

**BEFORE I GO, AFTER I 'M GONE**

**WRITTEN BY :**

**SELINA SHETH**

**ADAPTED FROM THE SHORT STORY**

**LAST NIGHT**

**BY**

**JAMES SALTER**

**(AND ON PUBLISHED NEWS REPORTS ON EUTHANASIA IN INDIA)**

**BEFORE I GO, AFTER I'M GONE**

**DRAMA/RITES OF PASSAGE**

**A MAN PREPARES TO EUTHANISE HIS BELOVED, TERMINALLY-ILL WIFE,  
UNAWARE OF THE SURPRISING EVENTS AND EMOTIONS THAT WILL  
FOLLOW.**

**ENGLISH/APPROX. 20 MINUTES**

**FEATURE SHORT FOR A UNIVERSAL AUDIENCE**

I/E. GURGAON APARTMENT/STUDY. MORNING

Gurgaon skyline through the open window of Anurag Saigal's study. He is 45, tall and slim, and working at his desk on a laptop. Next to him are translation notes for the Hebrew children's book *The Shark And The Fish*, by Gilad Shalit.

A framed photograph of Anurag and Uma, 43, rests on the desk, the couple happy and laughing.

The laptop PINGS with the sound of an incoming message on screen.

Anurag opens the file and reads, his expression stoic. Then he leans back, takes off his glasses, rubs his eyes, gets up and exits.

CUT TO

INTERIOR. GURGAON APARTMENT/BEDROOM. MORNING

Uma rests on the bed. Anurag puts down a cup of tea for her.

ANURAG

Taken your meds?

UMA

Yeah. How's the work going?

A beat.

UMA (CONT'D)

Any news?

ANURAG

(quietly)

Yes. I have an address. Uma, can't we just...just...forget all this and enjoy the day?

UMA

(gently)

It's time, Anu. Let's face it, I'm not going to get any better.

Uma removes a loose thread from Anurag's sweater.

UMA (CONT'D)

This ratty thing you keep wearing!  
It's more than 20 years old, from  
that summer in Prague, right? Where  
are your newer clothes...you know,  
from this century?

Anurag is quiet. He just holds Uma's hand.

UMA

When this is over, you have to find  
a way to move on. And you will.  
You'll find someone to love and  
who'll love you. I know you will.

ANURAG

Stop it, Uma.

UMA

Go and collect it now.

Anurag leaves. Uma lies back, shuts her tired eyes.

CUT TO

EXTERIOR. GURGAON HIGHWAY/STREETS. DAY

AUDIO : A radio VJ, some Bollywood pop music. It's all just  
background noise.

Anurag drives an old Toyota. He is dazed by the traffic, the  
news, blaring horns, the chaos on the streets.

He gets on the highway - on one side, a man sits bleeding,  
his motorcycle smashed, beside him a cop is taking notes.  
Anurag registers this briefly, in SLO-MO, as he drives past.

QUICK CUTS as Anurag turns off the highway, onto a dirt road,  
and nears a cluster of empty, run-down buildings. He checks  
the address on the car dashboard, drives slowly and parks.

CUT TO

INTERIOR. BUILDING/STAIRS/LOBBY. DAY

QUICK CUTS. Anurag enters a dilapidated building, walks up the stairs. Looks around. There is no one anywhere, except a sleeping guard on this floor. Anurag takes more stairs. He finds himself in an empty, dinghy lobby before a heavy wooden apartment door. He rings the bell. Anurag looks through the peephole and sees a grotesque face staring back at him. Just then, the dark door is flung open.

FADE OUT/IN

INTERIOR. APARTMENT/ROOM. DAY

A bright white room, almost hospital-like, with large windows streaming sunshine. Anurag blinks. A cheery, heavy-set man, 50, is smiling and welcoming him to sit, then disappears. The room is filled with stacks of medical books, packed and unpacked cartons. The man returns, package in hand. Anurag is uneasy, like he wants to get this over with.

NEIL NELSON HARRIS

Neil. Neil Nelson Harris. Sorry, I just got in from Kolkata. OK, this is it, syringe, filter, dosage. All that you paid for. Thank God for DarkNet, huh?

An uneasy chuckle, then silence.

