

## LITERARY NOVEL EXCERPT: THE READER BY SUSHRUT JANGI

*Sushrut-*

*In this excerpt we have bits of philosophy and literary theory. This book club is a very sophisticated group. The setting in Cambridge near Harvard encourages a feeling of sophistication and, with it, an elite-ness that the characters revel in. This might be the reason I, too, never attended a book club meeting. Everyone is so erudite and clever. The pretention makes me sick. You've captured that environment with both the setting and the characters.*

*Comments about the need of an ending in a story are particularly interesting. It suggests that the author doesn't have a committed message. Should the author leave the conclusions (the message) up to the reader? We can discuss that at a later time. I'd ask if the author is in command of the story enough to nail down an ending and stand by it. I'm not in favor of a wishy-washy novel. As I mention imbedded in the comments, the only story I've run into that uses the no ending story is *'The Lady or the Tiger.'* I used to use it to show how unrewarding and, frankly, how aggravating a story with no ending is.*

*The ideas here are worth discussing. The most troubling aspect of this piece is the length of your sentences. I'd suggest that you reconsider the numbers of clauses and phrases you tack onto your sentences. Extensive length leads to confusion and confusion leads to discarding the story. As many agents have told me, keep it simple. Your intended ideas will emerge much more easily with better command of your sentences.*

*Good luck with this worthy exercise.*

*Dave*

***Summary: This is a subsection of a larger novel I am working on, whose larger draft is currently at about 70,000 words. The story discusses the narrator of the story going with his friend to a book club - the larger novel is about a doctor who spends his nights on call in the hospital and his days wandering the city, trying to understand people.***

***\*\*\* Pages are extracted from the middle of the story. \*\*\****

The Reader

Rarely did I go to book clubs, but Mar dragged me to one assuring me that I would remain under her protection "from the evil eyes of the female literati." I had only read three-quarters of the novel – enough for me to make comment on its narrative structure and the motives of the protagonist if I needed to; I never believed endings held much value, although

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Mar, while we walked along Brattle Street, thought endings were the very moment the novel finally flowered into its ultimate aesthetic. *(I agree with Mar.)*

The house was old but obviously premier property on a quiet, leafy outlet far enough from the dormitories that there was no risk of drunken students stealing through its gardens at late hours and throwing bottles at the windows. **Its owner was a peri-emeritus professor who taught English at Harvard; we soon learned, however, that she was away on sabbatical in Israel, and she had subletted it to Anne, who was barely out of college, with a journalism degree that had brought her little in the way of vocation.** *(Can you break this enormous sentence up?)* Still, the professor had graciously offered the sublet on discount to any student in the same journalism program that had kicked off her meaningful career years ago. On the kitchen counter Anne had set out plates of brie, slices of baguette, Concord grapes, and a bottle of warm Shiraz she had already uncorked, offering a glass to Mar and ~~I~~ *(me)*. “One of my well-read friends,” Mar said, introducing me to Anne, who smiled wanly from beneath a pair of thick Warby-Parkers *(Eye glasses I assume.)* too heavy for her fragile nose and artful eyebrows. *NICE* “That’s high praise coming from Mar – she usually leads our talking points.” Anne brought the wine glass to her rosebud lips. “I tell everyone that I’m enamored of any kind of reader these days,” she said sadly.

**Others had begun to settle around the living room – a duet of old ladies on the sofa – a few, younger women scattered around the table, cross-legged on the floor, another on a beanie, and the only other man in the room, Ulf, a stocky German, who sat in a chair, appearing perplexed as to what he was doing there.** *(Can you break up this enormous sentence? Keep it simple.)* ~~Lightly~~ **A light** rain began tapping against the windows *which* Anne kept open to let the staid July heat flow through the room, propelled by old ceiling

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**fans that trembled ~~unevenly~~ *unevenly* as they turned. (Can you break up this enormous sentence?)**

“I’ll start then,” Anne went on after a stony silence. “I’ve read a good many books in my life and the more I’ve gone on reading, the less I’ve begun caring about the characters.

