

REFLECTIONS-II

A STORY BOOK BY ASIANITES, FOR ASIANITES!



Reflections-II

Books are always a good choice

An anthology of short stories written by the budding
authors of The Asian School.



THE ASIAN SCHOOL
DEHRADUN

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From the Principal's desk



Mrs. Ruchi Pradhan Datta

As we present the second edition of The Asian School's story book, Reflections – II, I'm reminded of the words of author, Tony Robbins, who said "Setting goals is the first step in turning the invisible into the visible."

After the warm reception, last year, of Reflections – an anthology of short stories by Asianites, our goal was to keep the ball rolling and come up with a stronger edition this year. And I'm happy to note that our dedicated team of teachers anchored by Ms Namrata Kapoor and Ms Archana Silmana and enthusiastic, budding student authors, the school has come close to the set goal.

The stories span a wide gamut of human experiences and will, I'm sure provide a glimpse into the minds of today's youngsters.

Our purpose behind publishing Reflections is three pronged - to encourage writing skills among students, to help them discover their hidden talents and to learn the skill of self-expression. Initially they do require some motivation, a little push and a shove as it were but once their creative juices begin to flow, then there was no stopping them and several students came up with multiple stories, of which we chose the best.

We would urge you too, as parents to encourage your children towards pursuing literary and creative interests as these are integral to developing a wholesome personality. Not every student will grow up to be an author but the possibilities are limitless and we do not want to leave any stone unturned.

Therefore, while students continue to hone their inventiveness and bring us more such editions in the future, a special word of gratitude for the school Management for their whole hearted support towards this endeavour and to Mr Manish Dhasmana for the design and layout.

Till then, Happy Reading!

Editor's Note



Mrs. Namarta Kapoor Dr. Archana Silmana

We feel exuberant to announce that we are ready with all new hopes and hues to bring out the second issue of 'Reflections', an anthology of short stories. With pleasure and gratitude we put forward the next dynamic piece of creativity, freedom and self expression, which is an amalgamation of year long work of talented souls with the blend of unique taste from each one who has contributed for this story book. The book is to be viewed as a launchpad for the children's creative urges to bloom naturally. This humble initiative is to set the budding minds free hence allowing them to roam free in the realms of imagination and expression, to create a world of beauty in words. It is often seen that one of the biggest blocks to creativity can be our mind's inability to allow a thought or insight to have the space to become a possibility. Some of the most inspired ideas are ones that start off as crazy concepts. By allowing them to be a possibility, they may blossom into something really usable. Often our mind may immediately shoot down a seemingly crazy idea by judging and analysing it too soon. The Creativity Formula can help each of us to refrain from judging our ideas or ourselves and thus blocking or stifling creativity. This is the purpose and our positive drive behind this story book. Our school has always believed in being unique and doing things 'its own way', then why not display the truth of it....?We express our gratitude to our beloved Principal Mrs Ruchi Pradhan Datta, for her enduring faith in us and entrusting us with the responsibility of editing this little collection. Her unconditional support and guidance has always acted as a catalyst to bring out the best in us as individuals. Also, we hope that this venture of ours will find place in the heart of the readers and they will enjoy the various pieces of literary work that we have stitched together.

Rosemary Mansion

The mansion once again stood in the rain, looking lifeless. Under the dome of love, which once was surrounded by lively roses now had nothing but the thorns left.

On the wet slippery ground, Edgar with tears in his eyes and a slight smile holding Olivia's face said "Maybe soul mates don't always end up together- " "Shh shh till death separates us! Remember !?" She interrupted him as he spoke, took his hands in her hand and gave it a kiss, crying, he then gave a comforting smile and said "In another lifetime my love, someday the world will let us be together, till death do us part."

The raindrops fell as tears rolled down her cheeks and suddenly lightning struck her and she drove the dagger through his chest and fell down because a mortal and a fallen angel can never be united. Rosemary mansion once again experienced love dying, like every time two lovers meet and end up dying. The mansion that was once alive, now once again died as Edgar took his last breath. The creepers on the old walls dried themselves. The tint on the Victorian windows faded, nothing but the dust now danced in the great ballroom



and the cello again started to decay and untune, the murals on the great walls chipped off and the portraits of all the wealthy men and women became lifeless and ragged, the grand wooden staircase became weak and the gate was again rusted along with the rotting body.

Olivia crept and sat against the wall nearby and cried and screamed, with his blood all over her satin silhouette cursing her fate as there was nothing she could do because the world never wanted them together. She realised how harsh the world can be and how love is nothing but pain, she was grieving so much that she lost her mind. The Rosemary mansion adopted her and as days went by she sat and cried at the same spot, she starved and the building just soaked her tears in, nobody came looking for her and she a live corpse decayed with Edgar's body . Her skin started peeling off, her face became bony and the brownish-red blood-stained white silk was now barely hanging on her skeleton and it was soon when the house dissolved her in. The Rosemary mansion soaked all her tears, her tired bones and her pure soul in it .

Mr Rosewood reappeared, the old man, with the classic wooden stick which had a beautiful metallic handle and a symbol of a rose, walked against the

strong winds towards the mansion and as he came near the old gate, the gates opened. He went inside towards a massive grave where it was inscribed

'Mrs Aeris Rosemary

Wife to George Rosemary, Rosemary mansions
soul 1935-1985'

He kissed the gravestone and with tears rolling down his cheeks he then went inside the mansion, he walked straight to the dome of love with a shovel and black bags, not surprised to see a sleeping and grieving skeleton. He lifted them in his hands carefully and gave the pair of skeletons a burial with all the customs next to the enormous gravestone of Aeris Rosemary, adding to the collection of buried lovers that lay by for years.

Mr Rosemary took a deep breath and said looking towards the mansion "Aeris you did it again, didn't you? When will all this stop?"

And gave a sad smirk and continued "The people didn't want us, but when will you stop taking away these innocent souls, they had our story, our life but killing them will make them suffer in heaven -"

But the house rumbled before he could finish so he went away with dropped shoulders and locked the mansion. The mansion started growing again more mesmerizing and beautiful than before, the cracks

started filling in and the roses surrounding the Rosemary acres started regrowing, bigger than ever and the fountain started sprinkling sweet water as if something joyous yet sinister struck it, Rosemary's grave disappeared and the skeletons that surrounded the grave disappeared as well, the walls and the old carpet soaked in the old blood stains and they turned royal red in a jiffy. The mansion's rusted gate was new and golden and the sign,

'Rosemary Mansion'

welded itself, huge fans on the ceiling attached themselves again. The mansion was now ready and more beautiful than before. Mr Rosewood again appeared now in his old Cadillac with a new couple, who had hopes of making a life as George told them the history and beauty of the mansion.

And obviously, the couple fell in love with the Rosemary mansion because the mansion transformed itself according to their wishes and desires. Rosemary caught another pair of love birds who were swimming in the ocean of love but were rejected by the surrounding fishes.

Vasundhara Chaudhary

12-B

冬の夜の夢

[A Winter Night's Dream]

Life has never felt more stagnant or peaceful than it is as of now for Joshua. Lying down on a park bench with no one around to bother him, he could sleep here all day long if he wanted to. He sighs as he closes his eyes, “let this moment never end” he said. After a minute or two, he started hearing a faint hymn, that too from a violin but he didn't pay much attention to it. After another moment passed, he heard it again. His eyes opened as he sat up, trying to check if it really was the sound of a violin or if he was just starting to hear things, “I'm only 17, God, please don't tell me I've grown so old that I'm hallucinating” he talked to himself; if an outsider would've seen him, they'd think he was delusional and laugh at him.

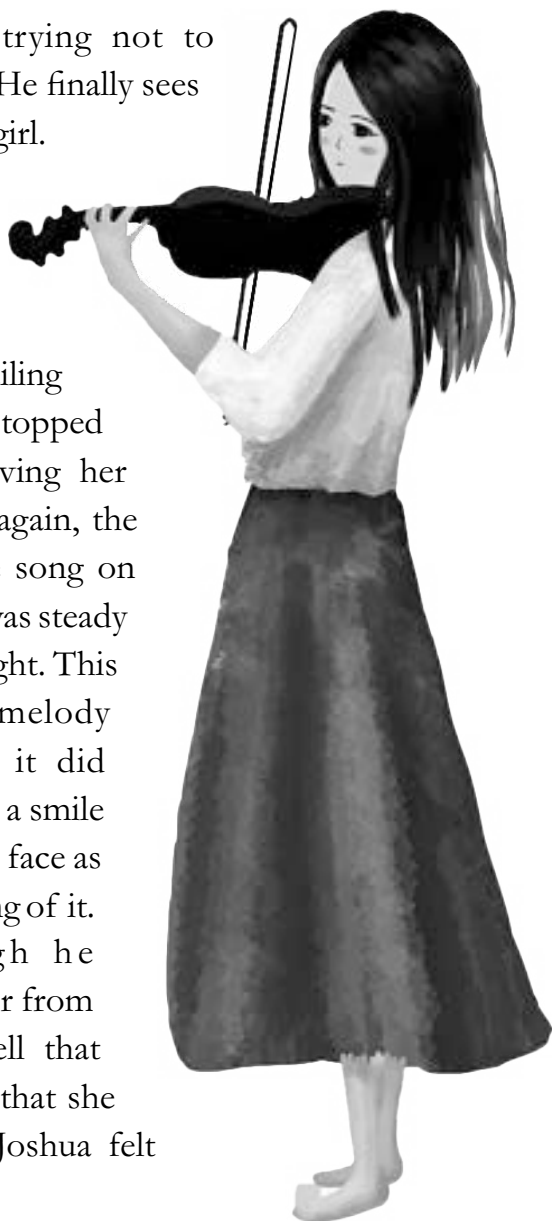
Joshua sits in silence for a moment, absorbing every sound that could reach his ear and then again, just like clockwork, he hears the strings of a violin. He gets up from the bench and starts walking towards the direction of the melody being fiddled. As he starts getting closer and closer, Joshua sees a lone cherry blossom tree. “Why have I never seen this tree? Is it even its season?” he whispered to himself as he crept up



towards it slowly, trying not to disturb the violinist. He finally sees a figure, seemingly a girl.

Her back was facing Joshua. It looked as though she was trying to play a song but was failing at doing so. Joshua stopped in his tracks, observing her from behind. Once again, the girl tried playing the song on her violin, her hand was steady and her posture straight. This time around, the melody lasted longer than it did before. The ghost of a smile appeared on Joshua's face as she finally got the hang of it.

Even though he could only look at her from behind, he could tell that even she was happy that she finally got it right. Joshua felt



reassured and started to leave but a couple of steps after, he stepped on a dry leaf. It made a crunching sound and he immediately looked back to see if the girl noticed. With an awkward yet funny expression on his face, he stared to see if she got disturbed by his presence. The girl shifted in her seat and turned around to look at Joshua.

She was the most beautiful being he had ever laid eyes on. Her eyes were the shape of crescent moons, her skin looked as soft as that of a baby's, the upper half of her silky hair was tied with a baby pink ribbon and the look on her face couldn't be easily deciphered. Joshua quickly turned his whole body to face her and bowed as an apology, "I'm so sorry, I just happened to hear the violin and wanted to see where the sound was coming from" he genuinely looked sorry, "I didn't mean to disrupt your practice, I'm sorry." The girl stood up and rested her violin on the chair, she started walking towards him. Joshua didn't say a word and just monitored her walk. *She walks like she's on a cloud*, Joshua thought admiringly. The expression on her face looked puzzled, she looked as if she was about to say something but something caught her eye before she could. "Ah" she let out a breath as she plucked a petal

from Joshua's hair. Joshua's cheeks went as pink as the petals that surrounded them. The girl saw the petal slowly fall to the ground and then looked up at Joshua again. "Watch out for the petals next time you visit" a faint smile appeared on her rosy lips. She looked up at the tree and like a domino effect, Joshua also looked up just to see that there no longer existed a cherry blossom, it was just an ordinary tree with green leaves. He quickly looked back to where the girl once stood and saw no one there, it was as if it was all a dream. He looked around to see that it had gotten dark, he was standing there, all alone, late at evening.

He groaned in frustration as he ruffled his own hair, "did I sleepwalk or something? Ugh" he said to himself. He hung his head low, in melancholy but just then, he saw the same petal that the girl had plucked out, almost glowing, shining in its colour. He squatted to pick it up and stared at it in disbelief.

Was he the one dreaming... or was it *him* who entered someone else's dream?

Siyaa Sarkar
12-F

The Purpose

I

There was once a boy with flaming gold hair and crystal blue eyes. He was a passionate chap and loved quests. Known for his jolly nature and impeccable wisdom, people came to him from the whole town for advice and suggestions on their life.

Contrary to his animated reputation, he recently disappeared from the public sphere and strictly refused to see any visitors. Rumour had it that a strange man with a rusty overcoat and thinning hair had performed some sort of alchemy on him. Some people went as far as calling the strange man 'the devil'.

A little girl living in the town could not process this information. She had once met the boy and he had saved her life. At that moment, he seemed like an absolute angel full of divinity and bliss. She thought of it repeatedly but the wings of her imagination seemed to yield here. However, she was desperate to know why. In the end, she concluded that she must pay him a visit. She travelled east of the woods where the sun first arose. On her way, she plucked a few yellow roses from the edge of the woods and arranged them into the prettiest bouquet she could make with her petite



fingers.

II

She knocked thrice.

'I am not taking any visitors', came a reply.

'I brought you a gift', she answered back.

The voice of a small child startled him. He had never before been visited by a child.

On the part of the little girl, she was certain anyone could be convinced with a gift; and convinced indeed he was, for he opened the door. His eyes bulged out, and his skin greatly lacked colour. He was exceptionally weak and skinny.

'What are you doing here all alone kid?', he inquired

'I brought you these', she said handing him the flowers.

She waited for him to invite her in, but he did not. His gaze fixated on the bouquet, he stood still.

'Well... I shall leave then.'

'Do you have time for some pies?', he suddenly asked.

'Oh, I have all the time in the world', she squeaked as she gleefully entered the house.

III

'What happened to you?', the two were fairly good

friends now, and she felt it right to pop the question.

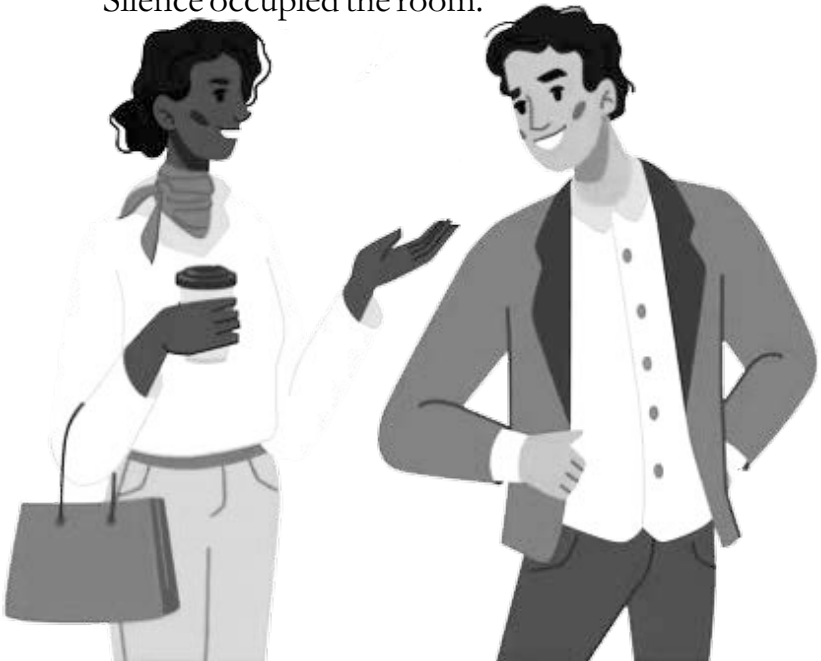
'Nothing happened'

'People say that a strange man did some magic on you.
Is it true he was the devil?

'The devil? What? No. A man did come to me but he did not do any such thing. He was suicidal and felt like he had no purpose. He just wanted a good example of purpose and sought it from me. Alas! He returned disappointed.'

She gasped 'He made you question your purpose!'

Silence occupied the room.



'Yes', he finally replied.

'But you do have a purpose', she consoled him.

'How so? I am not the baker who feeds people or the builder who constructs people's homes or the doctor who treats the ill'.

'But you guide and help people. You don't seem to know how many people look up to you and see you as their guiding star. Honestly speaking, if you think all you do is exist, then your existence, just like any other person's existence seems to be a great boon for all.'

In the days to come, he pondered on these words of the little girl and asked himself if he deserved to live. He asked himself if even though he didn't know his purpose yet he should live.

In the end, he concluded that he deserved every ounce to live. He no longer wanted to live for a materialistic purpose or fulfil some sort of romantic prophecy. He wanted to live because he was born alive and God chose to let him live. He now desired to do what he loved, to live and to experience life in all its dimensions; and in that, he was certain he would one day find his purpose.

Khushi Bhardwaj
10-E

Lazy or Burn Out

"I was born twice: first as a baby girl in May, 1987 the month of goddess of growth and then again as a survivor of a psychological illness which led me to attempt suicide multiple times" said Evelyn. Maybe the one reading is going through the same thing which Evelyn did. Evelyn Parker was a cheerful, heart filled with compassion, genuine and imaginative kind of a girl who was found to be adorable by every individual who knew her. But who knew a girl who enjoyed and appreciated her life would think of ending her life.

Peter Parker a lively person, her dad was a successful entrepreneur and Bailey Parker her beautiful and kind mom was a housewife. They had a small and sweet family of three. Evelyn's parents were supportive and understanding towards whatever she imagined her future should be like or whatever grades she got they never pressured her for anything, which she admired about her parents and who will not like those kind of parents who support them in every phase of their life whether it is the worse or the good phase rather than forcing them to live the way they want them to live. Due to her parents support she was given every facility to be perfect in her field of interest, fashion designing. Her confidence started building day by day in her skills of



fashion designing.

After graduating and 3-4 years of her higher education in designing she was appointed as Design Director of world's best company because of her own great potential for that position. Her life was following the same path which she thought for herself. She was growing every year in her field, people liked her designs and she had the majority of those customers who just liked her designs over those of all the other designers.

As everybody is of the opinion that designing is an easy thing to do but nobody knows coming up with new designs every time and fulfilling the customers wishes is not easy as it sounds. In the beginning she loved fulfilling her customers wishes and getting their positive reviews but you don't get time for yourself in this job due to multiple designs which designers have to create and only few are selected by the companies. Feeling dejected from something after doing or using it again and again is natural as we all use to lose interest in toys which were just bought a week back didn't we, so the same thing supervened with Evelyn, she started feeling exhausted due to her same routine of everyday just getting few holidays which she utilised to be with her parents or to take rest after being overtired.

Initiation of feeling unusual: Evelyn started feeling empty and mentally exhausted, devoid of motivation,

and beyond caring. She didn't see any hope of positive change in her situation. Taking excessive stress feels like you're drowning in responsibilities, this is a sense of being all dried up. And while you're usually aware of being under a lot of stress, you don't always notice the problem when it happens, which she did, she ignored these feelings by convincing herself that it's just she is exhausted.

The second phase : she started feeling that some days were more difficult than others. She found her optimism waning, as well as she knew she was stressed which affected her physically, mentally and emotionally. She went to the doctor a few days after the condition was at the verge of becoming worse. The doctor suggested that it was a headache due to over stressing herself and recommended taking a week's rest. Her headache was controlled but she didn't know that it was just the start.

The intermediate stage: this is where she started with a chronic stress. This was a marked change in her stress levels. going from motivation, to experiencing stress on an incredibly frequent basis. She started to desire to "drop out" of society... the desire to get away from family, friends, and even recurrent suicidal ideation. She missed her work deadline, she was not even taking interest in her hobbies which she loved

during her short breaks or holidays. Her body started giving up the same way she gave up her career. she left her job because she knew in this condition it's better to resign rather than getting fired.

Realisation of her condition:

She consulted a psychiatrist which her friend suggested to her after contacting her to ask why she had left her job. There she experienced her worst time ever in her life.

Her counselor said "It's the kind of psychological illness. which is the condition where you start losing interest in everything, start delaying things and many more as we already saw above in the first three phases called as the Honeymoon Phase. Then comes the Onset of stress, Chronic stress respectively, fourth is the Burn out and the fifth stage is called as the Habitual burnout. Continuing as normal is often not possible in this stage as it becomes increasingly difficult to cope. We all have our own unique limits of tolerance, and it's key that you seek intervention at this stage.'

Panicking is not the solution to your problem that even makes your condition worse. She tried her best to control herself from panicking as her psychiatrist said not to but it's human nature, we exactly do the opposite of what we are told not to do. She was able to control herself, even the medical treatment was

showing it's positive side-effects it just controlled her stress level and other things which could make her feel at least at ease for a day, a week, a month or let's say a year but did that bring her to her own self? No, that didn't happen. This is where The Final stage and the horrible part comes about.

HABITUAL BURNOUT: The symptoms of burnout were so embedded in Evelyn's life that she was experiencing a significant ongoing mental, physical or emotional problem, as opposed to occasionally experiencing stress or burnout. This cheerful and mesmerizing person was so lonely which nobody thought she could ever be.

Dreadful condition of suicidal attempts by Evelyn. She just wanted to end her life, it was so intolerable for her, the thoughts in her mind were haunting her, she was thinking negative in every aspect she thought of either her present or her upcoming future. But we all know our parents are the first GOD of ours, they are the ones who would save us even from Gods we believe in or any kind of energies which exist in this whole world, Her parents were late to recognise her condition but still early before they would lose their lovely daughter. They were the ones who talked to her, asked her what's wrong, what's bothering her, any thing which a person can share with an unknown person

whom they call bestfriend is a person who can share everything with their parents if they try to accept that their parents are their first bestest friend who will be there for them forever in real. She opened up about her losing interest in doing the same thing which she liked, herself getting exhausted from her love and passion(fashion designing) of childhood.

They made her believe it's not her losing interest, it's not about ending your life if you are not able to give your best towards your passion or your dreams, it's about learning how would you manage to live if this kind of situation enters your life *and* how you would challenge the problems yourself that enter into your life and handling them in a way finer than anyone can even think of and enjoy conquering them if they come.

It took her half a year but her parents were the source of her motivation to live her life further and dream again and work harder than before.

One of the strangest things about life is that it will chug on blind and oblivious, even as your private world-your little carved-out sphere - is twisting and morphing, even breaking apart

"Stay close to anything that makes you glad you're alive." - Unknown

Palak Yadav
11-B

If Depression Was My Friend

The day was long. Not the fulfilling, happy summer day type. The rain hit the coffee shop window. The wind was strong. “God, you should fly to the other side of the planet”, he said as he sat next to me. I ignored and made my way home. He accompanied me, leaving as soon as I stepped the doormat. Now I could finally put on the music that would help me forget about the grey sky I've been staring at all day.

This was much of a routine. After work, I'd get my fourth or fifth coffee of the day on the café down the road, he would come silently and put some unpleasant words together. Sometimes, he'd walk me home, some other times, he'd just wave me goodbye from our table as he'd watch me leave.

He didn't bother me nor was interesting, so I limited myself to learn his name and nothing more — “I'm Depression”, he introduced himself. That was the only time I've seen him smile.

This certain day, I woke up earlier and was feeling energetic. I am not a morning person, so this was kind of an occasional accomplishment. I got up, worked out, took a shower, had breakfast and even had time to explore a couple of chapters from the book I've been



reading. The almost non-existing rays of sunshine were awaiting me.

It was a surprise when I heard Depression's voice greeting me as I stepped out my front door. "Hey, D. What are you doing here?", I asked. He didn't hesitate to ask me for a cup of coffee. That was unusual. I have never seen him at the coffee shop in the morning. Caffeine wasn't in my plans this morning, but who would I kid if I said I can survive without it.

"You know, your job is pretty shitty. Are you sure you want to go?". D was right. My job was a parallel of excrement. But why would he question that? Why was I questioning that? My phone rang. It was an important call from work, leaving me no choice but to take off in a rush. The day continued as expected: work, coffee shop, home, a sporadic cup of wine, dinner, some journaling and bed. The next morning wasn't as enjoyable. My endorphin levels were significantly low. That question was now stuck in my brain. I still had one hour until the alarm went off, but I wasn't sure if I wanted to go to work. So, I went back to sleep. It was a failed attempt. My mind was having a sudden existential crisis — the job is pointless, this routine is unproductive, how happy am I?, will I ever do what I really want to do?, will I ever settle down? — it was

going miles. I managed to roll out of bed before I could hit the snooze button, took the habitual shower and peeked the sky to decide what would be my clothing for the day. Thick and dark clouds were covering the city. It felt like a Sunday and similar to every seventh day of the week, my choice was to stay in. I put on some clean pajamas and prepared myself to dive in a movie marathon.