NEIL NELSON HARRIS (CONT'D)

(in sales pitch style)

Sodium theopental is used for prisoners on death row in the US, I have supplied it personally to Ohio State Prison. It is 100 % effective. The best news? It leaves no traces in the system. So ummm...no worries.

Anurag winces.

NEIL NELSON HARRIS (CONT'D)

It works in a matter of four hours, during sleep.

Anurag holds the package gingerly.

ANURAG

Is it...painful? What about the pain?

NEIL NELSON HARRIS

Way less painful than the alternatives. Look, Anurag...

ANURAG

Mr Saigal.

NEIL NELSON HARRIS

Yes. Um, Mr Saigal. This is in high demand in these kinds of cases and it's very hard to get, you know what I mean? You're very lucky.

Anurag has a cold, sad look.

NEIL NELSON HARRIS

I don't mean lucky that way...I'm sorry.

ANURAG

Goodbye, Mr Harris.

Exits.

EXTERIOR. GURGAON APARTMENT/TERRACE. EVENING

Uma is tending to the flowers and plants, which are in full blossom. She looks happy and smiles as Anurag arrives.

UMA

Look at the roses. The new compost made such a difference. Stunning how they've bloomed.

A beat. She turns back to work on some weeding.

UMA (CONT'D)  
Did you get it?

ANURAG  
Yes, Umi.

UMA  
(smiling)  
I'm wearing the blue sari tonight.  
Remember when you spilled water all  
over it? Our first date. UCL  
campus, October 10, 1990. Some  
date. I've never forgotten it.

ANURAG  
I was so nervous that day, baby.  
And you're even more beautiful now  
than you were then.

UMA  
Is this the part where we talk  
about cancer and inner beauty?  
Today I don't feel beautiful, or  
tired, or anxious or anything at  
all. Just relieved that it's all  
going to be over.

A beat.

UMA (CONT'D)  
You've made the reservation at Myx  
for 8? Jaci's joining us. We'll  
celebrate.

Anurag looks like he wants to hug Uma, but he just lingers,  
watching her work the plants.

INTERIOR/GURGAON APARTMENT/LIVING ROOM/BEDROOM/HALL/NIGHT

A MONTAGE of past and present.

Living Room. Anurag is ready and waiting. He checks his CDs,  
pulls out one in Hebrew called Some One, then puts it away.  
Instead, he plays another.

AUDIO : innocuous light classical music.

MEMORY FLASH : Campus Lawns. Anurag sees Uma for the first time.

Bedroom. Uma - in a blue sari blouse and wrap, sits before the mirror and applies her make-up.

MEMORY FLASH : London. Anurag and Uma hold hands on the subway.

Bedroom. Uma ties her sari in place, dabs perfume, stares at herself, bends to lift a necklace out of its case.

MEMORY FLASH : Student Dorm. Champagne and a banner that says JUST MARRIED. Anurag presents Uma with the necklace and kisses her.

Bedroom. Uma fastens the necklace on herself and exits.

Living Room. Anurag watches Uma come down the stairs - she is a vision. He smiles. She smiles.

UMA  
Shall we go?

TRANSITION :  
GURGAON SKYLINE  
BY NIGHT

INTERIOR. MYX. NIGHT

A stuffy-looking waiter pours Anurag's glass with white wine for tasting. Anurag smiles and passes it to Uma, who tastes it instead. The waiter looks baffled.

UMA (CONT'D)  
It's fine, this is the Sauvignon  
Blanc Reserva? You need to chill it  
a bit more. You can serve it when  
our guest arrives.

The waiter smiles stiffly, clearly not used to such authority from a woman. He exits.

Anurag and Uma look at each other and chuckle.

Jaci arrives - Jacintha (Jaci) Oluch (38) is an elegant South African woman in an elegant print dress.



JACI  
(warmly)  
Uma...so sorry, the Uber guy was  
crazy late.

Anurag smiles politely and stands. The waiter appears,  
glancing at Jaci.

WAITER  
Any problem, Sir?

ANURAG  
(coolly)  
No. Maybe you should pull out the  
chair for the lady? Our guest?

The waiter does so. Jaci ignores him and sits.

JACI  
Thanks. It's Anurag, right? It's  
been ages since we met that time at  
the lab.

Warmly, Jaci reaches over and hugs Uma.

JACI (CONT'D)  
Uma, you look stunning.