**Nowadays what I want from a story is to get lost in its mood and although all the critics said this book was brilliantly plotted, I never gave myself over to it, not fully, or not wholly, anyhow.” (Take a breath.)**

“But that’s just one element isn’t it?” Mar said, piping up earlier than I had expected. “I do want something happening to the people in the novel that pushes them up against the wall to see how they react. We were talking ~~earlier~~ *about that* on the way here,” she said, nudging her head towards me, “*and we were having an argument about whether endings were important. I think an ending is a necessary provocation to keep the story off balance.*” (This topic was mentioned in the first paragraph. Do you need it in both places? I think not. This dialogue is more convincing.)

“We have a novel in Germany called Die Wand,” Ulf said, “in which the reader never learns the fate of the woman at the center of the novel. The story itself is an account of her loneliness and isolation and she does not even know if anyone will ever read her story. For me, it was the absence of the ending that gave the book its power. An ending gives the people in the story over to a set and sealed fate; but without a clear ending, they are allowed live on in my mind.” (Simple example – The Lady or the Tiger.)

“That’s an author’s weakness if he fails at last to deliver a sentence on the characters he has imagined,” Mar said. “The author brings them pointedly into being and it’s his responsibility to the reader to craft as deliberate an ending.”

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*(This dialogue is hopelessly pretentious. I'd not leave to get more wine. I'd just leave.)*

The Shiraz had gone a bit to my head. Nevertheless, I wandered into the kitchen for another glass. In the window above the sink I saw the spires of the old church in Harvard Yard from where I'd recently heard the songs of a choir in evening practice, the melody so divine and foreboding that I had stood in the shadows of the empty campus entranced as I had been at the end of my college days when the whole world seemed as though it had opened itself to me. *(Way too long. Revise.)* Only fleetingly did that sense of liberation still come over me, and when it did, I swore never to forget it, until, soon after, I lost my grasp on it, unable to recall the depth of that intensity. *(Revise.)* I knew that the pursuit of that feeling was what drove many people – like the professor who owned this house – to stay forever within the walls of a campus, where they were protected from the graying out that happened if you wandered too far into the real world. *(Self-absorbed.)*

“You’re being objective,” Anne was saying now, to Mar. “What I want to hear from you is how you felt long after the book was over – what would that feeling be?”

Mar shrugged, glancing at the two old women, who had, until now, hardly said a word, although both looked attentively on the rest of us, as though amused by our arguments. If I ever became an old man, I might do the same; listen to the annoyances and exasperations of the young to pass the time. *(Good point.)*

“It’s not at all how I read,” Mar said. “We’ve talked about this before. I don’t consider any kind of art to be greatly emotional for it to be useful to me.”

“But then I think you’re missing the point,” Anne laughed. “Or at least you are missing a lot of the joy that art brings me. I would have considered that a male perspective – but Ulf actually feels otherwise.”

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Again – Ulf seemed only rattled – looking at me to throw him a line. “Mar’s not being entirely truthful,” I said. “I don’t see her cry often, but certainly during films, or after reading certain books, or in a concert, I’ve seen that she’s overtaken by the art.”

Mar glared at me – although I had only meant this playfully, without any kind of criticism of who Mar was. **In fact, that book club and the arguments that I was hearing and making in my mind, even reading, was a play in itself, the words within a novel arranged besides each other to create an enchantment that was often lost from the work I did every day.** *(With sentences this long, the meaning is lost.)* Never did a novel reproduce wholly for me the happiness or tragedy or dullness of ordinary life but called out to me as though from behind a wall, and the joy I had was trying to hear, however distantly and imperfectly, what the novel was trying to say to me. But I never said this to the club because I didn’t want anyone to talk me out of my opinion – *the others, after all, were clever and thoughtful enough that had I listened to what they were saying I might have changed my mind.*

*(This sentence doesn’t make sense. Revise.)*

*(The previous dialogue about feeling and liberation reminds me of Plato’s Republic. This isn’t normal dialogue. It sounds like a life lesson give through dialogue.)*

Jenni

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*Summary: This is a subsection of a ~~larger~~ novel I am working on, whose ~~current~~ larger draft is ~~currently at about~~ 70,000 words. The ~~excerpt~~ story discusses the main character/narrator of the story going with his friend to a book club. - ~~†~~ The larger novel is about a doctor who spends his nights on call in the hospital and his days wandering the city, as he trying tries to understand people.*

