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The Namesake

By Sooni Taraporevala

What are you reading?

"The Overcoat" by Gogol.

- Gogol?

- Yes.

- Been out of this world?

- Yes. I went to Delhi once.

Every year I visit my
grandfather in Jamshedpur.

No, no, no. Not this world.

I mean England, America.

I was in England for two years.

It was like a dream.

The sparkling King Street!

Nobody speak in Urdu.

Have you ever thought of going abroad?

- No.

- You should.

You are young. You are free.

You will never regret it.

My grandfather always says
that it's what books are for.

You travel without moving an inch.

Good.

Hurry! Go and prepare yourself.

There is someone waiting to see you.

Watch and learn, Rini.

She is fond of cooking
...and she can knit well.

She made a cardigan for me in one week.

She is the children's favorite Auntie.

She has been learning
classical music since childhood.

Here she is.

My son has been living abroad
for the last two years.

He's in New York. He has done his Ph.D.

Our daughter's best subject is English.

Won't you recite something for us?

I wandered lonely as a cloud
that floats on high
over waves and hills.

When all at once I saw a cloud
a host to golden daffodils.

This is my father's favorite poem.

Poetry was the love of my father.
Oh, sit down please.
My child,
have you ever flown in a plane?
will you be able to go
half way across the world,
live in a cold city
with freezing winters,
leaving your friends
and family far behind?
Won't you become lonely?
Won't he be there?
Come to me.
Your life is about to change.
Embrace the new, don't forget the old...
and your new life... enjoy it fully!
Let me see her.
Are you there?
It's freezing cold outside.
You are going out?
I have to be away for
three weeks. I have to.
How are you feeling?
It will take you 7 hours to recover.
After all, you have just flown...
half way around the world.
Go lie down. I will bring you tea.
Go.
It is the American way.
Go.
Go, go.
I can't.
Okay then, sit and watch.
Here we get gas 24 hours a day.
This is how you turn it on.
Hot and cold water too.
There are two taps,
red one and blue one.
Don't confuse between the
two. You will get burned.
And you will bring water
straight from the tap.
No need to boil it.
And the washing machine

is there, down the street.
I will show you when I come home.
Now
Once you are settled, I will
take you to my department
and introduce you to
my office over here.
You won't believe it.
Our rickshaw drivers dress
better than the professors here.
I am very happy
and everything here is wonderful.
The plane journey was
long but enjoyable
and I am feeling fine.
How is Rini?
The house is very nice.
Big, with lots of windows.
Do you know, over here they
get has all day and all night?
all these have shrunk.
Who asked you to wash my clothes?
Why didn't you just
wait till I came back?
Here one dollar is 8 rupees.
And we don't have so
much money to buy...
Where are you going?
Ashima?
Open the door, Ashima.
I am sorry, Ashima.
It is my fault.
Your intention was good but it
was my mistake not to tell you.
Ashima, please, open the door.
My Ashima.
My Ashima, crazy Ashima,
open the door, Ashima.
Oh my dear, open the door.
Please.
Crazy girl.
Don't smile.
Come on, smile now.
Smile please.

Take 1 or 3 train.
From here...
all the way to...
Fulton Street.
Get out of the station, ask anybody...
Where is the Fulton fish market?
And if I get lost?
You think I'd let you get lost?
What happened?
Come.
Come to me.
Do you have a longer frock?
What was that?
I mean... till here?
You hide those gorgeous legs!
Lets hide them under the covers here.
Time of contractions.
Rana! Hey Rana!
all there.
I have already checked.
His eyes are black as a blackberry.
Black as his hair.
How are you feeling? Was it alright?
His cute voice is the
first miracle of my life.
You are the second one.
Mrs. Ganguly? I am Mr. Wilcox.
What do you want to name the baby?
My husband is going to name him.
He's asking about the baby's name.
We are waiting for my
wife's grandmother to choose.
will she be here soon?
She is in India. She is
more than 85 years old.
But there is no hurry.
Some of my cousins, you know, were
not named till they were 6 years old.
Until then, they were
called by their 'that' number.
- 'That' means?
- Pet names.
We all have two names.

One pet name:

One good name:

Unfortunately in this country,
a baby cannot be released
from a hospital without
a birth certificate and a birth
certificate requires a name.

How about... Baby Boy Ganguly?

Baby One?

Till the letter arrives.

Afterwards, will you change it?

In fact, what we should do?

I wouldn't. Too much
red tape. Expensive too.

Sleep on it.

Baby Boy Ganguly?

What do you say?

We could call him Gogol.

Till the letter arrives.

Later we could change it.

We would not be here
but for Gogol's blessings.

Hold still. Hold still!

Don't move!

One... two... three... say cheese!

Uncle! Auntie! Look, Gogol!

- Did this just come in?

- Yes!

How beautiful!