UMA  
I can't tell you how much it means  
to me that you're here tonight,  
Jaci. Right, Anu?

There is a beat of awkward silence all around.

The waiter appears with the wine and pours, Jaci's glass  
first.

UMA (CONT'D)  
(raising a toast)  
To love.

Anurag's eyes go moist. Jaci stays quiet. Uma looks exuberant  
suddenly. A band starts playing some light music.

UMA (CONT'D)

Nice band! You know Jaci, Anurag hates live bands. Ever since we did this trip to Madrid - when, was it, in 94,95? Anu wanted this band to serenade me with a song, except the guitarist had, like, a crush on me or something and asked me out. In front of Anurag! What was his name, Jules...no, Julio. It was Julio with the dark wavy hair and black limpid eyes. The Boy From Ipanema.

Uma laughs. Jaci smiles. Anurag goes red.

ANURAG

(emotionally)

He couldn't resist you. Just like me.

The waiter appears with starters.

UMA

(wistfully)

Starters already. And I want this evening here to go slowly, as slowly as possible.

Anurag and Jaci are quiet, their expressions loaded in the candlelight.

ANURAG

(to the waiter)

No hurry on the food. And we'll order another bottle - of the same.

TRANSITION -  
BAND PLAYING

INTERIOR. MYX. NIGHT

Food, wine and small talk in progress.

UMA

How is Dr. Mohan treating you, Jaci? Is your dissertation paper progressing on schedule?

Jaci grins.

JACI

It's going well, as well as molecular deconstruction research can go. Except for Mohan constantly calling me Michelle. As in Mrs. Obama.

Uma and Jaci laugh loudly.

JACI (CONT'D)

Delhi is alright. Obviously I miss Cape Town, but it's OK. I get scared sometimes on the campus. Last week, the cops arrested two Nigerians, allegedly for selling coke, right down the road from me, and I was scared they'd come for me next. I...I can't explain.

UMA

(angry)

Assholes. This country is racist, sexist, ignorant. Sometimes I wish Anu and I had stayed in London instead of moving back. Well, I guess London had its own problems. I admire you so much, Jaci, for dealing with all that you do...

Anurag interjects, his voice raspy.

ANURAG

...What is Jaci dealing with, Uma? I mean, compared to you? Compared to me? How can you make conversation like this, Uma...knowing there's no...time.

Anurag is close to tears.

The waiter appears with dessert.

UMA

(quietly)

Anurag, baby, please.  
(MORE)

UMA (CONT'D)  
Let's just have some cake.

WAITER  
(smoothly)  
We have Creme Caramel, with a tinge  
of...

ANURAG  
(to the waiter)  
Man, take a fricking hike.

Jaci nods at the waiter to go ahead and bring dessert.

JACI  
(gently)  
Why don't you two dance?

The band is starting the strains of an old, slow Cyndi Lauper song - Time After Time. A pretty Nepalese girl sings.

JACI (CONT'D)  
Go on. It's one of Uma's college  
faves, isn't that right?

Anurag chokes, then whispers.

ANURAG  
Sorry, Umi.

Anurag and Uma move off to dance. Jaci watches them, their bodies close and arms entwined, and feels sadness.

TRANSITION -  
GURGAON SKYLINE  
BY NIGHT

SONG/AUDIO CONTINUES OVER -

EXTERIOR. GURGAON HIGHWAY/TUNNEL. NIGHT

Jaci sits in the back of the fast, silent car. Anurag is driving, Uma rests her head next to his shoulder in the front seat. She is very tired. No one talks. Tension builds.

The car enters a tunnel.

FADE TO BLACK

AUDIO OUT

INTERIOR. GURGAON APARTMENT. LIVING ROOM/BEDROOM/KITCHEN.  
NIGHT

Living Room. Darkness to Light as the lamp is switched on and we see Jaci alone. She takes a book down from the shelf, sits to read.

Kitchen. Anurag opens the fridge and in the glow sees the contents of the package. With shaking hands he removes it.

Bedroom. Uma slowly takes off her sari, wears a robe, looks in the mirror, is about to remove her makeup, but then touches it up instead, brushes her hair. She looks at the medicines in the cabinet, then violently hurls them all to the floor. She looks relieved and goes to lie down on the made-up bed. The clock beside her says 12.25 am.

