

# Maya from Madurai

a ten minute drama

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Maya from Madurai

Cast of characters:

MAYA – Male. Twenties or thirties.

MAN – Male. Any age.

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*There are four blocks set up to form two benches parallel to each other. They face the wings so that the audience can see the space between the two benches. They remain in this position for the entire duration of the play.*

*Two men are sitting on these benches, one on each bench.*

MAN: Maya.

*MAYA looks up and responds without thinking.*

MAYA: *(In Tamil)* Yes. That's my name. What of it?

*MAN gets up with his arms extended to his side, the unseen bulk of muscle on him not permitting him to keep his hands by his side.*

MAN: *Maya va?*

*MAYA gets up and cocks his head back angrily.*

MAN: *(Laughs, amused.) Maya na?*

MAYA: *(In Tamil)* My parents gave me this name. I was named after a sage. He named me.

*MAN is highly amused now. MAYA snaps and lunges at MAN. He gets one or two punches on him, while MAN continues laughing all the while. Without much effort, MAN has MAYA in a headlock. He is far more amused now. He picks MAYA up and extends his hand. MAYA looks at it and looks away: Far away.*

MAYA: *(In Tamil)* I wasn't always this angry or violent. I started off rather innocent. I'm from Madurai, I was obviously innocent at one point. But as with all innocence, it is eventually lost. What really matters is what sort of sin takes its place. In my case, it was drugs.

I've lived in Madurai my whole life. I went to school there as my parents moved there when they were much younger. They set up a school for the rural impoverished. They were hippies. Rather, they are hippies. All my life, I've been surrounded by organic farming, blues music, acoustic sing along nights and marijuana. Of course, my parents obviously believed they were hiding this from me. But I caught on. I remember the first time I'd seen it. I must've been six.

They'd sent me to bed but, as with most children that age, I wasn't sleepy and wanted to stay up. I forced myself to sit awake in bed, thinking they would come and scold me for staying up so late. This didn't happen. And I was getting very sleepy. After what must've been a long time, in my eyes anyway, I got up and snuck downstairs. I was determined to cause a scene. As I got to the foot of the stairs, I noticed that they weren't there. I continued sneaking around the house. Then finally, I made my way upstairs: To the terrace.

I snuck up and heard them laughing away. It didn't appear to be some big secret. They were laughing and having a good time. I saw them lighting something and puffing it. It wasn't a cigarette. Muthu from school had brought a cigarette for us to see. He'd stolen it from his dad. And this one smelled funny. I was about to cough. I ran all the way downstairs and hopped into the bathroom. I coughed at last. And that was the beginning of my journey.

I had my first joint when I was 12.

MAN: *Dei, Maya!*

*MAN gestures for him to pass the joint. The two are yet to light it and are not sure how to. They light the tip. They do not inhale. They look at it, bewildered.*

Maya: *(In Tamil)* I'd taken a joint from Appa. That didn't mean we had the slightest clue on how to do it. And this was before all this YouTube and all. If you didn't know how to do something, you fucking learnt how to do it yourself. You didn't type it in something and figure it out. This was back when we actually used brains.

Hold on a second, I'm not that old. It's just that I remember a time when you actually had to physically do work yourself: Hard work. And that's something I've always believed in. And that's how I reached the position I'm in.

I learnt early on how to smoke marijuana and it wasn't long before Johnny and I were stealing from my parents' stash. This was when we were 13 and 14. As we were getting older though, we knew that there wasn't much time left before we started getting caught for it. So we did what any sensible stoner teen would do. We followed my parents and found their stash.

Oh, and how!

They'd taken the bike and gone to the outskirts. Past Yannamalai, past the High Court bench, past everything. They went off to the forests. We followed from a distance. Then, they left. We went to where they went and it was beautiful! (Pauses) No, it's not some gigantic field filled with marijuana and flowers with petals of joints. There was a small patch of land there. They'd been growing their own weed this whole time. It was by no means great weed but Madurai did have the ideal temperature and climate for marijuana growth for 6 out of 12 months of the year. It was perfect! (Pauses again) Maybe that's why they moved here in the first place.

We made quick work of it. We carefully dug up four of the marijuana plants and began work on a small garden of our own. It was not more than a 5 minute walk away. Not the smartest move, in hindsight, but we were barely teenagers. And it did end up working. Two years later, I was starting to deal.

MAN: MAYA!

*MAYA jolts up, sharply. MAN continues to look at him, disapprovingly. MAYA finally shrugs his shoulders and sits back down. MAN shakes his head disapprovingly again.*

MAYA: So school was a drag. Oh, this? (*Gestures to his mouth.*) English? Yeah, I studied at the American College. That's not some fucking white man's college, most of us go there. It's been around for quite a while. Maduraikarans aren't fucking illiterate. Most of us have a better grasp of grammar than you Chennai-ites and all these northies.

I was 17 and getting ready to join college by the time my dad found out that I'd been dealing. He found a big bag of grass in my bag. He never invaded my personal space, ever. And even this was an accident. He was picking up my blanket on the floor and my bag was on it. Obviously, the bag slipped and the weed fell out: Just my luck. We had it out. He argued with me and was upset. That was the first time in my entire life that he lifted his hand at me, and slapped me across the face. Thank heavens Amma wasn't there. She'd have been distraught. Appa was too. The second he hit me, he recoiled. He looked at his hand and collapsed in tears. That's the only time I've ever seen him cry. It killed me.

We finally composed ourselves. He said that he could not say anything as he was doing marijuana as well and it was because of him that I'd started. He said that he could not condone this behaviour either. He would have to ask me to leave the house. On amicable terms, but I could no longer enjoy the freedom and comforts of my home with this happening. We agreed and we remain close even to this day. Disastrous as it is.

I aced college and continued dealing. It was a breeze. I was making enough money for other people to start taking notice. I had to start paying off the cops. I wouldn't just sell my stash but I'd also buy from others and sell that in the city. Once a month, I would make my way to Madras

and sell it there. That was always the best time for me. My profits from selling there would easily be two months' worth of profits in Madurai. And I made even more because I wasn't paying Chennai cops.

Others began to slowly take notice of my success. It wasn't long before I was meeting a gangster I'd only heard of in fairy tales and urban legends.

Man, he was a fucking dick: Jumbo.

Of course, he didn't get my name.