“May I come in?”, D subtly knocked on the door early in the afternoon uninvited. I nodded reticent, letting him in. His steps were silent and he always carried this vacant look on his face. Regardless, something about him led me to a comfort zone, so I allowed him in my life. The negativity surrounded the atmosphere inside my house. He looked around in detail and hated every furniture and art I owned. I agreed even though it never occurred to me before that how bad-looking my apartment was.

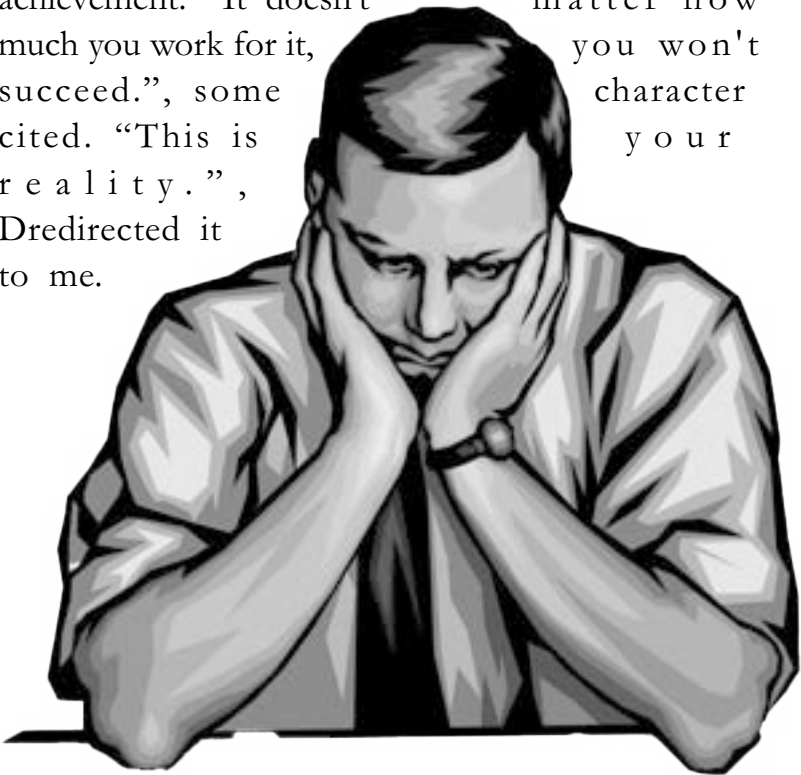
D and I emerged into a mildly interesting conversation. I opened myself up to the stranger next to me.

“I've wondered why you were constantly alone, thinking you were very comfortable with yourself, but the truth is you're not captivating.”, he stated. “Five minutes in and boredom is all I envision.”

It had been the first time I reacted to his mean words. My mind froze. Is this the impression people have of me? Thoughts of low self-esteem invaded my head.

I smirked and turned my attention back to the movie. Or so I intended. Truth is, no one has ever called me boring. But I don't usually engage with outsiders. It's not his interest to hurt me. He is just being honest.

Before I realized, we were three movies in. This third movie was about the different perspectives on achievement. "It doesn't matter how much you work for it, you won't succeed.", some character cited. "This is reality.", Dredirected it to me.



I gave it some thought, but he was right. I've worked hard all my life and I accomplished nothing. I curled myself up as if I was a fetus again and lost myself in tears. He poured me a glass of wine and I drowned my sorrows in it. We skipped dinner. I don't skip dinner unless I am sick. I am not sick. Hours of crying went by and he was still there watching me. I was beyond bothered. What was once an indifference, it was now a dull presence in my life. Will you help me? Please help me. I wanted to say these words, but I couldn't avoid the fact that he was the reason why I felt abruptly hopeless. The levels of toxicity this person has brought into my body in one day were unthinkable. It could be the white drink talking, but he had to go. I couldn't give up my life because he thought so. I couldn't turn down my ambition because this unfamiliar face expressed adversity. I couldn't miss on being happy.

I asked him to leave. I didn't scream, I didn't resort to violence. I simply asked him to be absent. For good. And just like that, I never saw Depression again.

Isha Saxena
12-B

The Dream That Changed Everything

It was raining heavily outside; the last lesson was going on but all Shanaya could think was the picture she had uploaded last night on her social media. Instead of focusing on her lesson, she was more bothered about the number of likes or comments she is going to get on her post. She wasn't the student who could cope with the last of her exams, but her priority was her post. One could blame it on the fact that she wanted to be famous too. She wanted to be recognized and accepted in her class as well. Her daydream came to an end when the bell rang and now finally, she could go home.

As she reached home, she first threw her bag, shoes, and socks away and got her phone as if her life depended on it. She opened her social media, and although her post got a decent amount of likes and comments, she was unsatisfied. She had a frown on her face, the number was not close enough to get her recognized well in her class. She had to get another post idea to get the number of likes and comments on her post she desired. She changed her clothes and went downstairs. Her mother was bothered to see the expression on her face. "Is there something bothering you Shanaya?" "It's nothing maa, not something you



can understand". She said unbothered about the fact of how upset her mother would be after listening to her statement. She left her lunch untouched, went upstairs again, and sat on her desk with her books lying open in front of her, and with a sigh, she began to do her homework.

While doing her homework she didn't know when she fell asleep. In her dreams, she was not in this era, she was in the past around the 19th century as she figured out. She saw a couple and some women protesting about something she couldn't hear from this distance. She moved forward to listen to exactly what they were protesting about. 'Awake, arise, and educate. Smash traditions and liberate', the lady was shouting in Marathi. She asked one of the women among the protesters to know what exactly were they protesting about. The lady took Shanaya to the side and exclaimed that the couple they were supporting were Jyoti Rao Phule and Savitri Phule. They were protesting for the educational rights of women and other lower classes of their societies like Dalits. Their mission was to establish schools where women could study, they could get an education. Shanaya was surprised as she always thought that education was always a right of the women. The education she took for granted was a result of these

people's sacrifice. And then was this sudden realization that struck Shanaya's mind that how she was so busy with her social media that could barely notice that the education she was neglecting now is a result of the people who had put in their blood, sweat, and tears for it. She noticed a mal-nourished child begging for food. The view of the protesters was too horrible that Shanaya woke up from her dream sweating profusely.

Guilt bit every inch of her body. She realized how she failed to acknowledge her parents' toiling for her every day so she could get education and a proper meal every- day. She opened her Google and searched for Savitri Phule and then came to know that she had established her mission of opening 3 schools in Pune for women. She felt so inspired by her and realized how important was education as a tool. She also decided to focus on her studies and start an initiative for the children who are not as privileged as her to have education. She looked outside and saw a rainbow forming in the partly clouded sky and realized that people accept you when you start accepting yourself.

Akanshi Raturi
11-F

Once Again

A teenage girl living a quite life was trying to live the fullest by reading for writing books. She has always been into fictional yet realistic stories because she believed that fantasy were far better than reality. And perhaps being a book tour, library was her favorite place to spend her weekends. Like any other Sunday, she was in the library, her hands on one of the stack of shelf and eyes searching for the most heart wrenching book. Soon enough a book caught her eye that curled up her lips, her hands reached out for it and eyes read 'Diary Entry'. She was not the type of reading diary entries yet, somehow this one seemed interesting to her. After finding a place where no one was with her, she opened the first page and got to know, the diary entry belonged to a young boy who enjoyed pouring his feelings in the form of poems with each turning page, she felt more and more attached as she, somewhat felt as if they were turning the same life. A poem she saw, was dedicated to the reads which went like:

I felt you turning the page.

Where I don't exist,

I'll have to let you go

In this beautiful mist,



I crave to see you smile
When you read about me,
How I wish, I too, was real
For I could have you all to me

She thought to write a poem for him for, she first
time read a poem written for readers. So then she wrote:
I turned the page
Yet again I found myself alone,
How I wish, I too, was made of ink
To be wish you. all alone,
You, my lord, are made of fantasy
Way too far to have,
Reading you is a beautiful intimacy
Yet you're not what I can have

As she turned the page her heart clenched on knowing
that the poet's no more. She felt utterly drained, for she
wanted to know more about someone she felt was like
her. With a heavy heart she kept the book where it
belonged and with a brim of tear she went back home
ready to live a peaceful life again.

Kanishka Bijalwan
10-B

Vertex of Chaos

Dr Alan Hawk, the disgruntled scientist, stared at the ominous portal known as “The Vertex”. The hum of the machinery echoed through the lab as he contemplated the consequences of his actions. He had been working for TechEclipse for years, but their secrets had begun to eat at him, driving him to the brink of insanity,

“Alan, what the hell are you doing?” Maya, the rebellious hacker, burst into the lab, her eyes wide with surprise. “You can't just waltz into the vertex without a plan!”

Alan signed, torn between fear and determination. “Maya, I have to see what's on the other side. There's something.... Awry with Tech Eclipse, and I need answers. Tom, my own brother, is stationed there as a military officer. I can't just sit back and do nothing.”

Maya's eyes softened, and she placed a hand on Alan's shoulder. “Alright. I'll go with you, but only because you are clearly out of your damn mind.” With that decision made, Alan and Maya braced themselves and stepped through the Vertex.

They emerged in a parallel earth, where chaos



reigned supreme. The air hung heavy with the stench of destruction, and rubble littered the streets.

“Tom!” Alan shouted, his heart pounding in his chest. “Where are you?”

A familiar figure emerged from the smoke, Tom, covered in dirt and blood. He looked at Alan with a mix of relief and anguish.

“Alan, you shouldn't have come.”

“Tom, what happened in here? What is this? Where's the guys you came with? What all is this? Why shouldn't I come here?” Alan asked his mind out. He knew something, or in correct words everything was wrong with this vertex. Every micro thing in here is wrong. He knew the idea of all this concept is bad. He always heard about these things when he was young, but now, he is experiencing it. Doesn't it sound crazy?

He came back to the reality when his brother, Tom hugged him tight, throwing himself on Alan? A shocking sight to both Alan and Maya. Alan's brother, Tom, always expressed himself as distinct and arrogant, Alan knew how strong his brother is. He surely knew now, something dangerous is awaiting for them in this mischievous vertex.

As the trio walked forward, they didn't have words to even speak anymore. Every destroyed

structure, building was getting back in shape. As the night was fading and a new day was coming, everything was coming back to how it was.

The new day, a beautiful morning, clear weather, it made them dream like everything they saw was just a mirage. The large skyscrapers protected them from the rays of sun, the same way, their real world, their real home protected.

Suddenly Tom grunted, as he had a small wound on the back of his hand. Maya's eyes widened a little, she ran across the medic place which was just in the front of their nose to grab the ointment and bandage. She made sure, the wound was disinfect and clean thereafter she wrapped it further. She was able to feel them questioning, how she knew all that? That's when she decided to clear their mind. She spoke "You know what? You guys should speak whatever is in your mind. Let me clear the thing. I took some lessons from the med school and then left it to be, what I want and what I am today" Alan just softly smiled for a second and that smile fell off as soon it came.

He seriously looked towards Tom and asked, "Do you feel like telling, just what happened while you and your team were here?"

Tom looked down and didn't speak for another

minute, and then he breathed in and spoke,” Everything here is as beautiful and lively like our home. Birds chirp, flowers bloom but that's only in the day. During the night, all these run after you like your biggest nightmare. There's some supernatural force which knows about all your fears and secrets. This place tests you out with your biggest fear” Tom rested for a second and spoke further, “Remember the way, we used to have the nightmare during the night hour just to wake up sweating but you knew... this was just a bad dream and would fade away soon. Here, the moment you step in here, everything that happens with you at night is real and won't fade away. If you couldn't survive the night, you won't see this beautiful morning.”

Maya couldn't controlled and hug Tom whereas Alan always had the roughest idea on how disastrous things were here. He was scared, he would not lie but somewhere in his mind, He knew he wanted to discover all the secrets here. He wanted to feel and know, if everything here is fake? Mirage? Supernatural? Or what else.

He wanted to be the one to solve it, be the first one to experience it and learn. Yes, he wanted to come out of his fear and be the person he was once. This vertex sounded crazy but he had learned once, see at

least something useful and good even in bad.

Who knows, what this vertex holds in itself? He was ready for everything, he and his team started. Let's save some beings and planets. His new target to achieve. Together, they unraveled the secrets of Tech Eclipse and the force that ravaged the parallel world. As they delved deeper, their bond as brothers strengthened, and Maya's quick thinking aided them in their quest for survival.

With time running out, Alan's mind raced. "We have to stop the force from reaching our world. It will bring destruction unlike we have ever seen!"

Tom clenched his fists, determination gleaming in his eyes. "I'll rally the troops. You and Maya find a way to seal the Vertex. We can't let this chaos consume our reality."

As the battle raged on, Alan and Maya raced against time, fighting their way through both man – made and supernatural obstacles. They faced their own fears and the harsh reality of what they were up against. In a final, desperate act, Alan and Maya managed to close the vertex, forcing the chaotic force to retreat.

Arpita Sharma

11-F

The Only Bestfriend I Had

“Cries Falling Down With Rain, The Only Man Who Could Understand Her Pain.”

I examined the lifeless body which lay peacefully on the rough ground. A dead body of a girl, who looked nearly in her early twenties, was found near the western river. A distant cry caught my attention, a cry of despair, a girl whom I identify to be Addison, tried to push through the constable to see the body of her best friend, Rose Clifton. However, the expression felt familiar like the one I had experienced in my past.

I, Jack Robinson, a police officer was investigating the case of Rose Clifton. The deep and dark surrounding felt repulsive to me. How could I withstand this same place where I had once seen the dead body of the best friend I had, Steven Brown. Tears welled up in my eyes but I have to hold them up. This was not the time to cry. Being a police officer it's my duty to give justice to the victims and I ought to live on that.

The dead body was sent for the post-mortem and I made my way to the station, where I was going to investigate her family members and friends. I sat on my chair and started to inquire from them about the case.



Now it was Addison's turn, somehow, she looked like a reflection of mine, the same expression sat on her face when I was getting inquired by the officer about my friend, Steven. He was the only one who understood me. He was such a kind soul whom you could never curse but give blessings. Unfortunately, God likes to keep kind ones to him and let the sinners rot on the Earth. After inquiry I stayed on the seat with, eyes closed, mind drifting to an unpleasant past, the past I dread to even think about.

It was 18th October, 2016, the day I hate the most. It was the day when Steven took his last breath. His dead body was found near the western river, near the big boulder that had mercilessly crushed his skull. Some said it was suicide, murder and others thought it as an accident. The investigation team closed the case saying that it was probably an accident, where the teenage boy fell off the bridge, making his skull hit onto the boulder which made him unconscious, leading to his death.

The next morning, I called Addison. I was sure she was hiding something that could be a light on this dark case. When she said that Rose called her by the bridge, famous for its breathtaking view, to resolve their fight, made me believe that she could be the one to offer

and murder her on the lonely bridge making it easy for her to take revenge. But revenge for what? I interrogated her for the next three days when she finally confessed the truth. Addison told me that Rose was going through depression that led her to unhealthy addiction. They often fought about this until Addison paid no heed. She felt guilty, if only she would have come that day things would have been different now and with that the case was closed saying it to be a suicide. I could empathize with her but her guilt was different from mine.

Steven and I met in middle school. We were totally opposite of each other. I had a calm, sober behavior while he emitted a cheerful energy. Within a short span of time, we became so close to each other that we used to hangout, eat, play, and celebrate together. It's been seven years but I could still picturize his contagious smile and the very next moment his bloody dead body infront of my eyes.

Our deep friendship turned into the one full of jealousy in high school when Steven was given all the attention and love by other children while I was considered unworthy and disgrace to him. Though he told me to ignore their words but unknowingly a wall was built between us. He did nothing but his so-called

followers did. Because of the death of my mother, I lost control over my emotions and made the final move by calling him to our favorite spot, the Western Bridge.

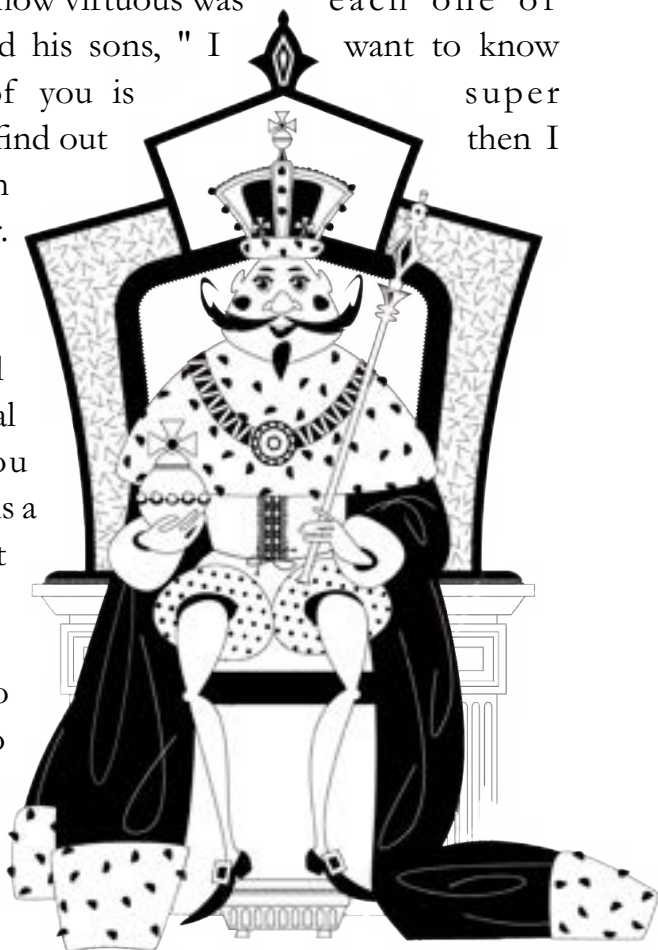
We were standing, talking and expressing our feelings until he said something infuriating. I hit his head with the baseball bat, making him unconscious and bleed to death. I got scared so I placed his body near the boulder making everyone think, it was an accident. This was the very reason why I became an officer so I could find peace from these feelings but in the end, I had no escape.



Khyati Gangoli
12-B

Who is the Successor of the King??

Once upon a time there was a king who was very virtuous. He had four sons and he wanted that one of his sons should be his successor. One day he decided to check that how virtuous was each one of them. He told his sons, " I want to know which one of you is super virtuous, if I find out then I will make him my successor. So I have an idea, go steal money, steal jewellery, steal whatever you can but there is a provision that I will accept whatever you bring to me only if no one has seen you stealing those



things."

Henceforth, apart from one, the other three sons started stealing things and kept bringing them to their father, the king. This one son, a favourite with his father, looked rather sad. " You are the only one who has not stolen anything and have brought me nothing, as yet," the king said to him. " Yes father, but actually even if the stealing is done in secret and there is nobody around, still how can I hide from my own self or my conscience?" replied the son. Listening to this the king was ecstatic. He said gleefully, " I have finally found my virtuous son and he is the one who is perfect to be my successor. I have found the future king for my kingdom."

Aarav Jain
5-B

"No entertainment is so cheap as reading, nor any pleasure so lasting."

- Mary Wortley Montagu

불타는꽃의죽음 [Death of a Burning Flower]

Yura has been driving in circles since 6 pm in the empty parking lot of an abandoned hospital and it's 8 pm right now. She's trying to clear her mind but it seems that it's only getting more crowded and she's trying her best to escape her feelings but they're overwhelming her. The abandoned hospital is the same one where her older sister was admitted back when she was a small kid and could barely understand the woes of the situation. She finally halts the car and takes off her seatbelt, sighing into nothingness; her eyes are closed but her ears are ringing to the sound of the rain outside. Looking at the rear-view mirror, she could see the dark, crusty building that was in ruins. Yura's eyes started to water because of the memories the sight brought.

It was back in 2008, when Yura was 8 years old, she remembers visiting the Kiuda Hospital everyday with her parents to meet the sister she barely knew – Minji. Minji was 11 years old at the time, diagnosed with mumps which was a very minuscule disease and a common one for a kid of her age. She was supposed to be hospitalized for only a month and then she was assumed to be ready for discharge. Until **it** happened.



SOUTH KOREA HOSPITAL FIRE: DOZENS DEAD AND MANY INJURED

A fire broke out in the middle of the night on the 13th of November in the Kiuda Hospital wherein a total of 78 patients were admitted. The fire took place at approximately 1:15 am while the city was sound asleep. The fire was reported by neighbors living near the hospital who smelled “something burning”. Authorities have not yet disclosed the cause of the fire – problems in the electrical workings? Caused by a patient itself? We have not been given an answer to the questions yet. Deaths of many occurred that night including a 90-year-old grandmother and an 11-year-old little girl and so, to pay their respects and condolences, there will be a candlelight vigil held on 25th November.

Minji was the 11-year-old who was mentioned in the article. Although Yura's memories of Minji were scattered into remnants, she still felt a hole in her heart, in her mind and even her bones. Something inside of her was missing and that was her sister. She was only 8 and her sister was only 11, they had so much to look forward to and it was all burnt to crisps. Memories remained memories and her sister became nothing but

불타는꽃의죽음
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a miniscule part of her memories. A hundred candles were not enough to bring her sister back and a thousand cries of help couldn't save Minji from the fate she was destined to reach.

Yura grew up alone, everyone assuming she was an only child and some even made dark humored jokes about the hospital fire in her presence, not knowing that she was the sister of the butt of the joke. She endured it for the sake of her parents, “it's in the past, Yura. Do you think we don't feel like hell? We want it all to stop too but we cannot keep living our lives if we're stuck in the past” they used to say. Same conversation again and again yet there was no end to it. The agony she felt, the burning sensation almost as if she was in the building with her sister, these sometimes mild, sometimes killing sensations took over her body whenever someone mentioned anything that could be the faintest connecting factor to her sister. She scratched where it felt like she was burning, it itched like crazy even though no harm was done to her physically. Yura put up with all of it, went through all of that pain for 10 whole years and now she sits in front of the hospital every day, reminding herself of the sister that would've been 21 now, going to university, making new friends, making a

whole future for herself.

Yura sighed, hearing her own sadness in the empty car. She decided to go back home and bring an end to today.

The next day, Yura was walking back to her house from the grocery store, with a popsicle in her hand and a cap on her head since it was one of the hottest summers her hometown had experienced till date. It must've been that she was too distracted by the heat or the music in her ears that she took a huge bite of the popsicle and got an immediate brain-freeze because of that. Usually, your head hurts for only a minute or two and then a person goes back to normal and can continue their day just fine but Yura felt something completely different. Excruciating pain in her head caused her to drop the grocery bag and kneel down, with her hands on her head and all she could hear in that moment was not even the music that was still playing in her earbuds, she instead heard faint screams. Someone repeatedly screaming Yura's name but it was too faint of a scream for her to recognize who was calling for her. No images came up in Yura's mind, only the voice of the unknown repeated itself along with a painful ringing in her ears.

She tried taking support of a nearby bench and sat on it, still hurting from the pain in her head. Was this a memory or just a figment of her imagination? “*Minji*” Yura whispered unknowingly, it was like muscle memory. “Are you okay, miss?” someone called out to Yura. She could barely hear the person over the ringing but still looked up at him, “should I call 119?” Yura shook her head insistingly, she was unaware of what was going to happen to her but all she wanted at the time was to know more. Was it a faint memory that she somehow forgot? Was it the night of the fire? Was it really Minji or someone else? Was it nothing but a trick played on her by her mind? They remained unanswered because the ringing stopped as soon as the stranger put a bottle in her hand, making sure she holds it upright.

His touch stopped the screams.

