

SWEATER

Written by

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Based on
A Pullover For Brother-In-Law
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INT.DRESSING ROOM HOUSE-DAY

NARRATOR (V.O.)

Shanti was plagued by worry because she had never made her husband happy. Whenever Sabita praised him, or told her how wonderful he was, she would feel strangely wounded, strangely envious. But she never said anything to Sabita about how she was becoming tangled up inside, as if some spider was weaving its web in the darkness of her mind.

We see a reflection image of SHANTI in an almirah mirror. She is checking her fitness and beauty as she was before. She is sitting in front of the mirror. She is combing her hair.

After combing her hair, she doubts herself that she is still beauty. She puts gajal and lipstick to erase her doubt and once again checks her beauty and fitness.

SABITA

(gamboling over to Shanti)
Sister! Brother-in-law says we're going to the cinema!

SHANTI

(quietly, but her tone is severe)
Tell him I'm not going.

Sabita stands there for a moment, nonplussed. Her sister is so dull, she thinks, she is indifferent to fun. Shanti is only five years older than Sabita.

Sabita leaves, silently scorning her sister's foolishness, but before she has gone very far Shanti calls her back.

SHANTI (CONT'D)

Did you offer to come and tell me?

SHANTI (CONT'D)

(putting on a more cheerful expression)
Or, did he send you to me himself?

Sabita is puzzled. She kneels down and toys with her sister's plait.

SABITA

I was sitting out in the garden enjoying the sunshine.

SABITA (CONT'D)
 (beginning, in a voice as
 timid as her nature)
 -- and brother-in-law came and
 asked me if I'd like to go to the
 cinema. So I said I'd come and ask
 you.

The cheerfulness falls from Shanti's face. But this time she
 has nothing cross to say.

SHANTI
 Alright, I'll come.

SABITA
 Good, sister!

Sabita's gladness bursts from her like a cascading stream.
 Her feelings are easily read in her face. Still, a doubt
 lingers on deep inside Shanti.

Time and again she tries to dispel it, but it goes on
 confronting and nagging her.

NARRATOR (V.O.S)
 Sabita had come to stay with her
 elder sister some months before.
 They had been great friends since
 childhood. Shanti still felt like
 kissing her sometimes for her
 childish ways and liveliness:
 Sabita still played hide-and-seek
 and blindman's buff. Her behavior
 and manner remained unchanged, but
 although she did not realize it,
 she was gradually maturing. Shanti
 no longer enjoyed such games;
 sometimes her nostalgia prompted
 her to play, but she was too
 hesitant, too self-conscious.
 Indeed, she was very different from
 her sister.

CUT TO:

EXT. VERANDAH - DAY

Shanti is sitting on the verandah combing her hair, with a
 small mirror before her. As she looks into it she suddenly
 thinks of she looks old. Strands of her hair falls out as she
 combs, and her face is flecked with dandruff. Hurriedly, she
 powders her cheeks, and her face turns as white as snow.

Sabita arrives, wearing mascara around her big eyes, in soft
 white cotton trousers and a pajama top of embroidered silk.

Shabita is young and healthy, and charming.

SABITA

Why sister, these hairs are gray!
 (picking one up and places
 it in Shanti's hand.)
 Shanti looks at her sister's hair.
 She inspects her from head to toe,
 but she cannot find anything to put
 into Sabita's hand in return. So
 she just sits there, fingering the
 gray hair.

SHANTI

Oh!

SABITA

(overjoyed)
 Brother-in-law is here!

SABITA (CONT'D)

As GOPINATH approached them

SABITA (CONT'D)

(flirtatiously)
 Brother-in-law, sister's hair's
 going gray. Get her some oil to
 turn it black, won't you?"

Shanty does not like her sister's sympathy one little bit.
 She is furious. She lookx her husband looking oddly at
 Sabita.

GOPINATH

I'll buy her some at the show
 tomorrow.

CUT TO:

EXT.FEST - DAY

It is suffocating at the show that day. Crowds of people are
 crammed together everywhere; there is hardly room to blink.
 They finds a ferris wheel—Sabita wants a ride, so Gopinath
 buys a ticket. Shanti refuses, although Sabita tries to
 persuade her.

SABITA

Come on, sister, why not? It's a
 special day today, you know! Oh,
 what's wrong with my sister? She
 won't do anything!

SHANTI

You go. Brother-in-law will go with
 you, won't he? I'm feeling faint,
 I'll just sit down here for a
 while.

GOPINATH

Right, right, why force someone
when they're feeling faint?"

Gopinath finds a seat.

Shanti sobs a little, making sure nobody sees her. She leans
against a bamboo post and dries her eyes.

The wheel turns round.

