

BOOK CLUB DISCUSSION GUIDE

The Love Lockdown

A romance short story by C.R. Lang

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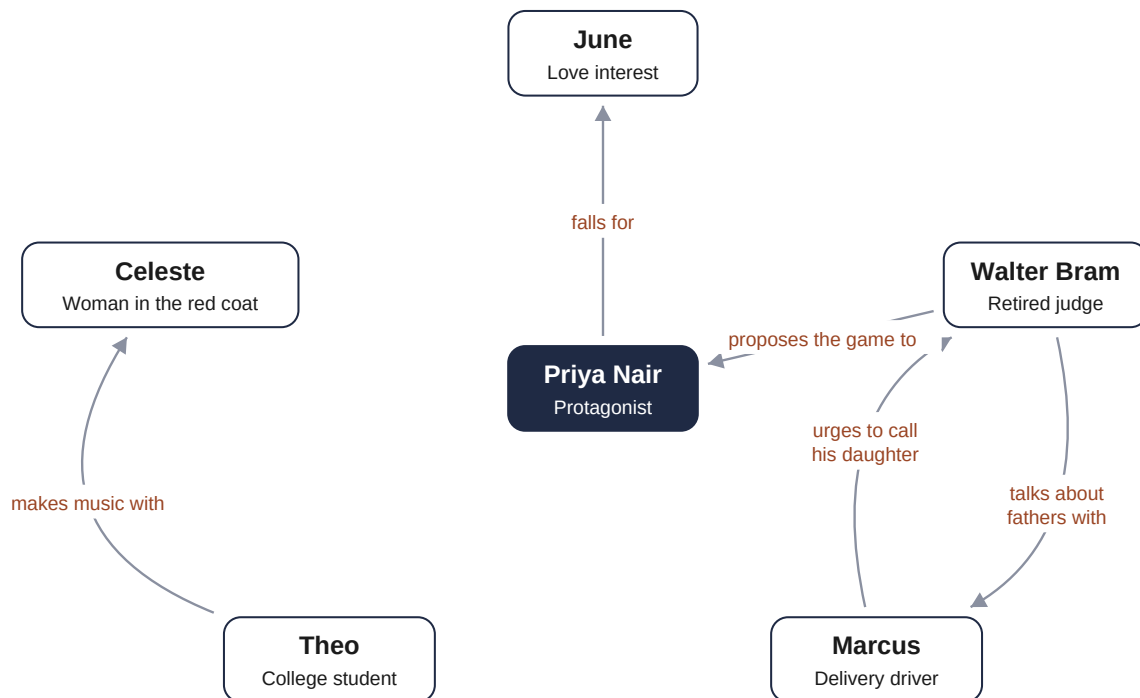
About the story

Six strangers are trapped in an elevator during a citywide blackout. A retired judge suggests they each tell one true thing, and by the time the power returns, none of them are strangers anymore.

This guide assumes everyone has finished the story, so it discusses the ending.

Character map

The main character is in the dark box. Arrows show who acts on whom.



Who's who

Priya Nair (Protagonist). A nurse coming off a double shift who has built a life where no one can reach her.

June (Love interest). Small and quiet, with a heart condition. Alone on purpose since nineteen.

Walter Bram (Retired judge). On his way to his daughter's engagement dinner after four years of silence.

Theo (College student). Carries an empty guitar case. Pawned the guitar and hasn't told his parents.

Celeste (Woman in the red coat). Thirty-six, waiting on a man who 'isn't ready to define anything.'

Marcus (Delivery driver). Lost his brother in the spring. Delivers packages because no one asks how he is.

Themes to look for

Strangers and honesty. ‘The truth is the only conversation that makes the hours go faster.’

Isolation by choice. Priya, June and Marcus have each built lives that keep others out.

Darkness and light. The city goes dark, and the sky fills with stars no one has seen before.

Love without guarantees. ‘You just do it badly, for a while, and then slightly less badly.’

Discussion questions

- 1 Why does Walter’s confession, that he’s relieved to be stuck, change the mood of the elevator?
- 2 Each person shares one thing they ‘wouldn’t say at a dinner party.’ Which confession surprised you most?
- 3 Several characters (Priya, June, Marcus) have isolated themselves on purpose. What are they each protecting?
- 4 June calls the blackout ‘the nicest night I’ve had in years.’ Why?
- 5 How does the story build the connection between Priya and June without big declarations?
- 6 Theo hums a song he’s writing, and it’s ‘the first normal sound’ Priya has heard all night. What role does music play here?
- 7 The title says ‘love,’ but only one couple forms. What other kinds of love appear in this story?
- 8 Walter says, ‘I think I know what to say now.’ What do you think he says to his daughter?
- 9 If you were stuck in that elevator, what would your true thing be? (No need to share it.)

Craft corner

For writers in the group: two ways to look at how the story is built.

Ensemble cast. Six characters in a tiny space. How does the story give each one a distinct voice?

Confined setting. How does keeping everyone in one small room raise the emotional pressure?

Try this together

Try a gentle version of Walter’s game: each person shares one true, low-stakes thing they rarely say out loud (a small fear, an odd habit). Afterwards, talk about how it changed the feel of the room.

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