The evening was drenched to the bone – just as any good august evening should be. It had sheets of grey splattering down the dull red buildings of campus and tiny rivulets of dirty water ran hopelessly along the road. Neon lights danced on the shiny black surface as cars and autos spluttered by. The air was heavy with the smell of petrol and a promise of intense mosquito buzzing the moment the rain stopped. Aakriti’s auto was wobbling on, turning on endless bends and leaving behind neat rows of red buildings as it moved further along into the unknown depths of the campus compound. She had just left behind a hurtling night train, a pair of lonely parents and a thwarted life full of overheard conversations, crowded lanes and a half baked love. It was all already becoming a blur – her parents, two tiny blurred dots as she waved goodbye to them from the train – Amma wrapping her lonliness carefully around her as she covered her are arm with her crisp cotton saree pallu and Papa – a newspaper clumsily folded under one arm, his glasses reflecting the train lights, almost blinding him. His face was crumpled, like the newspaper but he managed to smile till the time the train left the station.

‘Your hostel, madam!’ the auto had thudded to a stop infront of an old black iron gate and the autowallah jangled his keys nosily to probably get his passenger’s attention. Aakriti asked for the fare as she struggled with her two airbags. The autowallah in a swift, delicate movement was out from his seat, helped her with her luggage, all the time showing his paan stained grin. As she was paying him, the autowallah’s cell started singing a shrill hindi movie song. He immediately picked up and started talking animatedly. As Aakriti left, she could imagine a woman at the other end of the line, dangling by this hope that each night brought her. Another blur brought a bit into light at the end of a tired day.