\*\*\* Pages are extracted from the middle of the story. \*\*\*

Jenni's Comments

The Reader

~~Rarely did I go to book clubs, but~~ Mar dragged me to a book club one and promised to protect me from assuring me that I would remain under her protection "from "the evil eyes of the female literati." I had only read three-quarters of the novel—enough for me to ~~make~~ comment on its narrative structure and the motives of the protagonist ~~if I needed to~~; I never believed endings held much value, although Mar, ~~while we walked along Brattle Street,~~ thought endings were the ~~very~~ moment the novel finally flowered into its ultimate aesthetic.

nice language

The house was old, but obviously premier property, on a quiet, leafy outlet far enough from the dormitories ~~so that~~ there was no risk of drunken students stealing through its gardens at late hours ~~and throwing bottles at the windows~~. Its owner was a peri-emeritus professor who taught English at Harvard. ~~†~~ We soon learned, however, that she was ~~away~~ on sabbatical in Israel, and she had subletted it to Anne, ~~who was barely out of college, a recent graduate~~ with a journalism degree that had brought her little in the way of vocation. ~~Still, the professor had graciously offered the sublet on discount to any student in the same journalism program that had kicked off her meaningful career years ago.~~ On the kitchen counter, Anne ~~had~~ set out plates of

Comment [PHS IS1]: Is this significant to the story? If not, cut it.



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brie, slices of baguette, Concord grapes, ~~and a bottle of warm Shiraz she had already uncorked,~~  
offering a glass to Mar and <sup>me</sup> ~~I~~. She offered me and Mar a glass of Shiraz.

"~~One [Insert name here] is one~~ of my well-read friends," Mar said, introducing me to Anne, who smiled wanly from beneath a pair of thick Warby-Parkers too heavy for her fragile nose and artful eyebrows.

"That's high praise coming from Mar. ~~s~~She usually leads our talking points." Anne brought the wine glass to her rosebud lips. "I tell everyone that I'm enamored of any kind of reader these days," she said sadly.

~~The~~ Others ~~had begun to settle~~ around the living room. ~~a~~ A duet of old ladies sat on the sofa. ~~a few,~~ <sup>y</sup>Younger women scattered around the table; ~~a few~~ cross-legged on the floor, another on a beanie, ~~and~~ ~~t~~ The only other man in the room, ~~Ulf~~ a stocky German named Ulf, ~~who~~ sat in a chair, ~~and~~ appeared ~~ing~~ perplexed as to what he was doing there. ~~Lightly a~~ ~~A~~ light rain ~~begun~~ tapping ~~ing~~ against the open windows. ~~Anne kept open to let the staid July heat flow through the room,~~ ~~propelled by~~ ~~o~~ Old ceiling fans, that trembled unevenly as they turned, ~~propelled the staid July heat through the room.~~

"I'll start then," Anne ~~went on~~ said after a stony silence. "I've read a good many books in my life and the more I've gone on reading, the less I've begun caring about the characters. Nowadays, what I want from a story is to get lost in its mood, and although all the critics said this book was brilliantly plotted, I never gave myself over to it, not fully, ~~or not wholly,~~ anyhow."

"But that's just one element isn't it?" Mar said, piping up earlier than I had expected. "I do want something happening to the people in the novel that pushes them up against the wall to see how they react. We were talking ~~earlier~~ on the way here," she said, nudging her head towards

**Comment [PHS 1S2]:** New paragraph when a new person speaks.

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me, "and we <sup>argued</sup> ~~were having an argument~~ about whether endings were important. I think an ending is a necessary provocation to keep the story off balance."

"We have a novel in Germany called Die Wand," Ulf said, "in which the reader never learns the fate of the woman at the center of the novel. The story itself is an account of her loneliness and isolation, and she does not even know if anyone will ever read her story. For me, it was the absence of the ending that gave the book its power. An ending gives the people in the story over to a set and sealed fate; but without a clear ending, they are allowed live on in my mind."

<sup>It's a weak author who</sup> "That's an author's ~~weakness~~ <sup>if he</sup> fails at last to deliver a sentence on the characters he has imagined," Mar said. "The author brings them pointedly into being, and it's his responsibility to the reader to craft as deliberate an ending."

