

Title: Let Him Go

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Level: Upper Intermediate to Advanced

Genre: Adult Fiction (Personal Relationships, Grief, Adult Themes. Not suitable for young readers.)

Adapted and edited with author's permission by Cherie Brown. Photos by Mansura Mahmuda.

“There is a saying, if you love someone let him go. If he comes back to you, he is yours. If he does not come back, he was never yours to begin with.” *Muntaha* sounds so sure.

“You are saying I should leave him?” *Lila's* voice rises as she forms the question. She sniffs **loudly** into the **handkerchief** *Muntaha* has just given her.

“I am not saying that. Just let him be free... just for a while...” says *Muntaha*.

“But I left my **parents** for him, and even my **job**. Now you are saying I should leave him too?” *Lila's* voice rises even more. She sniffs again. Her eyes are red from crying.

“Don't cry **baby**. Reality can be very **cruel** sometimes.” says *Muntaha*.

“Ok... Just tell me... What do you know?” *Lila* is sounding desperate.

“I told you, I know nothing.” *Muntaha* remains **firm**.

“Then tell me, what did you *see*?” **begs** *Lila*.

“Can you bear it?” says *Muntaha*. Her voice sounds heavy.

“What *did* she see?” thinks *Lila*.

“You mean to say there is something that I cannot bear?” she cries.

“*Lila* please be strong. Just go home. You need to find out these things for yourself.” *Muntaha's* **advice** sounds wise.

“OK,” says *Lila* at last, “I'll try.” *Lila* doesn't know how she will do this, but she knows she has to do something.

Lila gets back home late that night. *Saem* is already there. As usual he is holding his mobile **phone** in one hand, and in the other, a cigarette. It seems he never looks at her or gives her

any **attention** these days. Whenever *Lila* goes to him and tries to talk about her day, *Saem* usually nods his head as if to show *Lila* that he is listening, but she thinks he is not really taking in what she says to him. Today, *Lila* looks at him as if from a distance. She cannot move towards him. Her mind remains **blocked** when she thinks about him.

“Is he seeing someone else? Is it really possible?” she asks herself.

Saem does not really notice that *Lila* stays away from him **tonight**, but in a strange way, he has a feeling that something unusual is going on.

They have two bedrooms in their **flat**. These days, they are sleeping in different rooms. Their little son sleeps with whom he wishes. *Lila* sometimes calls *Saem* in the night on her phone, and he comes to her, but now that she thinks about it, it seems to her that he doesn't come willingly. **Normally**, *Lila* does not mind too much, she thinks perhaps every man is the same in nature. In the beginning, his cool, quiet **behaviour** had **attracted** her to him. He seemed to need her love and care so much, but tonight she cannot bring herself to even touch the **screen** of her phone to call him.



She remembers the day he cried just like a child. It was the day they had lost their second baby. Just after her return from the **hospital**, to her surprise, *Lila* found herself **comforting** him. “Baby, don't cry. Don't cry like a child.” She had said. “We'll have another child, very soon.”

“But I really wanted our baby girl.” he had told her. “We would have had a **perfect** family, if she had lived.” He had cried all night. *Lila* was the one who had to be strong, even though it was she who had carried the child for so many months, and it was from her body that their little girl had come. “Shouldn't he have been the one comforting me?” she had thought. At the time, she felt she had to try so hard to be strong for both of them. “We can try again. *Inshallah*, we will have another little girl next year.” she had said. “Please. Please don't cry.” Her heart felt dead, but strangely her own tears had not come.

Thinking about the future, *Saem* had seemed **afraid**. *Lila* **reminded** him to think about their other child, their sweet little boy, *Ayan*, and **finally**, *Saem* had stopped crying. Now *Lila* remembers all this. She cannot **imagine** how this same man could ever leave her. “How can it be possible?”

She thinks about many important things. How *Ayan* is supposed to begin school this year. How, for the **sake** of *Ayan*'s pre-school **education**, *Lila* had left her job and stayed at home to be with him, every day, for the whole day, with only herself there to **guide** him. She thinks about how completely dependent she is on her little boy's father right now. Separation would be very **tough** for her. But living like this, every day, living like a zombie is not possible either. What should she do? There are so many questions **spinning** through her mind. “Should I look for another job? How will I **manage** on my own? What will this do to our son?” Holding *Ayan* **tightly**, she falls **asleep** at last. *Saem* does not come to her room at all tonight.



Unlike other mornings, today *Lila* is silent at the **breakfast** table. She serves everything without saying a word. *Saem* has noticed her **odd** behaviour, but he remains silent. He cannot decide what to say. “She seems troubled about something.” he thinks to himself. “I **guess** she will tell me when she is ready. Time will make everything clear. Time will **heal** everything.” He comforts himself with this idea, and leaves for his office as usual.

Feeling the silence between them, *Lila* becomes even more **worried**. Their lives have become **complicated**. All this worry is making it hard for her to **breathe**. She goes about the **flat**, doing her housework like a machine. She is not looking for anything, but just as she puts *Saem*'s **clean clothes** into his **chest** of **drawers**, she **suddenly** notices a handkerchief.



She **picks** it up **slowly**. In a BFDC movie, she once saw the heroine giving her lover a handkerchief like this as a gift to show her love. But *Saem* already has a handkerchief in *his pocket*. This one is nothing like it. It's so unusual, and almost impossible that he would ever use anything like this. Now, *Lila* thinks she is beginning to understand what *Muntaha*, her friend, was trying to say.