Sabita and Gopinath go round with it.

Shanti is unable to watch; she really does feel giddy now.
She turns and walks away with a weary expression on her face.

In a part of the show that is especially full, Shanti becomes
lost in the crowds. She does not know which way to go to get
back to Sabita and Gopinath. Her mouth is dry with anxiety as
she strains her eyes to look all around.

Sitting on a bench outside a shop, she peers into the faces
of people passing by.

The cruel feet of time tramped over her, and she begins to
imagine things—things that makes her burn with jealousy and
vengeful feelings. Now her eyes are dry and her temperature
rises.

SABITA

There... here's sister sitting
happily... and we were looking for
her over there!

Shanti looks up at them in irritation; they are both red in
the face with excitement. Sabita puts her hand into her bag.

SABITA (CONT'D)

Look! Brother-in-law's bought you
some oil for your hair, and I've
got some wool for a sweater, and
cream, and powder. When we get home
I'll show you, alright?

SHANTI

Yes. Haven't you had enough now?
We've looked at everything.

Shanti looks strangely at Gopinath.

GOPINATH

Right, right, let's go home. We've
been here for ages.

EXT. A WAY TO HOME - DAY

On the way home, Sabita shows Shanti her wool.

SABITA

Sister, shall I knit brother-in-law
a sweater?

SABITA (CONT'D)

I don't know! Why ask me? Ask the
one you're knitting it for!"

Shanti's response tinges with anger.

Sabita becomes so engrossed in her knitting, she does not
even notice the days going by.

As the sweater nears completion, her face shines more and
more brightly with success and satisfaction.

She holds it up in front of her to inspect it, delighted with
its embroidered flowers.

Sweater in hand, Sabita is on her way to measure brother-in-
law, like she does almost every day, when she meets Shanti on
the stairs.

SABITA (CONT'D)

Look sister! His sweater's nearly
finished. I'm just going to check
that it fits. I think the sides
might be a little too small. What
do you think? Will it suit him? It
will, won't it?

Sabita speaks as if she has no time for anything else.

Shanti swallows hard and puts on a smile.

SHANTI

Those flowers won't suit him;
they'd look better on a woman. Give
it to me instead, and I'll knit him
another one.

SABITA

Oh, what a joke! After all this
trouble for brother-in-law?

Sabita laughs, ignoring Shanti's comment, and runs into
brother-in-law's room.

Shanti watches her go. When she looks Sabita going into his
room to measure him day after day, a doubt arises in her
mind.

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

Shanti cannot sleep that night either. She gets up three or
four times to drink water. At last, she looks at her watch;
it is half past two.

In the silence of the night she rises smartly and goes to Sabita's bedside. Sabita's contented breathing offends her; it is as if Sabita has robbed her of sleep.

Her mood changes dramatically, and her nails goes toward Sabita's throat. But the mood cannot last for long.

She notices the sweater hanging from the head of the bed, and she pulls it slowly toward her.

Sabita has started sewing the back and the front together.

SHANTI

I guesses that it will probably be finished by the following evening.

NARRATOR (V.O.S)

Sabita's obsession with her task seemed to involve some kind of vow, some kind of powerful penance. Her austerities had not wearied her, however; on the contrary, they had made her more healthy and energetic. Shanti thought some more. Tomorrow night, when Gopinath put the sweater on, she would lose all her rights, all her authority, in this house. He would be so delighted with this lovely, warm sweater, he wouldn't want to take it off. She was sure, too, that she would know no peace of mind so long as it remained on his body. It seemed to Shanti that a curtain was rising on some dreadful game and that the sound of the bell that announced its commencement was making her shake all over.

Then it is as if her hopes and fears all comes into a knot. She holds the sweater tightly in her hands.

SHANTI

They say prevention is better than cure, so why shouldn't I burn it before it reached him, now that it was in my control?

But she is not totally unfeeling toward Sabita, and her jealousy soon takes another form.

Slowly, she begins unpicking the threads. Then her actions increases so much in speed that it is as if some machine are rapidly unraveling the sweater.

And the loose wool piles up quickly beside her. In her hurry to complete the job, she accidentally stricks Sabita on the back, and Sabita wakes up.

She looks at her sister in amazement

SABITA
(in a small voice that
trembled with fear)
What's the matter, sister? Why are
you unpicking it?

Shanti stops what she is doing.

SHANTI
A sweater like this won't suit him.
(She says firmly)
I'm going to knit him a different
one."

Sabita's face grows red with surprise.

SABITA
It's not for brother-in-law!
(She blutters out)
It's for you! I gave him his
sweater last night. He put it on
straightaway and went to bed in it.
Go and see how nice it looks!

FADE OUT: