegal guide. I enjoyed meeting different types of people. One Friday, I met an Indian girl who had come to visit the Taj Mahal on her day off. She was very beautiful, and her name was Nita. We talked together, and I really enjoyed it. Like me, she was an orphan, and she told me that she worked as a cleaner in an expensive hotel. Two Fridays later, Nita came to the Taj Mahal again. We met many times during the next few months, and I quickly fell in love with her.



Her work at the hotel was very hard, the hours were long, and the hotel manager, Shyam, was a frightening and controlling man. My biggest wish was to marry her and take her away from all that. But, when I suggested it, she looked very sad and said that I had to ask Shyam. “Shyam is not only the manager of the hotel,” said Nita, quietly. “He’s my brother, too.”

I was shocked. How could her own brother treat her so badly? It was then that Nita told me that he did not even pay her for the work she did.

That evening, I went to see Shyam and told him that I wanted to marry Nita.

“Nita’s mine, and I need her at the hotel,” he said. “I won’t let her marry just anyone. The man she marries will be rich, and he’ll have to give me 400,000 rupees to marry her.” Nita was very upset and begged me not to argue with her brother, who was dangerous. It was the end of my dreams; there was no way that I could ever save that much money.

Nita and I still saw each other, but I kept away from the hotel and Shyam. Then, one day, someone came running to my room with a message for me. “Someone called Nita has just phoned. She’s at the hospital and needs you there now!”

I ran all the way to the hospital. Nita looked terrible - she had a black eye, a long deep cut on her face, and marks on her arms, too.

“Who has done this to you?” I asked her.

“It was a man from Mumbai. I was cleaning his room at the Palace Hotel when he came back. He wanted to have sex with me, but I told him no. He got very angry and wouldn’t let me leave the room. Then, he did all this to me. What you see on my face is nothing. Look what he did to my body ..

When Nita pulled up her top I almost died. There were cigarette burns all over her chest. I had seen this before. I became extremely angry. "I know who has done this to you. Did he say his name? I will kill him."

"No, I don't know his name," said Nita. "He was tall and

Shyam then came into the room, but he stopped when he saw me. "Unless you have brought me four hundred thousand rupees, you can get lost. Get out, and don't come back!"

I left, but I decided that I must be with Nita and care for her. There was only one way I could think of to get the money. A woman who lived in the room next to mine worked as a cleaner for Swapna Devi. She had once told me where the money that we all gave in rent was kept.

Two nights later, Swapna Devi went out to a dinner party. I secretly went inside the house, broke a lock and took the money I needed. When I added the notes to the money I already had, it made just over 400,000 rupees. I put the money in an envelope, and I ran to the hospital. As I went into the hospital, a middle-aged man wearing glasses accidentally walked into me, and I dropped the envelope. He stared when he saw what had fallen out of it. "I beg you, please lend this money to me," he said. "My son is sixteen, and he is very ill. He needs medicine that costs four hundred thousand rupees, and without it he will die very soon

I felt very sorry for the man, but I told him that I needed the money to save a friend. As I turned and walked away, I heard the man begin to cry.

Shyam was in Nita's room when I got there. "Why are you here again?" he said, angrily. "I've got the money you asked for. I've come to take Nita away with me."

"Nita is not going anywhere. The doctors say it will take her four months to get better, and she needs an operation, too. So get out, or come back with six hundred thousand rupees - enough to pay for the operation as well. But, until that day, keep away from her!" Then, he closed the door in my face.

I sat down in the corridor and started to cry with anger. A few moments later, I noticed a newspaper lying on the floor. There was a photo of a man who was smiling and holding up lots of bank notes. Underneath the picture, it said, "Welcome to Who Will

Win a Billion?, the greatest show on TV! Call us, or write to us now to see if you will be the lucky winner!" The address given said: "Prem Studios, Khar, Mumbai". An idea suddenly came to me.

As I walked through the hospital, I saw the man with glasses again. I held out the envelope to him. "Here, take it," I said. "It's four hundred thousand rupees. Go and save your son."

The man took the envelope and fell down at my feet. "Thank you so much!" he cried. He took out his business card and gave it to me, saying, "Here. I'll pay you back one day, when I can."

When I went outside the hospital, a police car was there, and out stepped Swapna Devi's cleaner. "That's him!" she said. "He's the one who has stolen Madam's money." I spoke to the policeman in perfect English and told him I had no idea what she meant.

The policeman looked in all my pockets and found nothing. They also searched my room, and still they found nothing. The truth was that I had nothing.

"That's awful," Smita says, and holds my hand as I cry.

"I haven't heard anything about Nita for the last four months," I tell her.

"I'm sure you will see her again," says Smita, gently. "Now, let's watch the recording. There are only two more questions left."

Prem Kumar turns and speaks to the camera. "So ... question eleven, for one hundred million rupees' in which play by William Shakespeare do we find a character called Costard? Is it: a) King Lear, b) The Merchant of Venice, c) Love's Labour^ Lost, or d) Othello?"

I stare at Prem Kumar as the drums begin to sound.

"Do you have any idea of the answer?" Prem Kumar asks. "No."

But then I remember the two special chances I have. I cannot think of anyone who might know the answer to this question. I decide to use the "Half and Half" chance, and then use my lucky coin to make the final decision between the two answers that will be left. I reach into my pocket to check that the coin is there, but my hand touches something in the same pocket. I pull out a business card that says, "Utpal Chatterjee, English Teacher, St John's School, Agra." It also has a phone number. At first, I do not understand, and then I remember.

"I'll use 'Call a Friend', please," I say. Prem Kumar looks surprised.

"I want to call this person," I tell him, and I hold up the business card.

Prem Kumar passes me a phone. "You have two minutes to call one person, and you can ask them anything you like."

I take the phone and call the number on the card. The phone rings and rings, but no one answers. Half a minute passes. The audience is completely silent, and everyone is watching me. Just when I am about to give up, someone picks up.

"Hello. Is that Mr Chatterjee?" I say. "Speaking."

"Mr Chatterjee, I'm the person who helped you and your son at the hospital in Agra. Do you remember?" "Oh, my God!" he says. "I've been trying to find you for the last four months! You saved my son's life, you-"

I cut him short. "Mr Chatterjee, I don't have much time. I'm a contestant in a quiz show, and I need you to quickly answer a question for me."

"Oh. Yes, of course, I'll do anything you want."

I ask him the question as quickly as I can. But he says, "I don't remember this character in *The Merchant of Venice* or *Othello*."

It's either *King Lear* or *Love's Labour's Lost*, but I'm not sure which. Maybe it's *Love's Labour's Lost*, but I The two minutes has finished and Prem Kumar ends the call. "Sorry, Mr Thomas. I need your answer now." "I will say C. *Love's Labour's Lost*."

The drums come again. The correct answer appears on the screen.

"It is C! You're correct! You're the first person on the show to have won a hundred million rupees!"

The audience stands up and claps and shouts for a long time. Prem Kumar looks a bit hot and worried. I sit and take in the feeling of having won 100,000,000 rupees. I no longer have nothing at all.