She looked up at him again, she was angry even though he helped her and even he could tell her emotions by her face. “Drink it, please. No matter how you feel about me doing this right now, I'm not going to leave a hurting person alone” he said firmly, emphasizing the drinking part. Yura tried to stand up with all her might, planning to give him a piece of her mind but her legs wouldn't budge, her body didn't have enough strength to go on. Out of frustration, she drank the water, thinking it'll

help her gain energy but it didn't. She tried again but she couldn't stand. "Help me" she asked the stranger, "I'm not able to stand, I don't know why". And so, the stranger once again lent her his hand and even though their hands barely touched, she could feel a surge of synergy run through her, giving her enough strength to stand up. This energy felt overwhelming but it felt like something she'd felt before. *Who is this person?*

"I'm Daehwi." The guy said out of nowhere. Yura's expression was puzzled "I didn't ask, though" she said, "you thought it" he replied. Yura retrieved her hand back, startled by what he said. "It's been a while, Yura, hasn't it?" he said, "miss me?". Yura tried to take a step back but the bench behind her was stopping her from doing so, "Who are you? How do you know my name?" she asked, scared. Daehwi smiled at her, not a creepy smile rather a soft smile. "Ah, I guess you don't remember. I was your sister's friend" he held out his hand to shake hers, she shook it back. "You were one of Minji's friends?" she asked, "yeah, I was. I was even there at her memorial but I understand why you might not remember me." She sat down and Daehwi did too, next to her.

"How did you know my sister?" Yura asked after a moment had passed, "I was a patient at Kiuda at the

same time she was there. Our beds were next to each other and there were barely any other kids in that room.” He had a wide smile on his face, “I was already a patient there when she was admitted. She spoke to me first. “Daehwi. What a pretty name” that's the first thing she said, she was quite quick, the way she noticed the name plate on the rear end of my bed as soon as she came. Minji was very cool” he said as he drowned into his memories. Yura thought that she'd cry at such descriptions of her sister, she thought that's what she should do but instead, she was smiling. Tears did well up in her eyes, though they were not tears of sadness, they belonged to the scarce emotion of happiness, nostalgia, feelings she never felt at such a degree.

Till the clock hit 8 in the evening, Yura listened to Daehwi talk about Minji so much that it felt like she was there in those memories. He told her about the one time Minji stole three milk packets from the hospital's pantry for him because he loved milk and missed it because it reminded him of his mom's nagging, even though she got scolded later that very day. They laughed about her sticking a whole watermelon inside her shirt so that the

staff wouldn't notice and would just think that she gained some weight, all because the grandparents in our room were craving it.

“Can I ask a serious question?” Yura asked Daehwi, “of course, go ahead” he insisted, “How did you survive the fire? Were you discharged before it?” Yura didn't want to make him uncomfortable, he seemed so nice but the question had been on her mind since she found out his identity. “Yura, can I ask you something?” she nodded a yes, “How did **you** make it out alive?”

..... No response

Oh Minji, how much must you have gone through for you to end up like this? Daehwi thought

“I helped Yura out, I didn't even know you were there until Yura left my hand and ran back to our room. Why did you just stay there?” Daehwi continued. Yura was startled, she didn't know what was going on. She scoffed in disbelief, “why are you talking as if me and Yura are two different people?” she asked him amidst her confusion, “Minji, have you been acting like you're Yura this whole time? For the last 10 years? Did your parents really not do anything about this?”

“Minji? Daehwi, I'm not Minji. I'm Yura, Minji's sister”

“I thought you might remember everything again if I told it all in vivid detail but I guess your disorder is

worse than we thought”

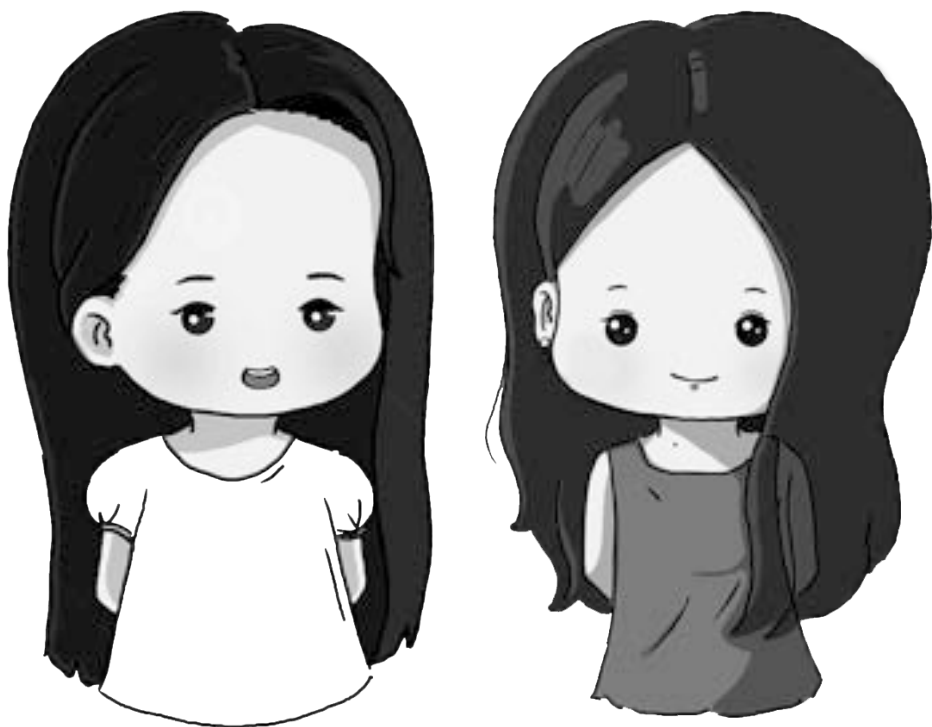
“Disorder? We? What are you even talking about, this is nonsense” she stood up from the bench, wanting to leave, feeling a known feeling – **suffocation**. She had felt herself choking up before, not able to breath but when? She doesn't remember but she does. The night of the fire. Memories come rushing back, Minji finds her way back as tears fall down her cheeks. “Daehwi.” She breaths out, “Yura.” She cries out, falling to her knees, holding her head in her hands, “Yura” she cries out again, tears not stopping themselves from falling onto her soft skin, onto the rough pavement. “It's okay, Minji, you're okay” Daehwi consoled her by holding her in his arms. “she's dead” she cried into his chest, grabbing his shirt as tightly as she could because of the pain in her heart. “What has happened to me?” she couldn't stop wailing, “my sister died because of me. Oh, my little sister” her muffled cries vibrated through Daehwi's whole body, as if it echoed inside of him. Even though he was expecting her to break down, he knew it'd still be hard for him to see her cry. Minji's parents took her to therapy multiple times but all those times she remained as Minji but her other personality – Yura – came out when she wasn't under an expert's eye; it even came out in front of her parents which led them

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to seek help from Daehwi, the only actual friend Minji ever had, the only one that could help her. Minji finally spoke after an hour or so of crying, after she physically had no tears left to cry.

“She died before she could bloom. Oh, my beautiful Yura.”

Siyaa Sarkar
XII-F



Company Matters

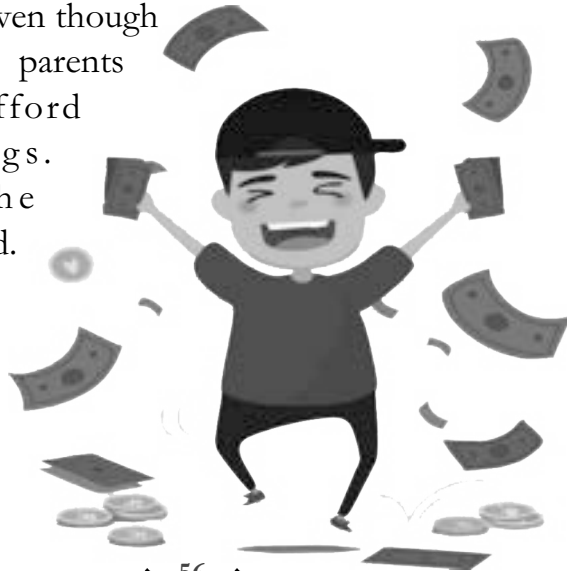
Once upon a time, there lived a boy whose name was Ryan. He studied in class six and his age was eleven years. He lived a middle-class life in Mumbai, Maharashtra with his parents and younger sister. His father was an accountant in a bank and mother was a homemaker. His family was very supportive to him. His parents always quoted his example to his younger sister. Along with his own studies he also helped his mother in home chores and sister in studies too. He was a ideal kid for all the children. He was the smartest student in his class. He always got good marks in all the subjects. His teachers were very fond of him and appreciated his hard work. He was very sharp minded and focused on his studies. His calculations were so good that he could solve a problem in less than a minute. His dream was to become a scientist and serve the nation.

He participated in every academic competition and got first position in most of them. He was good in sports too. His parents were very proud of him. Then one day suddenly a new admission entered his class and changed the entire story. Ryan became fascinated by him because of his cool dude nature, expensive accessories and high lifestyle. Both became good friends and spent most of their time together. They



wasted most of their time in playing video games, chilling together, going to parties etc. Now he became less concerned about his studies and stopped participating in competitions also. Everyone started noticing the difference in his behavior and his studies. He even misbehaved with his fellow mates when they told him about the difference in his performance. Finally, the date sheet of final examination was released by the school. All the students started preparing for the exams whereas Ryan was still wasting his time in unproductive work. His parents also started worrying about him as he stopped doing anything at home. He even didn't help his sister in studies.

He started demanding expensive things from his parents even though he knew his parents couldn't afford such things. Finally, the exams started. All the children were



very nervous including Ryan this time as he gave very less time to studies but he still had overconfidence that he would pass his exams with flying colors. His first exam was of mathematics. As soon as he saw the question paper, he felt the ground slipping under his feet. He couldn't even recall the basic formula to be used in some problems. A boy who always got hundred marks in mathematics was struggling to get passing marks this time. He was so disappointed with his performance that he started crying during the exam but as we all know time doesn't come back. Soon he realized his mistake and repented for what he did. He didn't have the courage to face his parents. He reached home and started crying out loud. His parents got frightened after seeing his condition. He apologized to them and accepted his mistake and started preparing for his next exam.

He was now again very focused toward his studies. He realized his mistake and told his parents that he will never get distracted by such materialistic things. He stayed up all night and worked hard. As a result, he got full marks in all the subjects. He was again back on the track and realized that we should keep the company with the wise so that we become wise.

Aarav Khatri
6-C

The Enigma Of The Hidden Mansion

Dark clouds covered the sky, a cool breeze disturbed her jet-black hair, it was about 6PM on a gloomy September evening. "I've got the flashlight, the keys to my bike and my video-camera" Ash reminded herself, "The three most important things on my mental checklist". She was ready for the adventure that awaited her.

Ash had always been the kind of person that enjoyed her own company, today she was going to finally explore the old Victorian mansion that she fantasized about from her bedroom window ever since she was a little girl, this mansion was built between the forest that could only be accessed through a cart-track from Rosewood Park. A very small number of people knew about the existence of this mansion and so it hadn't been vandalised. This mansion could only be spotted from the north most part of town which mostly was covered by a ranch that was owned by Ash's grandfather. Her grandfather served in the army and was a very disciplined man who would always make sure people stayed off his property which meant no one would spot the mansion, there was also some eerie stories that circulated about the park which kept people



out after sundown. Ash, however, was not scared by these stories, she felt invited and challenged to take on this challenge.

With a twist of a key and the swing of her foot, the bike's engine roared, and Ash set forth on her urban exploration, upon entering the park she was greeted by nothing but silence and darkness, the leaves started to sing by the melody of the wind as she darted past them, "Woah!" she said to herself as she arrived at the fence by the mansion, the fence was old and the wood was moist but surprisingly, it was locked, this meant that she could not get her bike any closer and that she had to walk about 250 meters or so to reach the entrance of the mansion which was presumably locked. This did not bother Ash, she got off the bike, hid it among the dark bushes and started making her way towards the mansion.

The Victorian Mansion stood almost just as tall as the trees in the forest, it had 2 stories and a huge arched entrance that was guarded by a large wooden door that appeared almost medieval and it as presumed was locked by a lock that would compare to the size of a Smartphone, the mansion had moss covering its walls and overgrowth that in some places looked as if it was growing from the walls themselves. Ash circled the

mansion to look for openings so she could enter the building and begin her exploration, after looking for about 10 minutes she couldn't figure it out until she spotted a window whose frame appeared to be rotting possibly because of the beehive which was now empty, that was going to be the way she was getting into the mansion, luckily this window was easily accessible due to the fact that it was on the lowest floor of the mansion. After a few more minutes of scavenging, she was able to find a piece of wood that could be used to pry apart the frame and get into the mansion.

The sun had set, and it was dark, her flashlight could only light up a narrow space at once, she turned on the video-camera and switched on the night vision, she began looking around. She was a young lady who took interest in History, Art and literature, she did not plan on stealing or vandalizing the mansion, she was only interested in documenting it.

Her exploration began in the main hall of the building, there were antique vases and beautiful paintings which appeared to have been painted for the house specifically, the mansion was dressed in White, Crimson and gold and everything, from the carpets to the furniture and even the flooring and walls followed this theme. IT WAS MAGESTIC and Ash enjoyed this

experience. To her surprise the house felt suspiciously silent, there were no noises, no creaking floorboards and no wind that could knock things over.

Her visit to the kitchen was as planned, they too followed the same theme, the cutlery was half-gold and half-silver, the plates and crockery shared a Gold-Crimson theme too, all this was set in a beautiful shelf decorated in pure white, with Crimson vine-like engravings that flooded into the white wood from the handle of the display case.

She then entered the hall; this hall had an enormous dining table like ones Ash had only seen in movies. Surprisingly, this table was set up and had some sort of fungi covering almost the entirety of it. She examined it making sure that she did not touch any of it, she was carefully videotaping this table until she bumped into something and fell over because she could not see very well due to the lack of light. Beneath her was a carpet, she bumped into something that was under the carpet,

She got up, brushed it off and raised the carpet to reveal what appeared to be a trapdoor, thrilled more than ever she decides to open it which takes her quite some time, but she manages eventually. The trapdoor led to a flight of stairs, the stairs were made of stone and

now covered in moss. She followed these stairs to a kind of room which had one bed, a table and a chair. The room was mostly empty except for the existence of one notebook which lay on the table, she picked it up and brought it back up into the house, closed the trapdoor and covered it back up.

She held the flashlight in her mouth and began going through the contents of this notebook, she opened a page at random, “Journal entry: 48?” she said, confused. She kept reading “We begin the ritual today; the subject is ready and so are we. The elixir will soon be ready to be offered to the queen” it read “The queen? This is so strange” she thought to herself. She kept reading even though she felt a little uncomfortable, “The queen accepted our offering with gratitude, she took the elixir and felt younger. I am glad we chose a newborn subject”. A cold shiver



went down her spine, she realised what she had discovered, “Sac.....rifice”, she muttered to herself trembling with horror, “a new born child.....”.

She dropped the book and darted out of the mansion, got her bike out, put the key in and kicked the engine, it growled and was ready to go, she looked back only to add to her horror, she saw a group of people dressed in Crimson, White and Gold, surrounding the house, facing her direction. She did not waste a second and left.

She got home and told her grandfather about the incident. He was furious yet also concerned, in a state of panic he asked Ash to pack her things and they left town as soon as they could, he asked her to never return and that she should never speak of what she saw.

As the years rolled on, Ash's memories of the mansion and its mysteries would never fade. Sometimes, in the quiet moments of the night, she would recall the chilling revelations of that notebook and the ominous figures clad in crimson, white, and gold. The enigma of the Victorian mansion remained etched in her mind—an adventure that forever altered her perception of reality.

Parth Bhatt

11-A

Justin's Hatred

Justin was a school going kid whose mother had just one eye. Justin disliked his mother for having just a single eye. He always felt embarrassed about this and did not insist on her visiting his school to pick him up. Justin's mother ran a small grocery shop near their house. She worked hard every day to make both ends meet. He hated their living conditions and wished to be rich when he grew up.

One day Justin's school organised a parent's day event and all children were asked to invite their parents to school. He did not want to become a laughing stock in front of his friends. However, Justin's mother found out about it, when she read his school diary while placing his lunch in the bag. She thought that he had forgotten to tell her and decided to surprise him with her presence. When Justin's mother arrived at school and called out to him, he was furious to see her. Justin's friends laughed at him and made fun of her saying "she looks funny",. He ran away in tears. When he reached home he yelled at his mother," why did you come to school, you are such an embarrassment. I never wanted you to come to school and that's why I didn't invite you." His mother said nothing and silently went to the



kitchen to prepare the lunch for him. He decided to be a rich successful man and also to leave his mother in the future.

When the time to go to God was near, his mother who was there with him throughout, now she was lonely and the doctor told her she had numbered days left. She everyday woke up with the insight that her son would come and visit her. Unfortunately he never showed up. She had left a diary behind revealing the ugly truth that his father had left them when he was two years old. He [her son] had met with an accident and lost an eye of his. She had given her one eye so that he could lead a normal and happy life. His mother did not want to be a burden on him so kept herself away after he moved out. She hoped that he would come for the schools' reunion and visit her. She never lost hope and died in the hope of seeing him for the last time

Arshia Bhardwaj

12-B

"Reading is an exercise in empathy; an exercise in walking in someone else's shoes for a while."

-Malorie Blackman

Your Last Bite

Jessica wakes up in the middle of the woods. She doesn't seem to remember her full name, age or even how she got there but she knew that she did not belong there. Something from the pit of her stomach told her to run as far as she could as she was in danger but she tried to ignore that feeling and began to inspect her surroundings. "hmmm... I seem to be in a forest nowhere close to a settlement at the middle of the night." Jessica thought to herself as she tried to stumble through the mist to find a landmark of any significance like a sign or some kind of light source. "AHH" Jessica shrieked as she bumped into a tree which came out of nowhere from the mist. Jessica relaxed and tried to regain her composure while inspecting the tree she had bumped into. It seemed that the tree Jessica had bumped into had posters of some sort on them. "R..R.Ronald Kenny lost t..to the nightmare" said Jessica as she struggled to read the poster aloud to herself through the mist. It seemed that the posters were posters of missing people which were stuck onto the tree and not just the one tree that Jessica had bumped into but every tree around Jessica seemed to be covered by posters just like the one she read but with



different names on them.

Jessica had chills running down her spine as she hurried to find some kind of safe haven in the middle of this mysterious and scary forest. The feeling of dread that she was feeling in the pit of her stomach before had suddenly grown into terror of immeasurable scales. She had no idea where she was or who she was or why she was even there but she knew that she had to find a way out of this forest as fast as possible and suddenly she saw it, a glimpse of light, a ray of hope. She saw a shabby shack come into view as she ran towards the light with a sign hanging over the shack which read "MOTEL IN THE MIST" but Jessica couldn't care less what the sign read as she was too overjoyed to find a shelter in this misty woodland. She knocked on the door praying to God that someone sane would answer as she had assumed only a mad man would live in a place like this. To Jessica's luck someone did answer the door but he was far from sane.

"Well now what might a young girl like you be doing in the middle of the woods this late?" the man asked Jessica in a deep raspy voice as he opened the door to greet Jessica. It was an old man in his 80s or 90s wearing a gray robe that was covering his entire body. He stared at Jessica with his eyes that had sunken deep

into his skull due to his age. Jessica frantically explained her situation to the old man in hopes of him to understand Jessica's situation and lend her a helping hand of some kind. There was a moment of silence when Jessica was done explaining, as the old man thought about what Jessica had said, Jessica stared at the man with intent in her eyes. "How about this young lady, you can stay at my place for tonight and I shall lead you to the closest settlement in the morning." Said the man in his aged voice. Jessica breathed a sigh of relief as she thanked the man who had decided to show courtesy to her. "Come now I will make you dinner, you must be hungry from all that running." The man said with a grin on his face. Jessica felt weird that the old man knew she had been running for a while now trying to find a way out of the woods but she shoved the feeling aside as she was too tired and hungry to think about it.

The man brought a bowl of what looked like meat curry to the table that he had assigned Jessica to. Jessica looked at the food with her mouth watering and dug in. The man introduced himself as the owner of the motel and his name was Lucifer. He had been living there since his childhood and apparently somehow he got a lot of guests even though the motel was in the middle of nowhere but Jessica thought he must be

exaggerating as surely no one would like to live in the middle of a forest as creepy as this. For some reason when Jessica was eating she could feel a strong feeling of discomfort. It was like her body felt disgusted to eat whatever she was eating even though it tasted amazing. It felt inhumane to eat what she was eating even though she did not despise non vegetarian food. She asked if the Lucifer had added something to the curry to make it feel so weird to eat. Lucifer replied with "Now child you mustn't be picky and eat everything you are given with the utmost of gratefulness as it might be the last bite you eat."

That night Jessica woke up in the middle of the night to go to the washroom. " Hmmm that old man must have done something to the food I shouldn't have trusted him in the first place!" muttered Jessica to herself as she scurried to find the bathroom but as she was walking half asleep she woke up completely when she heard some kind of noise coming from the room furthest from her to her right. It was the same room that Lucifer went to when he said goodnight to Jessica. Mustering up all her courage Jessica tiptoed to the room from which the noise was coming from and opened the door slightly as quietly as possible to peep into the room to find the most horrid and terrifying sight she had ever

seen.

There stood in the room, in front of Jessica, a eight foot tall creature covered in shadows with its fangs hanging from its mouth and its four pair of hand separating the flesh from the bones of what looked like a corpse of a human male. For some reason Jessica immediately knew what she had eaten for dinner and it was not the meat of chicken or goat but something much more terrible , but she couldn't worry about that now as the creature standing in front of her was much more terrifying than anything that she could ever imagine but as she tried to sneak away ,while convincing herself that it was nothing but a bad dream, the floor underneath her creaked and the monster which was busy butchering the human already knew that this creak was not due to a mouse but an uninvited guest.

Jessica knew she had to run as fast as her feet could carry her and that is exactly what she did. She did not care about shoes or the fact that she still did not know a way to escape the forest that she had ended up in but she ran with her full force bursting through the door of the shack into the pure misty darkness of the maze like forest. But she knew it was not enough to run as fast as she can as she could hear the beast chasing behind her,not caring about anything and destroying anything

and everything in its path , and as Jessica ran into a dead end , with a cliff in front of her and the monster behind her, Jessica had nothing to do but pray to the lord above.” Jessica..... oh Jessica do you think that praying to the lord who has forbidden you will help you at all ! I told you didn't I , you should cherish and be grateful to everything you are given to eat as it may be your last bite.” And with that said the shadow bears its fangs out towards Jessica and leaps.

Gregory wakes up in the middle of the woods. He doesn't seem to remember his full name, age or even how he got there but he knew that he did not belong there. Something from the pit of his stomach told him to run as far as he could as he was in danger but he tried to ignore that feeling and began to inspect his surroundings. “hmmm... I seem to be in a forest nowhere close to a



settlement at the middle of the night.” Gregory thought to himself as he tried to stumble through the mist to find a landmark of any significance like a sign or some kind of light source. “AHH” Gregory shrieked as he bumped into a tree which came out of nowhere from the mist. Gregory relaxed and tried to regain his composure while inspecting the tree he had bumped into. It seemed that the tree Gregory had bumped into had posters of some sort on them. “J..J.Jessica Smith lost to the nightmare” said Greagory as he struggled to read the poster aloud to himself through the mist. It seemed that the posters were posters of missing people which were stuck onto the tree and not just the one tree that Greagory had bumped into but every tree around Gregory seemed to be covered by posters just like the one he read but with different names on them.....

Shivansh Rawat

10-A

"Today a reader, tomorrow a leader."

- Margaret Fuller

Whispers Of Another Realm: The Interdimensional Diary

August 14, 2005

"Wow, this is a huge garage sale. Why do you have so much stuff in your house that you don't need?" Mia said mockingly as she was walking to Anne, her friend. "Mia! I didn't expect to see you here." Anne said while waving at Mia. They greeted each other and talked for a while, walking around the yard. Mia was looking around, and soon something caught her eye. It was a diary. An old crinkly diary with a dreamy vibe coming from it. Mia picked up the old notebook in an instant and asked her friend if she could get it. Anne informed Mia that she had never seen this diary around here, and she doesn't even remember owning it. Mia thought that it might have belonged to someone who had come to the garage sale to buy something. Mia asked Anne if anyone had come with a diary, and Anne told her that she was one of the first few people that came, and the previous visitors were not carrying anything with them. After some hesitation, Mia decides to take the diary home with her. Anne agrees, and Mia leaves.

Mia, upon reaching home, runs straight to her room to put the diary on her desk. She stares at it for a few seconds and then goes about her day. She had decided to first finish her chores, work, etc., and then write something in the diary.

At 11:37P.m, Mia was finally done with her day



and now had free time on her hands. She decided to get the diary and first draw something in it. She opened a blank page of the old notebook and started to doodle there.