The Shiraz had gone a bit to my head; nevertheless, I wandered into the kitchen for another glass. In the window above the sink, I saw the spires of the old church in Harvard Yard, ~~from where~~ I'd recently heard the songs of its choir in evening practice, the melody so divine and foreboding that I had stood in the shadows of the empty campus entranced, ~~as I had been at~~ It brought me back to the end of my college days when the whole world seemed ~~as though it had~~ to opened itself to me. Only fleetingly did that sense of liberation still come over me, ~~and~~ But when it did, I swore never to forget it, until, soon after, I lost my grasp on it, unable to recall the depth of that intensity. ~~I knew that~~ The pursuit of that feeling was what drove many people — like the professor who owned this house — to stay forever within the walls of a campus, where they were protected from the graying out that happened if you wandered too far into the real world.

Comment [PHS IS3]: Break thi sentence up.

Comment [PHS IS4]: But she didn't stay. She's in Israel.



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“You’re being objective,” Anne ~~was saying now,~~ said to Mar. “What I want to hear from you know is what how you felt long after the book was over, ~~— what would that feeling be Anything?~~”

Mar shrugged, glancing at the two old women, who had ~~until now,~~ hardly said a word, although both looked attentively on the rest of us, as though amused by our arguments. If I ever became an old man, I might do the same; listen to the annoyances and exasperations of the young to pass the time.

“It’s not at all how I read,” Mar said. “We’ve talked about this before. I don’t need consider any kind of art to be greatly emotional for it to be useful to me.”

“But then I think you’re missing the point,” Anne laughed. “Or at least you are missing a lot of the joy that art brings me. I would have considered that a male perspective ~~— but except~~ Ulf actually feels otherwise.”

~~Again~~—Ulf seemed only rattled ~~— looking and looked~~ at me to throw him a line.

“Mar’s not being entirely truthful,” I said. “I don’t see her cry often, but certainly during films, or after reading certain books, or in a concert, I’ve seen that she’s overtaken by the art.”

Mar glared at me ~~—~~ although I had only meant this playfully, without any kind of criticism of who Mar was. In fact, ~~that book club and~~ the arguments that I was hearing and making in my mind, ~~even reading,~~ were was a play in themselves itself. The words within a novel arranged besides each other to create an enchantment that was often absent ~~lost~~ from the work I did every day. Never did a novel reproduce wholly for me the happiness or tragedy or dullness of ordinary life. ~~but~~ Instead it called out to me as though from behind a wall, and my the joy ~~I had~~ was trying to hear, however distantly and imperfectly, was what the novel was trying to say to me. ~~But~~ I never said this to the club because I didn’t want anyone to talk me out of my

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opinion. ~~the~~ The others, after all, were clever and thoughtful enough that had I listened to what they were saying I might have changed my mind.

↳ Why does this bother him?

they never actually discuss the content of the book.

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I get a sense of the different characters, revealed through dialogue.

I don't get much of a sense about the main character, though. I mean, this is from the middle of the book, so maybe I wouldn't. but I don't see how this advances the main character much, except to bring him in conflict with Mar slightly.

I actually find the scene a little tiresome, feeling it could just be summed up with "people like different things", but I'm not a literary novel type person anyway.

1

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The house was an old, but obviously premier, property on a quiet, leafy outlet, far enough from the dormitories that there was no risk of drunken students stealing through its gardens at late hours and throwing bottles at the windows. Its owner was a [peri-emeritus professor][I am not familiar with this term] who taught English at Harvard. We soon learned, however, that she was away on sabbatical in Israel, and she had subletted it to Anne, who was barely out of college, with a journalism degree that [had brought her little in the way of vocation][awkward]. Still, the professor had graciously offered the sublet on discount to any student [Anne is a graduate] in the same journalism program that had kicked off her own meaningful career years ago.

On the kitchen counter, Anne had set out plates of brie, slices of baguette, Concord grapes, and a bottle of warm Shiraz that she had already uncorked, offering a glass to Mar and me.

“One of my well-read friends,” Mar said, introducing me to Anne, who smiled wanly from beneath a pair of thick Warby-Parkers too heavy for her fragile nose and artful eyebrows.