Kitchen. Anurag prepares the syringe, fills it with the sodium theopental, places it on a plate and just stares at it. He seems undecided about what to do. He glances at the trash can. He hesitates.

Living Room. Jaci reads. In the background, Anurag moves across towards the stairs, plate and syringe in hand, his movements like a blur. Jaci doesn't look up from her book until he disappears up the stairs, and then she hears the CLICK sound of the bedroom door shutting behind him.

INTERIOR. GURGAON APARTMENT/BEDROOM. NIGHT

The plate with the syringe lies next to Uma. Anurag pleads with Uma, grasping her hands.

ANURAG

Yes, I'm being selfish. So what?  
Uma, there are treatments,  
alternatives. Remember Amir, from  
Sales? He told me about this centre  
in Sri Lanka, just near Colombo,  
they've cured people there,  
hopeless cases even. We could leave  
this week itself, please, Uma.

UMA

(coldly)

This is what I hate about you, Anurag. You make a promise and then find a smooth way to break it. All the time. Enough is enough.

Uma lets out an angry sob. Anurag chokes up. They embrace for a few seconds.

ANURAG

(terrified)

OK, darling, OK. I love you. All these years, I've never broken my word to you. You know that.

UMA

(tired)

Please. Just do it. And when it's done, go downstairs. Don't come up until it's morning.

A beat.

UMA (CONT'D)

I love you. Now prove that you love me. Just set me free, Anurag.

Anurag fumbles with the syringe. Tension builds. He misses Uma's vein on the first attempt. Tries again. Uma starts to tremble with anxiety and frustration.

And then, Anurag just does it, he plunges the needle into Uma's bony forearm.

Silence. Uma stares at Anurag, relief, fear and gratitude mixed together, slowly she drifts to sleep. Her breath is shallow.

Anurag breaks. Then centres himself, gently covers Uma and slips away from the bed.

INTERIOR. GURGAON APARTMENT/LIVING ROOM. NIGHT

Anurag, as if in a coma, comes down the stairs. Jaci goes towards him and holds him, fearing he will collapse. Silently, she takes the plate and syringe from his hands, and sets him on the couch. She returns with a bottle of whisky and a glass. The time on the clock is 1 am.

ANURAG

(spaced out)

It's done. I can't believe it's done. She'll be gone by 5, that's what Harris said...

JACI

(softly)

I can leave, if you want to be by yourself...?

Anurag just stares into space.

CUT TO

ANURAG

(dazed)

It would have been nice if we'd had children, I think. She had a miscarriage in the early days. After that, we just got on with life. No regrets. Uma wasn't the sort of woman who craved motherhood, and I...I just wanted Uma.

CUT TO

ANURAG (CONT'D)

(rambling)

She wanted to do a PhD in Biochem. Organics. She loved her students - there, here, everywhere. She wanted to do many things. Like learn the salsa. She liked to sit by that window and look out at the skyline, ugly it is but Uma found it beautiful. And she'd watch hours of TV.

(MORE)

ANURAG (CONT'D)

For all her intellect, she was hooked to Saajan Chale Sasural, or whatever it's called, some shit like that.

CUT TO

ANURAG (CONT'D)

When we came back to India, from England...well, I had made it to top level tech at L&T because Uma helped me. She taught me everything, how to dress, how to talk, at parties everyone just hung around her. I'm just a middle class guy from Lucknow, Jacintha, who found himself on a student scholarship in London. I met Uma there and my life...it's like everything just became possible.

JACI

Please...call me Jaci.

A beat.

JACI (CONT'D)

Yes, Uma told me about how you'd both been practically all over the world together.

ANURAG

You know, the only place I couldn't interest her in visiting with me was Jerusalem. She just didn't care to go. She enjoyed London, Paris, Madrid. All those places. For me, Israel would have been the dream trip. I took classes in Hebrew, you know, as an engineering student. Fascinating, the culture. I wish I'd...studied history instead.

CUT TO

(Time transition)

Anurag sips his whisky. Jaci tries to do the same. The mood is calmer now.



JACI

My father was a prominent archeologist, well known in Cape Town. He knew a lot about Jerusalem, the Holy Region. I heard all the stories - what was that song, The Sands of Old Jerusalem? It was always playing at home. Ironical, because my father's dream was to come to India, to study the Indus Valley Civilization. Instead it's me who's here, doing molecular research, strange how life works out.