She was drawing when, all of a sudden, she got distracted by a sound and looked out of the window. There was nothing there, as she expected, but she was absorbed by the stars in the sky and thought, "These beautiful diamonds in the sky are the only thing that could fill up this empty void we call space." She zoned out. She zoned back in, however, when her eyes fell on the diary. She saw a text written there that wasn't there before. She felt a shiver go down her spine.

She tried to convince herself that she must have written it, but she knew very well that she wasn't the one who wrote it. She tried to overlook this but couldn't. A few minutes later, when she was done doodling a second picture, she saw words appear on the paper out of thin air. No one was writing these texts; they were coming out of nowhere. Mia was now horrified and thought of what she should do now, i.e., either burn the diary or maybe try something out first before letting the notebook go forever. She let her intrusive thoughts and curiosity win and decided to write something there as a response.

The latest text that appeared there was saying, "Wow, your drawing looks good." She decided to thank the person who was giving the response and see what

would happen. The words started to appear again, and this time they spelled out "you're welcome." Mia couldn't believe her eyes. "What is happening?", Were the only three words that were going round and round in her mind.

She asked the being what was going on and how they were communicating. The mysterious entity replied by telling her that the diary she is holding at the moment happens to have some inter-dimensional powers or abilities that allow it to connect one planet to another by giving people from different universes access to communicate with each other. Mia couldn't believe what she was seeing. It didn't feel real to her. Suddenly her eyes opened, and she found herself on her bed. "So, it was a dream." She thought until, all of a sudden, she looked at her desk and found the diary there. She could feel a chill go down her spine. She rushed over to it and opened it. The conversation was there. Now she knew for sure that the diary had some sort of power.

She didn't tell anyone about the diary. Not even her parents or the person she got it from, Anne. She knew that the best way to make sure they were all safe was to not let anyone know about it.

Mia continues talking to the being, who calls himself Pip. Pip was the entity that had talked to Mia on the first day she got the diary. Mia had been so busy talking to Pip that she cut ties with all those around her.

And by chance, Pip also happened to be the last person she talked to, as one day she went missing. Her parents, her neighbours, Anne, and everyone else who cared about her were looking for her, but she was nowhere to be found.

Mia opened her eyes and looked at the environment around her. It was cold and had an empty and dark atmosphere. She was scared, anxious, and confused as to where she was and how she might have gotten there, until all of a sudden, she looked up and saw hundreds of eyes looking down at her. She wasn't able to see the body but only the eyes, and then a loud and soft voice echoed, "Welcome to the Void." Mia was confused and puzzled. She asked how she got there and why she was there. The voices then replied that this was a consequence or a side effect of using the diary and that she had been teleported there by the diary's abilities. Mia asked how she could get out or leave, but she was given no answer. There was no way out. "Am I dead?" Mia thought to herself as she was walking around, trying to adapt to her new surroundings. It all felt like a dream, but this was no dream. This was real.

August 14, 2013

"Hello, sir and welcome to our yard sale. How may I help you?" Asked Mark. "I was looking around,

and I found this old diary. How much do I pay for it?" Enquired Sam. "I don't remember even putting it up for sale or even owning it at some point in my life." Sam tried to convince Mark to give him the diary by explaining that dreamy vibes coming from it were calling him....

Divya Khanduri

10-A



The Game That Wasn't

Sitting at his computer, Sam noticed something odd about his new video game, which his father had bought him a day before. All the characters and gadgets of the game data were gone. He checked the media files and system, but got nothing from there. Nor was there any virus attack. He was in a dilemma, but ignored it, thinking of it as some glitch in the game.

Couple of minutes later, he went towards his window, and was astound to see the view outside. The characters of his game were roaming on the streets with their advanced weaponry. Specialized gadgets like UFOs were there too! He was stunned. There was a mayhem in the whole city. All the game characters were causing a lot of destruction; some crushed the cars with their huge hands, some were destroying the buildings, and some were even killing the people. Sam didn't know what to do, he was at sixes and sevens and was just thinking that how can a game become reality. Suddenly he saw that a huge robot, almost thrice his house's size, was approaching his house.

He got terrified. Then the idea of deleting the game from his system struck his mind. He quickly reached out for his computer in order to uninstall the game. The robot was soon in front of his eyes. It punched his house's ceiling. And the same moment,



Sam deleted the game. All the characters and gadgets vanished, but it was too late, as the ceiling's debris was about to fall on him. He shouted to the highest pitch and next he could see was his cat licking his face, while he was lying on the bed. He realised that it was just a terrifying nightmare.

He then woke up, got fresh, had his breakfast, and finished his chores. Then he went on to sit on his computer to play his new computer game. But as soon as he opened it, he was awe-struck!!! All the characters and gadgets of the game data were gone! Was his dream turning into reality?

Prapti Pandey
11-F



Future Perfect

The evening sky changed hues like a chameleon. From one corner of the wide, lush green field Advay watched the young boys playing soccer. A young boy, Tony rushed up to him. He was wearing an old pair of jeans and a grubby T-shirt.

‘Didn't you watch my score?’“Oh! Yes I saw how you scored the winning score”, Advay replied smiling.

“Are you done with your school assignments? Advay asked.

“No, not yet but I was about to work on it”, said Tony in modest explanation. Then go just finish that first.

Advay instructed the group of teenage boys to move inside the orphanage. Advay was a 17 year old teenager, raised in an orphanage run by an old woman whose husband had died in World War 2. When Advay was only five years old, he became disabled due to polio. He was the oldest at that orphanage.

Advay was really talented when it came to painting, but because he was disabled, he was often underestimated. He was all alone with these conflicting thoughts, so he decided to try and do something about



the orphanage because the old lady could not take the responsibility of raising 13 children and being the only one who made money by selling woven baskets.

The sleepy sun vanished beneath a blanket of white clouds. He knocked thrice on the door. It was the same warm voice that greeted Advay, Aunty Indu. The old lady was wrapped up in a shawl and had a scarf around her neck, and her bright eyes seemed to convey her emotions. Advay asked aunt-Indu to join them for dinner. AuntIndu joined them.

Ten o' clock. Aunt-Indu opened Advay's bedroom door, he was painting, it seemed as if he was standing on the edge and filled those little moments of emptiness with the paint brush. Emptiness of his heart....

She closed the door softly.

Advay spent the entire night sketching the canvas. In the morning, he requested aunt Indu to take his paintings with her and sell them in the market. The old woman responded positively to the request, taking the painting with her without any further prompting.

When the old woman returned that night, Advay rushed to meet her. His bright eyes spoke volumes. The old woman reached into her handbag and quickly produced a note of 20 Rupee and gave it to him. He

couldn't believe it. He had not expected anyone to purchase his painting.

A sudden surge of emotion overtakes him, and he hastens with his paintbrush to begin the next one. But life had other plans for him.

No buyer came forward to buy Advay's art over the next few days but he continued to be optimistic in spite of the lack of patronage.

A month had passed.

Advay was feeling despondent and disheartened. He was sitting in the yard, admiring the tranquil sight of birds fluttering in the blue sky. Suddenly, his aunt Indu showed up, her expression was full of enthusiasm, and presented him with a bundle of notes, which he counted quickly. It was a sum of two hundred rupees. Advay cast a suspicious glance at the old lady, believing that she had given him the money to alleviate his distress and keep his heart content. The lady then informed him that the state administrator had visited the area where she had been selling her woven baskets, and had been captivated by his paintings, and had been determined to purchase them.

Advay turned 18 after a few months. He received a call on his birthday, which led him to some very surprising news. It informed him that his painting had

been awarded first prize in a National Painting Exhibition. The boy was still in doubt but the old lady was certain that it was Advay's work, as he had inscribed his name and address upon the reverse. The painting depicted a boy from wheelchair reaching the sky and surely he did that day. He noticed the old lady's sparkling face. It was too unreal to believe.

The organisers of the event granted air tickets to Advay and his aunt Indu, thus allowing him to experience his new identity. The old woman pushed Advay's wheelchair to the podium, where he desired to be presented with the prize money of Rs 5 lakh, from the old woman who had provided him with care when he was all alone in the world. The organisers also offered him the opportunity to study at the best art school in Delhi, which strengthened his belief that no disability could cause him to abandon his aspirations of success and achievement. He now desired to become an art educator in the near future, thus regaining his lost happiness. The boy was still in doubt but

Himani Tyagi
12-B

My Secret Well Wisher

My mama (my maternal uncle) and I are absolute buddies; he's the most hilarious and fun person to be around. He's always cracking jokes, narrating his hilarious tales, and making everyone around him laugh, but this time he narrated us something that we will never forget, and that has stuck with me ever since. And it's very true because my mama has personally experienced this in all its absolute senses and remembers every single detail even after so many years. Let's hear this story in his words~

I had to attend a very important meeting in a town that was very far from the actual town I lived in; it was approximately 7 hours by car. My meeting ended at a sharp 6:30 p.m. on a Thursday evening, and I wasted no time and headed straight towards my car after saying good-bye to my colleagues there. It was almost 6:45P.m when I started my car. I was in such a hurry because I had to attend the office next day back in my town, and for that, I had to reach my place on time so that I wouldn't get late for my office. The first few hours went smoothly; I was driving continuously for 3 hours now, and the roads were mostly filled with other cars, trucks, and buses at all times, with good street lights as well.



The area too wasn't very secluded; there were houses, shops, and restaurants everywhere, but I didn't stop to eat something or even use the restroom once because I was just in such a hurry that I was dying to reach my home and get a few hours of sleep before my office would start.

I wasted no time and kept driving for two more hours. By this time, it was already 12 a.m. now few trucks and buses were still passing by, but they were still very few. Now I could hardly see a single truck in 30–35 minutes; otherwise, the roads were mostly empty. I was driving alone on that road, and though there were a few shops nearby, most of them were closed by now, and since this area was on the outskirts of the city, there weren't any houses or people passing by either. That area was actually covered by a forest—not a huge one, but the trees were very tall, and due to that, the roads and place looked more dark.

I was not getting good vibes from that place, so I just decided to ignore it and drive faster so that I could come out of this area sooner. I also wished to see at least one vehicle pass by my car or a single person because I was literally driving there all alone on a dark, empty road. After continuously driving for an hour, that road still wouldn't end. I felt as if I'd actually been driving in

the same place for an hour, or maybe driving in a circle. The place does not seem to end. My eyes were getting moist and were sleepy.

I was trying hard to drive. After a few minutes, I noticed a black silhouette enter from the window of the seat next to me, and it quietly sat on the seat next to mine. At first, I thought I was just hallucinating because I was tired and sleepy, but that figure that sat next to me looked like a proper man sitting there. Obviously, its face or body wasn't visible, but that silhouette had the physique and figure of an actual man, and for some reason, that silhouette looked familiar to me, like I'd seen it somewhere, and its presence didn't make me feel uncomfortable as much.

Even though I was scared to death and feared for my life while sitting next to that silhouette and driving, I decided not to look at it at all and thought whatever it was, it would vanish or disappear itself in sometime, and if I paid attention to it, it might distract me or cause me some harm. I was not trying to act brave, but I just didn't have any other option because the road was literally empty and I was still far from my destination, so all I could do was just sit there and continue driving, and so I did. I panicked and started driving even faster, maybe because I was so scared, and by this time, I could

do anything to reach my home. My sleep had almost vanished due to the fear, and I was filled with thoughts of my death and with questions about what was going to happen to my loved ones once I died. I don't know why, but I felt my end was near.

Even though the silhouette was sitting next to me, it didn't move or cause any movement. It was just quiet. Although I didn't look at it even once and tried my best to ignore it, I still noticed after some time that the silhouette was pointing in different directions as if it were guiding me as to what turn I should take next. And I started moving my steering wheel towards the directions he was pointing.

I really don't know how. I tried to not look at it and not move my steering wheel towards those directions it was pointing to, but some force just moved my hands towards those turns, and I was unwillingly and helplessly following its directions and moving where he was taking me. It's not that I didn't try to move the steering wheel opposite to the directions it was pointing, but I just couldn't.

My hands were almost moving themselves, like somebody else was controlling them. I had made up my mind to die that night, and I started remembering all my loved ones and family members one by one as tears

started flowing from my eyes. This continued for a whole one and a half hours when I noticed that I had actually reached my city. I was basically on the outskirts of my city, but I could at least see some shops open with people sitting there and a few trucks passing by.

I felt as if everything came back to normal, and I came back to life. Once I came back to reality, I gathered the courage to look to see if that silhouette was sitting on the seat next to me, but it had disappeared. I don't know when and how, but it had gone and wasn't there or near me anymore. I can't really explain in words what relief I felt; it was almost as if someone gave me another chance to live.

I reached my home in about 30 minutes since I had already entered my city. I came back home and didn't change any clothes or put anything aside or in place. I directly hit my bed and fell asleep within a few seconds. I woke up with a "tring tring" sound on my doorbell and rushed to open it. It was Doodh Wale bhaiya (the milkman) who comes to deliver packets of milk every day to my house. I grabbed those packets and quickly rushed to check my phone, where I saw that it was discharged, literally dead with no battery at all. I rushed to charge it. I kept my phone for charging, and in the meantime, I started looking for my clothes to wear

that day in my cupboard when I heard my phone ringing. At first, I didn't pick it up since my phone was charging at that time, and I thought I could call whoever's on the other side a few minutes later when my phone at least would have little percentage of battery, but those calls didn't end. One after the other, my phone kept ringing with multiple rings in a span of like two minutes. I felt strange and ran to answer it. The call had hung up by then, but I could see 70 missed calls in total; most of them were from my friends, and a few were also from my best friend "Aman's" family members and his mother. Considering that his mother called me, I got concerned and called her first because I knew I could talk to my friends later too, but aunty's call got me more concerned. I called her back.

"Hello, sorry aunty, my phone got discharged last night. I just saw your missed calls. I hope everything's alright!" I said, and after a few seconds of silence, I heard her sobbing from the other side. "Aunty, what's wrong? Are you alright? Hello?" I asked her.

"Beta Aman got missing last night; we thought he was with you, or maybe you knew where he was; that's why we were calling you," she said while sobbing. "So where is he now, Aunty? Did you guys find him? Where did he go missing?" I asked her in a panic

stricken tone.

"Beta, he got into an accident and is no more with us," she said. That line, that sentence, broke me and shattered me to the core. My phone fell from my hands. I quickly grabbed my car's keys and started running towards my parking lot downstairs. I reached there, opened my car, and just as I sat there to drive towards my best friend's house, my eyes caught something kept on the seat next to mine; it was a piece of paper with something written on it. I remember it wasn't there until last night. I grabbed that paper, and as I opened it, I noticed it was written in my best friend Aman's handwriting. The letter reads: Dear Friend, I hope by now you know that I'm no longer in this world. I had an accident last night while driving back home at 11 p.m.

I know this news will leave you and my parents in a state of shock, than anyone else. I knew I could never come back, but at least I could've prevented you from dying last night. Last night, you were driving on the wrong road in the wrong direction, which would've taken your car into a deep, vast chasm, and you'd be dead too, on the spot, just like me. I could see you coming close to death, and I had to save you. I was dead already, but if I could've saved you, then even if I go, I'll

at least go happily, saving you. And so I had to do this. I'm sorry if I have ever done anything wrong to you. I'll forever cherish you and your friendship. And I will always come to save you whenever you're in trouble. I'll always be your well-wisher. Just take care of my family and meet them sometimes. I'll miss you!

As I read the last line, tears started rolling down my face, and I cried my heart out, keeping that paper close to my heart. I wept my heart out. My friend died, but he saved my life, and I'll forever be indebted to him. That was it. My mama still misses his friend a lot. There have been a few more instances when he felt his friend's presence, but it was also a positive, harmless one. I think he still comes to visit my mama, and will always stand by him and protect him like an angel and well-wisher. I hope you liked the story. Good day!

Vidhi Rana
10-C

"Books are the treasured wealth of the world and the fit inheritance of generations and nations."

– Henry David Thoreau

Pure Feelings

A bundle of fur jumped carelessly in joy, rolling itself into the green patches of the garden. The girl called him 'crazy', it was a cute little pomeranian dog. She said, but he didn't care of anything and was living free without any care. The moment he realized his meal, he came with a joy to the kitchen, running and barking playfully in the room. They both were immensely in love with each other.



They were meant for each other. But as we know the real truth that nobody stays forever and that there's an end to everything. One fine day 'crazy' was not in a mood to play, neither to eat his favorite meal. She found something unusual in his behavior. She shared everything with him, tried her best to light-up his mood. But after few days, she found that Crazy kept on sleeping till mid noon and she knew that it was an end now. She thought of each and every little moment spent with him and remembered those days.

A blur picture of crazy's cute tail, sparkling eyes, naughtiness, cuteness, his habits and many more things came into her eyes. She loved him a lot. Knowing the truth, she remained strong and gave all her love to him till the end, petting him gently . She carried him in her arms and hugged him warmly as he breathed his last breath.

Diya Dasauni

12-A

*" Books are mirrors: you only see in them what you already
have inside you."*

– Carlos Ruiz Zafon

In A Small Town

In a small town, lived a boy known by the name Tuzu, a 17 year old human boy, with a tall and sturdy built, shining black hair, a sharp round face, wide shoulders and a straight strong back. He lived with his parents in a house at the top of a hill.

The town was known by the name Livicity. It was a beautiful place, a hilly region with a good amount of development towards the side of valley around the lower grounds. Tuzu lived in a house; it was a pretty and a good-looking house having shining cream colored walls with a contrast of brown at different corners. Adorning the look of the whole place and the nature around it, this single storey house stood tall on the top of a hill. It wasn't too far from the city; it would take Tuzu fifteen to twenty minutes to reach the city's most busy area, the famous market of the city was just a walking distance from his house.

The house was surrounded with natural things like trees, fields and flowers completely covering the whole place. No one passing by was able to resist the desire to praise the beauty of the place and the only house which looked like the main center of attraction.

Tuzu's mother was a housewife and his father



had his own business of supplying imported goods to the city. Tuzu was a very intelligent person with a very nice personality. He liked his house and everything around it. The boy had a very sharp mind and he used to spend most of his time walking around the place from one hill to another trying to keep his brain engaged and explore new places, trees and animals. He liked to stay around animals and take care of all the animals and birds around him. From giving them food to taking them to the veterinary clinics, he took very good care of them. His school was in the city and it was his last year there. He used to wake up at five in the morning and start getting ready for school, and then he would leave at seven and return home in the afternoon, around one pm.

There were four mountain dogs which lived on the hill, Tuzu used to take pretty good care of them. He fed them food from his tiffin, and they used to obey to his commands very well. The dogs used to follow him to school and also wherever he went. They were big furry dogs. One with black shiny fur and yellow eyes sparkling like marbles, one with long brown hair, big ears and deep black eyes, and the other two were a pair having a beautiful white colored fur.

One fresh summer morning, Tuzu woke up early.

He was feeling quite lethargic as it was his summer holidays. After freshening up he went outside to the garden, sat on the corner bench and enjoyed the gentle sunlight filtering through the tree leaves. The day was too good to stay indoors, so he decided to take a walk. At the turning he came across the four dogs, who seeing him, ran up to him wagging their tails. They followed him in his walk back to his garden. As it was early morning, transparent sunlight was spreading throughout the hill, reflecting from the leaves of big green trees, falling on different flowers on his garden, a site worthy to look at.

After admiring the beauty of the place he lived in and giving all four dogs their food, Tuzu went inside the house and wore the new pair of leather boots he had got the day before from the market and went out for another one of his early morning walks. He went to the bottom of the hill, with all of his dogs still following him. The area was mountainous and had many small hills. He enjoyed the early morning fresh air and took a deep breath to fill his lungs with oxygen. After walking for some time he came across a hill, where he saw a butterfly. It had white translucent wings with a shiny black body which was reflecting sunlight in different colors. Tuzu was mesmerized by it. He had never seen

such a butterfly. Then, suddenly his eye fell on the hill. A sudden emotion of surprise and pleasure appeared on his face when he was staring at the beautiful scenery of the hill. It was the most beautiful hill he had ever seen in his whole life with trees and flowers of all species looking as if they belong to another world. He had never seen such a hill before. It was a heavenly site; he even got confused as to whether he was dreaming or imagining the whole place. The beautiful butterfly came and sat on his hand for a moment and then flew away.

Tuzu decided to climb to the top of the hill. However his dogs did not follow him uphill. He got a little nervous but seeing the mystical nature of the place he decided to keep going. The place was like an art piece. On his way uphill, he saw animals of all kind, elephants, lions, tigers and a waterfall at the top of the hill. This was something no human alive could ever imagine. Along with all species of animals venturing the ground, the river flowing downhill had not only hippos and crocodiles but also many colourful fishes in it. After reaching the waterfall he saw there was a way to even higher grounds of the hill so he kept moving forward. While he was on his way uphill, suddenly, he was stopped by a young man nearly twenty five years of age, strongly built and elegantly dressed who appeared in

front of him. Taken back with surprise, Tuzu flinched, but then he stopped and looked at the person who just appeared in front of him. He was a very attractive person even more than Tuzu himself. Tuzu was about to ask about him as to who he was, when suddenly the man spoke, he asked him to answer a question only then he may be permitted to ascend forward, but Tuzu took too long to calculate the possibilities of the situation and to answer of the question. After that he found himself standing at the bottom of the hill with all four of his dogs.

He felt a little headache, a strong feeling of forgetting something important or a lack of realization. The hill was no longer there, he checked his watch, only thirty minutes had passed since he left the house. A white butterfly flew from his hand, and image of the hill appeared inside his head, Tuzu felt confused and decided to return home with the dogs following him back to the house where he sat down under a banyan tree and thought about what had happened. He wondered whether the unique hill was just a supposition of his brain or was the hill actually real.

Lakshya Semwal
12-A

The Saviour

“I believe that you will make the family proud” said Alice Sotiras to her granddaughter, gazing at her affectionately. Extending a wizened hand she caressed her and added “You are destined for greatness Katherine. It is my privilege to sacrifice my life for such a great cause.”

Katherine Sotiras' eyes got brimmed with tears. She ought not to feel guilty but she couldn't help it. All because of a tradition which had been followed by generations of her mother's lineage since time immemorial and shall be followed sine-die. On the grand daughter's birthday, her grandmother would have to perform a ritual that would instigate the grand daughter's dormant magic but was fatal for the grandmother herself. The clan believed that magic could not be conjured up from nowhere. It was preserved in the lineage and had to be passed on from every generation to its third. The ritual generally occurred when the girl entered adolescence. It was fabled that if the ritual was not performed, the magic of the girl would remain dormant and unruly.

The origin of the Sotiras could be traced back to an ancestor who was a descendent of Hecate – the



Greek Goddess of magic –and was born at the oracle at Delphi under the aegis of Apollo – the Greek God of music, poetry, medicine, prophecy and whatnot. The family had the benediction of two Olympians, which was a matter of great pride. There was no way of nullifying these as mere fibs. Katherine herself was a live evidence of the legacy – an embodiment of the fusion of magic and prophecy. She was even more special that her forbearers because of a prophecy issued a fortnight before her birth.

“Born to the saviors in a fortnight
She will be a linch pin
A damsel who must unite
The estranged kith and kin
Will be the one to revoke the might
With time worn thin”

Prophecies were issued every time a child was to be born in the family, predicting the nature of the child and her virtues. Never had a son been born as far as Katherine knew and those who married the women of the family died early. The whole town was divided in their opinions about the family. Sotiras in greek means savior and the family was always hospitable to those who came seeking help. Alice often organized sermons and homilies and was a venerable figure among town

ladies. Some had deep faith in the family while others always found fault with their idiosyncrasy.

When Katherine entered the school, every single eye was staring at her as if she was something alien or bizarre. She held back the urge to shout at everybody to mind their own businesses, but she knew it would just earn her some mean glares. Moreover, she had expected worse. She knew that rumors about the family spread like wildfire and now when such an important occasion was around the corner, the imaginations of gossipmongers ran wild. They made ludicrous claims.

She quietly took the corridor to her classroom and turned a deaf ear to the snickering girls following her. On her way, she received a variety of glances from the classrooms she passed by. After being in the school for so long, students had lost interest in her but the nearing event brought Kathrine in focus again.