“That’s high praise coming from Mar – she usually leads our talking points.” Anne brought the wine glass to her rosebud lips. “I tell everyone that I’m enamored of any kind of reader these days,” she said sadly.

Others had begun to settle around the living room: —a duet of old ladies on the sofa, — a few, younger women scattered around the table, cross-legged on the floor, or another on a beanie, — and I the only other man in the room, Ulf, a stocky German, who sat in a chair, appearing perplexed as to what he was doing there.

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~~Lightly~~ A rain begun tapping lightly against the windows that Anne kept open to let the staid July heat flow through the room, propelled by old ceiling fans that trembled unevenly as they turned.

"I'll start then," Anne went on after a stony silence [by her? By everyone?]. "I've read a good many books in my life and, the more I've gone on reading, the less I've begun caring about the characters. Nowadays, what I want from a story is to get lost in its mood and, although all the critics said this book was brilliantly plotted, I never gave myself over to it, not fully, or not wholly, anyhow."

"But that's just one element isn't it?" Mar said, piping up earlier than I had expected. "I do want something happening to the people in the novel that pushes them up against the wall to see how they react. We were talking earlier on the way here," she said, nudging her head towards me, "and we were having an argument about whether endings were important. I think an ending is a necessary provocation to keep the story off balance."

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Formatted: Underline



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“You’re being objective,” Anne was saying now, to Mar. “What I want to hear from you is how you felt long after the book was over – what would that feeling be?”

Mar shrugged, glancing at the two old women, who had, until now, hardly said a word, although both looked attentively on the rest of us, as though amused by our arguments. If I ever became an old man, I might do the same; listen to the annoyances and exasperations of the young to pass the time.

“It’s not at all how I read,” Mar said. “We’ve talked about this before. [I don’t consider any kind of art <sup>has?</sup> to be greatly emotional for it to be useful to me. [I don’t get what this means]]”

“But then I think you’re missing the point,” Anne laughed. “Or at least you are missing a lot of the joy that art brings me. I would have considered that a male perspective – but Ulf actually feels otherwise.”

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JULIE

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Careful with placement of "only"

misplaced modifier  
SEGRE  
hostess's

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Run on

Break up long #5-

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objective case  
objective of  
preposition

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wind choice  
New 4 for re speak

Maybe "wanly" here

with idiom

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punctuated

A light

awkward? prolonged? word choice

wording?  
tighten-

"I'll start then," Anne went on after a stony silence. "I've read a good many books in my life and the more I've gone on reading, the less I've begun caring about the characters.

word choice

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redundant

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how is it provocation?

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Abrupt  
segue

Explain protagonist's leaving room

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Have him  
get Shiraz  
and  
re-enter  
room.



JULIE

LITERARY NOVEL EXCERPT: THE READER BY SUSHRUT JANGI

"It's not at all how I read," Mar said. "We've talked about this before. I don't consider any kind of art to be greatly emotional for it to be useful to me."

"But then I think you're missing the point," Anne laughed. "Or at least you are missing a lot of the joy that art brings me. I would have considered that a male perspective – but Ulf actually feels otherwise."

Again – Ulf seemed only rattled – looking at me to throw him a line. "Mar's not being entirely truthful," I said. "I don't see her cry often, but certainly during films, or after reading certain books, or in a concert, I've seen that she's overtaken by the art."

Change on

Mar glared at me – although I had only meant this playfully, without any kind of criticism of who Mar was. In fact, that book club and the arguments that I was hearing and making in my mind, even reading, was a play in itself, the words within a novel arranged besides each other to create an enchantment that was often lost from the work I did every day. Never did a novel reproduce wholly for me the happiness or tragedy or dullness of ordinary life but <sup>rather</sup> called out to me as though from behind a wall, and the joy I had was trying to hear, however distantly and imperfectly, what the novel was trying to say to me. But I never said this to the club because I didn't want anyone to talk me out of my opinion – the others, after all, were clever and thoughtful enough that had I listened to what they were saying I might have changed my mind.