Anurag's look shifts from spaced out to interested.

ANURAG

(impulsively)

Have you heard Some One? In Yiddish?

Anurag fiddles with the CD player. The song Some One slowly fills the room. The female voice is lilting, spiritual. Jaci hums along.

Anurag sways to the beat and moves, Jaci watches and does the same. In this way, they end up dancing - together but not together - and the mood lightens. When Jaci twirls a bit, Anurag reaches out, steadies her, touches her. They dance more closely.

CUT TO

(Time transition)

AUDIO : Music continues. The clock in the background shows it's 3 am. Jaci and Anurag are sitting, drinking white wine, the whisky bottle is abandoned.

JACI

This is better. I'm not a Jack Daniels girl. And I really wish I had a smoke.

Anurag produces a packet of herbal Camels. Jaci looks delighted. He helps her light up.

ANURAG

Why would you do this, Jaci? I mean, why would you be here tonight, in a situation like this?

Jaci shifts. Reaches for the ashtray. She looks sad, but open-hearted.

JACI

I had a twin brother. Mbele. In 2007, when he was 28 years old, he died of leukemia.

Anurag is startled.

JACI (CONT'D)

The chemo had failed. He was terminal. My parents petitioned for the right to euthanize Mbele. We fought and won in the lower court. But then, out of nowhere, the Honourable Supreme Court of South Africa reversed the judgment. So Mbele had to wait to die naturally - and endured eight months of pain. By then, even his medications had stopped working for him. It was...unbearable. I would have done anything to put him out of his misery, I could have killed him with my own hands if that's what it took, but...

Anurag is overcome with emotion.

JACI (CONT'D)

With Uma, I promised myself that things would be different, that I'd support her and do whatever she asked of me.

A beat.

JACI (CONT'D)

You did right by her, Anurag.

The moment stops and stares. In a way that is entirely natural, Anurag and Jaci reach for one another.

(Time transition - it is past 4 am, 5 am, 6 am)...

INTERIOR/GURGAON APARTMENT. LIVING ROOM. DAWN

Open windows. Birds chirp. The sky is clear. Anurag's eyes open to see he is lying next to Jaci, their semi-naked bodies entwined under a blanket on the floor of the living room.

The CD player is on mute, the empty bottle and glasses are seen, Anurag gently removes Jaci's long, graceful arm from his chest, his eyes flicker over the photograph on the desk - Anurag and a smiling Uma. A fog comes over Anurag, his emotions unclear.

Jaci stirs.

Anurag smiles and they kiss.

JACI (CONT'D)  
Have you been upstairs?

ANURAG  
No. But it's time.

JACI  
I can help with the arrangements today. Whatever you need.

A beat.

JACI (CONT'D)  
I know right now you need to be alone.

Jaci gets up to get herself ready - Anurag reaches out to her.

ANURAG  
Jaci, you know, I always dreaded this moment. All these months, I dreaded exactly this moment. But it doesn't feel so bad now. It feels peaceful...for her...for me...and now, with...it feels like there is hope, a future, maybe our...

A dull, thumping sound is heard.

Anurag freezes. So does Jaci.

The sound continues - steady shuffling - then more thumps. The sound nears. Anurag and Jaci look up, towards the top of the stairs.

Uma is standing there, like a ghost.

Slowly, she makes her way down, step by step.

UMA  
It didn't work.

Uma looks up as she makes her way down, her steps heavy and defeated, staring at Anurag and Jaci, the situation becoming clear to them all.

UMA (CONT'D)  
It didn't work. You let me down,  
Anurag.

The apartment is filled with the weight of anticlimactic shock, despair, betrayal and silence.

Transition to the open living room window -

EXTERIOR. GURGAON SKYLINE. DAWN

A new dawn over the Gurgaon skyline. AUDIO UP - on the song Some One.

SLOW FADE OUT TO  
BLACK

END CREDITS.





## Certificate of Registration

This is to certify that I have registered this Screenplay  
titled **Before I Go, After Im Gone**  
Written by **Selina Sheth**  
Whose SWA Membership No. is **018266**  
On **30-08-2017**

& as a proof thereof is placed below my digital signature and seal of the Association with relevant details in the QR code.

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