Moments after she settled in her seat, Ms. Lester entered the class and everybody greeted her. She started teaching while everybody took notes. Katherine did not feel like participating in class that day. Ms. Lester was a keen observer. She was perfectly aware of Katherine's indifference. However, she waited till the lesson ended, she asked Katherine to follow her and once outside, she said to Katherine "I noticed your lackadaisical attitude

in class today. I didn't want to lambast you in class because I am perfectly aware of the reason behind it. But Katherine, you must keep in mind that I am always there if you need help. Okay?" Katherine looked at her teacher and nodded, Ms. Lester was the first person besides her family who had consoled her. She went back in class and tried to focus in the rest of lessons. After the dispersal bell rang, she headed straight for home as she had no acquaintances in school whatsoever. She went to her grandmother who was gardening. She sure had a green thumb. Katherine left no stone unturned in trying to convince her to back off but Alice was unperturbed. After listening to Katherine for a while, she said with finality, "You cannot alter the writ of God. You must endure the grief for it is ephemeral. Tomorrow is your big day. Brace yourself to bear the mantle of the magic which you I will pass on to you tomorrow. I am tired of carrying it."

Katherine ran to her room and tried to hold back the mixture of emotions surging through her. She resisted tears. She would do exactly as she was told. She would sustain the magic if she was destined to. But that was not the only reason she was trying to control her emotions. Now that the occasion was around the corner, her powers were starting to get agitated, lately

she had observed some uncanny incidents around her whenever she had outbursts. She was addled, so she tried to get some rest.

She was in no hurry to wake up the next morning as she didn't have to go to school anyways. When her mother called her she made the bed and tried to compose herself. When she entered the hall, she witnessed what she had dreaded. They were preparing for the rituals. "We are almost finished. Try not to feel guilty, Katherine, though it is inevitable." At this Katherine looked at her mother, it suddenly struck her that her mother had faced the same situation she was facing, her grandmother too. She had been far too selfish to think from her grandmother's perspective. The agony she was in, to pass on the guilt to her granddaughter. Neither had she cared about her mother's helplessness. Now that she realised, she uttered a single word "Sorry" she said. The understanding in their eyes soothed her.

Alice and Katherine stood facing each other, it was time for Katherine to finally bid adieu. Alice made eye contact with her and started chanting. Katherine could feel the power of the incantation. Still she was at ease. This was her world after all. She was all about magic. Though the language was alien to her, the

incantation made perfect sense. It depicted change, progress, renewal and heritage. Her grandmother had unleashed her magic. She was surrounded by a brilliant aura. Katherine knew the next words immediately. They came to her as naturally as breathing. She spoke of acceptance, goodwill and gratefulness. Just as she came to a stop, she started feeling rejuvenated, the energy from the hall entered her and started coursing through her veins. She could only hear her heart pounding and struggled to stay conscious. At last she drifted into oblivion. She wanted to rest a little.

When Katherine came around, she was still lying on the floor she had fallen. The reality came crashing down upon her. It was no nightmare. It was reality and she had to confront it. The conclusion of her grandmother's life was the commence of her magical peregrination.

Ansuman Panwar

10-E

"The reader lives a thousand lives before he dies . . . The man who never reads lives only one."

-George R.R. Martin

A Chance to Live

A young girl in a long overcoat ran down the dark alley. Caring little for her already drenched trousers' hems, she ran on the muddy road down to an old, shaggy building at the end of the alley.

The black paint on the windows showed little of the interior of the house. As she entered, she found her brother doing the dishes.

"The tickets are finally here!" she exclaimed.

"Really?" The boy was younger than his sister and aged nearly mid-teen.

Eleanor ripped open the envelope to reveal the two tickets to the neighbouring country of Aldpond.

"Here, take a look," she handed him the tickets.

"Do you think we have a chance to live?" The boy, Asher, asked quietly.

"It seems like we do" said Eleanor with a gentle smile.

The two siblings lived in the war-torn nation of Cronad. Earlier, the war was only at the borders, but over the years, eventually, it engulfed the whole nation, and now the civilian areas are under attack. The decade-long war had come to an end many times, but it was never consistent. A huge exodus of people had



occurred on several occasions, and now people were simply too tired to stay in the country anymore.

Eleanor was ten and her brother, a toddler when the dispute began. The two lost their parents as war casualties and were orphans now.

The young girl had promised her mother that she would keep her brother safe and show him what life could be. However, at those hard times, she wasn't sure if she could keep her words.

When the day the train was leaving arrived, a huge thunderstorm acquired the area. Everything was cancelled. This left the siblings shook.

The following day, it was announced that the train had been rescheduled to leave in a week.

The people weren't sure they'd live that long. The enemy troopers were getting closer every day. People were scared and full of fear. In that terrible time, Eleanor remembered what she had promised her mother. She decided that if she couldn't give her brother a good life, she'd at least show him what it could be like.

The sixth evening, she bought an old radio with her savings. When she reached home, the first thing she did was turn on the radio.

Asher was naturally surprised by this action.

"What is that?...Oh, you did not spend your savings on this." Eleanor had taken his hands. "What are you doing?"

"Let's dance," she said cheerfully, and led him. Her brother had never danced before, so she knew he needed this. Asher was resistant at first but eventually gave in to the music. As his body reacted to the rhythm, he noticed the sensations that spread throughout his body. He was feeling warm, safe, and without worry. At that moment, it was just him and his sister dancing to the cracked voice of the radio, their souls mingling and spirits high. What a discovery it was for him—happiness!

When the evening ended and the morning came, he was still thinking of the sentiment. And half a century later, when his sister was dying, he saw Eleanor breathe the same sound as her last breath.

Khushi Bhardwaj

10-E

"Reading is essential for those who seek to rise above the ordinary."

- Jim Rohn

Curse of the Scepter

“The clouds may change, but hope remains eternal.”

Amidst the misty echoes of ancient times, in a domain that soared in the ethereal skies, there existed a kingdom that was governed by a queen who was both powerful and driven by an insatiable desire for authority. Her rule was one that was both revered and feared by her subjects, as she relentlessly pursued her ambitions without reservation.

One day, a young and charismatic rebel leader emerged, rallying the people against the queen and her tyrannical rule. He promised them freedom and equality, and they flocked to his cause. He possessed the unique ability of shape shifting, the capacity to alter his physical form and assume the guise of any creature. He employed this power as a means of infiltrating the palace of the queen and obtaining information regarding her nefarious plans and designs.

The queen, determined to maintain her power, sent her army to crush the rebellion, but the rebels were fierce and determined. They fought back with everything they had, and soon the war between the two sides had escalated to a brutal and bloody battle. The queen was using a powerful and mysterious magic



system that was unknown to the rebels, this magic system could manipulate the clouds and control the weather.

As the conflict persisted, it became evident that the military forces of the queen were inadequate to withstand the rebellion. The queen, in a state of despair and resolute determination, resorted to a maleficent artefact as a means of gaining an upper hand. The artefact was a mystic sceptre, possessing the capability to manipulate the minds of those who wielded it, and the queen had procured it through a pact with a formidable and enigmatic being. With the sceptre's power at her disposal, the queen's army was able to subdue the rebellion and put an end to the insurrection. The queen emerged victorious, however, at a dire cost. The maleficent artefact claimed her soul, and she was consumed by darkness and malevolence. The kingdom was enshrouded in a state of despondency and despair, under the tyrannical and merciless rule of a sovereign who had become inhumane. The people were plagued by a sense of apprehension, as the absence of any resilient opposition left them vulnerable to the tyrannical rule of their vicious leader. It appeared as though the forces of evil had triumphed, and the kingdom was destined to endure an endless era of

oppression under her tyrannical reign.

Despite the initial defeat of the rebellion, a faction of the rebellion led by the shape-shifter managed to evade capture and covertly persisted in their resistance against the queen's rule. They formed a secret organization and diligently accumulated allies and resources for a final, decisive assault against the queen. One of the members of the society was a young woman, who was also a powerful wizard. She discovered a way to break the curse on the sceptre and a way to banish the mysterious entity back to its own realm. The group knew that this was their chance to overthrow the queen and restore the kingdom to its former glory.

The final battle took place in the heart of the capital city. The society's army fought against the queen's army and the entity, who had taken the form of a giant monster. The young wizard used her magic to weaken the entity and banish it back to its own realm.

Upon being released from the control of the cursed artefact, the former queen was struck with remorse for her actions. She acknowledged the gravity of her wrongdoings and pleaded for forgiveness.

The rebellion emerged victorious, and the kingdom was saved, leading to the former queen's

abdication of the throne. The leader of the rebellion was subsequently crowned as the new ruler and pledged to bring peace and prosperity to the kingdom, eliciting celebration from the people.

The young wizard, who had been instrumental in overthrowing the former tyrant queen and restoring hope to the kingdom, was widely acclaimed as a hero. In recognition of her contributions, she was offered a position as the new ruler's advisor. Together, they embarked on a concerted effort to rebuild the kingdom and restore the people's trust. The new ruler pledged to put an end to the use of dark magic and cursed artefacts, and to establish a transparent and egalitarian system of governance. As a result of these efforts, the kingdom thrived like never before. The kingdom was successfully salvaged from the clutches of evil through the valiant efforts and resolute determination of the rebels. The new leaders of the kingdom were committed to preserving the unique cultural heritage and way of life of the people living in the clouds. They ushered in a new era characterized by aspirations of hope and fairness, rather than oppressive fear and tyranny.

Twesha Sharma
10-E

Danny: A Real Hero

This is a story of a person named Danny. He was the best pistol shooter of his country. He had won all the national championship held in his country. Everyone was almost confirmed that Danny will only win the gold medal in Olympics. Danny had done his training for years. He had only one dream and goal in his mind and that was to make his hand the world's best shooting hand.

During a training session, his right hand was badly injured when a faulty grenade exploded. This was the hand from he had to win the coveted gold medal. His focus and his dreams all were shattered. Now he had only two choices. First was to keep on crying and regretting for rest of his life and to hide somewhere or the second choice was to start focusing on his goal again and not on difficulties by forgetting the past.

He didn't focus on the thing which had gone. He focused on the thing which he had and that was his left hand. The left hand from which he couldn't even write. After the treatment for three months in a hospital he started his training, after one year of training, he came back.

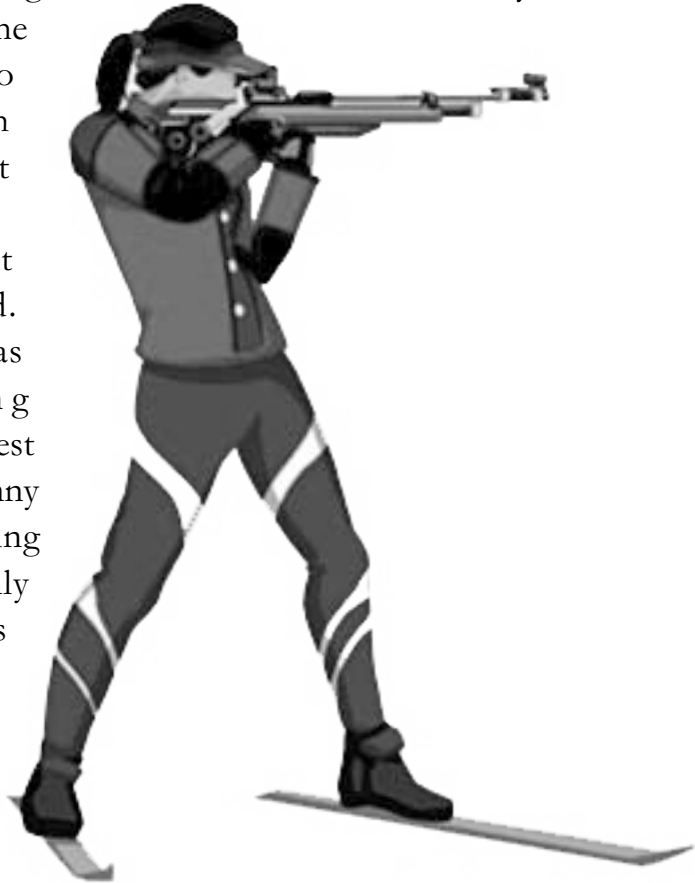
National championship was being held and there



were many other pistol shooters. They came and congratulated Danny for his sportsman spirit and said, “After suffering from all the grief you have come here to see us and to encourage us.” No one knew that he was doing his rigorous training with his left hand for past one year. In reply Danny said “I have not come here to encourage you

all, I have come here to compete with you all. Get Ready!”

Competition started. Everyone was competing from their best hand but Danny was competing from his only hand left, his left hand. At last man with the only one



hand, Danny won the competition. But he didn't stop here. His goal was clear. He had to make his hand not only this country's best shooting hand but the world's best shooting hand. He started his training for Olympics. But the Olympics got cancelled because of War. Now he started his training for next Olympics but that Olympics was also cancelled because of War. Now he started focusing on the next Olympics. It was difficult to compete with younger players but there was no word called "Difficult" in his dictionary. He went there. From all over the world best shooters had come. Surprisingly, the man with the only hand, Danny won the gold medal in Olympics. After this achievement also he competed again in the next Olympics. This time also Danny won the gold medal in the Olympics.

By not losing hope he changed the whole history of the Olympics. Before Danny, no athlete had ever won two gold medals continuously in this particular competition.

MORAL:- Focus on the goal and not on the difficulties which come on the way. Anything is possible if you have the dedication and determination to work.

Rangoli Singh
12-D

Last Man Standing

It was just another typical morning for John. He woke up, showered, and got dressed for work. But as he stepped outside, he noticed that something was different. There were no sounds of cars honking, no people walking their dogs, and no one waiting for the bus. He looked around and realized that he was the only one in his colony.



At first, John thought it was some kind of holiday and everybody was just too tired. But as the day went on, he searched for any signs of life, but there were none. He went to a nearby convenience store and found food and supplies, but there was no one there to help him.

Days turned into weeks, and John struggled to survive on his own. He spent his days searching for any signs of life, but there were none. He began to feel like he was losing his mind and wondered if he was the last person on Earth. He started becoming depressed and was even thinking of committing suicide.

But one day, John stumbled upon a radio signal. It was weak, but he could hear a voice on the other end. He contacted the person and found out that there were others like him, scattered around the world.

John realized that he was not alone after all. He had found a community of survivors, and together they were able to establish a society. Although, they never got to know what had caused the sudden disappearance of the rest of humanity, but atleast they were grateful to have found each other.

Chaitanya Gupta
10-E

Nothing Is Impossible

There was a girl named Anny, who lived with her mother and a younger brother in a small village of Uttarakhand near Dehradun, her father was an explorer and a successful business man, he lived far away from his wife and children in a metropolitan city as he didn't really care for them, he thinks that his wife and children are just farm labours and can never be successful in life. He visited them thrice a year just for formality.

They lived in a beautiful cozy cottage surrounded by a farm with some cows and hens which her mother used to rear and earn some money. She was a strong, independent and a bold lady. Anny's mother was her only parent who used to take care for her and her brother. Anny loved her mother and also cared for her, sometimes helped her in farm work as well. Anny loved her father as well, she called him every alternate day but he was hardly interested in talking to her. As her father was an explorer it was his dream to go for a world tour. When he had great profits in his business, he just planned vacations and without thinking about his family.

Her mother had never complained about her father. As year passed by, Anny passed her school and



with her hard work she cracked NEET examination and got a seat in government college of Nainital for the degree of BDS. After 4 years of graduation she got her degree, she got a job in a private hospital and near to the hospital she got a room on rent, there she lived with her mother and her brother.

After some years of working, when she got experienced in her field, she opened her own clinic and became successful. She proved her father wrong and made her mother proud. She understood that nothing is impossible if one is determined.

Chehhhal Goyal
10-E



Spellbound By The Spellbook

I was seven when I first got bit by the bug of Witchcraft. It remained a topic of wonder for the next few years but slowly and steadily my curiosity and an innocent desire to be a witch was turning into something of a fatal obsession.

I wanted magic so desperately that I hated everything ordinary. I felt too special to be in such a world where there were no miracles, and no child learned the mystical powers.

Everyone, it felt like, had some duty reminding me that fiction is not fact and magic is not real. I did always answer with the nod of a wise witch but still consciously or subconsciously wanted to be one. Not for my own but for the greater cause. Or so I thought.

A few months ago, I discovered that miracles were real. I was strolling through our farms in the village when I saw them. Three books deserted on the branches of a tree over a canal. It would have been the last place where I'd keep books, but it wasn't I who kept them, was it? Were they thrown off somewhere? If so, how did all three of them manage to end up together, and not one of them fell in the water?

I was perplexed, yes, but being a book lover and curious to the point of naïve, I could not leave the



books to get damaged, could I? I carried them home. Upon a closer look, I realized that one was battered and tattered, one shiny and new, and one, just felt ancient and powerful, like an aura radiating. Neither did it feel good, nor did it feel bad, just very powerful.

Before going to bed I planned on flipping through the pages of the ancient one, but I couldn't sleep. Why? I kept flipping all night. Why? Because the book just won't end, it was endless. Every time I thought, "It's got to be the last page," another appeared just like **BOO!** The pages were filled with all sorts of bizarre things I was only too interested in. Realizing soon that they were spells, like magic spells, and me being me and an INTP, I was in a haze of pure delight. I thought it was a dream come true, little did I know of the coming nightmares.

I was obsessed, I was mad. I started using the Spell book. It started with little spells, and then came the bigger ones. From cleaning spells to spells that erase memory, all for my convenience, and later moving on to even controlling those around me.

As I learned more magic, I started changing, not just my personality but my physique too. Lost a bunch of weight, and looked a little better than a mere frame of bones, my skin was losing color, turning yellow and flaky, super flaky. My dark circles turned darker than

ever and stood out like black holes on my face. My once shiny, bouncy, and healthy hair lost its charm. I was not able to eat anything, even if I tried to, my body would simply reject it. I stopped feeling any kind of feeling.

But I wanted to be better, wanted to be pretty. I searched for spells for hours on end. The Spell book was now an addiction, I could not get through my days without it. It always seemed to know what I wanted; I opened the Spell book, flipped through a few pages, and found the spell I needed. This time, however, was an exception.

After months of searching, I finally found it, not a spell, but witchcraft. It was blood magic, amazingly powerful but terrifyingly destructive if misfired. If I were me, I would never do it, but I wasn't me, was I? I was spellbound by the Spell book. I did it. I did it and lost everything. It misfired and took away all I had. It took my family. They weren't dead, no, they were non-existent.

The grief broke my trance. I never turned pretty like I was supposed to. But now I missed no chance of hurting myself. I realized what the other two books were. The damaged one was about people who got ruined because of magic and the new one was about those who reached the sky. All three together to warn those who picked them, showing that there were two

sides to the story. I stopped practicing magic but did it for the one last time. I traded with the higher powers. I sold my Spell book, my magic, my imagination, my health, and my happiness for my family. I loved them so much.

Now, I lie in the painfully white, bright, and cheery ward of the asylum. How did I get here? Well, when my family came back, they saw me in a pathetic condition, and I told the truth but who would believe me? These people, the staff here, took me away on my birthday. I tried so hard, I tried very hard to convince them that I'm not mentally ill, but no one paid any heed. Everybody thinks that I love stories and have an imagination too vivid, but how can I? I sold it, remember? I am just a fourteen-year-old broken so completely that everything is fading away from her mind. I'm here just writing my story to anyone who might believe it. You might even find my story in the battered and tattered book too but never pick up three books that even slightly match the description and lie at a very odd place. Why? They'll ruin you. They'll ruin everything. Trust me for I learned the hard way.

Shambhavi Singh
10-E

A Silent Voice

I feel a sense of warmth, empathy, and compassion that fills my heart, but the reality is that I am left feeling isolated and alone. These emotions swirl around inside my fragile heart, innocent and pure. I longed to be like everyone else, to live a simple life and experience happiness. However, I was shunned, rejected, and ostracized, forced to carry the burden of disappointment on my shoulders, straining my mind and leaving me with a hollow soul. I felt empty and alone in this bustling world, and I had given up hope. But just when I thought it was all over, I heard a 'Silent Voice.'

It was a typical morning, and I awoke feeling tangled up in my blanket, sweat pouring down my face. I lived alone in a small apartment without my parents, who had never accepted me for who I was. Since birth, I had been deaf, unable to hear the sweet songs of the morning birds that I longed to hear. As I made my way to school, I could feel the eyes of others boring into me, their sneers and snickers haunting me every step of the way.

I entered my classroom, and the silence was palpable. Students deliberately avoided sitting near me,



distancing them from the "freak." I sat alone at the back of the room, feeling isolated but safe. Hours passed, and the school day ended, and as the other students left the class, I slowly gathered my belongings and made my way out of the building. Suddenly, I felt a cold gust of wind on my neck, and I thought it was the other kids picking on me again. But when I turned around, I saw Liam standing there with a big smile on his face, the most beautiful smile I had ever seen. He was waving excitedly, trying to get my attention, and when he rushed over, he put his arm around my shoulder.

As the sun shone through the windows, I saw Liam's messy, overgrown hair and his bright blue eyes. He was taller and more energetic than me, and he didn't say anything at first. Instead, he put his hands over my eyes and then suddenly removed them, revealing a present: a notepad. I was confused at first, but then he bit the cap off a pen and wrote on the notepad, "Yes! I got this. I know you have difficulty hearing, so we are going to talk about this, ok?" I felt my face flush, and tears sprang to my eyes, which I quickly wiped away. I wrote back, "Thank you. It means a lot." We then walked outside the school and communicated in a way that I had never experienced before.

The next day, Liam was waiting for me outside

my apartment, and he handed me a heavy pile of books and a letter that read, "You are lacking in class. Here are the notes. You've got to pull up your socks, Ava." I wasn't thrilled about the gift, but I was grateful for his thoughtfulness but i really did not like the idea of doing a pile of school work. In class, he sat next to me, and I was overwhelmed by the fact that someone wanted to be my friend. Before the class ended, he gave me another piece of paper, inviting me to go to the mall because he had heard that my apartment wasn't in the best shape. I found it a little creepy that people were talking about me, but I went along with it.

After school we went shopping, buying posters, books, and even some plushies. In the distance, I could see Liam cringing at all those girly stuff but he was fine with it. Till evening we ended up setting up my room and I was exhausted. Panting I sat on the floor and saw Liam go outside. While I wondered why he went out, he came in with a big cake in my room! And on top, there was a number 15 candle! He knew my birthday was today! And while he kept the cake down I looked at the calendar and had the biggest disappointing face, and not just for Liam but for me too. My birthday is in three days! Well, I can't blame him because I also forgot what date it was today. We had a very awkward stare and then

started bursting out laughing, and yes we did eat the cake. When Liam left and I found myself in my room alone, I realized that even though I am deaf and different from others, it's not words that make people understand each other, it's the respect and kindness you have for that other person. After 14 years of my life, I could finally hear the 'Silent Voice'.

Bhavik Singh Rautela
10-E



The Spirit Of The Mythical Forest

It was like a dream come true for Maya. The opportunity of going hiking on a school trip with her class for three whole days was something that sounded as intriguing as it was cool. She had made up her mind to avail herself of this as soon as she heard about it. But, she knew it was going to be difficult for her to persuade her parents about this.

Maya was a brilliant, sweet and elegant girl, with a robust personality. She was thirteen years old and as unruly and obstinate as any other adolescent would be. Naturally, she was allured by the adventurous possibilities of this trip. And this opportunity caught not only her but also the attention of all the other students in her class. Just after the announcement was made, friend groups began discussing their plans for the trip. Everyone was super excited. In the spur of the moment, Maya too committed to joining the trip.

However, when later she mused on it, reality hit her hard. She knew that there was a fat chance of her parents letting her participate in the trip. She tried to concoct something to convince her parents but she knew that won't work so, she dropped the idea.

After reaching home, she knew that she had to



strike while the iron was hot. As soon as she found her father in a pleasant mood, she went to him and gave him a nice shoulder massage. Her father knew her very well. He saw right through her tricks, he told Maya to stop beating around the bush and call spade a spade. Maya uttered everything about the trip and to her pleasant surprise, it was a success. She knew that her father would somehow convince her mother, so, she light-heartedly went to her bedroom and sprawled down on her bed. Soon she was dead to the world.

The trip was to commence the next day. There was a great sense of excitement in Maya when she woke up. She had never stayed away from home even for a day. And on top of that, it was her maiden school trip. Her mother quickly packed her belongings in a travel bag and dropped her at her school.

Maya, all her classmates and teachers, got on the bus and they embarked on their journey to a majestic forest famous for its mythical tales. On the way, they enjoyed themselves fully. They played all sorts of games and sang all sorts of songs. The time flew by.