?  
Remember

EXPLAIN ANNE'S RELATIONSHIP TO MAR. <sup>about what?</sup>  
WHY DID MAR DRAG PROTAGONIST TO BOOK CLUB?  
DO THEY SPEND TIME TOGETHER REGULARLY OTHERWISE?  
COMPARE THIS INTERACTION WITH PEOPLE TO OTHER INTERACTIONS ELSEWHERE IN THE NOVEL.  
WHAT IS THIS DOCTOR'S SPECIALTY?  
PSYCHOLOGY?  
PHYSIOLOGY?

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**Summary:** This is a subsection of a larger novel I am working on, whose larger draft is currently at about 70,000 words. The story discusses the narrator of the story going with his friend to a book club - the larger novel is about a doctor who spends his nights on call in the hospital and his days wandering the city, trying to understand people.

\*\*\* Pages are extracted from the middle of the story. \*\*\*

WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF THIS SCENE IN THE LARGER BOOK?

The Reader

IN FIRST PERSON, YOU SHOULD ONLY REVEAL WHAT THE NARRATOR KNOWS WHEN HE KNOWS IT - SEVERAL VIOLATIONS HERE.

Rarely did I go to book clubs, but Mar dragged me to one assuring me that I would remain under her protection "from the evil eyes of the female literati." I had only read three-quarters of the novel - enough for me to make comment on its narrative structure and the motives of the protagonist if I needed to; I never believed endings held much value, although Mar, while we walked along Brattle Street, thought endings were the very moment the novel finally flowered into its ultimate aesthetic.

I DON'T THINK SHE THINKS THIS WHILE WALKING

ON BRATTLE ST?

The house was old but obviously premier property on a quiet, leafy outlet far enough from the dormitories that there was no risk of drunken students stealing through its gardens at late hours and throwing bottles at the windows. Its owner was a per-emeritus professor who taught English at Harvard; we soon learned, however, that she was away on sabbatical in Israel, and she had subletted it to Anne, who was barely out of college, with a journalism degree that had brought her little in the way of vocation. Still, the professor had graciously offered the sublet on discount to any student in the same journalism program that had kicked off her meaningful career years ago. On the kitchen counter Anne had set out plates of brie, slices of baguette,

EXTREME?

WHO IS ANNE?

RUN ON?

SOON? WHEN IS THIS HAPPENING?

LITERARY NOVEL EXCERPT: THE READER BY SUSHRUT JANGI

Concord grapes, and a bottle of warm Shiraz she had already uncorked, offering a glass to Mar and <sup>ME</sup> "One of my well-read friends," Mar said, introducing me to Anne, who smiled wanly from beneath a pair of thick Warby-Parkers too heavy for her fragile nose and artful eyebrows. "That's high praise coming from Mar – she usually leads our talking points." Anne brought the wine glass to her rosebud lips. "I tell everyone that I'm enamored of any kind of reader these days," she said sadly.

Others had begun to settle around the living room – a duet of old ladies on the sofa, a few, younger women scattered around the table, cross-legged on the floor, another on a beanie, and the only other man in the room, Ulf, a stocky German, who sat in a chair, appearing perplexed as to ~~what he was doing there~~. Lightly a rain began tapping against the windows Anne kept open to let the staid July heat flow through the room, propelled by old ceiling fans that trembled unevelly as they turned.

"I'll start then," Anne went on after a stony silence. "I've read a good many books in my life and the more I've gone on reading, the less I've begun caring about the characters. Nowadays what I want from a story is to get lost in its mood and although all the critics said this book was brilliantly plotted, I never gave myself over to it, not fully, or not wholly, anyhow."

"But that's just one element isn't it?" Mar said, piping up earlier than I had expected. "I do want something happening to the people in the novel that pushes them up against the wall to see how they react. We were talking earlier on the way here," she said, nudging her head towards me, "and we were having an argument about whether endings were important. I think an ending is a necessary provocation to keep the story off balance."

"We have a novel in Germany called Die Wand," Ulf said, "in which the reader never learns the fate of the woman at the center of the novel. The story itself is an account of her

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loneliness and isolation and she does not even know if anyone will ever read her story. For me, it was the absence of the ending that gave the book its power. An ending gives the people in the story over to a set and sealed fate; but without a clear ending, they are allowed live on in my mind.”