For the whole day neither she nor *Saem* have called each other. They are both **busy** with their daily work. After coming home from his office, *Saem* finds his **tea** sitting on the **dining** table. His tea is **excellent**, but *Lila*'s **absence** makes him restless. "*Lila! Lila!* Where are you?" he calls. There is no reply. He **checks** the other parts of their flat. She is not in the bathroom. She is not in her room, where *Ayan* is lying fast asleep.



Saem goes **upstairs** to the **roof**. No, she is not there either. “Uff! What’s going on?” He calls to her again. From where he is standing, he can hear the sound of a phone ringing below. He looks down. There she is, sitting alone in the garden, enjoying the cool evening air. Her phone is ringing, but she does not answer it. She seems to be deep in thought, and her mind seems to be far away.

Suddenly, *Lila* notices *Saem*’s movement above her, and looks up. They make eye **contact** for a moment, but it feels uncomfortable, and they both look away quickly. How strange this moment is.

Saem wonders if there is some way he can find out the reason for *Lila*’s unusual behaviour. “What on earth is going on?” he thinks. And then he has an idea. “She writes in her diary sometimes. Yes, that’s it. That might tell me what is going on.” He goes back **inside** and looks around. There, sitting on top of her **desk**, he sees *Lila*’s diary. “Perhaps there’s an answer there.” He thinks. “But should I look?”

He cannot stop himself. He opens *Lila*’s diary to the page where the **pen** is kept. Her beautiful handwriting looks so familiar and dear to him. He begins to read...

“If you love someone, let him go...”



Learning Activities

Vocabulary Lists: learn all of the words from the following two lists...

1. High Frequency Words from the 2nd 1000 General Service Word List

absence	breakfast	dining	imagine	roof	worry
advice	breathe	drawers	inside	sake	
afraid	busy	education	loudly	screen	
asleep	check	excellent	manage	slowly	
attention	chest (furniture)	firm	parents	spinning	
attracted	clean	flat (building)	pen	suddenly	
baby	clothes	guess	perfect	tea	
beg	comfort	guide	phone	tightly	
behaviour (British English spelling)	complicated	handkerchief	picks	tonight	
behavior (American English spelling)	cruel	heal	pocket	tough	
blocked	desk	hospital	remind	upstairs	

2. High Frequency Words from the Academic Word List

contact finally job normally odd

Do you know the meaning of the words and expressions below? Use a dictionary to check the meaning. These are not high frequency, or common, words in English, so **only learn these words and expressions** *if you already know ALL of the words in the two lists above very well.*

cigarette desperate diary heroine housework mobile
movie nod pre- (+word) sniff sob zombie

Comprehension Questions

1. **Inferring:** What is the relationship between *Lila* and *Saem*? (The writer does not tell us this directly. She expects us, the readers, to work this out for ourselves.)
2. **Remembering:** What worries came to *Lila*'s mind when she heard *Muntaha*'s advice? What worries did *Lila* have when she thought about the possibility of separating from *Saem*?
3. **Understanding:** What does the writer mean, when she says *Muntaha*'s voice "sounds heavy?"
4. **Understanding:** What does it mean to "*find out something for yourself*"?
5. **Inferring:** The writer describes *Saem* as holding his mobile phone in one hand and a cigarette in the other. What does this information tell us about *Saem*? (The writer does not tell us directly why this is important. What do *you* think the writer might be suggesting?)
6. **Understanding:** Why did *Saem* look inside *Lila*'s diary?

Critical Thinking Questions

1. **Analyse:** Why do you think *Muntaha* did not tell *Lila* what she had seen? In your opinion, had she, in fact, seen anything of importance, or was she simply gossiping? Why do you think she told *Lila* to go home and "*find out for herself*"?
2. **Analyse:** In what way was the death of *Lila* and *Saem*'s baby girl important in the story? How does it help us to better understand each of them?

3. **Analyse:** The writer tells us, “*Lila* doesn’t know how she will do this, but she knows she has to do something.” Do you think *Lila* left her diary where *Saem* could find it, on purpose? If so, why do you think she did that?
4. **Apply:** If you were *Lila*, what would you do in this situation? If you were *Saem*, what would you do? (Give reasons for your answer.)
5. **Evaluate:** Do you agree with the statement, “*If you love someone, let them go.*”? In what situation(s) might this be good advice? In what situation(s) might it be bad advice? What do you think might be some good advice to give to...

a) *Lila*?

b) *Saem*?

c) *Muntaha*?

6. **Evaluate:** In your view, is it ever wise to give other people advice about their close relationships? Even if you know the background and details of someone’s personal problems well, is it better to say nothing and let them solve those problems by themselves or not? Give some reasons for your opinions.
7. **Evaluate:** Do you keep a personal diary? If you do, how would you feel if someone read it? Is it ever OK to read another person’s diary? Why/Why not?
8. **Create:** The writer of this story does not tell us what happens next. If *you* were the writer of this story, how would *you* end it? Either...

a) Write an ending of your own in two or three paragraphs, or...

b) Tell someone an ending to the story in English.

(In each case, make some notes, and spend some time planning what you are going to write or say first. Make sure you explain how the strange handkerchief came to be in *Saem*’s chest of drawers.)