Hardly had the bus entered the forest when it halted abruptly. The teachers were soon well acquainted with the reason that they were face to face with a lion. Everyone was turned to stone. However, Maya, who

had been fast asleep, woke up and noticed everyone's fright, looked out of the window beside her. She was aghast at the sight of the lion, who was staring right back at her. It turned even more bizarre when the lion bowed down to her, turned back and disappeared into the forest. Nobody else saw this happen, so there was no fuss about it. Maya too didn't pay much heed to it.

After reaching the desired location, the students were assigned to set up their tents in groups. Maya and her friends were the first ones to complete their assignment, so they got ample time to explore the forest. Maya did not realise it at first, but this place seemed familiar to her. After exploring a little, she found out that she somehow knew every nook and corner of this place. But, dismissing it as a *deja vu*, she returned to the camp.

That night, everybody sat around the bonfire and narrated stories for recreation, with some delicious soup. When Maya's turn came, she had no clue what she was going to deliver. Her friends suggested she fabricate something. She thought for a while and then she uttered a mythical story about the spirit of the forest they were currently in. Everybody gave a standing ovation to her innovative imagination. As if suddenly, Maya snapped out of something. It was kind

of a reverie. It was like remembering something that she never had experienced. She realised that she had been narrating her reverie.

After the programme was over, everybody returned to their respective tents for the night. That night, Maya dreamed of a girl with the same face as hers and she even had a pair of wings, strangely enough, she was in the same forest. She said to Maya, "It was your destiny to be here. You were born for this. You will finally learn your real identity." Maya woke up suddenly. She broke into a cold sweat. She was starting to feel creeped out by all the queer incidents. However, she managed to fall asleep again.

The following morning was unusual. Maya used to wake up a lot much earlier, but no one was there to wake her up. She was much more relaxed and had pretty much forgotten about the last night. The teachers assembled the students and marched through the forest, introducing the various plant species, gazing at various majestic mountains and enjoying the cascades. After a short while, the children were given a short break to ramble about the forest but individually. Maya too wandered off alone.

While walking through the forest, she came across a banyan tree. It stood amid the forest. Majestic

and old, but still beautiful like anything. Then, she noticed a big truck-like vehicle, preceding the tree. A few men holding axes came out. They surrounded it and began to hack off the tree. Being the nature lover that she was, Maya quickly intervened and gave the loggers a piece of her mind. The loggers were somewhat embarrassed to hear this coming out of an adolescent, so they left without saying anything. Maya was then prepared to leave, when, she heard a harsh and rough voice saying, "Thank You!" Maya turned back to find no one, so she gladly dismissed it as a fragment of her imagination. Then again, she heard the same gruff voice say, "I am grateful to you." Maya was astounded. She realised that the tree could speak. She pinched herself, and it hurt. She wondered loudly, "How is this tree able to talk?" The tree as if listening to everything replied, "It's not only me. You can talk to all the trees and animals and streams in the forest. Anyway, I thought that my time was over but you finally returned." Maya was puzzled at all this. She reached out to the tree, and asked, very frankly, "Why am I able to do all this, and why do these queer things keep happening?". The tree said, "It's all for a purpose you see, to make you aware of your true identity". "And what is that?" Maya inquisitively asked as if she had started getting

interested in all this. To this, the tree replied, "You are the spirit of the forest reborn for a purpose. You gave up your position as everyone was happy and you wanted to rest in eternity. But, we are in danger. The humans have started intervening. They exploit us without any intention to replenish. The loggers come and cut the forests without any discrimination. It's your responsibility to save us, to preserve us." Maya was completely shaken. Had this been somewhere else, she would not doubt this being a stupid prank. But, with all



the bizarre things happening around her, this was neither a dream nor a prank. She returned to the camp for the day. The next day flew away, without any notice. Mostly because Maya was in her world pondering over what the tree had said. They returned home afterwards.

Maya meteorically narrated the whole incident to her parents and they did not, at all, seem aghast, like they knew everything. They told Maya that they had a slight idea of all of it. They were her parents after all, and she truly was an unusual child. Her parents also told her that if she was born to guard the forest, she will guard the forest. But, the times had changed, and the method too had to.

The ordeal of the forest's exploitation was told to a forest conservation organization, whose head was friends with Maya's father. Thereafter, the forest was taken special care of and all human activities of exploitation were restricted in the forest. Maya grew up to become a forest officer and protected the forest in every possible way as she was supposed to. And, she still speaks to the trees, animals and mountains, and she has befriended the Banyan tree.

Anjuman Panwar
10-E

The Teen Side

Once, there lived a boy named Jacob, who was at an age of grasping things differently than others. He was starting high school with a boost; he was not popular but surely had many of his closest friends. He was enjoying his life and was very happy, but inside him was a strange, awkward feeling of “failing”, “drowning”, an inability to cope with society's expectations, and the risk of getting rejected by society. On Monday morning, when he was headed towards school with his best friend Adam, Jacob didn't feel like going to school and wanted to bunk. Not because he was a bad student, but as if he was trying to escape from something big. Not because he was a spoiled kid, but he was afraid of losing that he didn't even try. It was the reason he stopped trying, and his life seemed to be drowning. In the end, they ended up in an arcade playing games and having fun, but they caught the eye of a person next to them. To Jacob's surprise, it was his dad's friend, and he knew what was coming and the cruelty he had to go through. Jacob's parents came to know about it all, and he got scolded by his parents very much. He was in his room with a strange feeling within him, feeling pathetic for himself. He had pity on himself because neither he was a good



student nor a good child. He was addicted to games and watching anime that he didn't take part in other activities. He was spoiled for sure. He was trying to escape his real life with the help of these distractions, which ended up spoiling him. It was a usual day of school, and Jacob was sitting at the last bench taking a nap. One of the teachers saw him and called him in front of the class. To Jacob's surprise, he was not scolded at all and was instead given a project to be done. Now, it became regular for that teacher to give him projects every day, but Jacob was kind of enjoying it, not much because of the project he did but the teacher. The teacher was very kind to him, and Jacob was comfortable sharing everything with her. The teacher always motivated him and made him feel special. He started working hard and became one of the most well-known personalities in the world. Who knew a teacher seeing him sleep in class would be a turning point in his life. The teacher saw "THE TEEN SIDE" of Jacob.....

Arunav Tiwari
10-E

Trapped in The Shadows of Past

“Losing a good friend is like your heart melting from its core, you can't do anything but cry and hope he will come back.” On a pleasant sunny morning, a boy was seen doing his daily chores and getting ready. Fully packed with morning enthusiasm the boy – Dev went out and entered someone's house. When he entered he politely asked something to a servant and walked off from there listening to her reply. As he entered a room he saw a girl sleeping peacefully on her bed. He sighed shaking his head and tried waking her up.

They were already running late on time and now this behavior of hers annoyed him. Maddened at his best friend's antics he picked the glass filled with water from the side table and tossed it over her, she instantly woke up with a jerk, seeming startled. She went crazy over Dev for getting her heart out on her hands.” It was necessary to wake you up, we are almost late for our first day at college” Dev reasoned himself screaming a bit. Hearing this girl ran quickly to get ready without speaking a word. Dev smiled to himself thinking about Aanya his beastie and fighting partner. Aanya soon rushed out from the bathroom door and dragged Dev along her to their taxi. Fortunately, they



reached on time. They witnessed a gathering at the entrance, and inquiring out of their curiosity they found out that a famous teen actor Ray was there. Aanya squealed and ran to meet him she was a big fan. Least interested in all these Dev directly went to his class.

A few minutes later Aanya with Ray entered the class, giggling and settled beside Dev. They had become friends in just a matter of seconds. As Dev and Ray's eyes caught each other they shared a fierce look and turned their faces to opposite sides. Unknown of this Aanya introduced them and this time they greeted each other with a smile. At their last lecture, the professor started the chapter about Dragons and Demons.

“What is the need to study about them, as they are just fictional characters,” one of the pupils asked the question of everyone's mind. The professor replied with a smile saying “They are not just fictional characters but some countries have mythological feelings related to them. People in places like Japan and Korea worship Dragons and Demons.” Dev and Ray exchanged looks. After the class, they also argued about who is better Dragon or Demons, and made Aanya the judge. She is a smart person who said that she thinks that both are equally virtuous. A few weeks flew by with Dev and Ray fighting as always and Aanya handling

them. They seemed as if they were ready to murder each other. Today the professor assigned them a group assignment with three students in a group. Luckily or unluckily Dev, Ray, and Aanya were assigned together, they decided to meet at Dev's house in the evening. Aanya unexpectedly had some work so she was not able to go so she informed Dev. When Ray came to Dev's house they both again fought and created chaos there. Agitated, Ray went from there but after a while fell on his knees and started crying bitterly.

The same was the situation with Dev he was also crying recollecting the past times. Both of them were past best friends although Dev was a dragon and Ray was a demon. Their communities were each other's sworn rivals but still, Ray once helped Dev and befriend him. But on a cloudy night with the help of Legion, he backstabbed him with a dagger filled with a dangerous poison. This incident added fuel to the fire increasing the hate.

Yes, they were friends despite the rivalry between their communities but now just loathed the other. The next day the three of them met and started working on the project when suddenly a cloud of smoke came and surrounded them. All of them fell unconscious and when they opened their eyes there were in a deserted

dark place. They looked around and found that they were caged and a person was standing in front of them smirking evilly. Dev didn't take a second to recognize him as he was his father's friend Legion and asked him what was he doing.

The person laughed and replied that he just wanted his father's position and that he was not his friend. Now, he also told Dev that he was the one who bluffed him saying that Ray was going to attack his father and he didn't want to be true friends with him. This truth broke Dev and he started saying sorry to Ray repeatedly. Ray could not see his friend like this and quickly hugged him. Aanya was standing there shocked. While Dev nervously asked Ray, "Can we be friends again?" to which Ray responded positively. Aanya saw that Legions was going to attack but before he could attack them Aanya attacked him with magic.

The other two were shocked to see Aanya having powers. But before they could ask her anything she again attacked Legions. He was severely injured so he thought to leave there. Aanya also made a magic portal and left with her friends. After reaching back Dev and Ray showered Aanya with questions. She told them that she had powers because her mother was a dragon and her father was a demon. Her friends quickly bowed

down in front of her as they knew that the dragon queen and the demon king were the only ones to marry a native of another community.

When they got up Aanya said,” We need to catch Legions before he causes any destruction and for that, we need the help of the king and queen.” I will call mom/dad said Ray and Dev at the same time. You are the son of the king and queen asked Aanya. Dev and Ray nodded their head. After a while king and queen came, at first they were shocked to see the other one there but understood after listening to their children. They told them that Legions can only be killed with the help of white pearls and silver swords but they were not having them.

White pearl was the symbol of the dragon kingdom and silver sword was the symbol of the demon king to find which they were here. Aanya went towards her wardrobe and brought them with a flower too and told that she found them a year ago. Aanya gave the flower the rare Ice Lily to Ray, the only cure to the poison, and cured him. All of them went to find Legions and found him in that deserted place near a big rock. As soon as Legions saw them he started attacking them and he captured all of them except Aanya. She also started attacking him trying to kill him with the

sword and pearl. After failing all her attempts she took a risky but important step by joining the sword and pearl together. A while later Legions was lying lifelessly on the ground while Aanya also fell unconscious as a negative result of her step.

The combined powers of the two took over her and started drowning her to death. Her friends sprinted towards her and saw her pulse rate as low as zero. Dev and Ray started crying for their friend and suddenly Aanya's pulse started increasing with her breathing. They proved the legend that when a dragon and demon shed tears together for a reason they can defeat death also. When Aanya gained consciousness they went back to their kingdoms and announced Aanya as the queen of both kingdoms. They made another place for their living and started living there together happily. Dev, Ray, and Aanya also spent their time together enjoying and teasing each other.

One day, Dev interrogated Ray as he was suspicious he was hiding something. His suspicion turned out to be true when Ray told him that the Ice lily didn't work for him properly, instead of curing him permanently it cured him temporarily and added a few years of life. This broke Dev's heart, his buddy was going to die because of him when he came to know he

just has a year more to live while Ray was smiling wholeheartedly. He was happy he got his friend back and could die peacefully now. A year went by quite fast with this kept as a secret and today when Aanya and Dev went to Ray's room they saw him lying lifeless. Everyone completed Ray's last rights with tears in their eyes and his friends crying.

They just not only lost their friend but also lost a part of their soul with him, but it was the first and last day they cried remembering him. Years rolled on with seasons coming and going but they couldn't forget their friend yet remembered him smiling as they didn't want their friend sad seeing their crying faces and continued living with his memories.

Vanisha Goyal
10-E

" Reading is important. If you know how to read, then the whole world opens up to you."

– Barack Obama

The Strange Coincidence

My History teacher is one of my batch's favourite and best teacher. He's always been very friendly, honest, funny, and like a friend—and so much more than just a teacher. He shares numerous stories with us about his life, past experiences, successes, and failures. But this one time, he shared with us a very strange and spooky story that stayed with us much longer even after the lecture was over, and I experienced something related to a creepy coincidence with this.

The story starts in 2018 or so, when my former History teacher narrates to us this incident that happened with him. He was out on a trip to a place with a cremation ground and a Kali mandir (temple) nearby. For those of you who don't know, a Kali mandir is dedicated to the goddess Kali. My teacher told us that he is a night owl and he often struggles to sleep on time at night, so he usually goes for a walk after dinner because he can't sleep, and he did the same during his trip as well.

The place where he was staying was a very huge resort, and it was mostly surrounded by dense jungle in a secluded area. The area was quiet and calm, but something about it always felt eerie to my teacher.



Anyways, that night, just like every other night, my teacher went for a walk within the resort itself, as it was huge and there were so many places to walk in and hang out. After walking for some time and appreciating the resort's architecture, our teacher sat down for a while on a bench kept there and silently started hearing the sounds of small insects.

He was enjoying his time when he noticed a strange, tall lady coming towards him from a distance. At first, my teacher thought that it could be some other guest staying there that night who is also having trouble sleeping, so they've come out to maybe get some fresh air or to go for a walk. As she came closer to my teacher, he noticed that the lady had worn a torn and very untidy dirty gown, had an expressionless look on her face, and was looking straight into my teacher's eyes. My teacher felt a bit weird, but still felt maybe she was coming to talk, say, or discuss something. As she came even closer and was at a distance where my teacher could clearly see her.

The teacher noticed that the lady had no feet and that her body was literally flying in the air. My teacher got frightened when he saw that, and in panic, he shielded his face with his hand, and after a few seconds, when he removed his hand, the woman had already

gone. And could be seen nowhere as my teacher looked around; he could see nobody there except a coin that, that lady had kept on my teacher's lap.

When my teacher took that coin in his hands, he noticed it and saw that it had an 1818 East India Company logo on one side and Lord Ram and Sita engraved on the other, which our teacher also showed us in class. Sir also told us that he tried asking about that lady in the morning from the room service guy and receptionist, and what they said made our teacher more terrified. " Sir, Why did you come out of your room in the night? We always warn our guests not to come out of their rooms late at night," said the receptionist. "But why? I just went for a walk," said my teacher. "Sir, our resort has the presence of a spirit of a lady ghost, and a lot of our guests have reported encounters with that spirit. Ever since then, we have advised our guests not to come out of their respective rooms after 10 p.m" said the receptionist.

The entire class was so scared after hearing this story, and we discussed it among ourselves for days, but after a few months, as we got engrossed in our studies, we almost forgot about this story until an incident of coincidence occurred with me that reminded me of this story again.

It was a Thursday morning, it was raining heavily, and I was waiting to get an auto to reach college on time. I didn't have an umbrella with me, so I went up to a girl standing nearby, who turned out to be a first-year media science student, and she gladly let me under her umbrella.

We waited for some time, but then that girl's bus came, and so she had to go as she was going elsewhere that morning, not the college and I immediately needed to get the auto or I'd miss class. I finally spotted a rickshaw wallah and asked him whether he'd take me to my college address. He said yes and I quickly got inside his auto as it was raining. The auto driver didn't speak a



word in the first four minutes of the ride and remained silent.

He finally spoke then and asked me, "Miss, do you mind looking at this coin? I wouldn't like to keep it," said the auto driver. I took the coin in my hand, and guess what? One side had Lord Ram and Sita engraved on it, and the other had the logo of the East India Company. It was made in 1818. Oh my God, that incident that my former history teacher narrated to us flashed back on me, and my immediate physical response was an increased heartbeat.

The rickshaw puller asked me if I'd like to keep the coin. Absolutely mind-boggled by the coincidence, I said in a voice that was 70% panic, "No, I wouldn't like to keep it, but where did you find it, bhaiya?" I asked him. "I found this coin on the footpath," answered the auto driver. I understand that the East India Company would have manufactured a lot of coins, and both of the coins—the one that my sir showed us and the one that the auto driver offered me—could be different, but the accuracy, similarity and coincidence scared me the most.

Vidhi Rana
10-C

When I Was A Dumbo

This story is a real one. It is based on one of the real incidents of my childhood.

It was a summer evening. At around 6:00p.m I went on the streets to play outdoor games with my friends. I was a small and innocent girl with short hair. I was in class second and was not highly aware of wrong and right. There on the streets, my friends included a tall clever girl named Priya and twin brothers.

On that day, we all planned to play the game 'Pithu'. Being stupid, we all choose to play that game with a tennis ball. while playing, suddenly the ball broke into the house of a lady and crumbled her window glass. That lady was a strict woman who was over-possessed regarding her things. We being scared, ran frightened towards her terrace. The lady when saw us, ran behind us. I felt very uncomfortable and felt not to hide from them as the lady could catch us any time.

Then finally my friends threatened me by giving me my mother's swear. But still confused, I did not support them and finally, the lady caught us and even scolded us.

While returning to our homes my friends blamed me for the scolding and even claimed that my mother



would die if I did not follow them. After that, I was praying to God for my mother's protection. I talked to my mom regarding the belief in Mother's Swear and she told me that it was just a fake belief and I trusted her. That day I was thankful to God for not letting her die.

Now being a smart girl, I often laugh at my stupidity that I was affected by that fake belief. I felt that I was a dumbo at that time.

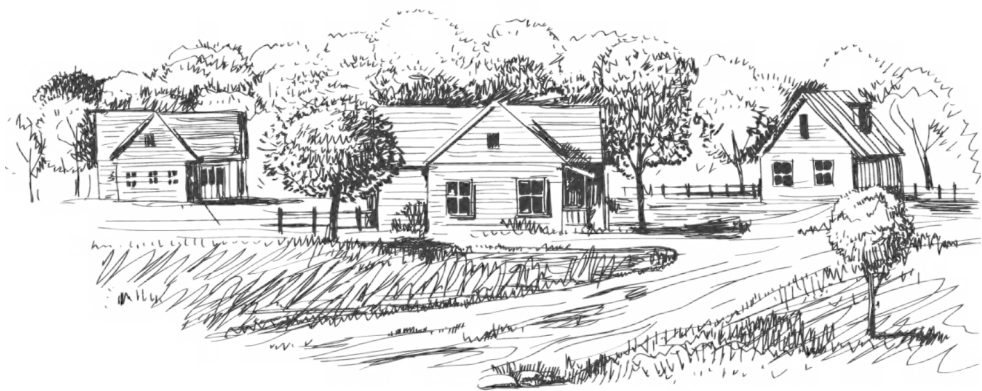
Anubha Rana
10-E



An Enlightening Incident

This incident occurred in those days when buses did not travel at night in the hill areas of Uttarakhand and there were no mobile phones. I was going to Karnaprayag from Rishikesh. The bus first had a flat tyre near Kirtinagar and finally its engine broke down after we had passed Rudraprayag at dusk. Night had fallen and there was no prospect of the bus being repaired then. The conductor requested us to spend the night at the village just above the road.

We were very few passengers, so all of us climbed the hill to reach the village. As the village was not electrified, we could see some homes with lanterns. When we explained our plight to the villagers, they



became very hospitable and provided some food and a welcome cup of tea. Further, they even arranged for us to spend the night, with the passengers being spread out among the various families inhabiting the village. The unique feature about that village was their strong belief in their village deity and its protecting powers so much so that none of the houses there had doors. No one ever indulged in any thievery. No wild animal ever sneaked into their cowsheds. Their simplicity won our heart. Most people in the village were elderly and aged. On asking about it we were told that since there are not enough opportunities or means to earn livelihood hence the youth had preferred to migrate to plains to carve a better life of comfort for themselves.

The next morning, after the villagers had provided us tea and snacks, we went down to the road. Soon the first morning bus from Rudraprayag arrived and we continued our journey after an amazing and enriching experience.

Yuvika Goyal
12-A

"Books are a uniquely portable magic."

-Stephen King

Babatoto And the Master-Spirit

Neemu, a ten-year-old girl, sat sulking in the back seat of her parents' car. The family was on its way to a new home in a new town and Neemu didn't want to move to a new town, leaving behind her childhood friends and to study in a new school. On the way the family decided to take a break and halted near a roadside inn. Little they know that they were in an abandoned town. They set out on foot to explore the town which seemed unusually quiet, devoid of human presence with only few birds of all type huddled on trees looking at them.

Neemu's parents unmindful of the eeriness around sat in an abandoned restaurant and started eating the picnic hamper they had brought with them. It had boiled egg sandwiches, grilled turkey breast, chicken sausages etc. They were really hungry because of travelling since morning. Neemu decided to wander away by herself. While she was exploring, a young boy appeared out of nowhere and warned her to leave before dark. She ran back to the stall, only to find that her parents were not there. Neemu was totally frightened and started to cry.

As night fell, the strange boy appeared again. He had brought some food for her to eat. He told Neemu



that his name was Ronny and he was an orphan; pointing towards the westside hills, he added that he had been raised by a kind old witch Babatoto , who lived atop the purple hill . When Neemu asked if he knew anything about her parents disappearance, the boy told her that he could take her to Babatoto, perhaps she could do something.

They started the tedious walk uphill to the purple hill on the way Ronny told Neemu that once he too had parents and like her parents his parents too had come to this run down restaurant and he never saw them again. He has been searching for them ever since. Helpless and homeless, he was taken pity on by a kind old witch who was passing by. Since then he has been coming here to warn passers-by to either leave or promise to change their cruel ways. He explained that whosoever comes to this town is either rewarded for their kindness towards animals or punished for their mistreatment of animals. When Neemu asked him what possible wrong had her parents done. The boy said that killing any innocent living creature for its meat, fur or any purpose was the most horrid of all sins and some adult people were all the time treating poor animals mercilessly. These inhuman acts had angered the master-spirit of the animal world.

The boy took Neemu to Babatoto, who initially refused to allow Neemu into her cottage, but consented when Neemu pleaded with folded hands. After making Neemu sign a contract for job, Babatoto agreed to help her to find her parents. The job was to cultivate flowers on the purple hill. Months passed, both Neemu and Ronny kept toiling hard in Babatoto's garden.

Spring arrived and the whole mountain bloomed with flowers of all kind and hues. The whole place was filled with the fragrance of flowers and abuzz with the presence of bees, birds, and butterflies. This made Babatoto very pleased. One day she collected a handful of roses and made a flowery gown for herself. When she wore the rose-gown a magic happened and she was transformed into a beautiful maiden. Both Ronny and Nemmu were surprised at the transformation. Smiling at them Babatoto explained that today she has become free of the curse. She told her story that once she was a cruel witch, she would change children into pigeons and people into hens and ate them for breakfast .She was punished by God's angel and was cursed to remain an ugly old witch till the purple hill does not fill up with flowers. Of course, she regretted her bad -witch ways and ever since has been at her good and helpful to all, especially small children.

Babatoto told Neemu that now it was the right time to go to the castle of the master-spirit of the animal world to free Lobo's and her parents from captivity. Early morning Babatoto readied a hamper of sweet eggless cakes, which she and the children had prepared the night before, jars full of honey which her garden bees had given to her and also put a beautiful bouquet of flowers in the hamper basket . Babatoto perched on the long stick of her flying broom and Neemu and Ronny too sat behind Babatoto. The broom flew high and up over the purple mountain beyond the blue river and landed on the green meadows where the castle of the master spirit was located.

Babatoto knocked on the huge door, which was opened by a huge furry grizzly bear, who was wearing a flowing silk cape and had a golden crown on his head. They all kneeled silently before the master-spirit of the animal world. Babatoto offered him the hamper of cake, flowers and honey that she had brought. His majesty was overjoyed, obviously happy to receive the gift from the good souls. On hearing the whole story of Neemu and Ronny, the grizzly king took pity on them and told that he will release the parents of both the children only on one condition that they promise never to cut any trees, nor torture or kill any innocent animal.