OVERLY  
FORMAL  
DIALOGUE

“That’s an author’s weakness if he fails at last to deliver a sentence on the characters he has imagined,” Mar said. “The author brings them pointedly into being and it’s his responsibility to the reader to craft as deliberate an ending.”

— WERE TO  
LEAVE?

The Shiraz had gone a bit to my head, nevertheless I wandered into the kitchen for another glass. In the window above the sink I saw the spires of the old church in Harvard Yard from where I’d recently heard the songs of a choir in evening practice, the melody so divine and foreboding that I had stood in the shadows of the empty campus entranced as I had been at the end of my college days when the whole world seemed as though it had opened itself to me. Only fleetingly did that sense of liberation still come over me, and when it did, I swore never to forget it, until, soon after, I lost my grasp on it, unable to recall the depth of that intensity. I knew that the pursuit of that feeling was what drove many people – like the professor who owned this house – to stay forever within the walls of a campus, where they were protected from the graying out that happened if you wandered too far into the real world.

RUN  
ON

WHEN?

WHY ONLY?

WHEN? WHAT CAUSES THIS?

IS THE  
NARRATOR  
BEK  
IN THE  
ROOM  
NOW?

“You’re being objective,” Anne was saying now, to Mar. “What I want to hear from you is how you felt long after the book was over – what would that feeling be?”

Mar shrugged, glancing at the two old women, who had, until now, hardly said a word, although both looked attentively on the rest of us, as though amused by our arguments. If I ever became an old man, I might do the same; listen to the annoyances and exasperations of the young to pass the time.

WHY  
WOULDN'T  
HE?

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“It’s not at all how I read,” Mar said. “We’ve talked about this before. I don’t consider any kind of art to be greatly emotional for it to be useful to me.”

NEED?

“But then I think you’re missing the point,” Anne laughed. “Or at least you are missing a lot of the joy that art brings me. I would have considered that a male perspective – but Ulf actually feels otherwise.”

THIS IS NOT A SENTENCE

Again – Ulf seemed only rattled – looking at me to throw him a line. “Mar’s not being entirely truthful,” I said. “I don’t see her cry often, but certainly during films, or after reading certain books, or in a concert, I’ve seen that she’s overtaken by the art.”

Mar glared at me – although I had only meant this playfully, without any kind of criticism of ~~who Mar was~~. In fact, <sup>THIS</sup> that book club and the arguments that I was hearing and making in my mind, even reading, was a play in itself, the words within a novel arranged besides each other to create an enchantment that was often lost from the work I did every day. Never did a novel reproduce wholly for me the happiness or tragedy or dullness of ordinary life but called out to me as though from behind a wall, and the joy I had was trying to hear, however distantly and imperfectly, what the novel was trying to say to me. But I ~~never said~~ <sup>DIDNT SAY</sup> this to the club because I didn’t want anyone to talk me out of my opinion – the others, after all, were clever and thoughtful enough that had I listened to what they were saying I might have changed my mind.

???

THIS SOUNDS FRUSTRATING NOT JOYFUL

AND WHY WOULD THIS BE BAD?



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Comment [s1]: Which city?

*\*\*\* Pages are extracted from the middle of the story. \*\*\**

### The Reader

Rarely did I go to book clubs, but Mar dragged me to one, assuring me that I would remain under her protection “from the evil eyes of the female literati.” I had only read three-quarters of the novel—, enough for me to make comment on its narrative structure and the motives of the protagonist if I needed to; I never believed endings held much value, although Mar, while we ~~walked~~ strolled along Brattle Street, thought endings were the very moment the novel finally flowered into its ultimate aesthetic.

Comment [s2]: ?

The house was old but obviously premier property on a quiet, leafy outlet far enough from the dormitories that there was no risk of drunken students stealing through its gardens at late hours and throwing bottles at the windows. Its owner was a peri-emeritus professor who taught English at Harvard; we soon learned, however, that she was away on sabbatical in Israel, ~~and s~~ She had subletted it to Anne, who was barely out of college, with a journalism degree that had brought her little in the way of vocation. Still, the professor had graciously offered the sublet on discount to any student in the same journalism program that had kicked off her meaningful career years ago.

Comment [s3]: Sentence too long, I divided it up.