Rana, look, Ashima's son! Gogol!

Lady-killer!

I want to go home.

I don't want to raise Gogol
in this lonely country.

This is the land of opportunity, Ashima.

He can become whatever he
wants, study whatever he desires.

Here the options are limitless.

Don't you want to give him that?

Thank you.

You're welcome.

Come, come.

Don't go so far that I cannot see you!

He is too little.
Welcome to Suburbia. It's a
beautiful house. Congratulations.
Everything is bought in the yard sale.
Ashima does not like it but I say
what is wrong with it, you know.
Even my chairman, who
lives in a huge mansion,
wears a trouser bought for 50 cents.
Gogol.
Where are you?
Hey Gugli!
He is probably feeling
left out because of
his sister Sonia's ceremony.
Is he going to be Gogol in school?
No. We have decided on a good name.
Finally! What is it?
- Nikhel!
- No!
Gogol!
Hey Gogol.
He's here!
Missing your sister's ceremony, eh?
I found him!
What will your baby girls future be?
Her future will soon be revealed.
Hey Sonia!
Pick up the pan.
American girl! Must be weak!
So, how did you like your
first day in big school?
Great!
And what is this?
"Due to your son's preference,
he will be known as Gogol in school",
Mrs. Lacidus Princeton.
And what about your parents' preference?
In this country, the children decide.
He wants to keep Gogol and
not Nikhel as his good name.
Fine. No big deal.
If he prefers the name Jimmy,
there's nothing we can do.

As long as our kid is happy, you know.
It's so late.
Hello? Hello?
Hello? Ashuda?
Can you hear me, Ashoka?
I have terrible news.
What?
I can't tell my sister.
Don't... don't worry. I will...
He told you something
you are not telling me?
Yesterday, Rini and your
father were playing on his bed.
He died of heart attack.
Be calm, Ashima.
At least he went peacefully.
Come on or we'll miss
the plane. Come on.
I can't go.
I can't bare to see them in mourning.
You can't be this way.
Think of your mother.
Think of your son.
They need you to be strong.
Not your ordinary guy.
You can write Gogol.
Gogol is your namesake.
Today, he is respected
as one of Russia's
most brilliant writers
but in his own lifetime,
he was understood by no one.
Mr. Gogol himself might say
that he was an eccentric genius.
Gargle, way to go!
Mr. Ecks, Dean, I'll
see you both after class.
Thank you. Out! Come on, out!
Thank you, gentlemen.
Gogol was reputed to be a hypochondriac.
He was deeply paranoid, frustrated,
friendless, he never married,
and he fathered no children.
Towards the end of his life,

he proceeded to commit
slow suicide by starvation.
Did you guys know all the stuff
about him when you named me?
That he was paranoid,
suicidal, friendless, depressed?
You forgot to mention
that he was also a genius.
I don't understand why you guys
named me after someone so strange.
Don't talk back to your father.
And don't call us guys.
When I close my eyes
and listen to you both,
I feel like I've given
birth to strangers.
Just because you are graduating does
not mean you can behave like this, Gogol.
So, I am two inches away from her.
Her luscious lips part.
And just as I am about to kiss her,
she looks at me and she says,
"What's your name?"
Gogol Ganguly. End of seduction 101!
Jane loves your name. Gogol Gangu Lolly!
Don't you even go there, man.
Of all the freaking Russian
writers in the universe,
why'd they have to go
and choose the weirdest?
What the hell is wrong
with Leo or Antwerp?
You know, I just want
to sit them down and be like,
Gogol is your favorite
author, don't mind...
- ... shit!
- What?
I have to think! Oh shit!
Good bye, Air India!
I'm sorry, I'm sorry!
They have been here for two hours!
- This is our son, Gogol.
- Sorry I'm late.

Mr. and Mrs. Majunda. They just moved in to New York from London.

They are of the same age also.

Oh I am sure.

Hi.

Hi.

What're you reading?

Mo Jou Priestess.

In French.

You want to go watch some TV?

I detest American television.

Gogol, come here.

Come, my boy, eat something. Eat

Why are your eyes so red?

Ashima, give me some chilies.

Mosi, I promise you there are no evil eyes in the Unites States of America.

That is what you think.

You be careful where you are going.

- What is the name?

- Hale.

There'll be plenty of girls in this

Hale place who would want to trap you.

Have as much fun as you want.

But... marry a Bengali!

- How do you feel now?

- Yeah, I am good.

- Thank you.

- Good.

Listen.

I have never given any presents apart from what your mother buys but for your graduation I have something special.

Thanks, father.

I ordered this just for you from the book store.

I hope you like it.

Very nice.

You know, I feel a special kinship with Gogol more than with any other writer.

You know why?

Yes. Gogol is your favorite

author. I know, Baba.

No, apart from that.

He spent most of his adult
life outside his homeland.