He then took them to a dungeon. Both Neemu and Ronny recognized their respective parents; they were sitting huddled in one corner. The children ran to embrace their parents and told them the whole story. The parents sobbed with joy at being reunited with their children and promised the master-spirit of the animal world that from now they will never harm anyone, nor destroy habitat of any animal and will always value the life of animals as they were also God's creation and had as much right to live on this beautiful earth, with their family, as humans do.

They took leave of the master-spirit of the animal world. Once out in the open free air; the families again thanked the beautiful Babatoto for all the goodness she had shown them. Babatoto bid them good-bye and getting on her flying broom flew into the horizon.

KINJAL

12-A

"Reading is to the mind what exercise is to the body."

-Richard Steele

Choose Your Own Destiny

Lattoo was a young man who was brought into the world in a poor family. He could never go to school owing to his family's poverty. When he became fifteen years old, he thought to take up some work to earn his livelihood but as he was unskilled and had no work training so he could not get any employment. He took to pick pocketing and thievery but unfortunately at one point he was caught in the act of stealing. Since he was a juvenile, he was sent to a reform home, where he was made to follow strict discipline, in the morning there would be study classes run by the jail authorities and daily exercises in the afternoons. He had no interest in either of them. The rasping tone and the harsh conduct of the inmates made him morose and insubordinate. It was distinctly during the short entertainment hour in the evenings, when they were allowed to watch TV in the hall, that he was by all accounts his typical self.

One day as he was watching a comic movie on T.V. he was captivated with the dialogues of the joker. He quickly learned them. His mimicry antics brought squeals of laughter from all watching him and got him lots of accolades. He had at last found his calling. He requested the jail in-charges to let him watch more

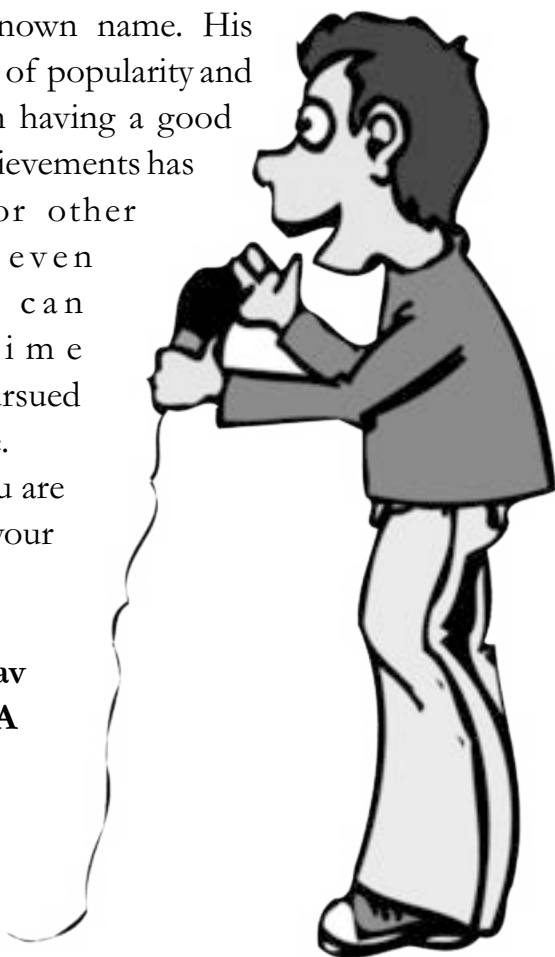


cartoon programmes. Very soon he became a polished performer himself.

Three years later, when he was liberated from the remand home, he headed to the tinsel town and by and by carved a niche for himself in the local cinema. This boy from the poor family soon became a well-known name. His talent got him lots of popularity and wealth. He began having a good existence. His achievements has set a model for other people, that even insignificant can become prime provided it is pursued with perseverance.

Moral – You are the creator of your own destiny.

Prashant Raghav
12-A



Friend's Advice

Prashant always dreamt of becoming a famous surgeon or an engineer or perhaps a famous scientist. In class 11 he decided to take up science stream -PCMB, never giving a thought whether he would be able to cope with these subjects. He had also decided to take computer science as the fifth subject, but after a month he started having second thoughts, he began to feel the pressure of studies and started getting depressed.

In school he started become more and more withdrawn, quiet, and dull. Whenever his friends would come and talk to him, he would never say anything and just be quiet. Then one fine day one of his classmate Minal came up to him and motivated him about his self- confidence and studies. He told him not to underestimate his own capabilities or feel sad about anything, instead to just focus on studies in a systematic manner. He taught him a better way to study for his upcoming final exams, advising that if he found the entire syllabus too much to study then at least he should first prepare the topics which are more important.

Minal's motivation showed a way to Prashant to deal with his study related stress. He started coming regularly to school and would often request the teacher



to explain the difficult topics again. He did well in class eleven final examination, scoring seventy-eight percent marks and now he was not suffering from any depression.

He expressed his thanks to his friend for his timely guidance. After that they both started hanging out and became very good friends and always used to do their studies together. Now, Prashant never got scared of exams, he always faced them with preparation. His hard work and belief in self helped him score very good marks in his class twelve board examination.



Kanav Gupta
12-A

Maya's Adventure

Once upon a time, in a small village in the mountains, there lived a young girl named Maya. Maya was always fascinated by the beauty of the mountains and spent most of her time exploring the surrounding hills.

One day, while wandering in the mountains, Maya stumbled upon a small cave. As she peered inside, she saw a glimmering object. Curious, she crawled inside and found a shining crystal lying on the ground. Maya picked up the crystal and felt a strange energy emanating from it. She felt an immediate connection with it and decided to take it back to her village.

As Maya walked back, she felt a strange power within her. She felt invincible and capable of doing anything she wanted. When she reached her village, she found that the villagers were in distress. The village well had dried up, and the crops were dying. Without hesitation, Maya took out the crystal and held it up high. Suddenly, a bright light shone from the crystal, and a gentle rain began to fall. The villagers watched in amazement as the rain continued to pour, replenishing the well and saving the crops. From that day on, Maya was known as the village's saviour, and the crystal became a symbol of hope and prosperity for the



people.

As Maya grew older, she became the village's leader, guiding the people through their challenges with the crystal's help. And the crystal continued to shine bright, a beacon of hope and inspiration for generations to come. And so, the legend of Maya and the crystal became a beloved tale for generations to come, reminding people of the power of hope and determination to overcome any obstacle.



Yaduraj Singh
12-E

Blessing In Disguise

Long time back, there were two cousins who lived in a beautiful house and were from a well to do family. The servants usually came in the morning, did all the household chores and went off in the afternoon. Those two cousins used to lock the main door and move to their respective work places.

One fine day, it was afternoon, the guard was asleep and by chance the gate was unlocked, a beggar who was hungry entered the gate and after seeing the guard asleep, moved towards the doorstep of the house in search of some food. As the door was locked, he tried to peep in through the kitchen window and found it open, he jumped from the window and entered the kitchen where he found a lot to feed upon. He ate to his heart's content and then quietly moved out of the house.

When the two cousins returned in the evening, they saw the mess created in the kitchen, refrigerator was open, clutter on the floor, all this made both cousins very angry and they summoned the guard, questioned him about all the chaos, but the cunning guard did not admit his mistake rather said, it might be a fault of a cat who entered the kitchen through that open window.

All the statements made by guard could not convince



the two cousins and hence, they decided to hire a spy who would keep an eye on their house and solve the mystery of today's chaos.

The next day, the spy concealed him behind a large tree in the garden and started recording the surroundings. The beggar as usual came that day also and as the guard was again asleep, he entered the kitchen where he ate up to his fill. Then the beggar went off carrying some food. In the evening when this recording was shown to the two cousins they were taken aback and were very angry to know that the guard deceived on them. But the spy did notice one more thing which was not noticed by anyone and that is, when the two cousins were out for work, some thieves used to try entering the house from the backyard thinking that as nobody is home, they would get a lot of expensive items that they would steal and sell at very high rates in order to earn profit.

But as the beggar used to be in the house, the thieves could not muster up the courage to enter the house thinking that they might be caught as they thought that someone was already inside the house. The spy elucidated everything to the two cousins, who were very pleased to know that nothing had been stolen so far except food. For those two cousins, the beggar was indeed a blessing in disguise. —

Priyanshi Aggarwal

11-G

Pelosthenus-The Ghost Of Euliphius

Once upon a time back in ancient Sparta, there lived a young mortal man named Pelosthenus along with his mother and twin brother.

Since his childhood, Pelosthenus possessed certain qualities like wisdom, valour, military tactics and patriotism which were the hallmarks of a true Spartan. When became eighteen years old he joined the legendary Spartan army and led his men in many successful conquests spanning Greece.

One day the King of Sparta ordered its national army to invade the land of Athens to fulfil his desire for a rare herb that was said to cure any illness by the old prophets and sagas, so he promoted Pelosthenus to the rank of General.

One August day the Spartan army set sail to Athens but they were not aware of what is in there for them. The Olympian guard-The largest military of over 1 million soldiers were ready to face the unprepared Spartans. When the Spartans landed on the bay of Thidlis in Athens they were ambushed by the Athenians. After fierce battles for five days, the Athenians proved to be too good for the visitors! And the Spartans were getting crushed to their knees. Things got heated up when Pelosthenus got knocked off his horse, so he begged the God of war to help him defeat



his enemies in exchange for his soul. The God of war showed mercy to the mortal and gave him a heavenly spear along with a shield to defeat his enemies but kept him as a slave.

Soon he started undertaking tasks given to him by the Gods of Olympus. In these, he killed many who were deserving and many who were not. One day the God of war ordered him to plunder and win the village of Euliphius for him but he played a bloody game with his slave, he tricked the mortal into killing his own family.

The priest of the village cursed Pelosthenus to be named “the ghost of Euliphinus”. After this incident, the mortal refused to serve the God of war and decided to avenge his family by killing the God of war.

He sought by powers of Pandora's box to attain the power to kill a God with which he defeated the God of war and quenched his thirst for vengeance. The damned mortal ended up getting himself killed in a battle repelling the forces of the god of war.

Later a statue of Pelosthneus was built in Sparta to pay tribute to the fallen warrior.

Harshvardhan Singh Rawat
12-G

Stellar Tensions: The Great Polar Rift

As we all know there are poles at the ends of a geoid-shaped planet, 'Earth'. Furthermore, we also recognise the tiny twinkling lights glaring in the night sky as 'stars'. This is a case of a rift between the poles and the stars. The story begins with the poles staring at those shining stars jealously and deducing on a certitude of being more brighter and bold. Tourists were consistently gazing at the night sky on account of polar night and the brightness of tiny dots in the sky. Seeing this resulted in bewilderment of the poles' wisdom and landed them in indignation. As a result the tectonic plates eventually started to brush past each other. This made an unstable environment for the tourists. Standing or beholding themselves was like a hornet's nest. Landslides occurred as a consequence of this and houses fell like sand particles. Now the actual brawl begins, the stars altered their position in order to restrict the gravitational waves occurring due to the magnetic energy of the central core. This ensued in the stability of the land. After the settlement of the land, the Poles got the opportunity to perform something more catastrophic. Unbelievable disaster was demonstrated by the poles. It started erupting volcanoes due to which



magma was released on its surface. The stars again overpowered the situation by locating themselves in a new place in the vacuum. Again the change in gravitational and magnetic waves caused the ice to shatter and produce enough water. This rift seemed never ending but at last, the stars being wise restricted themselves as if they won't, the planet will land in a situation of great destruction. This case conveys that we should be neither destructive as stars nor jealous as poles. They both make a beautiful ecosystem. Stars in vacuum and magnetic waves at the poles are responsible for polar nights (solar storms). Thus, they both work together. We should also work together in order to improve the quality of human life.

Madhav Goel
11-G

"If there's a book that you want to read, but it hasn't been written yet, then you must write it."

--Toni Morrison

My Garden

My garden welcomes squirrels, butterflies, and sometimes a black and white cat. Also, I love playing with them. They make me happy. But what got my attention a few days ago was the backyard scene. I saw a mongoose there. Firstly I got a little scared because I had not seen it before. But then I realised it is shy. I clapped and whistled and it just ran away and went into a hole under the earth. It reminded me of Alice in Wonderland, and in my imagination, I could feel a tea party going on, and all the underground creatures there. The next day I saw the mongoose, but this time he was not.

Two more of his family members were there. One mongoose was playfully biting the leg of another one, but as soon as they saw me, they again vanished. Only if I could tell them anyway that I like them and I want to see them safe. I searched for an animal whisperer' number but could not find one in my city and my desire to know my cute friends could not be fulfilled.

I put bread for them, but they didn't like it, and I felt sad. But then I realised that they only eat what mother nature gives them, and that made me smile. I



gave them names from the biggest one from the middle and the fattest one the smallest and the cutest. One funny thing happened when I tried to wave at them.

They looked at me for less than a second and all three of them went back inside all at once in the hole in the earth. I love watching them play very efficiently, that's why I tried making their video to share with my friends, and all my friends became so amused to see them. One of my friends came to my backyard to watch Storm Pomeg at play. I tried to share my birthday cake with them, but they only ate the fruits on the cake. They may not be my pets but the amount of joy they give me cannot be measured. They climb up and down the furniture, and sometimes go to my neighbour's house, so there is no fixed time for the roaming.

So, I look of my window many times to see if they are back or not. Every time I get to see them, I thank Mother Nature and God for making such playful creatures. I feel so lucky that they are in my backyard. One day I will get an animal whisperer and try to know them more.

Rujeet
12-C

The Angel Of Death

Ryan had failed the entrance examination of his dream college on his second and final attempt. Thinking he had lost everything and would never be able to accomplish his dreams, thinking he had disappointed every person who ever cared about him, Ryan struggled with depression.

After seven hard months, one fateful day, he stood in his room, on a wooden stool, with a noose around his neck. As he was about to jump off, a bright light burst into his room, so bright that he had to shield his eyes. Suddenly it seemed to Ryan that the sky had split open, and what came through was Death itself.

Death was dressed in a long overcoat with a cowl covering its head and most of the features, holding his infamous scythe. Followed a long silence in the room broken only when death spoke, “What are you even doing?”

Ryan could not frame a reply as he was so shocked, “Am I hallucinating? No, this has to have a rational explanation!” he thought. After all, he was a science student.

“Cat got your tongue, eh?” Death said in a playful voice and started laughing at Ryan.



“Come let me show you a better place to die!!” Death said in a joyful voice.

Death snapped his fingers and teleported Ryan to the top of the Eiffel Tower, “How about a jump? Heh heh!” Ryan had a horrified look on his face and held on to the nearest metal bar he could find.

“Heh-heh! Not a fan of heights, huh?...Fine!” Death snapped his fingers again and brought Ryan to Antarctica, “Here! Hypothermia will set in even before you can say 'frosty!'”

A chill went down his spine, and he could feel the stinging cold on his skin. He immediately fell to the ground and huddled his knees close to his chest to keep himself warm.

“What's wrong? Is cold not your thing? Heh heh heh!” Death snapped his fingers and brought Ryan on a rail track with a train coming towards him.

“There you go! Happy?”

Terrified, Ryan closed his eyes, pulled up his hands to shield himself, and screamed, “I don't want to die!”.

Ryan stayed in that trance for an entire minute until he realized he was in his room. Death's hollow eyes stared right into his soul.

“Wait, don't you?” asked Death.

“No! I think I want to live.”.

Death smiled and said, “Alright then, call me if you change your mind! Heh heh heh!”

Ryan got up and walked towards the door of his room, knowing he would live and give life another chance.

He looked back at Death smiling at him, and he smiled back and said in his mind, “Thank you!” then he opened the door to step in the light.

As the door closed behind him, there was a sudden ripping sound, then the mask and the overcoat fell to reveal who Death was, an Angel of heaven merely disguised.



Yash Sherawat
12-G

The Frozen Night

“Hey.”, someone shouted. She turned back to see a woman in a black dress running towards her with a brown wallet. The clock showed 2 am. Tanya was drunk, and was returning back from a party hosted by her colleagues. The woman, who was by now standing right next to her, panted heavily. “You forgot this on your desk.” It was her cash wallet. It was Aisha, her team-lead. As she was taking her wallet back, her hand touched Tanya's and she was chilled to the bones. They were as cold. As. Ice.

“Are you fine ma'am, your hands are cold.”

“Yes, Just the weather tonight, quite chilly.”

She checked her watch. It was 27 degree Celsius. The weather couldn't be a reason for this. Tanya found it extremely weird, worrying and terrifying at the same time. Aisha offered to walk her down to her home and she agreed. But Tanya, who was already intoxicated, put up a condition and asked Aisha to pose like superwoman in the middle of the road and then started to capture images endlessly. She continued to do ridiculous things with Aisha without giving any second thought. Tanya climbed up Aisha's back and acted as if she was a car. But Aisha didn't stop Tanya from doing any of it. She had a lifeless look all over her face the



entire time and was just clicking photos on Tanya's demand.

Then suddenly Aisha grabbed her shoulder and stared into her eyes. Everything suddenly stopped as if time had frozen. Pin drop silence. Aisha pointed towards the moon. Tanya, hesitatingly looked towards the moon only to see it red, blood red. She screamed but there was no one to help her. She ran as fast as she could but she didn't move forward. She was running at her place. Her bag was latched in thin air. She looked behind. There was no one. The road was empty. She stopped a patrol car that passed by. She looked inside the window only to find Aisha, who was driving the car. She was horrified. She tried to run but Aisha held her hand tightly and started to drive the car. The car stopped. Aisha got out of it, her hands covered in blood and her canines like vampires. She held Tanya's arm and opened her mouth to bite through it. And just as she did it, Tanya woke up. She looked outside at the sunny weather and felt relieved. She checked her clock and it showed 8 am. She got ready for her office. She was scrolling through her gallery just as she..... stumbled upon a picture of Aisha and her from the previous night.

Aditya Bansal

11-G

GNT- Terror Trails

“Are you sure?” Nishtha asked, “Yes” Gauri and Trisha replied with excitement. They were planning to go to Lambi Deher mines, considered as one of the most haunted places in India. Situated in Mussoorie, the mines had been long abandoned, with tales of a tragic past. Back in the 90's around 50000 mine workers died an agonizing death at the Dehar mines due to faulty mining practices. Legends say that spirits of the workers still roam there.

Sunday morning they were all set up to visit the mines. Talking about all the scary stories they reached their destination. As they entered the mines chilly winds welcomed them. They felt a negative energy as they continued. Gauri stopped to tie her shoe laces. When she looked up, Nishtha and Trisha were nowhere in sight. She saw a burned man looking at her with eyes full of panic. She shouted in horror and blinked. Nishtha and Trisha were standing beside her trying to hold and calm her. They asked her what happened and if she was okay. All of a sudden, Gauri started laughing. Trisha and Nishtha shared a look, Gauri still laughing and told them that she pranked them. They shouted at Gauri and after a minute they started laughing too. When they started walking, Nishtha gave Gauri a quick glance



asking if everything was really okay, she nodded. Nishtha and Trisha thought something was up, but didn't look too much into it, as Gauri had a habit of playing pranks. They continued to walk. On their way, they saw a shovel in a bad condition. Trisha had a sudden flash of some mine worker shouting. She covered her ears with her hands and started shouting. In panic, Nishtha asked what happened when she calmed down. Trisha started explaining her, an invisible force pushed Nishtha and she fell on the rock, and her head started bleeding.

That's when they realised that it's time to leave. Trisha pulled her up and covered her wound with a handkerchief. Tears started rolling down their eyes and they decided to leave immediately. They noticed that



Gauri was staring at the shovel blankly, Nishtha and Trisha called her but she didn't respond, they tapped at her shoulders ,she came back to senses. Trisha and Nishtha glared at her in horror, astonished by her weird behaviour. But they didn't have time for anything . They grabbed her and started running as fast as they could to get out of the place. On their way back they decided never to talk about this incident again and everything would go back to normal but nothing would be normal ever again. Most of the ride they were silent. They reached their respective houses . Gauri shared her room with her sister Myra. Myra felt a negative energy as Gauri entered the room , excited to know about her scary adventure, she ignored it and started asking questions about it, but Gauri didn't respond she was just staring at the ceiling blankly, frustrated Myra tapped her shoulder. Angrily in response, Gauri slammed a book at her face. That left her in shock, she was about to hit her back when her phone rang, it was her boyfriend. "I'll deal with you later" she said to Gauri, picked up the call and went to the terrace to talk. There she noticed an old dusty shovel and hands on her neck.....was that her heated brain playing. He tricked or the spirit of the miners had followed her home???

Geetali Arora

10-D

Imposter Living with You

You all might sometimes have noticed that some people suddenly change in a good way or a bad one. But why do they change their nature and behavior.

There was a girl named Sopa. She was 16 years old and very curious about everything. She was always happy. One day she went to buy some groceries from the market. Sopa like always , started to observe and notice everything. She saw a beautiful tree with blue flowers on it. She went towards that tree to pluck them up. Suddenly she was dragged in a big hole and the hole disappeared. When she returned back home, she was acting very strangely. Her mother asked her where were the groceries, she did not say a word.

From that day Sopa forgot many things. She was serious all the time. Every day she asked her parents how old was she. She used to write something in her diary. One day her brother Rom went inside her room and saw that she was writing something. She wrote 'only 4 years 8 months and 26 days left'. When her brother thought about this he thought that she would be 20 years old by that time. He started to find and know the truth. He came to know that after her sister came from the market that day she started to behave very strangely.



He was an archeology and history student and went to that market, he got to know that his sister fell into a hole. Now he knew what had happened his sister was in great danger.

He had read somewhere that about 5000 years ago, there was a group of people who were cursed to live underground always as they were considered evil. From then on they, whenever found someone alone, made a hole on the ground, dragged them in and took their appearance and came out living their life. This was the a really sad thing. That means, his sister was underground. An imposter was living with them.

He also read that these cursed people's killed their family when they turn 20. When Rom researched more he found that their memory is also vanished. When he told all this to his mom, she was shocked and said Rom 'when you where 4 years old, you were playing in the garden and fell into hole and started to behave very mature from that day. His mother got very scared as he was 20 and a half years old at present.

Angel Ghosh
10-E

Destiny

Its just the destiny that speaks and we have to listen either it is in our favor or against us destiny plays its game and changes the life forever

Another hectic day for Dr. Rai with patients, their family and much more which was now part of his daily routine. Life has been always like this for him from childhood to teenage and till now. It always revolved around his studies, family, job and few friends. But who knew that his destiny was going to change everything for him.

As usual he was sitting in his cabin with a file of one of his patients in his hand when a girl in her mid-twenties entered pale skin dark brown orbs and short hairs. As she entered he saw her, at that point of time he didn't know what change this girl was going to bring for him. As they talked and she told about her condition and he examined her report he said, "Miss Vyas you have to be admitted as soon as possible". He thought it was not the right time to tell her about her terminal illness but what happened next just shocked him. The girl just smiled and asked "how much time is left?" He thought how someone in her condition could be so calm and composed after even knowing that there's not



much time left with them.

For the first time in his life and career he had encountered such type of person. Next day she was admitted and he saw her smiling and just happy and making her family smile in their hard times. Later that day he came to check her and decided to ask “how can you behave like nothing happened and nothing is going to happen?” and she calmly answered “Because I know destiny will play its role. It doesn’t matter if I cry or laugh, eventually I have to die and nothing can change my fate. But me being happy and living fully can surely change one thing that’s the regret that I would have if I make others cry. At least I can make few good memories in my last days for my loved ones”. Doctor was mesmerized by all this and he promised her “I will make all your smiles worth it”. And next few months she lived her fullest and enjoyed a lot and made every person happy with her smile and even the doctor stayed by her side until the day came when she had to leave those chatters and laughs behind her. The doctor just remembered her words “Destiny plays its role, your perspective to see it and live a little can change everything” and he thought she was right she always was ...destiny will play you have to live for yourself not just survive but LIVE”. He thought I studied to save

lives and I saved others but I was not able to save mine only.

Later he received a letter in which it was written “I KNOW YOU WILL MAKE ALL THOSE SMILES WORTH IT TILL LAST AND FORVER...” with this he decided to live for his life changing love and destiny and he cherished her and her memories “FOREVER”.

