

Some Things We Say are Never Spoken

Abhijato Sensarma

Courier New is a comforting font. It doesn't reveal too much about the one who's using it.

The words written with them, on the other hand, always reveal my secrets. Writing is too intimate an art to let the artist escape without forcing him to share a piece of his soul first. For those of us who view the world through the prism of our insecurities, we leave behind that part of our soul on the page as well when we write on it.

We are then at peace until the anxiety inevitably returns. The soul may be abandoned, but it is never truly lost, after all.

I've written a few words today. Not as many as I would have liked to, but something's better than nothing. It's enough to keep a lid on my anxiety over my art when I come down for dinner. My wife's set up the table for the two of us.

She pulls out the sandwiches from the microwave and puts one on each of our plates.

In the first years of our marriage, she would always ask me—"How's your writing coming along?" A decade down the line, she asks me about neither my writing nor anything else. She prefers the silence now, just like me.

Dinner has turned from a cathartic host of conversations to summarise our days, to an opportunity for introspection before returning to our bedrooms. When we're in there tonight, we'll move further apart from each other as she uses her tab and I read through the e-mails on my laptop. We still sleep on the same bed, though. So that's something.

I reach out for the ketchup and pour it on the plate. She's already started eating—she doesn't like ketchup. This isn't the healthiest dinner we've ever shared, but she had a big surgery today, and I cannot cook. *You really should learn how to cook*, she's said enough times. I still haven't. It annoys me, the way she asks me to give up control over my decisions to learn things.

"Courier New is a comforting font," I say. She looks at me like a doctor who doesn't know the symptoms a patient's describing. It's usually because the patient is unable to comprehend his symptoms. But every now and then, something unheard of pops up on the radar of even the most experienced clinicians. Any doc-

tor, really. It makes her unsure, like a writer who prides himself for his vocabulary, but comes across a word which he doesn't know is misspelt or just something he's never seen before. She's the doctor; I'm the writer.

"Courier New?" she asks. "What's that?"

"It's a font." I take a bite out of my sandwich and chew on it longer than I need to. I want my wife to figure out the rest by herself.

She looks up at me with a raised eyebrow. Earlier, it was a way for her to feign annoyance, a playful gesture which endeared her to me even when she pretended I was being eccentric or too romantic. She liked that side of me back then.

But now, the raised eyebrows have lost their sense of irony. They persist that way for a moment longer, then they subside. *Get on with it.*

"I use it to write all my stories." I've lost most of my romantic flair as well.

She read my poetry before she met me in college. One of my pieces was published in the quarterly campus magazine—it was about love, and it wasn't that good. But it must have captivated her, because she found an excuse to meet me the day after she read it.

"You don't know Courier New?" There's the slightest strain in my voice which makes it crack. I shouldn't be annoyed, but I am. I've told her about it before.

"I don't," she replies. Her eyebrows threaten to raise themselves again. She restricts herself by taking another bite out of her sandwich. I hold myself back by doing the same.

There are some things which, once said, can never be taken back again. We've spoken plenty of those words ourselves. It's made us cautious—of ourselves, and each other. Each sentence we speak now is a thought which has been revised to perfection, until the objections we present are more nuanced, the jokes we say are sensitive, and the apologies we make sound genuine.

I don't share my first drafts with her anymore.

"How's work been?" I ask. I know how it's been for some time now. *Exhausting.* She returns every night carrying a heavy sigh within her. One she's afraid to let out. All of the regrets reside within her, hidden for the moment. It will come out eventually, and I'll be the one facing her when it does.

"Exhausting." She lets out a sigh. Then, she looks up at me with an expectant eye. It's coming, isn't it?

"You came home...late."

"You didn't hear me coming home, did you?"

"I didn't." I write in the evenings. It's the only time when I manage to be around my desk for long enough to put down anything concrete on the page. And I've asked her not to disturb me for as long as I find myself in the flow. She has her own set of keys. She can let herself in.

I've always got the deadlines writing themselves onto my calendar and the ideas swimming around my head with a life of their own, fighting to make their way into this world with its plethora of professional commitments.

I've had a good career as a writer. But I don't know if I still have a wife. And Lord, I've never understood poetry. I still think I'm pretentious when I write it, but they're the only works of mine I see my wife reading on the tab. Covertly, of course, and only sometimes.

She loves me sometimes too. This is not one of those moments.

"I want a divorce." She looks at me, no longer annoyed. We're past the stage of annoyance and the resentment. It's resignation which has settled in between our pauses now.

I sigh. This is an eventuality I've always known would be coming. It's just that I didn't dare to think about separation myself. She has been a lifeline for me. And now, she's pulling herself out of this. I cannot blame her—I've lost myself in my work and in my ambitions surrounding it. But this will leave me grasping for a comfort I shall no longer find in the middle of the night, right beside me. Even if she's been unreceptive to my deepest desires for the longest time now—because I've stopped sharing them with her.

There is a comfort in resignation, yes, and it's being snatched away from me now. "Alright."

She looks at me, then nods. "I'll sleep on the couch tonight. I'll move out by the weekend."

"Could I ask you something, though?" I know how this is a culmination of everything that's happened in this marriage. Yet, I need to hear her saying it herself. "Why are you leaving?"

"Because you didn't even try to stop me just now."

I was mistaken, then. It is only now that *both* of us feel resigned to our fates.

"I think I still love you," I say.

"Remember that poem you wrote the other day? About some things which can be said but never taken back?"

"Yeah, I do."

"It was a beautiful poem."

I smile.

"But I realised there's something else you've never realised, in your endless fascination about words and what they mean."

"And what's that?"

"There are some things which are said so many times they lose their meaning. And when they're spoken too often, maybe, they're not spoken at all."

I nod, but I do not say anything myself. I have nothing to add. Nothing which will be worth repeating, anyway.

"Even I still love you," she says. And then, she makes her final confession - "For what it's worth, I think *Courier New* always revealed a lot about you."