- Like me.

- Right.

But...

there... there is another reason.

- Hello?

- Hmm?

What's the other reason?

No other reason.

Okay. Good night.

Good night, Baba.

We all came out of Gogol's Overcoat.

One day you will understand it.

Your attention please.

India Airlines announces the departure
of its flight IT-408 to Calcutta

Ladies and gentlemen, on behalf of
the Indian Airlines and the captain,
we hope you enjoy your flight.

Take off the luggage.

- Gogol!

- Hi, Dadi Ma!

Take her size!

Go buy two pairs of slippers from Bata.

Please take your present.

For you, mother-in-law.

A sweet for a sweet.

What's wrong with you?

I want to go home!

I have something else
to cheer you up with.

Here.

The calendar says that there
are only... 89 days left to go.

What is wrong with you? What
are you? Hot or hot here?

- Have some ancient air conditioning.

- Go away!

You are going out?

Jogging!

- Jogging?

- Running. On the street.

I'm training.

- Training?

- Yes.

Don't worry, Dadi Ma. I won't go far.

Quick. follow the young master.

He's gone running on the streets. Keep an eye on him!

Can you do that?

I can do anything. I know English.

Why have you been following me?

There is something I always wanted to ask you but...

never had the courage.

all these years ago, why did you...

say yes to me?

You were the best of the lot.

At that time, the

widower with 4 children

and then compromise with one.

I also liked your shoes.

Oh, okay.

You want me to say... I love you?

Like the America?

Yes.

Yes.

I am soaking, Sonia. You actually look better than after I shoot you.

Shut up!

Why don't you get in, my American

sahib? Sonia can sit on my lap.

Being pulled by another human

being is for feudal lords.

I don't want to be part

of anything like that.

Ma!

Get ready, we are going tomorrow.

We have gone to the

Garden a hundred times.

To Agra, to see the Taj Mahal.

Are you serious? You're not kidding?

- That's awesome, Ma!

- Oh good!

It's a wonder of the world.

We should have had taken a plane.
Don't worry. Everything is fine.
What is fine?
I've always wanted
to come here with you.
Just imagine how much Shah
Jahan must have loved Mumtaz.
To make this for her.
Other husbands also
love their wives, Ashima.
Only we cannot afford
to build Taj Mahal.
Hey, guess what.
I really want to major in architecture.
What about engineering?
Come on, Baba.
Architecture has everything.
It's got engineering,
drawing, aesthetics.
Our family Shah Jahan!
Let's go, Sonia.
Look!
Gangrene!
What the...!
I am going to catch the
racist punk who did that!
So, I have been thinking
a lot about my name.
Gogol's fine. I might
have got used to it.
But too much of Gogol in a resume
or credit card after that!
What are you trying to say?
I'd like to change my
name back to my good name.
What is done is done. Now
Gogol has become your good name.
It's too complicated
now. You're too old.
Anyways, you have
only yourself to blame.
Oh yeah! My fault that
I was four years old?
That's right, Kaalu.

Everything is possible in America.

Do as you wish.

I'm home.

- Hi Nick.

- Hello.

Hi dear. How're you doing?

- Have you got it?

- Yes.

- Congratulations!

- Thank you, Daddy.

Thank you all so much for
coming. This means so much to me.

Drinks! To celebrate!

- Hey.

Hi.

- You like it?

- Yeah, its beautiful!

Oh, I want you to meet
the young Indian architect
who has so captured Max's heart.
This is Pam Bridge, my dear college
friend, and this is Nikool Ganguly.

How do you do?

It's very nice to meet you.

You're always welcome.

How big were you when
you moved to America?

I was actually born in
New York. I am from here.

I once had a girlfriend who went
to India. Came back thin as a rail.

Sure.

Do your parents want you
to marry a nice Indian girl?

I don't care what they want.

This is what I want.

Sally gave them to me before
anybody could check them out.

What perks I get from
my wife the librarian!

What are you? Blind?

You have to learn to drive faster.

Don't talk to me. I
will have an accident.

If you keep on driving like
this, you will have an accident.

Everything is fine, Ma.

- Ma, why did you call me?

- Hey Hon.

You are not at your apartment.

You are never at your apartment, Gogol.

In the middle of the night I have
called, and you are not there.

I am, Ma. I need my sleep.

I turned off the phone.

- Gogol, are you there?

Yeah, yeah, I am here.

I want you to come home next Saturday.

Then you can come with us
to the airport the next day.

Papa is going to teach
in Ohio for six months.

Do you remember or not?

Yeah I remember, Mom.

But what's the big deal?

He's only going to Cleveland.

Sonia is not coming home?

Sonia is in California, Gogol.

Mom, I can't come home on this weekend.

I am going on a vacation
with my girlfriend.

Her parents have come with us to stay.

Mom?