## LITERARY NOVEL EXCERPT: THE READER BY SUSHRUT JANGI

On the kitchen counter, Anne had set out plates of brie, slices of baguette, Concord grapes, and a bottle of warm Shiraz she had already uncorked.

~~Anne offered,~~ offering a glass to Mar and I.

“One of my well-read friends,” Mar said, introducing me to Anne, who smiled wanly from beneath a pair of thick Warby-Parkers too heavy for her fragile nose and artful eyebrows.

“That’s high praise coming from Mar,” ~~Anne said.~~ “—sHe usually leads our talking points.” Anne brought the wine glass to her rosebud lips. “I tell everyone that I’m enamored of any kind of reader these days,” ~~she said sadly.~~ She smiled wistfully.

Comment [s4]: Something like that

Others had begun to settle around the living room: — a duet of old ladies on the sofa, — a few, younger women scattered around the table, cross-legged on the floor, another on a beanie, and the only other man in the room, Ulf, a stocky German, who sat in a chair, appearing perplexed as to what he was doing there.

Comment [s5]: Break this up more. I had to read it a few times to fix the scene in my head.

Lightly a ~~R~~rain began ~~began~~ tapping against the open windows. ~~Anne kept open to let~~ The staid July heat flow through the room, propelled by old, whirring ceiling fans that trembled unevenly ~~as they turned.~~

Comment [s6]: Assumption-I re-worded

“I’ll start then,” Anne ~~went said~~ on after a stony silence. “I’ve read a good many books in my life, and the more I’ve gone on reading, the less I’ve begun caring about the characters.

Comment [s7]: Why was there a stony silence? No one was speaking? If so, is “stony” the right adjective? Seems odd people aren’t chatting about the book or engaging in small talk amongst themselves.

Nowadays, what I want from a story is to get lost in its mood, and although all the critics said this book was brilliantly plotted, I never gave myself over to it, not fully, or not wholly, anyhow.”

Comment [s8]: Isn’t she kind of young?

“But that’s just one element isn’t it?” Mar said, piping up earlier than I ~~d had~~ expected. “I ~~de~~-want something happening to the people in the novel that pushes them up against the wall to see how they react. ~~We~~ were talking earlier on the way here,” she said, nudging her head towards

Comment [s9]: Say his name instead

## LITERARY NOVEL EXCERPT: THE READER BY SUSHRUT JANGI

me, “and we were having an argument about whether endings were important. I think an ending is a necessary provocation to keep the story ~~off-off-balance~~.”

“~~We have~~*There's* a novel in Germany called *Die Wand*,” Ulf said, “in which the reader never learns the fate of the woman at the center of the novel. The story itself is an account of her loneliness and isolation and she does not even know if anyone will ever read her story. For me, it was the absence of the ending that gave the book its power. An ending gives the people in the story over to a set and sealed fate; ~~but~~ without a clear ending, they are allowed live on in my mind.”

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**Comment [s10]:** How does the narrator react to this? Is he bothered that Mar already singled him out? Does he feel put on the spot, or put into the spotlight and doesn't want to be there?

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would like his thoughts throughout

**Comment [s11]:** Perhaps if he's German, he won't use contractions in his speech, but to add to that, you might want to break up his English a bit.

**Comment [s12]:** And laziness!

**Comment [s13]:** Seems a bit rude for him to leave the crowd so quickly, especially when he's a newcomer.

**Comment [s14]:** Break this up

**Comment [s15]:** I don't know how you'd maintain that intensity if you didn't expose yourself to the real world.

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Again – Ulf seemed only rattled – looking at me to throw him a line. ~~Why not?~~

“Mar’s not being entirely truthful,” I said, ~~glancing at her and giving her a wink~~. “I don’t see her cry often, but certainly during films, or after reading certain books, or in a concert, ~~I’ve seen that~~ she’s ~~been~~ overtaken by the art.”

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**Comment [s16]:** So why does she read at all, and why does she participate in a book club if she doesn’t feel that a book is worth discussing?

**Comment [s17]:** I’d pick a different verb.

**Comment [s18]:** Is the narrator back from the kitchen?

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others, after all, were clever and thoughtful enough that had I listened to what they were saying I might have changed my mind.

**Comment [s19]:** I'm a bit lost on these last two sentences and I read each several times.