

no memory of his first visit, I have no memory of his last. My father drove him  
470 to the airport one afternoon while I was at school. For a long time we did not  
hear from him. Our evenings went on as usual, with dinners in front of the  
news. The only difference was that Mr. Pirzada and his extra watch were not  
there to accompany us. According to reports Dacca was repairing itself slowly,  
with a newly formed parliamentary government. The new leader, Sheikh  
Mujib Rahman, recently released from prison, asked countries for building  
materials to replace more than one million houses that had been destroyed  
in the war. Countless refugees returned from India, greeted, we learned, by  
unemployment and the threat of famine. Every now and then I studied the  
480 map above my father's desk and pictured Mr. Pirzada on that small patch of  
yellow, perspiring heavily, I imagined, in one of his suits, searching for his  
family. Of course, the map was outdated by then.

Finally, several months later, we received a card from Mr. Pirzada  
commemorating the Muslim New Year,<sup>16</sup> along with a short letter. He was  
reunited, he wrote, with his wife and children. All were well, having survived  
the events of the past year at an estate belonging to his wife's grandparents  
in the mountains of Shillong. His seven daughters were a bit taller, he wrote,  
but otherwise they were the same, and he still could not keep their names in  
order. At the end of the letter he thanked us for our hospitality, adding that  
490 although he now understood the meaning of the words "thank you" they  
still were not adequate to express his gratitude. To celebrate the good news  
my mother prepared a special dinner that evening, and when we sat down  
to eat at the coffee table we toasted our water glasses, but I did not feel like  
celebrating. Though I had not seen him for months, it was only then that I felt  
Mr. Pirzada's absence. It was only then, raising my water glass in his name, that  
I knew what it meant to miss someone who was so many miles and hours away,  
just as he had missed his wife and daughters for so many months. He had no  
reason to return to us, and my parents predicted, correctly, that we would never  
see him again. Since January, each night before bed, I had continued to eat, for  
the sake of Mr. Pirzada's family, a piece of candy I had saved from Halloween.  
500 That night there was no need to. Eventually, I threw them away. ☹️ 🍬

🍬 **THEME AND  
CHARACTER**

Why does Lilia throw  
away her remaining  
candies?

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16. **Muslim New Year:** an important Islamic holiday and observance that marks the Prophet Muhammad's emigration from Mecca to Medina, a turning point in Islamic history.