Deepanshi Sundriyal
12-B



[A SHOW TO REMEMBER]

Disclaimer: the following, although based on facts of history is a fictional narration; including, people, names, etc. any resemblance to real persons, living or dead, is purely coincidental

In the era of late 19th century, *magic*, as a craft was gaining its popularity among the hearts of the people in Northern England. Many individuals grew popular in the following years as *magicians*. Among many, *William Dale* was one of the few to gain extreme success due to his extravagant shows. The following is an account of one of his extraordinary shows, as told by the spectators.

“Pick a card, any card!” the magician said, offering the volunteer an option out of thirteen cards. The young girl, close to 8 years of age seemed to ponder, not noticing the subtle marks on each card. The spotlight highlighting the pearls of sweat appearing on her forehead.

“I pick this one” she said softly, the charming man took the chosen card and shuffled it back into the deck. The audience watched in awe as the magician effortlessly executed the cascade of riffle shuffles, a



symphony of randomness. Each card passed his skillful fingers as his eyes remained locked with the volunteer's until he paused. A grin played on his lips as he lifted an ace of spades, knowing without looking that this was her choice. Her eyes widened at the reveal.

“Is this your card, miss?” he flattered, offering her the card as he took a slight bow; the footlight illuminating his confident smile, casting deep shadows across his features. Impressed, the young girl took a moment before she nodded which in turn was rewarded with applause from the audience. He helped her down the stage steps, gingerly while holding onto her hand, as she returned back to her seat.

It was an old-fashioned theatre, which doubled as an opera house during the high seasons. The maroon curtains were embroidered with golden and silver, two marble pillars flanked each side of the stage, awarding the showman with a sense of grandeur and otherworldliness. His dark grey top hat lengthened his silhouette, adding to his mystery.

“Who wants to disappear?” he asked the audience, his arms raised as if they were about to cast a spell. Two men in black rolled a grand woody closet onto the stage as a wave of murmurs could be heard coming from the audience, each person pushing their

loved ones to volunteer.

Eventually, the magician took off his hat and pulled out a blooming white lily. **“Whoever catches the lily shall be my assistant”** he proclaimed, throwing the lily in a grand motion. It landed on the lap of a young lady, her long brown curls neatly styled and reaching her waist.

She stood up and was escorted towards the stage where the magician awaited her, his hand extended. She took his hand as he helped her up the stage. **“Hello miss! Do you dare to step into the closet of disappearance?”** he asked, still holding her hand. **“I do,”** she answered as she approached the closet.

The magician faced the audience as he announced, **“This beautiful young lady has dared to take the challenge.”** He placed his top hat back and opened each closet door slowly to maintain the suspense; revealing nothing of note, only that the planks had been removed to make room for the volunteer. The lady stepped into the snug closet, her back facing the audience. The magician slowly closed the doors behind her.

He then circled around the closet three times, his long red cape following him like a delayed shadow, as he muttered to himself, his footsteps echoing throughout

the theatre hall. After the fourth round, he shouted, "*Abracadabra*" and then tapped on each of the closet doors four times, finishing the ritual.

"My beloved audience, will my beautiful lady have turned spectral? Do you think she have vanished into thin air?" he lengthened the audience's anticipation while slowly approaching the door of the closet.

Several members of the audience stood up to witness the moment of magic as he quickly opened the first door, standing in front of it. A few audience members begged the magician to *let them see the closet*.

"Patience is a virtue well rewarded" he said as he quickly opened the second door, jumping aside for the audience to witness the empty closet. A collective gasp echoed through the crowd as the illusion unfolded before their eyes, which was quickly followed by a loud applause.

The magician took a deep bow, tipping his top hat as a sign of respect. The spotlight was repositioned by the lighting technician from the magician to the closet with a loud metal creak. **"Let us return our fair lady from the beyond"** he exclaimed, again circling four times around the closet, but this time in reverse. When he finished the fourth round; he shouted,

“Abracadabra” and tapped each of the closet doors four times.

The audience grew silent once more with anticipation, waiting for the lady to return. The magician put his gloved hands on both of the door handles and pulled them open in a quick, but grand motion. Standing in front of the closet, the audience did not get a good look; but this time, the magician did not move away.

Even though the overhead spotlight directly shone onto the closet, no shadow was cast. Only the magician's long shadow played on stage that night. **“It seems our lady has not seen the need to return just yet”** he said, closing the doors. This earned him a round of laughter from the audience.

The magician completed the reversed ritual once again; but this time, he did not feel the need to wait before opening the doors. He immediately took a look inside, it was still empty. His smiling mouth twitched, attempting not to drop his facade in front of the audience, but the gloves stuck to his sweaty palms.

“Quite a stubborn lady, I must admit” he laughed, but by then, the audience had grown murmurous, noticing that the charming man seemed to be overcome by nerves. He spotted the young girl in the

front, who had volunteered for the card trick, to be covering her eyes with her hands.

“It seems that I must retrieve her myself” he announced after a long pause. He opened the closet doors, stepped in, and turned to face the audience. **“I shall return, but not alone”** he shouted, his dark eyes wide as he remained smiling. He closed the closet doors from within, and a silence ensued.

By each minute, the crowd became more restless, until some had enough and shouted for the magician to return their money. Eventually, a stage member appeared and opened the closet doors, taking a step back to reveal the empty closet, with which the audience erupted into chaos. The confused stagehand inspected each side of the closet, together with several members of the audience, but nothing was to be found.

The next day, a morning newspaper printed an article, front page, with a title in large black letters, **A SHOW TO REMEMBER**, reporting on the magician and the volunteer pair who had disappeared. Till this date, the pair has never been found.

Manasvi Joshi
12-F

Men Apart, Every Man an Emperor

It was a pitch-dark, moonless night. The thirty-foot-deep Shiloi Lake stretches out like an unending ocean, disturbed only by the soft splash of oars moving through the water. Three narrow canoes, eight feet long, are making their way over its cold depths, each seating armed soldiers in diving gear.

The team of twelve Special Forces men, the toughest soldiers in the Indian Army-free fallers, swimmers, weapons and unarmed combat experts, especially trained for the most dangerous missions-have been rowing on the lake for close to three-and-a-half hours. Their task is to destroy a militant camp on an island on Shiloi Lake. The island has a total of thirteen huts of which three belong to the militants and the rest to the fishermen.

Colonel Rahul, KC, SM, VSM the leader of the Shiloi Lake Operation has been told that innocent people must not be harmed. That is the reason why the Special Forces team has been practising and planning the attack for nearly a month. They decide that they will reach the island like local fishermen using canoes.

It is 2 a.m. when the boats reach the island. Rahul makes a move, and being a big man, upsets the balance



of the canoe. It turns over, toppling all six soldiers, including him, into the freezing water. They straighten the canoe and clamber back in, taking care not to topple it again. They find a big piece of floating biomass over which they pull their canoes so that they become steady. All twelve soldiers climb on top of the platforms and look through their night-vision binoculars.

Intelligence network had informed them that the militants had an impressive array of weapons at their disposal. These included a 7.62 RPD machine gun, an M79 grenade launcher (lethod), M16 and AK-47 assault rifles and shoulder-fired rocket-propelled grenades (RPGs) with the power to destroy. Rahul watches closely and when the guard leaves the machan at 3 a.m., he gives his men orders to open fire.

The men fire from their assault rifles, machine guns, multi-grenade launchers. The terrorist sentry and perimeter patrol fire back at Rahul and his men but fall to the fusillade of bullets sent by Rahul's machine gunner. The fire lasts exactly four minutes and causes complete devastation. After they are satisfied that the camp has been neutralized, the soldiers jump into the water and swim to the island.

The high point of the operation is that not one civilian is injured in the exchange of fire and there is not

a scratch on any of Rahul's boys. The Special Forces men row their canoes back to camp, weary but satisfied. They come back to a piping hot glass of tea. He is later awarded the Kirti Chakra, the second highest peacetime gallantry award of the Indian Army. Rahul gives a lot of credit to the special forces training for making him who he is.

Akshat Bahuguna
11-G



Bruno

This story is about a girl “Rilly” and her love for all the creatures and how she met Bruno a magical chameleon and turned into a magical being.

Rilly, a girl who was always curious to know about mysterious creatures and by that I mean animals. Rilly was only five when she had her first pet paper “A white Rattle Snake” which was venomous. She found paper when she was out in the woods to catch some unique patterned butterflies but after the failure of not being able to find one, she sat on the Rock near the bushes, held her chin while her elbows were on her knees. In the silence where you can only hear the movement of trees she heard a raffling sound, she peeked through the bushes and saw the snake. It was a white snake with some grey pretty patterns on it and a ring on the tail. She was really mesmerized that she took it home. Kept it in a pink cage which she painted herself in her storeroom which was a lab according to her and no one was permitted to enter without seeking her permission. But soon after 3 months her brother who was 2 years elder than her got to know about paper. Because of Rilly's suspicious act her brother “Joe” followed her down the storeroom and spotted her



feeding the snake and within no time Joe ran and informed their mother about it. When her mother checked the room she found the snake and killed it and Rilly was no longer allowed to go in the storeroom and mother locked it away. Since that day she never spoke to Joe and hated him for that as he had always been nosey.

Soon after Rilly was growing up and as it is at her age, her curiosity was growing too. She use to bring home animals like Rats and Porcupines as pets and her mother always threw them away whenever she would get to know about it. She was always found in her backyard with bees, worms and other insects. But her mother never understood the fact that she had no friends and her classmate use to think that she's a weirdo. But soon after her parents understood her problem and when she turned 16 her parents decided to gift her a chameleon as her birthday gift. She was on cloud nine. After when the party was over she didn't take a minute and ran to her room with the chameleon on her palm. She kept it on the bed and named him as 'Bruno', she even made a bow and tied it around it's neck. Out of no where Bruno said "I Love It". Rilly took a step back in shock and took a minute and started speaking.

Rilly : Wait! Is that really you? You can speak??

Bruno: Woho, well yes it's me! I can speak but

HUSHH... No one is supposed to know that.

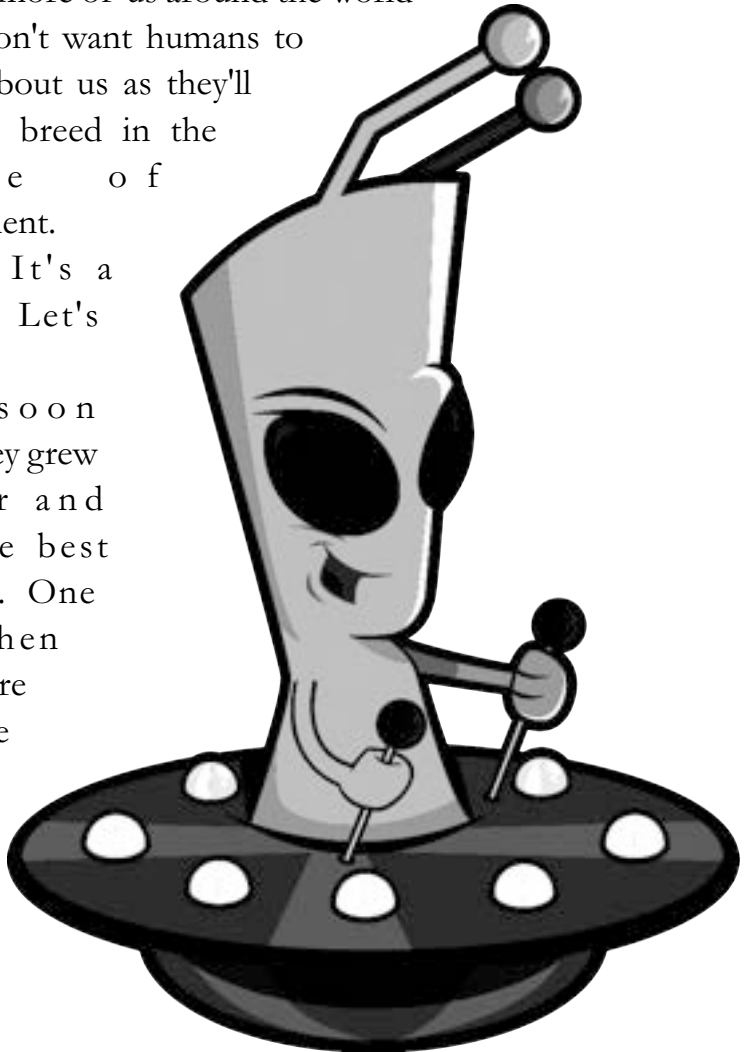
Rilly : Ok but why and how??

Bruno : I am one in the million and there
are five more of us around the world
but I don't want humans to
know about us as they'll
kill our breed in the
n a m e o f
experiment.

Rilly: It's a
secret, Let's
go!

A n d s o o n
after they grew
closer and
became best
friends. One
day when
they were
in the
woods

Bruno
gave



Rilly a magical power of communicating with every creature and now she can understand what a bird or an animal is speaking.

Bruno: I gave you this power as I believe that you are capable of saving these creatures from human beings and I won't be there in this war with you as I'm dying because of the virus I caught.

Rilly: What do you mean? What are you hiding? I'll save you Bruno, don't leave me.

Bruno: You cannot help me. This virus has got no cure but you can help me by securing the innocent animals.

(He took a deep breath and he stopped breathing and he started disappearing)

Tears roll down Rilly's cheeks as she said a healthy good bye to her only friend.

Now, 10 years later she is independent and works as a forest department officials and save lives of wild animals.

Sania Mirza
12-B

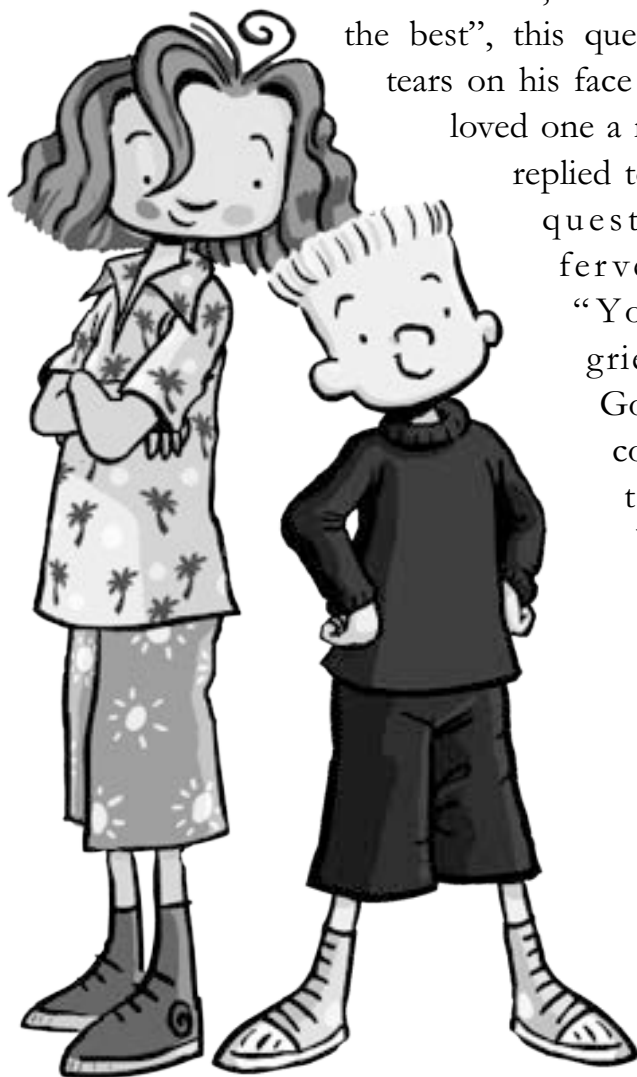
The Good... The Bad... The Ugly... Death Unveiled...

Today while I was strolling down a deserted Road, I came across one of my friend who was eminently interested in knowing the real meaning of death. I started with it stating the reactions of different people at the time of death. Some people respond with wavy sighs of relief while others regret. He asked, “what is death”? In response, I told him that death is a state in fact the real state, of body without soul, furthermore, when a person completes his debt of past births, he is surrendered to death. His next question was as predictable as a sunrise, “Is ultimate peace achieved in the end”? I nodded readily with a 'yes'. Now I asked him a factual question, “Do the dead get anything out of grieving of people”? His answer was 'no' as expected. Further he said that he could imagine people twisting in their graves saying, “It is getting dizzy here”, etc. at night times. This thought was painful and a fierce one. Moreover, over dramatic people sour it up well, adding their own comments. I responded to his question with a suitable reply, “After death, the soul leaves the body and in fact the body is unable to execute any action without soul, hence, thinking of such actions from a dead is useless”. He was satisfied after listening to my reply.



One of his emotional question shook my heart, he devotedly asked, "Best flowers are plucked by God before the worst, this means we aren't the best", this question brought tears on his face as he lost his loved one a month ago. I

replied to his heartfelt question with a fervent answer, "You mustn't grieve for this, God must have considered him the best because of which he was plucked and placed as an alluring flower in the headdress of God", I further said ,



“grieving never decreases the pain, on the contrary it increases it”. He was somewhat convinced with the answer, but a final question struck his mind, “Why people are meant to die if they are born”? After hearkening this question, I realised that I was having an answer but an indirect one. I replied in the form of a verse which was disenthralled by God himself in the ancient text of 'Bhagavad Gita'.

It was twenty seven verse of chapter two which meant, “Indeed certain is death for the born, and certain is birth for the dead; therefore over the inevitable you should not grieve”.

This was an actually convincing answer which was enough for satisfying him. He was overwhelmed with my words and bowed to me in order to express his gratitude. I raised him and hugged tightly, wiping off his tears. After this sentimental and fervoured conversation he gaily returned home.

Lakshya Malhotra
12-D

Black Magic at its Best

Present day...

“Run!” he shouted at me.

So I ran, until my knees felt so weak that I found myself lying on the ground in the middle of nowhere.

In three days since, the voice in the dark talked to me. Maybe I would be at peace right now if I decided to stay home like Mom told me to instead of listening to my best friend, Avery's voice - A very convincing voice with just a hint of cupcake to it. But I, Tsezu Edga, decided to be a rebel that night.

Three nights ago...

“Please Tse, I promise we won't get in trouble”, Avery pleaded, while my music was still playing and banging in my left ear.

After an hour I decided that it was a Friday night And I needed adventure in my life. After Avery went for a short washroom break, I decided that I would follow her wherever she wished to take my stubborn self to.

Half an hour later, we found ourselves in a warehouse with the only light flickering.

I like to call the warehouse 'The Bureau of Lost Voices'. As we got deeper and deeper inside it, we went our separate ways so as to find an adventure sooner. It was a little room, an office it seemed, on the top floor that almost cost me my life.



“Bang!”, The door closed shut and that was my green light to shout for help. So, I did, from every organ of my body.

Soon, even the flicker of the light went down as I found myself shouting even more.

I was 15, in a cinematic scene with the only hope of survival being able to exhaust my voice box. Then he shouted.

“Run, for your life and your family's too, child!”

“Run, run, run....”

The door, at that moment, fortunately budged and I ran like my life depended on it because who knows if it didn't?

Avery was nowhere to be found – 6 missed calls. The next day, I asked her if anything happened to her too. She told me that after she came out of the washroom, I was not there in the house anymore.

“I did not go with you, Tse”

That explains the 6 missed calls from her. Whoever messed with voodoo, or black magic, whoever cursed me, whoever the voice was, the world may never know.

Adeline Halliday
10-G

Her and I

HER AND I WERE STRANGERS, the moment I saw her as a young girl I felt attracted towards her. She had this grandeur aura surrounding her, I never saw her or met her before but I felt like I had a past connection with her.

Her first sight bought a wave of excitement and appreciation in my heart and I couldn't contain it so I jumped in her cradle to hug her. Who knew that this fine lady will become the reason for my happiness and be the reason why my heart pounds even today when I think about her, now that she's gone!

What makes her special many may ask, the simple answer is home, she made me feel at home and she was my home for 12 years, she saw me cry and comforted me, she saw me daydream and dreamt with me, she saw me grow and grew with me, although she was already ten times bigger than me, she understood me, when I felt lonely she became a part of my imaginative world and gave me a shoulder. She saw me grieve for my best friend Donna's death and dissolved me in for comfort, I still remember that feeling of shock and grief, the wave of sadness that took over me when I sat with her and heard that Donna was no more ,



she was gracious enough to carry my Donna to her final resting place, her last abode.

She couldn't speak well but her presence was enough , people feared her and she was like my identity, everyone knew me because of her, that much control she had over the minds of humans. She was like this massive white cloud that rumbled before every journey to alert people about her departure or arrival. When I was with her she made me feel like royalty, with her I felt like the queen of our little imaginative world. She took me everywhere and when she was gone for a few hours for self-care and rest, I was a restless little mouse.

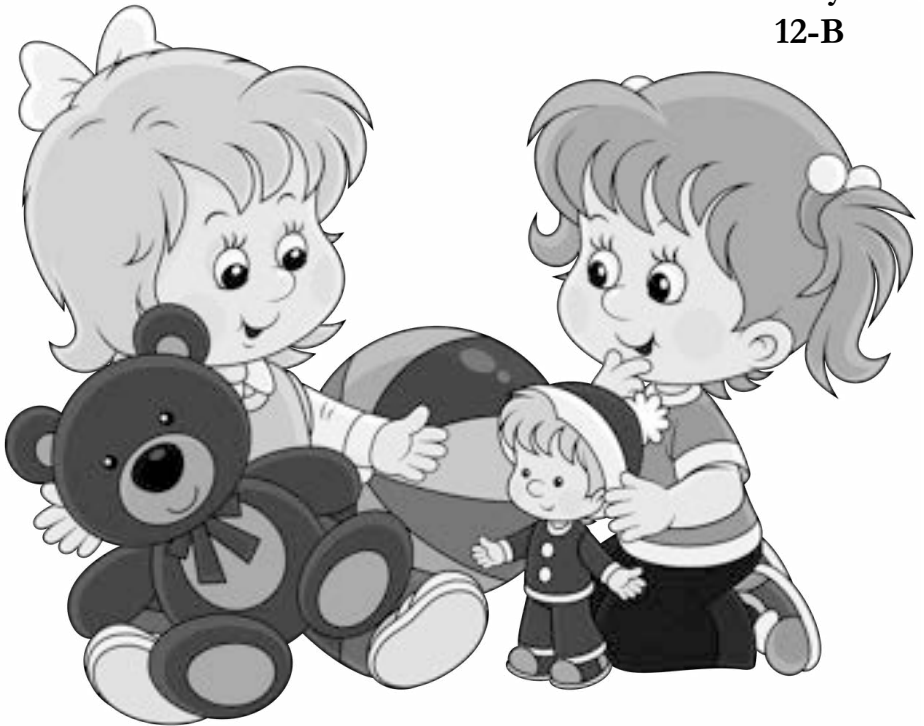
She travelled with me everywhere from mountain tops to sea shores, from salt lands to gods abode, from marshy beaches to the sand dunes becoming the reason why I enjoyed travelling, she made them easy, comfortable and carefree because I knew she will be standing behind me like a rock and protect me when it felt like there was no escape her warm hugs and kissed were enough. She was the love of my life who made living worth, people may call me crazy for it but she made me feel like I belonged somewhere . They called her SAFARI, a mere mammoth car, that has no impact on anyone's life, but she impacted mine

greatly. Today as I am pouring my heart out, I realise how greatly I miss my graceful SAFARI and how every journey whether small or great was made a memorable one cause of her. I remember the day she drove away from me, my mammoth baby that carried a bag full of our memories and games, standing at the gate because it was her time to go, I cried and bawled because it felt as if a part of my childhood is being taken away that great of an impact she left on me. Even the dealer was shocked to see someone mourn over the "loss" of a car, maybe because he didn't understand the bond SAFARI and I shared. I am still feeling a bit overwhelmed as I am writing this down because that non-living machine was what made me feel alive and gave me so much that I honestly don't deserve. One last time I sat in my safari with teary eyes, my charming lady, not looking a day old, kissed every bit of it and saw her one last time steer out the driveway giving up and taking away my dream of driving with her when I get my licence and exploring the remaining corners of the world with her. As more tears rolled down, I stood there, empty again, frozen, when I saw my four-year-old self jump in her and started playing with her steering wheel like I used to, imagining my dream life with her and she drove SAFARI away beaming and laughing

assuring me that "it will all be okay" while SAFARI rumbled for one last time and bid her goodbyes and vanished along with the setting sun at the end of the road, leaving me with so many great and cherished memories that made my childhood and that's when it struck me,

HER AND I WERE STRANGERS, just with memories this time.

Vasundhara Chaudhary
12-B



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Adeline Halliday



THE ASIAN SCHOOL
DEHRADUN

THE **STORY** **BOOK**

